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Artists’ Statement on Cover Art
“The Fall of Water” (2006-07)
by Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge

Canada contains 20% of the world’s fresh water. The availability of water, the source of life itself, is in crisis. As Condé and Beveridge learned more about the politics of water, the photographic project broadened. The idea of history and the problem of representing water lead them to look at paintings. While there are many representations of the sea and rivers, none adequately represented water as a living or symbolic entity. One painting stood out, however, even though it had little to do with water directly. It was Pieter Bruegel’s 1562 painting *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, which depicts the struggle between the Archangels and Lucifer, and, in Bruegel’s time, referred to the Counter-reformation. What intrigued the artists was the liquid quality of the composition and figures.

Characters representing the global breadth of water politics have replaced the Archangels in the Bruegel painting. In the middle, replacing Saint Michael, is an Andean indigenous woman, referencing to the successful fight against water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia. On the left side is a South Asian woman referencing to the struggles against the damming of the Narmada River in India. On the right is a Canadian environmentalist defending Canada’s vast water resources. Activists of various nationalities and cultures have replaced the remaining eight angels. The abusers below cover the ground from oil companies to industrial polluters, water bottlers, dam builders, privateers, agribusiness types, the military, politicians, scientists and corporate thieves, and include dead fish, oil covered birds, drought, disease, and e-coli with the occasional unsuspecting victim floating among them.

The project was assembled digitally. Each character was photographed separately, digitally manipulated and then assembled into the final image. Some of the characters were either constructed as a prop and photographed or were created out of photographic elements. The final image is presented in a size similar to the original 118cm x 162 cm (46” x 64”) painting.
EDITORIAL: “Re-Sent Histories”

In this issue 30th Anniversary issue of Rampike we consider histories re-sent, re-assembled and re-situated. Here, we offer historical revisions and re-conceptions via international perspectives on world events. We begin with our cover image, Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge’s “The Fall of Water” which features a Bruegellian-inspired depiction of historical struggles to rescue the world’s dwindling water resources. Then, we turn to (re-)interpretations of recent events including Rosemary Sullivan’s moving family history, Laura Shintani’s experience of creating sculpture in China, and John Barlow’s account of personal injury in Toronto. We present broader socio-cultural and political issues such as Frank Davey’s treatment of public apologists; Brian Edwards’ re-visions of culture and cinema springing from his Australian point of view; French author, Jean-Pierre Ostende’s mystery replete with allusions to Federico Garcia Lorca, Johnny Depp, and cultural cannibalism; German writer, Christophe Fricker’s inhabitation of Homer’s Ajax; Sandy Pool’s spam-based military strategies; Jacob Scheier’s re-contextualization of Wall Street informed by Walter Benjamin; Norman Lock’s eventful itineraries of Lessandro Comi; Jenny Samprisi’s re-contextualization of urban temporalities; Rolland Nadjiwon’s Anishnaabek remembrance of disappearing horizons; Mark Dunn’s re-visitisation of Cortez at Lake Superior; Kemeny Babineau’s sense of time as madrigal; and Brian Henderson’s epic re-visioning of natural history.

We also feature re-evaluations of linguistic and literary models including Dennis Cooley’s preface on English, Helen Hajnokczy’s re-construction of the argot of women’s-wear advertising, Richard Kostelanetz’s re-cursive Fulcrum Fictions, Jean-Claude Gagnon’s secondary effects of linguistics, Susan Holbrook’s transcription of the letters of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson, Stuart Ross’s collaborative re-considerations of contemporary city-scapes, Stephen Bett’s soft-core porn-parody, Xavi Sabater’s re-visitisation of 1988, Kaitlin Tremblay’s re-visioning of the moment of reading itself, and Stan Rogal’s response to Barlovian history.

In addition we provide Derek Beaulieu’s re-views of eight recent books of visual poetry. As a whole, these texts and images provide dialogical re-assessments, and revisionist perceptions of individual, local, and global histories, thereby returning us to the original event-horizons while interrogating the impulses that shape our perceptions. -- Karl Jirgens (Editor)
this she said
this is what
you need
to know
if you want
to write

/in english

- there are 5 vowels to indicate 50 sounds
- there are many descenders, y among them, ours is not to reason y
- the alphabet is very close to the ancient greek and roman letters in sequence and in lettering
- there are many ascenders too though as senders no nor ass enders they wont amount to much [some would say they are endless and should stay at home]
- some readers object to typographic impertinence, get in a terrible guffuffle, a nasty snit
- the nineteenth century let loose a barrage of new fonts that shouted for attention, at least when the merchants got hold of them they did
- riddles and gnomic utterances since ancient times impeded naked communication
- a young Toronto poet is an avowed and out-an-out lipogrammatist, unrepentent some have said from too much book learning, gives us too much lip
- it is a wonder that in writing R so much can be done with a bowl, a vertical stem, and a leg stroke. Perhaps, dear poet, dear reader, you might find this information informing, if not provocative. Prof Ligate for one, might.
- some readers say typefaces proliferate to express different meanings
- the first books were designed to resemble manuscripts
- readers can make out almost any variation on a letter; this is especially true in dealing with pharmacists and editors
- runes were scratched on wood or bone. Odin found them, wrote the first poem. A big guy from Gimli did the same, up from the ruins.
- words in early manuscripts were often fused continuously and were hard to extract in the reading and so to make out with any distinction
- punctuation as we know it was settled only after printing was well established
- same goes for spelling
- attempts to develop a phonetic alphabet have been frequent and often have ended in disaster
- ghoti, writes George Bernard Shaw, spells fish: gh from enough, o from women, ti from nation
- ghoughphtheightteeau spells potato, someone else has shown
- the double U was a double U
- Wynkyn de Worde printed many books in English vernacular
- spelling was anchored by print and the sounds of words floated further and further away from the letters. Cast adrift, they sailed out of sight, and once they did people began to talk a different tune, began to sing a different song—sea chanties behind their backs chansons reels flings dirges chants ballads graffiti swearing contests the purchasing of coffee the pulling of toffee and silent letters. which often as not they left, began to complain of spelling & wrongful pronunciation.

Sorry
by Frank Davey

In most cases, if someone is offended by something you do or say, it’s much better to apologize right away. Democratic war opponents keep asking Senator Clinton to apologize for her vote authorizing the invasion of Iraq. I said it’s too late to apologize, it’s too late. HBO talk show host Bill Maher will reportedly apologize this evening for offensive remarks he made this week about Pope Benedict XVI. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories says it will soon apologize to former students of native residential schools. Beijing Olympic organizers have issued an apology for the language used to describe disabled athletes in a manual compiled for thousands of volunteers. Gigabyte has agreed to publicly apologize to ASUS over that little Energy Processing Unit spat they’ve been having.

Look, I apologize – I’m sorry I spawned him. I am sorry. I apologize for interrupting. I was told by staff that Senator Brown, in fact, had no questions. I misunderstood. Look, I apologize all the time when I don’t mean it. I apologize, ’cause you don’t really love me. I’m sorry I asked. I apologize in advance for mangling the story and getting the facts horribly wrong. Sorry I got underfoot? Sorry for taking up space? Sorry you’re not watching where you’re going and I got in your way? Mama I’m sorry I’m addicted to promethazine. I apologize everyone, that was a horrible thing to say. I’m sorry I called you the C word, Bernie. Beyond that, however, I apologize to Iraq and the world. I’m sorry, I’ve had blogger’s block. I’m sorry, I dozed off. I’m sorry I hurt you last night when I pulled your hair.

We’re sorry, but we can’t ship to international or APO/FPO addresses at this time. We apologize for the inconvenience. We are sorry. For all these things we apologize. We apologize for any inconvenience. In other words, they were sorry for showing something that looked like boobs, but were not. We’re sorry, this video is no longer available. We are sorry for calling Public Safety. Gosh, we’re sorry. Mea culpa. Mea maxima culpa. Plus the traffic’s heavy so we imagine ourselves saying that we’re sorry. The franchise owners in D.C. went too far and we apologize for that. We’re sorry that you killed millions of your own people during the Cultural Revolution. We are sorry to hear you are having issues while traveling abroad. We’re sorry but there is no quicker way to receive your order.
Once again, we are sorry that we are not taking orders for personalized dish towels. We’re sorry; we apologize for what happened to Eddie Carter. We apologize for the gross mismanagement of our Human Resources department. We are sorry we don’t maintain waiting lists; we suggest you watch the artists website. We’re sorry to report that one of our webservers was hacked. We are sorry for changing things around. We’re sorry the project was dead for nearly a year. We apologize for the return of bell-bottoms. We are sorry to hear that you are suffering from having the wrong kind of metabolism. We apologize for the experience you have had. We are sorry to hear that you wish to leave Sales Spider. God is wrong and we apologize for what He said. We apologize that this paragraph undermines our apology.

In response a special Sorry Day was held to highlight the Council’s decision. UTSpeaks: What follows sorry? Standing in the dock, the Marist Brother said he wanted to tell his victims, some of whom are in court today, that he was deeply sorry for what he had done. Some of those gathered in parliament wept at the word they have waited years to hear: ‘sorry’. Saying sorry will let the healing begin – tomorrow’s national apology to members of the Stolen Generations is an important milestone in Australia’s history. Betancourt’s Farc kidnapper says sorry. Say sorry on YouTube, court tells teens. The National Sorry Day Committee is formed to organise an annual National Sorry Day. Sorry, this is just my dopamine releasing a placebo for getting satisfied. The muggers were sensitive enough to say sorry for slashing her.

Oops – a chick is on national French TV when she decides to do something which she will probably regret for a long time! Oops! The Page you are looking for doesn’t exist or has been moved! An easy-to-read story follows two young twins as they learn how to prepare for this change in their life, including putting together an ‘oops’ kit with sanitary napkins and a change of clean underwear, and learning to tie their sweaters around their waist when needed. Oops, it’s not a sperm bank... it’s a ‘convenient’ store. Ooops, that’s not funny. Ooops, sorry. This article has been moved to our archive website. Very funny football, oops, but some are sad. With Ooops, mistakes are gone! Ooops - a series of expensive accidents. Ally Ooops – this guy goes for a slam dunk, and then gets nailed in the back of his head.

Oops, sorry, wrong patient! Ooops! sorry, Aulus! Ooops, sorry, wrong forum. Ooops! Sorry about the extra junk. Ooops – sorry – it wasn’t crack babies after all. Ooops, our bad. Here’s the sorry reality. Ooops! Sorry for the thread. Ooops – sorry I missed it. Ooops ... sorry wrong message, ignore the last one. Ooops! Sorry! I forgot my box cutter was hidden in a hollowed out book in my backpack. Ooops ... sorry for the subject, should be: “Broken pipe, what is it ?” Ooops! Shit! Sorry! We keep killing civilians. Ooops sorry, that last post was to lizzylou lol sorry. Ooops, sorry I find it amazing and disheartening.
This is a survey about the regrets people have in life. Yeah, I regret his legacy too, Karen. It’s kind of funny, but I have the exact opposite regrets. In Rome, along at first, you are full of regrets that Michelangelo died; but by and by, you only regret that you didn’t see him do it. Welcome to No Regrets Online. If you have no regrets, it’s probably because you are still happy. Bush: I regret talking tough before war in Iraq. Six to ten purpose-built mobile computer stations publicly located in and around Cambridge collect anonymously submitted regrets from the public to comprise a sociological database of contemporary regret and remorse. Norwegian skier Ingvild Engesland, 22, deeply regrets posing nude for soft porn magazine Lek, and is surprised by how much attention it generated. Fischer regrets ‘geeks and otaku’ comment.

In Liberian parlance, a sorry heart is a sympathetic heart – and a generous one. In Australia, while debate raged over whether a sorry should go ahead, or whether Aboriginal people stolen from their families had the right to compensation, media decided that giving space to Invasion and Survival commemorations was unnecessary. I guess they forgot what a sorry sack of manure Pres. Carter was for his role in Iran. Perhaps it’s time to appeal to the women of India to save the sari from a sorry fate. It’s a sorry day: business people and politicians have woven a complicated web around the simple apology. Why do I believe that the open source is in a sorry state? It is a sorry sight for Zimbabwe but we pray that freedom will come. Cook opens shoulders while Strauss cuts a sorry figure. Development is only in a sorry state if creative individuals become content with the past and hesitate to move into the future. The end of a sorry era, or that era’s revenge?

I wish you could hit Ctrl+Z to undo anything. We’ve been around and around on this ‘UNDO’ wish various times. A wish can undo a single recent event. If only life came with Undo shortcuts – wear your wish for do-overs. Navigate the tree to locate a node containing changes that you wish to undo. Undo your worries with Windows Disk Protection. I wish I could undo what I’ve done. I wish that I could undo – remember it, undo, – the time we spend. Your portion is unhappily so small that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications. If we could undo the things we’ve done. Wish I were the one. “You cannot undo the wish granted to another. The wish must be for you alone,” declared the ring. Marla felt faint and collapsed into her chair. The undo-stack design is very simple: actions are either reversible (rotate, flip) or irreversible.

I wish I had the super-power to retroactively undo human deaths at will. Louise must figure out how to undo her wish, which has turned her brother into a pig, without provoking another dangerous result. I am not talking about making blunders everyday, but everyday we do or say certain things and instantly wish if we could undo that! Word will undo your mistake as long as the Undo feature is accessible. Those who cannot face the present without the wish to undo past evils are imprisoned without hope. If you wish to retract a move, choose Undo from the Edit menu.
5 Poems
by Brian Edwards

1. A Game of Cards
The sky’s fearsome dark tonight as I slip out the back door,
drop off the verandah and cross the step to the clay path
on past the peppercorn tree to the back gate.
Ah, damn that wonky catch! The chooks are all sleeping now,
nuggled up side-by-side like balls of rough wool
under boobialla trees, wire netting, and in their boxes.

At the cottage gate, vines scraggle the path,
the jacaranda stands by the vegetables. Past the tank,
woodheap, laundry, to the verandah steps
and the low picket fence my father made
(it fell down once), the milk churn and coolgardie safe.

“You’re here then,” she says, Gran sitting
with cards spread before her on the kitchen table.
Pop’s tight in his captain’s chair
reading a western, his holder waggling in his mouth
as he ruminates on things.
He’s away with cowboys. A fire crackles in the grate
and wind growls in the chimney, bangs about the roof.
Listen to the clock ticking and there’s music
on the wireless …

“You want a game, then?” she says, shuffling cards, eager to begin.
“Get the board and matches. Hurry about it.”

It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black …
“Come on,” she says. “Don’t take all day.”

slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind
as moles (though moles see fine tonight in the snouting, velvet dingles …

“What’s that, Gran? That on the wireless?” “Ah, just some rubbish,”
she says, dealing, concentrating on her cards.
Young girls lie bedded soft or glide in their dreams, with rings …
and I see Maureen and Elizabeth,

magazine pictures, and Joan Collins.

The boys are dreaming wicked or of the bucking ranches
of the night and the jollyrodgered sea …

Pop leans and grunts, dealing with Indians and cattle rustlers,
gunmen, the cavalry, and saloon cardsharps.

“Don’t forget your crib,” she says. Her eyes glint in the lamplight.
“Fifteen-two, fifteen-four, three for the run …”
“And one for his hat,” she says, frowning, moving matches.

Remember me, Captain?
You’re Dancing Williams!
I lost my step in Nantucket.
Dancing Pat comes in from a farm. He whirs across the floor in shining pumps, the floor we worked with kero and sawdust. I’m dancing too, smooth as can be, holding on to Maureen -

Do you see me, Captain? the white bone talking?

I’m Tom-Fred the donkeyman.

Rosie Probert, Jonah Jarvis.

Alfred Pomeroy-Jones, Curly Bevan.

Aye, aye, Curly.

And there’s old Tom Turvy out to get his paper, Percy Payne in woollen trunks, Mrs Borella at her corner shop with boiled lollies in big jars on her counter, and Wally Ayres, station master, who likes a drink, gets terrible thirsty, Couttsy, garage man without legs, Siddler Gilmartin, railway worker, barber, handy with shears and scissors …

Any order today, Missus? Butter, bootpolish, biscuits, flour or washing powder, vanilla essence, vinegar?

Her cocked wrist smooth over the table top, she irons on, hot irons on the stove, washing in a basket.

“Your deal. Come on now. Give them a real shuffle this time.”

Waldo! Wal-do! the voice says. Yes, Blodwen, love?

Oh, what'll the neighbours say, what'll the neighbours …

But there are no neighbours tonight. In the black hours the whole town is sleeping. No dogs bark, there’s no sound of axes or steam engines at the railway line. No kids mad in the park, behind the hall, in Mrs Leslie’s orchard.

Will you take this woman Matti Richards, Dulcie Prothero, Effie Bevan, Lil the Gluepot, Mrs Flusher, Blodwen Bowen, to be your awful wedded wife?

Too late. Pop’s asleep in his chair, tired out from chasing rustlers. Gran’s winning, again, her watery light blue eyes shining. And there in the smoke, God watches the cards with his dealer’s eyes.

To begin at the beginning.

It is quiet dark night in the sleeping town where the people are dreaming and tonight they dream of a river, mountains and the sea, they dream of lost loves, grass growing and gleaming fish.

“Ah, never mind, dear, never mind” she said. “You didn’t mean to do it.
2. Sea Changes

When the sea settles and there’s headway to be made,
   I think of Conrad again reading Flaubert aboard
the *Duke of Sutherland* or sitting quietly with Marlow
   and the others in the *Nellie* waiting for change of tide
in the Thames estuary. Or he lingers with Jim aboard
   the *Patna*, weighing dreams of heroism and shame
with only the wise man of butterflies to lament
   the absurdly romantic nature of youth’s encounter
with the ineffable. Up the Congo into the dark heart
   of Africa. Through the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean,
and the Pacific. Sailing the south coast of Australia,
   the east coast. He thinks in Polish, French and English,
   navigating shoals and reefs of time in the dark waters
   of language. How can I possibly make you see? he writes.
How can you begin to understand? Marlow’s questions
   acknowledge obscurities of geography, culture, experience,
identity, language and meaning. He’s such a steady pilot
   of intersections and uncertainty, one who persists
by declaring his confusions and his accountability.
   At heart, there’s solitariness and solitude, something
that defies simple explanation eating away within Satan,
   Faust, Lear, Ahab, Kurtz, these overreachers.
Beyond the common, a touch mad, driven to go on
   even when there’s no going on, they’re firebrands, game
for anything, won’t settle, restless, vain, ambitious.
   “Crack winds, blow your cheeks!” “Don’t talk to me
of blasphemy, man!” “The horror, the horror.”
   Watching, making connections, mindful of systems
and structures, Marlow tells stories. What else, indeed!
   A foghorn sounds somewhere up river, the day’s last light
gleams across the waterway, the accountant stretches
   and grumbles … and looking up, Conrad caps his pen.
3. An Overpopulated Garden

*The Draughtsman’s Contract* (Peter Greenaway, 1982)

The year is 1694, on the eve of Mr Herbert’s departure for Southampton. The formal elegance of the supper party at Compton Anstey is so at odds with all of the intrigues developing around the table. These Greenaway scenes are painterly compositions by Canaletto or de la Tour, with the dramatic light and darkness of a Caravaggio, as the Herberts and their guests mingle in candlelight. The exchanges are stylized provocations filled with riddling banter, wit and sly anecdotes. Such ripples of energy and anticipation. For here the conversation piece is a spider’s web. The draughtsman is Mr Neville, a young man contracted to produce twelve drawings of the charming country house in a tribute to art, landscape and property that is also, from a later perspective, a satire of nouveau-riche pretensions. How can the artist refuse? Besides, Mrs Herbert even agrees to a daily sexual liaison for the period of the commission. And what part is her daughter Mrs Talmann playing in these arrangements? The time is ripe for crime, and let it be murder – the murder of Mr Herbert, the crime from which so many of the players stand to benefit. When Mr Neville asks Mrs Herbert her opinion of a small painting, his rhetorical questions and her silence extend the allegory, with so many questions remaining about plot, power and control: “Shall we peruse together? Do you see, Madam, a narrative in these apparently unrelated episodes? There is drama, is there not, in this overpopulated garden? What intrigue is here? Do you think the characters have something to tell us? Would you know, Madam, if your daughter had any particular interest in this painting? Madam, could you put a season to it? Madam, do you have an opinion? What infidelities are portrayed here? Do you think that murder is being prepared?” But this draughtsman’s game, which may acknowledge the intrigue of Mr Herbert’s murder, is, in ways we appreciate before he does, framed within the larger game that is apparently of Mrs Herbert’s invention. He is her dupe, and they are Greenaway’s. It is Mrs Talmann who then engages him in another bout of interpretation, this time of the odd items (a man’s cloak, jacket, boots, and a ladder) appearing at sites he has chosen for his drawings. Clues and the tricks of interpretation. As an objective realist and recorder, Mr Neville has included the objects in his drawings. Has he inadvertently copied clues to a murder? Is he in danger? But character, events and words are not transparent; history is not as clear as it is sometimes thought to be. Like Antonioni’s photographer in *Blow Up*, Greenaway’s draughtsman is both innocent and implicated. Not one murder but two, for Mr Neville is a victim too. Here are stylish events and mysteries without answers – Peter Greenaway is engaged in modish cultural poetics in a world of art, intrigue, eroticism, murder, the challenges of investigation and the pitfalls of interpretation.
4. Divided Testament

_The Belly of the Architect_ (Peter Greenaway, 1984)

Set the imperfect human body against the perfect marvels of stone. As time ravages one it increases wonder of the other. But the interplay is also more complicated between life and art, this symbiosis. When American architect Stourley Kracklite eats, belches and vomits against the background of Roman architecture and statuary, his human mortality emphasizes not only the immortality of art but also the passions of its making. He is in Rome to oversee an exhibition to celebrate the work of an obscure eighteenth-century French architect, Etienne-Louis Boullée and he faces the backstabbings of corrupt colleagues, his wife’s waning interest and the problem of his belly. “He’s obsessed with his stomach,” they say. He eats and suffers; he compares his belly with photographic reproductions of the belly of Augustus caught in marble; he measures out the length of the intestine. Livia, he says, tried to kill her husband Augustus with poisoned figs. Kracklite is suspicious. “Dear Etienne-Louis Boullée,” he writes in his diary, “The pains are returning. I can’t eat anything ... Did the pharaohs suffer from stomach cramps?” His wife Louisa complains that Boullée and his stomach aches are more important to him than she is. Increasingly, she responds to Caspasian’s flirtations, Caspasian the fashionable young Italian who mocks her husband, the one who will take over not only his ailing American wife but also his exhibition. Such drama of deterioration set against images of the Colosseum, St Peters, the Pantheon, Roman fountains and immemorial marble and all with Greenaway’s pedantic attention to framing, to shadows and shafts of light. The images are as rich as seventeenth-century paintings. Caspasian’s sister Flavia is commanding. She is a seductress with a camera and there are walls of enlarged photographs of Kracklite’s naked body, of him throwing up, of Louisa and Caspasian together ... taunting black and white takes, records, one more ordering system in the interplay between order and chaos, between the symbolism of Kracklite’s grand project and the reality of his stomach cancer. When the screen is littered with scaffolding, drop cloths, plaster, dust and crumbling hallways, these analogues to time and art, it is the process itself on display. Dennehy’s Kracklite is a flawed figure of nostalgia, obsession, passion and deterioration, dead on Boullée’s birthday as his wife is about to give birth. Old time the ravager, in its moments, gathering victims. Another splendid Greenaway acknowledgement of human vulnerability and achievement. He loves art.
5. Food, Sex and Death

*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and her Lover* (Peter Greenaway, 1989)

How familiar the places are, a car park, a kitchen, a restaurant and a lavatory, the sites of food’s entrance, preparation, eating and defecation, the waste cycle itself and, in Peter Greenaway’s *mélange*, crossed so ingeniously by sex. Fundamental to life - eating and sex, two of the world’s great play areas. This car park is lit with the surreal colours of blue smoke, green and red lights, and yellow clouds of steam, and with a sound track that combines the snarling and yelping of a pack of dogs feeding on raw meat with the grandeur of heavy strings. The gang torment a naked victim, a Blake man on all fours debased and brutalised. We move through walls with the party, in through the kitchen with its feverish industry of food preparation, all of that sharpening, chopping, plucking, scrubbing, whisking and stirring, on into the crimson and silver world of the restaurant dining room. This is the Thief, Mr Spica, his wife Georgina and his gang, dressed to an elegance their behaviour belies. What a disjunction there is between the ruffled bourgeois males in Franz Hals’ painting on the wall and the scene of progressive degeneration over which they preside. “No smoking in the kitchen,” he says to his wife, “I’ve smelt the loo after you’ve been piddling in there,” “Raise your skirts and warm my seat,” “The naughty bits and the good bits are so close together” ... Master Speaker Spica, Michael Gambon coarse, scatological, vulgarly comic and irresistibly entertaining as grand master of manners. Little wonder Georgina retreats to the lavatory, to the stark white, silent and antiseptic place of excretion that will double as a meeting place for lovers - it, too, “goes to show how eating and sex are related.” The French Cook presents cuisine as a mark of civilization, and Spica’s diners create a carnival of disgust. As for the Wife and Her Lover, the bookish fellow in brown, although they find comparative safety as displaced Adam and Eve amidst the kitchen’s food and greenery, the gargantuan talker become revenger will find them out. The endings are culinary, fundamental and gruesome. Greenaway is so good on sets - each like a fine painting, from the minutely detailed eighteenth-century still life of the kitchen and decorous nineteenth-century realism of the dining room to the hard-edged twentieth-century surrealism of the lavatory. It is a suggestive progression, one more reminder that the markers of order, civilization and progress are just a Spica’s touch away from the disruptive figure of elemental chaos itself.
An Irish Story
by Rosemary Sullivan

I’ve been thinking a lot these days about memories that travel in the blood. I’m third generation Irish on my father’s side and my mother’s ancestors were driven from Ireland by the Potato Famine in 1847. You’d think that would be long enough to dilute the memory, but the inheritance persists. I have a letter sent to my father’s sister, Cecile, by her County Wexford cousin, Brian Kelley. The letter is dated Feb. 28, 1949. It’s yellowed now, scarred with decades of scotch-tape holding it together:

County Wexford
Feb. 28, 1949

Dear Cousin,

Your welcome letter received and me and your Aunt Bridget thank you for the money you sent. We had seven masses said for your grandfather and grandmother, God rest their souls.

You have gone high places in America, God bless you. I hope you won’t be putting on airs and forgetting your native land.

Your cousin, Hughie O’Toole, was hung in Londonderry last week for killing a policeman, may God rest his soul. And may God’s curse be on Jimmy Rogers, the informer, and may he burn in hell. God forgive me.

Times are not so bad as they might be. The herring is back and nearly everyone who has a heart is making ends meet and the price of fish is good, thanks be to God.

We had a grand time at Pat Muldoon’s wake. He was an old blatherskite and it looked good to see him stretched out with his big mouth shut. He is better off dead and he’ll burn ‘til the damned place freezes over. He had too many friends among the Orangemen. God’s curse be on the dirty lot of them.

Bless your heart, I almost forgot to tell you about your Uncle Dinny. He took a pot shot at a turncoat, from in the back of a hedge, but he had too much drink in him and missed. God’s curse be on the dirty drink.

I hope this letter finds you in good health and may God keep reminding you to send the money. The Brennans are 100 per cent strong around here since they stopped going to America. They had kids running all over the country.

Father O’Flaherty, who baptized you, is now feebleminded and sends you his blessings.

Mollie O’Brien, the brat you used to go to school with, has married an Englishman. She’ll have no luck. May God take care of you and the lot of you and keep you from sudden death.

Your devoted cousin,

Brian Kelly

P.S. Things look bright again. Every police barracks and every Protestant Church has been burned to the ground in County Wexford, thanks be to God.

I did have a relative named Brian Kelly, and he lived in County Wexford, so I was almost taken in by this letter. But Brian Kelly wasn’t its author. The letter was a joke making the rounds among the Irish in the late 1940s, and Brian Kelly sent it to my aunt under his own name for her amusement. But there it is, my Irish inheritance: a brutal political history, rampaging mockery, black humor, emotional extravagance, pigheadedness, and family loyalty. All the things that made me up. The question haunts me: what does it mean to be Irish?
In July 1970 I made my first trip back to Ireland. I was twenty-two and traveling with my then-husband, who was a Protestant of British heritage. Brian Kelly would not have approved. The Troubles, as the Irish called them, had broken out the previous year. With a voyeuristic curiosity we headed first for Belfast.

Throughout the inner city, the British army had built improvised sandbag forts and armed soldiers leaned over their ledges, rifles at the ready. It was my first experience of a war zone and I have to confess I was excited. We walked the whole city. I can still recover how, as we descended the steep Shankhill Road in the Catholic district, the rumor of our presence whispered down the street. A group of menacing young men poured out of the pub at the bottom to confront us, but a bus pulled up just in time. We headed to St. Anne’s Cathedral to hear the preaching of the Reverend Ian Paisley, the most virulent spokesman for the Ulster Protestant Loyalists. A square ugly man with a wrathful puffed-up face and a voice like nails rattling in a jar, he began his speech from the pulpit with a quote from the bible: “Christ Came to Bring Fire and the Sword.” And fire and brimstone against the dirty Catholics was what followed. The church was packed and restless, the congregation shouting back their exhortations. We were sitting in our pew making notes when we noticed people pointing at us. Taking us for journalists, two ushers in blue sashes came up from behind and told us to leave. Foreign reporters were not welcome in this church. In a nearby pub, pretending we were both Protestants, we got into conversation with an Ulsterman and his son about the Troubles. I suggested that maybe if they mixed Catholic and Protestant schools, the children would learn tolerance. The old man turned on me and said: “You’ve lost the faith.”

We headed past Londonderry, where there had just been a bombing, and over the border to Screene, a small village in Donegal, the northernmost point of Southern Ireland, to meet my relatives Aunt Brid and Uncle John. That first night we sat over a peat fire in the small farm kitchen drinking Irish Whisky while locals arrived to greet the relations returned from America. They’d trekked miles over the peat bogs carrying gifts of white heather and shamrocks for luck. The next day Uncle John proudly showed me the rubbled remains of the thatched roofed cottage where my grandmother was born and lived before she emigrated to America. John gave us a shillelagh and promised us a piece of land if we would come back to live in Ireland. We climbed the local mountains overlooking Glenveagh National Park to see the Atlantic Ocean, on our way up stopping to say hello to my uncle and his son who worked the roads. With their pick axes and shovels beside them they were sitting at the point where the pavement turned into dirt, brewing a kettle of tea over a small fire. When we returned in the evening, they were still sitting there. It was a scene out of Samuel Beckett.

We visited Sligo to see the grave of William Butler Yeats and his Lake Isle of Innisfree. I didn’t know then that I should have been looking for other graves. My great-great-grandmother Mary Morrison on my mother’s side had buried two children in the same cemetery before being driven out of Ireland by despair and hunger in 1847.

On the streets of Dublin, I disappeared. My face was just like everybody else’s -- wide and round, with green Irish eyes. Our Dublin was James Joyce’s Dublin. Well before there were guided tours, we crisscrossed the city, tracing Leopold Bloom’s wandering route. We drank a Guinness at Mulligan’s Pub, where some of the seats at the bar were boxed in so that they looked like confessionals. An errant husband on an alco-holiday could hide inside and when the wife showed up, the barman would say: “Sorry. Missis. Not seen the Mister all day.”

We visited Trinity College, Alma Mater to Jonathan Swift, William Congreve, Oliver Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde, and Samuel Beckett, looking to view the Book of Kells. Being a Catholic, Joyce couldn’t attend the college without a virtually impossible-to-obtain permission from his bishop. He took his revenge in Ulysses by calling the college a place of “tinned minds.” And of course we went to Joyce’s Martello Tower in Sandycove -- so uncanny to mount the stairs of that old war lookout built in the 19th century to protect the Empire, thinking of Joyce up there writing about his city with such nimble malice and love.
Was I brought up Irish? As Irish as a whistling jig. We were five kids named Patricia, Rosemary, Sharon, Terry (the only boy) and Colleen. With the moniker Sullivan, you don’t get more Irish. Until I was ten and we extended the house, we lived in one of those prefab two-bedroom houses given to demobilized soldiers after the war.

Our street was called Bras D’Or in the town of Valois on the West Island of Montreal. We went to Catholic school, and were taught by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. I took my revenge later by writing a humorous poem:

*Sisters of the Holy Name*
We were their daughters
those faithful nuns,
married to Christ,
the gold band they’d lain down for
gleaming on firm fingers
as we filed past in pencil rows
each morning.

Those were the days God woke me,
a dependable alarm, and I watched him
rise from clouds on the church wall,
the incense sharp in our nostrils
high on the Latin Litany.

How many persons are there in God?
the priest asked as the nuns fussed
in their starched habits
calling him father.
We could smell the wine on his breath
that rasped behind the grill
we dragged our sins to each week.

Clean like fresh laundry,
I wanted to die
and go to heaven directly.
Already afraid to touch that place
between my legs where the devil lived,
a mole in a wet nest.
When I looked with a mirror
I could almost see his red face.

But actually I have a fondness for those nuns—they were so ambitious for their charges. They taught us Latin and rhetoric, and sent us off to win high school speech contests and debates at McGill University. They instilled in me a lust for learning and a metaphysical longing. Even if, as I got older, I had to throw off their dark repression. My particular *bête noir* was Sister Mary of Perpetual Help who used to hall me up in front of the classroom and expose me to excruciating humiliations because I had the devil’s own pride in me. Her chastisements had an unintended effect. I learned from her never to back down. Sister Mary later had a nervous breakdown. Of course I felt sorry for her, but I have to say I also felt a secret, vengeful satisfaction worthy of Brian Kelly.
We collected playing cards illuminating the lives of the Saints and followed all the ceremonies: we took First Communion in white veils; walked in the procession on Palm Sunday with green palm branches and candles; wore ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday; gave up candy for Lent; rehearsed the stations of the cross during the agonies of Easter week. We marched in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in downtown Montreal. My older sister once rode on the lead float as an Irish princess. My mother, as honest as the day is long, had had to resort to risky measures. We were too poor to buy my sister a gauzy gown. So we went to Eaton’s Department Store on the Saturday morning to buy one, and promptly returned it on Monday. We told ourselves it was free advertisement for Eaton’s.

My Dad was born in 1914 on Duluth Avenue, intersected by St. Urbain St., the working class slum in the heart of Montreal that Mordecai Richler mythologized in Duddy Kravitz. Dad would occasionally reminisce about the rag pickers of St. Urbain, the sound of their horse drawn wagons clomping down the street. The kids would roll balls for their street hockey games from the dung the horses left behind. No one could afford pucks. For pin money, Dad would light candles for the Jewish families on Sabbath Saturdays.

Grandfather Sullivan had emigrated from Ireland at the turn of the century and worked as a porter on the CPR railway. There was talk of him having had to leave Ireland quickly because he was a Fenian. It was a complex household, that family in the long narrow apartment on Duluth. Two children from a first marriage whose mother had died and then four more children from the second marriage: my father and his three younger siblings, Aunt Cecil, Uncle Henry, and Uncle Johnny. I know little of them then, except for the poverty and the constant illness of my grandmother. Dad once told me that when he got home from school, he put on his apron and, with his sister, cooked the supper and cleaned up the house. He made it sound like a secret game between them.

Grandfather Sullivan (c. 1895)

The life I know begins when they moved to Saint Antoine Street, on the edge of what was then called Griffintown, a working-class neighborhood slum chock-a-block with Irish immigrants. The name came from Mary Griffin, wife of a soap-factory owner, who swindled the real owner, Thomas McCord, out of his lease to the area in 1804, and by the time he got it back ten years later, her name had stuck. At the height of the Potato Famine in the 1840s, 30,000 Irish immigrants arrived in Montreal’s Griffintown each year. They labored on the docks, in the brickworks and soap factories, breweries and flour mills. They dug the Lachine Canal and built the Victoria Bridge. On Bridge Street you can still see the Black Rock, an enormous piece of granite weighing 30 tons, dug up in 1859 by workers building the Victoria Bridge and set there as a monument to the thousands of Irish Immigrants who died of typhus in the crossings.

The tenement houses on St. Antoine Street all had wrought iron railings outlining the staircases that mounted to the second floor. I only ever knew the Sullivan’s apartment from a child’s perspective, which made it a magic and mysterious place.
It was a long dark apartment, with rooms lined up in rows: the living room is the only place I remember seeing my grandmother—a huge woman who seemed to overflow the chair in which she sat immobilized, surrounded by strange odors of decay. The crocheted runners on the heavy furniture exuded dust. The family said their mother had “a tongue that could clip a hedge”; she had “words that could cut the teeth out of a saw.” I approached her warily, like a skittish cat.

My grandfather always sat in the dining room in a wing-backed rocker underneath a cardboard picture of St. Teresa, the Little Flower of Jesus. He was a small man perpetually dressed in a black suit and waistcoat, with a watch chain riding from his lapel to his pocket. Relaxed in his rocker, he would take off his jacket and smoke his pipe. The elastic armbands that secured his rolled-up shirtsleeves fascinated me. There was always a smell of smoke about him from the ashes that coursed down his waistcoat. Here I hear no sounds, no voices, only the chiming of the wood framed clock that tolled the minutes and hours on the dining room wall.

It was in the kitchen and on the back balcony that the house came to life. My bachelor uncles, back from the lumber camps where they worked winters, would sit in their white undershirts on the balcony and drink their beers. They could talk like a river that never runs dry. The balcony ended in a shoot used to send the garbage down to the ground. They loved that I was terrified of falling into that hole.

My uncles were teasers, feeding me and my older sister buttermilk for the pleasure of seeing our shocked faces when what we thought was milk was so sour we spit it out. But I remember the comfort of an uncle’s hand, maybe Jim or Harry, as he led us to the corner store for delicious ice cream cones. First my grandmother and then my grandfather died before we knew them—was there no funeral?—and then the apartment was sold, so quickly that there was no time to remove the furniture or even the mementoes of photographs on the walls. All gone.

When I speak of my father I have only brief memories to help me. His story is like a fragile net threaded with holes. Why is it we wait to chronicle the stories until after they’ve been lost, so that each generation knows only rumors?

Like many of the Irish, my father was a man of fertile imagination, a romantic, a sentimentalist. He was full of anger and devotion and there was no middle ground. When I was in my thirties, Dad and I drove back to the old apartment on St. Antoine Street just to see what was left. His block was still standing, the apartments now gentrified, but St. Anthony’s parish church was gone, demolished to make way for an overpass. He had loved that old church with its frescoes of clouds and angels and plaster saints on wooden capitals. The parish priest, Father O’Brien, was a holy terror and all the kids were scared of him. When their sins were big, Dad and his buddies went round the corner to the French church where the priest didn’t speak any English.

We walked around behind the row houses to the field where the kids used to play ball. Dad would have been ten the day someone’s ball hit and broke an apartment window, and the police were called. His friends got away but the cops caught him scaling the fence and hauled him off in the paddy wagon. He was put in a cell with the hookers and pimps and spent a lonely terrified night cowering in a corner watching men beating up on women. His father didn’t show up to collect him till the next day—the boy had to learn his lesson. As Dad told me this story, his shock was still palpable. “A child in a cell! That wouldn’t happen now,” he said. I have a picture of him from that day. He is leaning against the high fence and has raised his hat to cover the F of the FUCK you someone has scrawled on the wood. He is grinning sheepishly, but he looks as if he felt someone had been trashing his past.

My father imagined himself an intrepid journalist, but that dream ended when he left school at age thirteen to go to work as a mail boy at the Northern Electric on Shearer Street, the largest employer in Point St. Charles. In a poor Irish family, everyone went out to work as soon as they could. When the Great
Depression hit Montreal in 1930 everyone went on relief, trying to subsist on a dole of $1.20 a week per person. From that time, my father’s strongest memory was when he almost died.

He was fourteen and had been on his regular mail route riding along the edge of the Lachine Canal in Point St. Charles, carrying two heavy mailbags. His pant leg accidentally caught in the spokes and over he went. As the water sucked him down, he saw flashes of his mother’s face, his father, his brothers, and then suddenly a hook caught on his trousers and was pulling him up. A longshoreman had seen him go under and had dragged the canal with his grappling hook and caught him. The man then fished out the bike but told Dad he was keeping it for his trouble. The precious bike Dad had labored so hard to buy. He accepted his loss. He didn’t complain to anyone; there was no one to complain to. Long-sufferance was bred in his bones.

Dad always wanted to be a hero. When he was in his late teens it was reported that a rapist was loose in Griffintown and assaulting young women. Dad came up with a plan. He asked his sister to walk down a dark alley late one night. He would be waiting in the shadows at the end of the alley to catch the rapist. Cecile loved her brother enough that, out of her mind with fear, she walked that alley at midnight. But, to my Dad’s disappointment, no one appeared. I’m not sure his sister ever quite forgave him.

But everyone loved Dad. He taught himself to be a superb dancer, a regular Fred Astaire. He told me about slipping off to Small’s nightclub to hear a young Oscar Peterson. Weekends he might find someone with a car and drive to the Edgewater Hotel on the Lakeshore and dance all night to Benny Goodman’s swing with songs like “One O’clock Stomp” and “Don’t Be That Way.”

In downtown Montreal there was turf warfare between the Irish and the Blacks and you had to know how to defend yourself. Evenings, he trained as a boxer at the Fletcher’s Fields gym off Pine Avenue. In 1935, age twenty-one, he won the Quebec Provincial Junior Championship, light heavyweight division. They called him Big Mike. Dad might have had a career in boxing. But in one bout he knocked out his opponent so soundly it took the guy long minutes to come round. Dad thought he had killed him. He never boxed again.

Dad joined the Air Force in 1939, hoping to become a pilot. His best friend Ernie Coughlin was commissioned, but it turned out Dad was colorblind and failed the test. He joined the military police. He spent his war in Canada, bringing back guys who went AWOL, not a job he liked. Though he could dance, Dad couldn’t hold a tune, but he had a favorite song he would sing: “Of all the things in this lonely old world, we are the loneliest three/ The cop on the beat, the man in the moon, and me.”

The war brought Dad love and a life story. Turned out to the nines in his Royal Air Force uniform, he showed up one night at a canteen dance. That’s when he saw her. With her long black hair, porcelain skin, and shy black eyes, she looked like a tinier version of his favorite film star, Loretta Young.

Dad claimed it was love at first sight. When he asked her to dance, she said her dance card was full. He could be number thirteen. Dad was due back at the barracks and so he asked for her phone number. She replied coyly that she was not in the habit of giving her number to strange men. “But I’m a man in uniform. You can trust me,” he countered. And, rather amazingly, she wrote down her number. He stuffed it in his pocket. When he looked the next day, the little slip of paper had fallen through the lining of his coat and was gone.
Three years later, he met her again on a blind date and that was that. When I questioned Mom years later, she admitted she’d been the other man’s date, but they dropped the people they’d come with and slipped away. Like in the movies. He was thirty, she was twenty-four. They were married on November 4th, 1944.

The sentimental romance of the time is caught exactly in the decorous report I found in the Montreal Gazette:

The bride wore a floor length gown of powder blue lace, torso style with full skirt, falling into a train, a sweetheart neckline, with which she wore powder blue jersey silk gloves and a small gold cross at her neck, the gift of the groom. Her veil of powder blue tulle was held in place with orange blossoms. She carried a bouquet of fisher carnations and rapture roses.

The wedding dress was a loaner from a friend. They spent their honeymoon at the Domain d’Aronde in the Laurentians. Mom remembered it as a beautiful place, though a bit sad. People still talked about how the government had confiscated the hotel from its German owners at the outbreak of the war.

The first baby came a year later. Dad was still in the Air Force. Mom tried living with her mother-in-law, but when the old woman complained: “You stole my Mikey,” she left in a huff for her mother’s farm. She’d discovered she’d married a man whose temperament didn’t match her own. Her mother’s advice was firm: “Go back. You made your bed; you have to lie in it.”

My father was like a funnel cloud, all his extraordinary passion funneled down into a narrow box that could barely contain it. He was a big man, 6’1 and weighing 200 pounds. But he was as thin-skinned as an over-ripe tomato. Anything could humiliate him. He would change a baby’s diaper or wash the dishes at the drop of a hat, but let a neighbor catch him in his apron and his pride was crushed. He didn’t like power and he didn’t like people putting on airs. But authority was always to be respected: if a bank teller overpaid him, he gave the money back. And he believed in sin and temptation. The priest said that the thing one did with a woman was sin unless it led to conception. Repression, duty, self-control. How impossible it was to be Irish. All that effusiveness and passion tamped down and raging between the boundaries of heaven and hell.

My Mom got the brunt of it. Tiny, half his size, she was shy and timid. She was born just outside Smiths Falls, Ontario, on a farm so barren that the rocks stuck out of the earth like knee bones through flesh. The second to last of eleven children, she was always told what to do and she resented it fiercely. She finished high school by boarding in town, and left the farm as soon as she could. She had enough of the Scottish cross-bred into her bones that she loved order and simplicity, animals, flowers and solitude. As my parents negotiated the power territory that is marriage, there were rages. In the air force Dad had picked up the drinking habit. Apparently, he’d abstained from drink until his late twenties, but now he liked to go out with the boys. My mother once told me of a particularly painful memory. One night, early in their marriage, Dad was on his way out when Mom asked him to stay with her. “I can’t help it if you haven’t any friends,” he said cruelly. He had crossed the line. When he left, she took all his clothes and threw them down the stairs of their tenement apartment and went to Windsor Train Station to sit alone among her anonymous friends.

As the Irish say: “If a family doesn’t have a skeleton in its closet, it’s because it’s buried in the back yard.” Dad’s drinking was our skeleton. I think Dad drank to keep the lid on. He never drank so much that he lost his job. He worked for the Northern Electric Company for fifty years and rarely missed a day. He drank only beer. But he made us miserable because the drink immobilized him and drew him away from us. He was often just a silent presence at the kitchen table drinking alone. Or he’d be at the Green Hornet Tavern
with his drinking pals, though he rarely brought anybody home. He was present when we needed him—for swimming meets, for teachers’ reports. But not emotionally there. He’d give up the drink for the month of Lent, and we couldn’t understand why he couldn’t do it all year round. It was denial of course. He didn’t really drink. That was a story Mom made up to turn us kids against him. When Mom threw his beer bottles out in the snow or hit him with a broom, he just sat there passively taking it. I look back now and think, with a kind of perverse admiration: the man was a boxer and yet he never lifted a finger against any of us.

Dad had that destructive Irish pride that shuts the world out. He hurt himself and he hurt us. But I never doubted the love. One New Year’s Eve, dancing with him at the church basement dance, outrageously I asked: “Were you ever tempted by another woman?” He smiled ruefully: “There was one woman once, but I didn’t do anything about it. I had too much to lose.” He loved my mother to the end, though it took him a long time to figure out how to live with her.

This is a bit from a poem I wrote a while back, trying to capture the claustrophobia of growing up in that four-room house on Bras D’Or Street:

.... There were always too many lives in other rooms—
the anxious man tied to a job for fifty years
till the company paid him off
with a piece of the building mounted
on a bronze plaque. He needed to drink
to see the joke. And the timid woman
who filled the house with her bright red heart
asking for nothing
except a life.

When they fought she would cower
in the shrinking corner with her three sisters,
each one planning escape into the arms of someone
they would also have to abandon.
Love is like that. It’s the need
you run from and return to
always circling back to where you started
like somebody lost....

Finally, when he was in his mid-fifties, Dad upped and quit drinking. Just like that. Things got better. The Northern Electric went on strike and wages went up. Soon there were no more humiliating tabs at the grocer’s. My mother got a job when my youngest sister was ten and recovered some of her independence. Once I asked Mom how she got through it all. She laughed and said: “Imagine me, my size, beating your father with a broom. But why remember those things. There were other good things about him.” And I think: yes, we all live in two minds. The love and the pain coexist, and neither cancels the other out. Our family was Irish, and maybe even the skeletons in our closets were Irish, but we were like all families, negotiating the difficult terrain of longing and need, of loyalty and betrayal, behind closed doors.

The Irish have a three-part saying: “Children begin by loving their father.” I did love him. I remember a childhood ritual. After dinner, exhausted from the long commute into town to work at Shearer Street, Dad would sit reading the newspaper. I would sneak up behind him and comb his thinning hair. It pleased him. I can still remember the smell of his hair oil on my fingers.

“After a time they judge him.” My father wanted me to go out to work to help support the family, but I insisted I was going to university. He even called in Mr. Paton, the principal of the boy’s high school, to
convince me that university would be wasted on a girl. My older sister remembers the rage loose in the house as my father and I fought, although I have completely blotted it from my memory. I left home when I was nineteen and didn’t return, at least emotionally, for seven years.

“Rarely, if ever do they forgive him.” But I did forgive my father. In a conversation I had dreaded -- perhaps all failure seems shameful when you are young or perhaps I was afraid of his disappointment -- I told my father I was divorcing my husband. As though he had been waiting for just these words, he said calmly: “Rosemary, I don’t believe in divorce, but whatever you do is OK with me.” In my mind now it is the loving man I remember. All the years I returned to Montreal to visit, he was the last one awake at night to close down the house and the first one up in the morning. I can hear his footsteps lumbering down the stairs, the sound of air blowing in and out of his mouth with a faint whistle. That sound was the sound of contentment as he carried in my wake-up tea on a tray. He was an optimist with a disposition to look on what he called the favorable side of happenings. For him, life was an act of faith.

On a bleak winter morning, December 12th 1996, I received a phone call from my mother. Her voice on the other end of the line was panicked. She said my father had been sick for days and that morning had fallen out of bed. He had been unable to pick himself up, and she had been unable to lift him. She called an ambulance. As the attendants hoisted him onto the gurney, my father repeatedly apologized for his size. He felt humiliated to be so helpless. Mom said he’d worried all week about how they would cope with his body were he to die. I took the next train to Montreal.

The Point Claire hospital seemed a cruel place—the staff was on a work-to-rule and the nurses were preoccupied and impatient. We talked constantly by phone with my sisters and brother about Dad’s condition, but it never occurred to us to insist they come. I remember only a few things from that week. When I told my father that he was a fighter, “an old champ,” and would get through this, he bantered: “Still a young champ.” Once, in his drug-induced sleep, I heard him call out that the baby in the crib was crying and needed to be soothed. Was he dreaming of his children or, perhaps, of his
own childhood self? And I remember the gesture of his hands—long and thinly boned, with brittle nails, combing the sheet compulsively as I tried to soothe him. But by December 19th, he seemed to be getting better.

That morning, I asked the doctor whether it was safe for me to go home to Toronto. Just for three days -- there were things to do. It was almost Christmas. I wanted to finish painting my basement wall. Such an absurd idea. I was thinking of the spring -- how could I ever convince my stubborn father that Mom could no longer care for him. He would have to submit to the indignity of living with strangers.

I boarded the afternoon express for Toronto. As I was sitting chatting inanely to the stranger beside me, the conductor announced my name. I stumbled along the corridor toward him, knowing what this meant. He was solicitous. I said: “Just tell me.” “Your father has died,” he said. “Your mother said you were on the train.”

He told me they would stop the train at the next station so I could get off. Then he led me to the bar car and asked me if I wanted a drink. I said “Irish Whisky.” There was only one other passenger in a far corner of the car. I looked at him hostilely. I sat down with my drink. I could see my face reflected in the window, and it broke, it shattered into silent screams with an anguish that welled up from deep in the blood. I hadn’t been there for him. I had run away.

The train stopped. I got out and crossed the tracks. And the return express to Montreal picked me up. People held their distance, as if to accord me the dignity of my grief. I kept saying in my head: “Look Dad, you stopped the Express Train!” I knew he would have loved that.

At the funeral, the priest refused to allow my brother to say goodbye from the pulpit. Terry delivered his oration as we all cowered in the winter blizzard beside the open grave. He was eloquent. He said Dad had lived through two World Wars and the Depression and into the computer age and had seen all his beliefs tumble. It must have been confusing for him, all those changes, yet his core values of the importance of family remained rock solid. Terry said he had triumphs and sorrows, but we kids were his life, his purpose, his reason for living. We were lucky to have him as long as we did. Terry, who had once been so mad at my father that he decked him to the kitchen floor. You could say we were being sentimentally Irish, coating the hard bits with Irish blarney. You could also say this was the right metaphor for my dad: warm words in a winter blizzard. You could say this is family: The love we run from and return to, always circling back like somebody lost.

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Fleck it, or feck-it

former dairy plays fort

a fleck of the feelick, a dice of the trice. Whyn’t you treble, whyn’t you play nice?

Don’t stop for the soy-train, the gravy keeps comin’

why-n-dot: street names for tunes.

I’ve explained and explained, but dying won’t hunger

just like gifting for beginners.

Trade union station offers mini-donuts and Rah-rah-Rasputin raspberries

who know what text’s next

the hunted more than the Huns

won’t sneeze for the pope?

Pass the mike, pass the class, pass the tenth of the twelve

matching shoelaces
stringing an instrument apart

why-n-ot?

Nicole Markotic’s latest book is: Scrapbook of my Years as a Zealot (Arsenal Pulp Press)
FULCRA FICTIONS  (an excerpt)  
by Richard Kostelanetz, 

ADDICTION.  AWAKEN.  
ADDRESSES.  BAFLED.  
ADHERENTS.  BAGEL.  
AGENT.  BALLADS.  
ALAY.  BALLAST.  
ALLIED.  BALLOONS.  
ALLOWED.  BALLOTS.  
AMEN.  BANALITY.  
AMOUNTING.  BANDIED.  
ANCHORAGE.  BARKS.  
ANSWERED.  BATHINGS.  
APPEARED.  BEACH.  
APPROACHES.  BEAGLE.  
ARCHIVES.  BEARINGS.  
AREARS.  BEAST.  
ARMORED.  BEATEN.  
ARMY.  BENDS.  
ASSAILS.  BEGIN.  
ASSAYS.  BEGINNINGS.  
ASSSENT.  BEGRUDGES.  
AUTOPSY.  BEGUN.  
AVERAGE.  BESTOW.  

28
BETRAY.
BIGOT.
BILLIONS.
BILLOW.
BITCHES.
BLANK.
BLESSINGS.
BLOWER.
BOAR.
BOON.
BOOR.
BOOZES.
BOtherS.
BOUGHT.
BOWLS.
BRANDIES.
BRAINS.
BRIEfed.
BROKERAGE.
BUDGET.
BULLETs.
BUTTERED.
BUTTONs.
BYE.
CALLOuses.

CALLow.
CAMERAS.
CALN.
CANY.
CANTileVER.
CARE.
CAROUSE.
CAVEATS.
CHARMS.
CHARIOTS.
CHOPS.
CLEARLY.
CLOSEts.
CLOTH.
CLOThesPIN.
COAXIAL.
COCKeyed.
COLORATION.
COGENT.
COMEDIAN.
COMET.
COln.
CONFIDENT.
COPIES.
COPOUTS.
EFFETS SECONDAIRES
par Jean-Claude Gagnon

« Son psychiatre est un escargot
et sa maison est remplie de produits chimiques de toutes sortes »

EFFETS SECONDAIRES

Détruire les textures et par la même occasion pourquoi ne pas s’attaquer aux structures des causes de ces épiphénomènes en bloquant les issues qui permettent de comprendre les mécanismes des rêves

De la Magie
magie intérieure autre que cœur à cœur autre que cors à cors

Cheminer

sur des parchemins d’ebène de la folie virtuelle et urbaine
s’envoler sur des tapis en Turquie
sur des univers imperméables parallèles

Habiter ces lieux

conserver haineuses
attitudes
Marge +-marginale
À l’intérieur des lignes brisées

**EFFETS secondaires**
*De la mauvaise perception*
Secouées par tant d’ardeur des lettres se heurtant à la page dans un tintamarre ahurissant

Dépôt de cultures de la bactérie du mot

Cause de la torpeur : **EFFETS SECONDAIRES**

Émoussant les déroutes amoureuses
Devant le geste par anormal des arbres qui défèquent
nous assistons alors à l’accouplement du réel et du fictif

Déguiser les paumes de la main en thérapie électorale

**éclosions**
**des larves**
**chromatiques**

**du langage**

Réalité

A

bstraction accouplement
réel/fictif

DUALITÉ
I
I want to realise abstract figure
Words disappearing in nonsense
Jean-Claude Gagnon

l’abominable homme des letters
le Yéti de la poésie

Janvier 2009

ARRIMER
L’ESPACE
DEFENDRE
L’ESPÈCE
JUSQU’AU BOUT
Mystère dans la neige
par Jean-Pierre Ostende

En fin d’après-midi, dans le « mystery » train du retour, retraversant un pays (« terre d’accueil ») encore couvert de neige célibataire, sans chasseur ni cerf blessé ou sauveur professionnel d’une association humanitaire (du genre paix verte) à toque de fourrure contradictoire qui n’avait rien d’autre à sauver, nous avons commencé de rédiger nos rapports. « Tu es déjà mûr au point de te rêver libre, sans obligation de gagner ta vie chaque jour avec des clowneries... Tu veux être libre? » disait Sanglier.. « Il n’est jamais trop tard... Franchiras-tu cette porte? T’affranchiras-tu? Nous sommes nés avec l’inscription idéologique « Qui ne risque rien n’a rien » gravée dans notre cerveau... Alors que fais-tu de ta vie? »

On se prenait ça dans la tête, aussi, avec Sanglier. Il ne nous lâchait pas. Ce n’était pas toujours facile.

Avec Sanglier il fallait souvent se répéter ses phrases deux fois.


A notre descente du train, dans un espace gris, un couple de jeunes soldats déguisés en parachutistes nous observaient sur le quai de gare de notre terre d’accueil, debout, anxieux, perplexes, persuadés d’être en milieu hostile. D’ailleurs ils étaient dans un milieu hostile. Qu’auraient-ils pu faire si un véritable monstre était descendu du train? Avec deux bouteilles susceptibles de rendre une zone urbaine de 20km² inhabitable pendant plus de trente ans?

En treillis de combat, leur pistolet mitrailleur sur le ventre, la peau du visage rose très clair sauf les joues très rouges, presque maquillées, peut-être encore puceaux, avec du lait autour des lèvres, un chewing-gum entre les dents et une lettre de leur mère dans la poche, ils devaient avoir vingt ans, peut-être moins; rangers trop cirés, ongles courts, yeux d’enfants pas rassurés, bérets rouges de parachutistes d’un rang à qui l’on ne confie jamais rien et encore moins un secret militaire. Ils auraient pu sauter d’un hélicoptère Puma dans n’importe quelle ville du monde et tomber amoureux d’une fille au pair, rêver d’un lotissement, d’un terrain
de basket, boire du lait frais, regarder le feu dans la cheminée les dimanches d’automne.

J’ai remarqué qu’ils n’avaient pas de parachute ni même de masque à gaz.

Cela m’a fait de la peine.

Dès la sortie de la gare Sanglier nous a invités au bureau et nous avions tous l’impression qu’il pouvait mettre de l’ordre dans nos vies égarées. Marcello a commandé nos pizzas chroniques, nos usuals suspects pizzas, des pizzas alla rabiata (Note. Pimentées.) livrées par des kamikazes livreurs aux zigzags acrobatiques (un bandeau rouge autour du casque) dont l’espérance de vie en scooter ne dépassait pas trois ans, avant de gagner l’hôpital des vétérans livreurs de pizzas. Nous sommes restés jusque vers, à peu près, vingt et une heures zéro trois. Nous avons entamé une première réunion de synthèse ultra-confidentielle que Sanglier nous a proposés de reprendre le lendemain à six heures trente (on ne savait jamais si l’éléphant testait notre répondant); nous n’avons pas refusé, bien que le lendemain fut chargé, puisque nous attaquions le début d’une étude dans une société coriace et, disait-il, perverse : PETRA (Prévention Et Traitement des Addictions). PETRA la folle, la vicieuse, la cannibale.

Sanglier m’a parlé aussi du week-end où il recevait dans sa maison de campagne « non gouvernementale » (Mystère, mystère, riait Marie). L’éléphant aimait se promener accompagné dans la campagne, sans jamais être contredit, le long du fleuve où toujours quelqu’un lançait des pierres pour d’improbables ricochets, ou bien dans la forêt dont il connaissait les chemins par cœur, suivi de ses invités fiers de l’être. Il y invitait beaucoup de femmes, beaucoup de couples, parfois des chrétiens de gauche en chandails, des cérébraux, de jeunes femmes qui chantaient Bella Ciao, quelques barbus, même des réactionnaires de couleur, certains lisaient les lignes de la main. Marie a dit : « Quand je suis seule j’y vais. C’est une très grande maison avec beaucoup de chambres d’amis. Nous regardons des clips de Pierre qui danse avec les Pierrettes. Parfois nous dansons aussi et c’est cosmique. Sanglier aime filmer. Parfois ça dégénère un peu, tu sais comment c’est, l’alcool, l’ennui, la chaleur, on ne peut pas toujours sucer son pouce, au début il y a une atmosphère de tombola puis on finit par se laisser aller, on glisse, oui, on glisse, on s’explose, c’est invraisemblable nos faiblesses, je ne voudrais pas m’accrocher à ça. Il y a des jupes fendues, du Cognac, des produits « Pour l’amour du ciel ». Il y a toujours un psychiatre modérateur parmi les invités. Souvent il porte une cravate fantaisiste. Il surveille qu’il n’y ait pas de propos racistes. J’en profite pour lui poser des questions sur moi, sur les gourous, sur l’âme cœur. Je me sens tellement nulle, insignifiante, zéro, avec mon instabilité affective et financière. Après, je rentre chez moi et je me drogue d’histoires angoissées avec des livres et des films à l’ancienne comme mes grands-parents. Bon Dieu, je ne vais pas pleurer. Mon précédent mari était utile pour tourner le matelas au printemps et au début de l’automne. Mais à part ça et son goût pour le
ski nautique c’était un salami... et derrière le salami il y avait ma propre misère... Je me pose des questions. Pourquoi est-ce que je répète toujours ça?... avec des espèces de vampire qui ont des yeux de poney grisonnant... qui adorent mes seins pointus... Je pense que je suis trop fade avec juste deux pieds, deux mains, deux seins, une tête... En plus de ça, je ne trouve pas le produit qu’il me faut... toi, Jacques, je sais que tu as le bon produit, ça se voit tout de suite DANS TES YEUX ET DANS TES RÉPARTIES, ne rougis pas cachottier... ça se voit que tu es chargé pour barboter dans le « grand calme »... avec le bon produit... d’où te viennent toutes tes idées? »

Une règle : ne pas répondre, ne pas alimenter la machine. Imaginer qu’elle vient d’une autre planète, qu’elle parle une langue invisible, qu’elle est absente.

Sanglier avait de bonnes oreilles assez décollées :
« Mais non Marie, pourquoi tant de venin? Vous travaillez avec moi depuis des années et je sais que vous n’avez pas de l’eau gazeuse dans les veines et n’êtes surtout pas une mémère chaussette... c’est faux... c’est absolument le contraire, vous êtes une fille brillante et douée... vous avez de l’imagination, vous êtes indépendante... vous travaillez autant d’heures que les autres et parfois plus... vous êtes belle, vous dansez sur l’air de Chili Con Carne avec un mouvement des hanches de folie, votre sourire c’est de la science-fiction... qui vous met tous ces spams négatifs dans la tête ?... »

Marie le regardait sans y croire, d’abord parce qu’elle se pensait profondément nulle et vraiment archidouée pour la vie fossile, façon téléfilm au sirop kitsch, prête à pleurer devant un soap opéra où les hommes sont des glands de pères en fils, des énigmes pour la science, des mulots, mais aussi parce que Sanglier était comme ces hommes fermes, presque autoritaires, parfois cruels, un peu féroces, jamais sanguinaires, dont l’affabilité, la courtoisie étaient prises pour de la feinte et de la poudre aux yeux. Posant sa main sur mon épaule, Marie m’a murmuré à l’oreille : « Je crois que je tombe amoureuse trop facilement... on dit raide dingue... mes rêves se peuplent de groupes de musiciens disparus comme Aphrodite’s child au volant de voitures poussiéreuses, squelettes à perruques forcément souriant pour le club des cœurs solitaires dans une télévision en noir et blanc... C’est une tare, une attirance, qui me prend par bouffées... J’ai des bouffées... Je suis attirée, toquée soudain de quelqu’un, et je mouille à fond, je me cambre, c’est foireux dès le départ mais irrésistible et physique, je suis habitée par In the mood for love, je suis transformée par l’amour, j’ai des réacteurs nucléaires dans le dos, la terre est une orange, rien ne m’arrête, ni le physique repoussant ni les défauts visibles comme les coutures sur la tête ou le bouquet de fleurs défraîchies... Je crois tout ce qu’il me dit jusqu’à l’os, j’avale le bla-bla, les romances sur les grands espaces, la philosophie de feu de bois... je me décarcasse pour l’approuver en tout, pour être fraîche, propre, parfumée, sexy sans répulsion... C’est comme une drogue... je princecharmantise... je tombe amoureuse trop facilement... Le moindre vampire peut alors devenir un maître du monde,
un crooner aux dents douces et sucrées quand je suis amoureuse, je perds mes lunettes, mon nez, mon sens critique, tout ce qui m’entoure prend alors du relief, l’égout à ciel ouvert devient un canal à Venise, la fermette un ranch, la flamme d’une bougie tordue devient un coucher de soleil, deux jambes au format d’allumettes sont deux belles cuisses, l’enseigne clignotante d’une pharmacie sous la neige est un sapin de Noël, la pacotille se transforme en or, une serviette en papier devient une couverture écosaisse sur mes genoux glacés, c’est tellement fort, tellement puissant, tellement violent, ça m’arrache, mon cerveau devient une machine à changer de réel, la moindre musique ridicule me soulève, en sainte à l’oreille absolue, je met dans un état de perception accrue, de mélancolie excitante, enivrant, je n’ai pas les mots pour cette chose qui m’habite. Je sors de mon corps, je me regarde faire, je flotte, je suis à côté de moi-même, je surexiste, c’est la meilleure des drogues, mieux que picoler... tout devient génial, heu, génial... Je deviens médium, ultrasensible... Je trouve des chansons qui sont débiles et creuses, voire gagas, parfaitement profondes et intelligentes, savoureuses, fines, malicieuses, touchantes, philosophiques, genre « au-delà de la pensée humaine », et je les écoute en boucle et j’ai envie de les offrir, tout me touche, me fait vibrer, m’envahit et en même temps je me sens coupée du monde, derrière une vitre incassable ou dans un satellite à dix mille kilomètres de terre... Je crois que je tombe amoureuse raide dingue trop facilement... Et surtout mon complexe numéro un, mon tube : Je ne m’imagine pas prononcer quelque chose de passionnant comme je n’imagine pas un homme préhistorique suisse... dans la conversation je me sens comme un vaisseau fantôme tout ordinaire, feux éteints dans la nuit forcément noire, voiles mortes, vent néant, je ne sais pas où je vais et j’ai la honte d’en être arrivée là, ballottée, émue... »

Nous avons laissé Sanglier au bureau (il ne peut pas s’empêcher de partir le dernier) et nous sommes descendus dans la nuit devenue fraîche mais toujours énigmatique, sommes passés sans un mot devant l’enseigne du « Mexicain qui saigne », restaurant à la mode, avec sa statue aztèque et ses publicités de tacos du diable, « les meilleurs et sans polémique ». Nous avons croisé le crieur « d’hommes dont le souvenir s’est perdu » qui criait : « Rudolf Valentino! Charlie Chaplin! L’homme qui tua Liberty Valance! L’homme qui a marché sur la lune!... »

Le lendemain viendrait le gros morceau, la première visite chez PETRA. Ce monstre faisait peur, même à Marie qui, dans sa collection automne-hiver, ne craignait personne devant un ordinateur.

Il pleuvait à torrents quand, avec Marie, Marcello, Brandon, nous sommes entrés au plus grand bar de la ville, ouvert nuit et jour, le Blade Runner surnommé le Lapin Vif, bourré d’effets spéciaux et de nouveaux cocktails (dont le Martini-Zébu, le Tout-ou-Rien et le TocToc), rempli de chaises, de fauteuils et de banquettes où pas mal de clients séchaient devant un verre.
THE SMOOTH SLIT IN A SMOOTH FACE
by Richard Truhlar

while contemplating
a controlled accident of speech

you have forgotten
the odyssey of food experienced
thru your eyes

soon it will be twilight
and the cannibal nouns
will come out
to sample the cuisine
of your emotions

"The Smooth Slit In a Smooth Face" is from A Dust of Events. His other recent publications from Mercury Press include The Pitch (ISSBN: 978-0920544860) and The Hollow (ISBN 1-55128-117-1). Along with Bev Daurio he is the editor of Closets of Time (ISBN-10: 1-55128-133-3).
5 POEMS by Christophe Fricker

(Translated by Tom Nolan)
With Images by Timothy Senior

Ajax
Gehüllt in deine Kraft schläfst du nicht ein.
Knie und Ellenbogen suchen an-
einander halt. Dein Schweigen ist verhallt.
Man glaubt nicht, daß man mit dir rechnen muß.
Seit gestern stimmt das. Draußen hörst du sie.

Ajax
What do you get for being right? Your sword.
You'll never sleep clothed in your strength like that.
Elbows and knees look for support in one
Another, and your silence fades away.
Since yesterday the case seems proved: your force
Is spent. You hear approaching steps, outside.
**Dialog**

I.

Es gibt nichts anderes als die wenigen beschreibbaren Tätigkeiten. Alles andere ist Unordnung.

Nur die gesprochenen Wörter, alles andere ist Unwissen.

Vergiß die Gesetze.

Was helfen sie, wenn kein Bekenntnis mehr Ordnung, wenn kein Versagen Erwartung ermöglicht?

Wie kannst du so vielsagend schweigen, wenn du nachher nichts zu sagen hast?

II.
Laß ihn schlafen.
Er will einmal der Schwächere sein dürfen.
Er gibt uns ein Du, um von sich abzulenken.
Er will einmal der Stärkere sein wollen.

**Dialogue**

I.
Have done! The balance of two continents, right and left of that juncture in the tiles.

There's nothing but the few definable activities. The rest is disorder.

Only the spoken words, the rest is ignorance.

Forget the laws.

How can they help if no confession brings with it order no failure expectation?

How can your silence seem so pregnant if, once you break it, you have nothing to say?

II.
Let him sleep.
He demands the right to be the weaker for once.
He concedes us a “thou” in order to distract us from him.
He demands the will to be the stronger, for once.
für Gisèle
Dein Anhänger mit dem Januskopf
drehte sich. Er sieht jetzt
in meine Gegenwarten.

Die Einheit der Person - keine Schule auf Stein,
zu der im Smog nach zweitausend Jahren
die Klassen pilgern, verlangt sie.

In einem vergangenen Jahrhundert, das noch
nicht geendet hat und noch nicht
begonnen.

For Gisèle
Your Janus-headed pendant
revolves and sees in me
alternative present-states.

The unity of the person – no stone-built school,
to which during two thousand years the pilgrim
classes have made their way through the smog, requires it.

In a past century that has
not yet ended and not yet
begun.

Der feste Händedruck der Wurzeln unterhalb der Behördengänge.

Er erhebt sich nicht wie ein Cellothema,
irdisch und sterblich.

Ein dünner Baum vor dem Wald. Als hätten sie ihn vorgeschoben.
Er kann nicht abgehen wie ein Schauspieler
in seinem Applaus.

Die Wurzeln erheben sich nicht mit roten Fahnen
wie auf der Straße der Chor,
erinnerst du dich?

The firm handshake of the roots beneath the civil-servants' walkways.

It doesn't rise up like a cello-theme,
but is earthly and mortal.

A thin tree in front of the forest. As though the others had pushed it out in front.
It can't leave the stage like an actor
in the midst of his applause.

The roots don't rise up with red flags
as the choir does on the street,
do you remember?
Von den Etiketten müßte man beim Weggehen –

Mäntel, Verabredungen, Schneechaos auf den Straßen –
och die Namen der Weine, Jahrgänge abschreiben,
und eigentlich all die Namen auch sich merken
nach der Party, auf die man nicht gehen wollte,
von den Lächelnden, mit denen vielleicht irgendwann
ein Gespräch zustande gekommen wäre. Aber – höllisch –
das Leben hängt nie davon ab.

Schreiben Sie! schreiben Sie das auf! – so ein Schrei,
jahrelang, durch die Jahrhunderte hallt der nach, aber
nie hat jemand so geschrien, als ein Name kam
dem Suchenden, oder als der Nennende
sich seiner Macht erinnerte. Was ein Leben –
lächerliches Moment bedeutungsloser Bereitschaft –
erreicht, ist der nie aufgebrochene Schrei, und wer weiß woher
die Betulichkeit, von der doch das Leben abhängt.

We should have thought to check the bottles as we took our leave –

clothes, suggested rendez-vous, a chaos of snow on the streets –
and written down the names of the wines, the vintages,
and made a point, too, of remembering all the names
after that party we didn’t want to go to
of the laughing people with whom one day perhaps
a conversation might have got underway. But – appalling –
life never depends on it.

Write it! Write it down! – so the shout goes up,
year after year, century after century it echoes, but
never did anyone so shout as when a name came
to the man who sought it, or when the giver of names
remembered his own power. What a life –
absurd moment of meaningless readiness –
achieves is the never released shout, and who knows from where
the solicitude comes on which life, after all, depends.
3 POEMS
by Susan Holbrook

Transcribing the Letters of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson

I am practicing lejibility, do you recognise it,
(Stein to Thomson, 23 Sept. 1928)

Thanks for the duffings.
Love to my Gody and quineff pumfally.
Smile and write look the same.
Saints and Emily.
Clippings, thanks for the clippings.
See you Tuesday. Fine, until Thursday. That’s Tuesday. Yes, ’til then.
At seven in the afternoon.
After Estuary after Easter flu, full
of almost almonds.
Margaret and Nougat.
Avery Hopwood assumes or assures. Avery Hopwood amuses.
Have you been a little better? Have you sent a bitter letter?
The train comes on the hon and half-hon.
There’s a good chance of having you finished
in January, or printed in Germany, printed
in January, finished in Germany.
The book was famously, permanently, persistently, furiously, permanently lost there.
It looks like terrified hills, sewing ourselves, Alice is rippled.
It looks like buttered
nightingales, and it is.
Love to anybody and yourself pumfally.
That story about piano is rapturously narty and that story
about Picasso is xceptionally nasty.
Thanks for the Christ on Epps.

There is no famous church at Epps, there is no Epps.
Georges’ 50 000 francs was SO OOO famous.
Love to everybody and yourself principally.
Anyway always, smile back soon. May your mossy
gritty be revealed as snowing gently.
From an uncatalogued box, buried
in the archive, may you fish out a postcard
of the Burgos Cathedral in Spain:
Jesus standing on eggs.
Aside From

a wrong tree what is rued
the mouth what is barked up
French what is foamed at
the bird what is excused
the slip what is flipped
something fishy and a rat what is given
a long story what is smelled
my dead body what is made short
the flow what is over
your own medicine what is gone with
the eye of the beholder what is tasted
humidity what is beauty in
your head what is not heat
more than you can chew what is kept above water
a rose garden what is bitten off
an old dog what did I never promise you
the trees what cannot be taught new tricks
the dust what can one not see the forest for
the land what is bit
that bridge what did time forget
the pitch what will we cross when we come to it
the ropes what is queered
a limb what is known
the lock what is gone out on
the vote what is raped
parole what is won
the night what is he out on
the heart what is taken back
the word what is worn on sleeves
what’s good for the goose what’s mum’s
bygones what’s good for the gander
the day what are bygones let be
Red Coral-to-Wet Castanet

Tap victim on the hinge and shout, “Are you okay?”

If there is no response:
tilt the victim’s fragile egg, apple pointing up.

Place one chinar leaf under the victim’s satin tower and gently lift. At the same time push with the other big mitt on the victim’s distant sea. This will move the mark of your spiritual maturity away from the very sensitive barometer of your physical and emotional well-being to open the airway.

Immediately look, listen and feel for air. While maintaining the backward 500-channel-media-universe tilt position, place your bloomen red rose and shell the wind swept close to the victim’s big front door for microbes and complex air conditioner. Look for the bowle of creame uncrued to rise and fall while you listen and feel for the return of air. Check for about five seconds.

If the victim is not breathing: Check for and clear any foreign matter from the victim’s font of information. Give four quick breaths. Pinch the victim’s sink by which the braine doth purge itself of phlegm with the bunch of ragged carrots that is on the victim’s crown of the face to prevent leakage of air. Open your wee cave wide; take a deep breath; seal your pomegranate
cut in twain with a
knife of ivory around the
victim’s round suctorial funnel, and
blow into the victim’s wet
scarlet wings of a reborn
butterfly who trembles on the
rose petal as Life floods
his strange body with four
quick breaths just as fast
as you can.

The germ-reservoir-to-super-sniffing-
machine method, instead of the cakehole-
to-lilies-which-drip-
湿-myrrh method, can be
used in the same sequence
described above. Maintain the backward
lofty treetop tilt position with
one map of yourself on the
victim’s piece of luncheon meat
stretched across a basketball. Remove
the other sprout from under
the swinging door and close
the victim’s freshly cracked fig.
Blow into the victim’s tower
of Lebanon that looketh toward
Damascus.

These breaths should be brief
and gentle to prevent air
from entering the bottomless pit
when it comes to this stuff.

WHEN IT FALLS  
by Clarice Eckford & Stuart Ross

This place, this cow, this perfect floor. This punch to nose.  
A white-winged magpie pokes its beak  
in slanting stacks of empty nights  
I push my shoulders back against.

The cow, the magpie  
and their several limbs  
embrace the stacks of smoke and dust,  
carving grief from stumbling shadows;  
the magpie punctures parachutes.

I broke my dad’s binoculars  
waiting for his mound to crack  
and now I have a bandaged nose.  
The magpie drums its thumb and stares.  
The cow stretches out on the linoleum floor.

I tie myself to hollow cloth  
and poke my beak through inky clouds  
to find our swallowed resting place.  
Ants on bicycles crisscross plots  
to catch a glimpse of vacant skies.
ma’s lost weight
and there’s a furnace on her lawn
feeding it tulip bulbs, shrugs in my direction.
her house, once brick, is made of
blocky chunks of clear acrylic,
and her hair, once brick,
bristling chinny-chin-chin-coloured straw,

and a mutt named wreckless lolls
sickly in the shade of the furnace.

ma counts her thin fingers,
dredges dusty grudges, levels
awkward high-rises, bounces

awful-coloured tennis balls to wreckless. she’s
peering through her soap-streaked kitchen window.
it’s clear. she’s forgotten already. and pointing
into the sky, where a wavering twin-propeller
junebuggy plane feebly tugs a raunchy proposal:
OGLE THIS FLAPPING THINGAMAJIG: a wobbling egret.

she motions. closer. forced hot breath, quick
acrylic grope and the dizzy, tumbling
car wreck of drunken press-on memories
send her. she is a sputtering motor,
a whirling coalmine, an errant walrus
hooked up to feeding tubes. porcelain
silences clatter around us, chipping themselves
on urgent gasps, until at last

the furnace kicks on. we are
the last of the porcelain mummies,
dumbly succumbing to another heat wave.
INVADING DETACHED
by Jay MillAr & Stuart Ross

That morning my brilliant dents trott out
to the starting gate. A cascade
flipped the bird over the back
of the kneeling postman,
pulling a tooth from the ground up,
an eye from the sky down.
Across the line appears fourfold a
child with reluctant dentures;
from the shrubbery a wound cries out
the name of its assailant. Later,
we capture a certain je ne sais pas,
put it in an orange jumpsuit, lock it in a cage.
The bright blue arrow points out
the flaws in our arguments. The garden
mortifies philosophical purity. Who said,
“I can barely hold on to the landscape”?
It was the guy who wrote that hymn
on the inside of a cow’s skull after
the cartoons invaded. Detached for
centuries, he came to embrace
ambivalence as a kind of spiritual
yo-yo. I cradle him in my arms.
The world goes back and forth.
Froth emerges from between my teeth.

And now, moments later, I am alone.
I sit on a mat, clutch a box of raisins.
I’m curious about the word “juicy.”
Psalms For Military Strategists
(adapted from spam)
by Sandy Pool

There is a law against anything that resembles the military – will get us all quickly dead. Now have you all your destruction?

Perhaps that is only fair since you are their landscape: the sun crawled across the sky.

We had been walking these dreadful compositions yet another time. He plugged in the cubes --

and religion?

Do you have a female equivalent of Iron John? Glassy- a pregnant porcuswine assailed our ears.

I popped the recording out. No-please hear me out lock-down was issued, but has been lifted,

said the outside. The building near the cafeteria. A Code Red Ugandan newspaper, The Monitor reported the baby

had died during the gassing. Underneath you could feel the anti-game,
candles exploding like spiders across the stars and inproposed reforms.

He ate his winnings.
Sat with wives all day in the sun,

wheezing ravens, whence covering the land—

the brotherhood is broken
4 Poems
by Jacob Scheier

Wall Street

"This storm is what we call progress."

– Walter Benjamin

The future is this moment of walking down Wall Street, rain tricking down, the red and blues of flags pastel, Chagall-ian against the grey backdrop, while we lay our claim to the stone feet of General Washington, looking out into the dim starlight like cracks in the night. The first president now, forever, though never again, a new angel, no longer thrust, back forwards, into the future, but as though he has stepped in tar, waits, in relief, to be buried beneath the wreckage.

Is this the way the world ends not with bang but a pie chart, a downward spike on a muted screen, a white man shrugging?

In the history books there will be no text of you and I, marching that afternoon, tourists, perhaps. Except weren't we all, taking respite in the future? Surveying the monuments: the stock exchange pillars and thinning September air. Only your arm on my shoulder was attached to the present, and your voice, asking me, if I was warm enough, like you were my mother.

Starbucks emblems hung like lanterns over the dispersing crowd. Our breath nearly visible and yellow. And I wanted to see blood like barium fluid, for the meaning of the moment to be contextualized in violence.
Did you see the sky peel like Chekovian wall paper?
The world an aristocratic country home,
crumbling on Broadway.
How we left the theatre
with the lights of Times Square
worn as memories of stars.
We did not know where to go
or if it mattered. And you worried,
because someone has to,
about what I would or wouldn't do,
if things turned Robespierre-ian or something
that has no historical equivalent.

Not too late to live with you
in your small prairie house, you said.

And you know I can't or won't
(where ever the difference lies).
Only wanted to remind me:
history still happens
to people made strong and fragile
by the possibility, the eventual certainty,
of losing one another.

**Fire Island**

This is about the first time my mother died.

The second time was the normal way;
decaying in stasis.

Now: webs of storm splintered wood line the shore
like shanty-church stained glass.

The ocean a loud whisper, and

too beautiful for god.

Her body, a chronology of scars,
becomes salt stung air.

She is not anything that has happened to her,
only the pure and fine pain alone.

There are no photographs.
The Dead Play Themselves

How the dead appear in dreams,
like they are performing alive,
method breathes and laughter.
They have worked hard getting inside
their former selves, even what we,
the living, might have called their quirks
or flaws, their clumsiness
bordering on irresponsibility.
There is no acting here,
as though they truly believed
they were still alive.

The flawless performances are short-lived.
A weariness sets in around the eyes,
like they are watching grainy home movies
of someone else’s family.
Voices strained and self-conscious
as though translating thoughts into a language
they have not practiced in many years.
But they are trying, they are trying for us,
and it is only polite
to act like this is a day in the ordinary world
in the ordinary country, where no one you love
and especially need, ever dies.

It is not our place to criticize,
to ask, accusatorially, why
all this formal training in acting,
while wardrobe and make-up is all but ignored?
Or if budgetary restraints are responsible
for their near skeletal faces,
the tired machinery visible and gradually
coming to a halt beneath the skin. Those eyes
that still won’t fucking close,
stubborn slits emanating November light.
Why is the dream world so pointlessly Brechtian?
Why do they not appear
the way they were, back then,
when they were never going to die?
Breakfast at Tiffany’s

I’ve often wanted to be kept by a patron of the arts,
then look out my window
and see you
playing “Moon River” on guitar.
That sounds like my kind of life, for awhile. I like not knowing
how things will turn out. Of course, I always have an idea
about changing you, just a little,
into the kind of woman without furniture,
but only so I change you into someone
who would get her Givenchy sandals soaked, follow me
out of a taxi and into a rainy movie set.
Although maybe you were that kind of person, all along –
just waiting for me to say the right lines. That’s what I like
about the movies. The words always come at the proper time
and there the right words. And cats are found. I guess,
I can revise a few autumn evenings in my imagination,
makes the leaves and your dress a little yellowier.
Though I wouldn’t dream of changing your iris
under certain lighting conditions.
And, I am a little blonder (and taller and wider) when I tell you
people do fall in love,
people do belong to each other,
because that’s the only chance anybody’s got.

Though, of course, I don’t say that exactly.
But something like it with the same passion, but my own.
And you… I don’t know what you do then.
Even in my imagination it’s hard to imagine
you ever really leaving that taxi cab. It’s hard to imagine
it is ever not too late
or people change that quickly
in that way. And, sure, people fall in love,
all too often it seems, but even I want to slap Fred,
or whatever his name is,
when he talks about real happiness.
It just doesn’t work that way. I mean, after the credits roll
someone has to speak, apologize, really talk about the weather –
whatever it takes not to end up back in that taxi,
trying and failing to say the right lines, or worse
having said them and it not changing a damn thing.

Jacob Scheier’s: More to Keep Us Warm (ECW Press) won the 2008 Governor General’s Award
An Excerpt from: **A SWAN BOAT ON THE NILE: THE EVENTFUL ITINERARIES OF LESSANDRO COMI**
by Norman Lock

“Nothing is, but what writing makes it so.”
-- Marco Knauff

4.

The beach chairs were all put away. The attendant man or animal was gone. Where all had been utter blackness the night of my arrival (how many days past?), the beach now shone; the shallows and gullies were agitated by celestial light. I was able to study the footprints in the neighborhood of the hut but could deduce nothing from them; they had been made by ordinary shoes and sunk in the night-clotted sand to a depth that could have been made either by man or beast. Only then it was that I wondered to what use the folding chairs were put, for the place appeared to be deserted. Perhaps they served as an occupation for the attendant, who, otherwise, would fall into sickness or despondency; perhaps they survived as something merely habitual but nevertheless necessary. I walked to the reach to the right of the hut, returned to it, and followed the same procedure in the contrary direction. In this way I was able to verify my impression of a general desertion. Only the hut intimated a settlement – that and, in a cove or narrow estuary, the swan boat bleached in the absence of all light but what was coolly shed by the moon and – less significantly – the stars. The swan boat would have set out on its own for the interior if the mooring line had not been fixed, presumably by the attendant. Of course, the beach might have been peopled, even thronged, during the interval when the shadows were at their most circumspect; I mean to say from late morning until late afternoon – times of day in which I had been elsewhere. But I doubted it for reasons other than the footprints cast in the sand, belonging, as I determined, to the attendant alone. Did not the chairs and the tickets wound on their fat pink roll have the look of things unused? In any case, it was not loneliness or the want of others that caused me to unfasten the rope and, taking my place on the wooden seat, ride quickly a current fed by flood tide into the trees. It was hunger, obscure in its source and satisfaction. There was on the seat beside me a stereoscope, but I decided against looking into it – afraid of what I might see there. Something told me – I tell you that my instincts had been made acute! – to beware sensations whose novelty might have power to undo me.
5.

I closed my eyes in the gloomy passage, which pursued a course impossible to follow by any other means than instinct – not mine, but the water’s, which had observed its own imperatives in cutting wide a trench through the forest floor. Here and there an ibis or flamingo stood on the muddy margins, waiting on one leg. The swan boat offered no resistance. Whether it was endued with intelligence or some primitive organization of desire and appeasement, I could not guess. The seat was tapestried in a depiction of a childhood’s idyll I almost seemed to recall. But to stare overlong at it was to fall into a lascivious contemplation never to be escaped. This, I knew as one does in dreams, with the certainty of unreason. Not that I knew myself to be laboring inside a dream. Though I leaned, at times, toward this supposition, I had not the slightest evidence to confirm or deny it. (Nor would I ever.) I closed my eyes as the swan boat flew onward and recalled Werner’s flight of speculation in a coffee house on the Ringstrasse. We had gone there after the premiere of Spinelli’s *Waltz of the Viennese Bears*, whose adagio had caused in us a melancholy almost past enduring. Wiping a wayward drift of cream from his upper lip, Werner had declared with puzzling vehemence that a dilemma was, in fact, an ethical construct that offered no obstacle to the actualization of desire. “Decisions are without consequences,” he maintained, “because the alternative to any particular act, which we consciously reject, is embraced by our animal nature. At this moment, I am eating a napoleon as well as the Sacher torte I wished equally, but abjured for appearance’s sake. At this moment, I am also lying in bed with Helene, whose company by any other philosophy I should have had to forgo in order to keep yours here tonight. There is no such thing as the road not taken.” He lit a cigarette and went on: “We glimpse those lives lived otherwise and elsewhere, in our dreams; later, I’ll see myself and Helene clasped while I am asleep to this world and awake in another.” If it is as Werner said, might I, in fact, be on the steamboat crossing the Tyrrhenian to Benghazi instead of on a swan boat – or, rather, on them both at once?
6.

Disquieted by dreams, I went up on deck and, leaning against the rail, studied the moon’s parenthesis hanging in the west. My cigar’s smoke lost itself in the ship’s own, which mingled its black particles with the blacker ones of night. Blacker still was the sea, which invisibly moved on its great hinge. It groaned beneath the ship, or the ship did, racked upon the sea’s steely bed. I recalled another boat – pink it was and obedient to a rush of tea-colored water. I recalled a bear and thought it had spoken to me in the language of men of my own country. But I soon laid aside those memories as follies of a sleeping mind. I turned my mind instead to Benghazi and my mission to my countrymen there, who were competing with the Greeks for sponges and hoping to subjugate the Libyans. Because the plague lingered yet on the Cyrenaican coast, I had not wanted to accept my government’s commission. But Beatrice had persuaded me that our future together depended on the generosity of those in power. I wished that I might be allowed to live quietly, in Rome in a small pensione close by the Tiber, and paint pictures. But my father’s example and Beatrice’s ambition dictated a life of obligations and public affairs. I had not painted in two years or more – the paints, no doubt, were by now caked in their tubes. I should like to paint this, I told myself – this moon and my cigar-end’s answering light among night’s black draperies. I should like to paint the captain, who had spent his youth in the brothels of Smyrna and Messina and would not now willingly leave his ship for fear of losing himself once more in the toils of desire. He had the look of someone who has extinguished his self’s last ember. His eyes seemed to be fastened onto eternity, which is also death. I feared the plague and also the Libyans, who wished the Italians dead.

7.

On each word, I step out further into the darkness, which lies at the end of all words. In this way do I write life into being. And so might not there be now on its way a ship of Barbary pirates set against ours to plunder and scuttle us? It takes only a little imagination to see it, like a photograph in the developer bath, composing itself in the outer darkness spar by mast, cabin by deck swarming with Moroccan sailors in whose hands are scimitars shaped like the moon’s parenthesis, ready to hack us to pieces. Those words aforesaid – did they not just now assemble out of nothing a kind of life? And having done so, can it be possible to revoke, undo, and uncreate it? Or, once having been conjured, is it – figment or its opposite – an irrevocable fact like any other? But let it be kept for another story – this, of the Barbary pirates – one that will tell itself, perhaps, in a slowly unfurling dream (or its opposite). For the words want to speak now of my arrival in Libya.
8.

Steam as if all spent, our ship staggered between enormous lions rampant in stone at the entrance to Benghazi’s harbor. Beyond, a broad esplanade submitted to the jurisdiction of shadows laid down by late afternoon sun. The sun was African. The frank shadows appeared incapable of deceit, unlike those that lurk with sinister intent beneath tables and in the corners of rooms where women, exhausted as gladioli by a lewd summer heat, peer without confidence in tarnished mirrors. They are gripped by a despair born of Sahara, which neither the green mountain nor blue gulf can dispel. Like them, the shadows on the esplanade, cast by arcade and fountain, were languid. But their languor did, in fact, conceal a restlessness, a malevolence waiting to be unlimbered. The water in the harbor lay flat under the sun’s heavy hand, scarcely ruffled by the hot wind – no, not wind, but rather fitful gusts full of heat and fret. The plague festered beneath floating scarves of smoke compounded of hashish, incense, and tobacco. I walked through the arcade as if waiting for my throat to be cut, though I knew the plague (gorgeous as a freshet of blood) killed with deliberation. The ship was already steaming past the lions as though to escape embargo. I looked for a conveyance to take me to the offices of the Italian legation but could find none nor any other sign of life. All life might have been extinguished, so desolate the streets and alleys, so absent were they even of sounds betraying a human or animal presence. There was about them the absolute stillness of the slaughterhouse at the end of the day. The ship was far out on the Gulf of Sidra, and I wished myself on it. But inside my briefcase were letters for the Italian consul.
Creative Process for “Dreaming Canada”
A 3m bronze in Changchun China
by Laura Shintani

Artist’s Statement: December 18, 2007 -- I opened an email from the Arts Council of Windsor soliciting submissions for a sculpture competition in Changchun, China, on the themes of “friendship, peace and spring”. I had three days to submit a proposal and dropped everything to make it happen.

I submitted photographs and an artist statement for a 10 inch maquette in plastiline of a seated girl that I thought represented the themes of “friendship, peace and spring”. I had been working on it already and in haste named it Aurora canadensis/Canadian Dawn.

The competition organizers responded that they were interested but asked to have the proposal fit more closely with notions of Canadian traditions and culture. Their aesthetic and sense of Canada had to be addressed and in addition they asked for a figurative work, something less abstract, even though the first proposal was very figurative in my mind.

I worked on new ideas, keeping within the boundaries of my own direction and integrity, and knowing that the Chinese committee was intrigued by Aurora canadensis. I wished to connect with the Chinese audience, make something that I would want to see myself, and also have it relate to a Canadian sensibility. A maquette emerged of an encounter between two figures, a beaver and a resting three year old child. It mixed some Canadian kitsch with the original proposal The child/infant was resting under a “blanket” that was meant to submerge into the ground and grass. The head of the child appeared from under the blanket and the beaver sat looking at the child from the edge of the blanket. It was meant for presentation in bronze at a scale larger than human. As a friend commented: …it talks about peaceful co-habitation.

I submitted the new proposal under the title Dreaming Canada. In a world in which Chinese culture is ancient, the idea of a child or infant to represent Canada is not unusual, but in a China where ‘one child’ is a state legislated investment, a single child without a parent or mother transmits great emotional power and takes us away from usual Madonna/child or adult/child depictions. The beaver was included because of its many iconic and hackneyed qualities for Canadians but its extreme mystery for the Chinese because beavers do not exist on the Asian continent. Nor do the Chinese have any exposure to Canadian myths other than Gold Mountain and Dr. Bethune. I created an encounter between a child and a beaver that the Chinese might find perplexing and compelling and that I myself could focus as a harmonious encounter between humans, nature and cultural difference. We are a part of nature and not separate from it. We enjoy and value its mystery. The Chinese organizers liked my work and engaged me in an exceptional opportunity to make art. It felt like a dream to me to have such an invitation and I named the piece Dreaming Canada. It restores life and the relationships many Canadians wish for nature and culture.

On June 10, the Chinese committee accepted my proposal but wanted some understanding from me. What now? As they had been adjudicating proposals, a massive earthquake had hit Sichuan Province and become China’s first publicly acknowledged international disaster. In China and the world press, the worst of the disaster was focused on the thousands of school children who died in the ruins of poorly constructed state-run school buildings. A child lying down, as in my Dreaming Canada, evoked emotions much too intense for Chinese audiences and much too political for the authorities. The odd beaver became a strange looking mourner in the overall composition.
In light of the tragedy, I was asked if I could disconnect my work from their sorrow. I felt my work was being a bit compromised here, but I could see past the glare of political light. Continuing the dialogue was best. I informed the committee that I could agree to a new composition given the earthquake’s effects and they should feel confident about the new work. I wanted them to accept my word on the new composition without having to re-work the maquette first. At this point I was feeling very stressed. There was only a month to go before I was due in China to build the full scale sculpture and I did not think I could make a satisfying work under such pressure. They agreed with me.
The competition was turning into more of a commission. I took up some more plastiline and commenced re-forming the Dreaming Canada maquette in an upright posture. I flew into Beijing on the 20th of July with an almost finished maquette in my luggage. There I spent much of the first week trying to be an artist and not a tourist. The air was hot, polluted and unforgiving. In Beijing I finished the maquette just before leaving for Changchun on the 25th.

In Changchun about 50 sculptors from around the world had gathered to create their art to a completion deadline of September 10. I was the only Canadian and one of only 5 women among the crowd. In its imperial ways, China welcomed everyone with top down formality. Rows of waiting dignitaries, bouquets of flowers, curious onlookers, and bright red and gold big-character banners were commonplace. If a ceremony or a photo op could be imagined, it happened. And in my case there was a special twist in the events. Given my Japanese ancestry, my appearance was not foreign and it did not provoke the swarms of Chinese CCTV paparazzi and interviewers that besieged others. For the first two weeks, our hosts were convinced that my husband was the celebrity sculptor and that I was his Chinese interpreter. This misinterpretation was also assumed by most of the other sculptors for a short while. I received two types of treatment: either as an important international guest whilst wearing proper identification or as a Chinese person to be jostled without apology because I could not communicate. It was far too confusing for many Chinese that I, “a Chinese looking” person, spoke English and needed a Chinese interpreter – perplexing this all became but also inspiring as I was starting to see more deeply the layers of complication and meaning in my own work.

Once the introductory formalities were done, the 50 of us set to work on an imposed daily regime designed to complete our submissions:

Hotel Breakfast: 7:00-8:00
Shuttle bus to the studio work site.
Work until 11:30 then shuttle back to the hotel for lunch
At 2pm return to the work site
Back to the hotel for dinner at 6:30
Work through most of the weekends and insert as much play and rest when we could. Some seemed never to sleep.

Building the full scale work was an adventure. I was able to keep entirely to the conception and form of the maquette and create a 3 metre high version in clay that was meant to be remoulded in fiberglass for national display in China on September the 5th and recast in bronze during this winter for permanent installation in front of the new People’s municipal building of Changchun. I had to complete the clay stage and leave the final steps of the fiberglass mould to skilled specialists.

On the 27th of July I was introduced to the site supervisors and formed my production team of four who would work with me to transform the maquettes into the 3 metre clay format. The assistants were university students at varying levels of study. The first was a computer programmer. The second assistant was a miracle in his second year of art school. He was intuitive and we were able to get to work right away as I found it easy to convey my intentions to him and work through the aesthetics easily although his sense of vision was very much classical Chinese.

My two interpreters were also invaluable and helped make the process manageable through a labyrinth of protocols and bureaucrats, many of whom worked in deliberate opposition to each other. From the first encounter to my last day in Changchun they not only translated, but offered ways to see their culture, keep me sane, and understand bureaucrats and how China functions as layers of state authority. They were also so different, one privileged and connected to the authorities, the other driven from humble origins to make a successful business career. They proved superb at gaining concessions and advantages for me in the bureaucracies, the health system, and materials supply.
and giving me a very personal window into Chinese aspirations. We had a fabulous working relationship and the team formed a fast friendship.

The second day on the site was spent in a materials quest. Materials were a real surprise. None of the usual refined art supply stuff that you might expect in an operation that had been functioning for nine years seemed to exist. We had to improvise at every step. The clay was full of grit. Any scaffolding had to be built ad hoc from wooden scantlings. Worst of all, health and safety on the site seemed to be of no concern. Try working without respirators and goggles beside a fiberglass process or torches cutting brass and steel. Fortunately, we were eventually able to source some of our own safety items in a tools market and started slowly to educate our hosts and their workers. As well, the heat was oppressive under a tin roof and the close spaces of the work site were continually criss-crossed by workers moving materials and visitors checking us out.

On day three we started to build armatures, one for the beaver and one for the child, from curved steel rods and angle iron. The welding work was slow and getting the right depth to allow for the
eventual clay work meant being careful. Scaling up was done by some simple math, measures and eyeballing. Some areas were filled out with wood. We wrapped the armatures in plastic sheeting and then wire mesh for twisting on small wooden cross-shaped supports this was all a surface built to hold clay. By August 7 we were about ready to put on clay and were also thinking hard about preventing possible slumps and slides, especially from the higher sections of the sculpture where most of the detailing was required. Some of the key solutions to avoid potential slumping were the four inch crosses made from finger-thickness wood and tied by wire to the armature and mesh in swarms at locations where gravity would bring down the clay. We had a much greater danger in the off centre leaning position of the head to the shoulder in the form. The possibility that the weight of half a ton of clay and more would break the armature at the neck position and create our own Sichuan disaster was always with us. We were fortunate to sustain a balance, to create a strong foundation that not only supported the immense weight of the clay but minimized yet absorbed vibrations (this was essential). We were very pleased not to have had any mistake.

Adding the layers of clay to the steel armatures started a very personal relationship with that primal medium. This work is done with the body and hands, with vigor, precision and as much physical force as one’s arms and cudgels can muster. Clay (roughly 8-10 inch cubes) was supplied by labourers, they hauled it out from a concrete pit and formed bricks for use, this clay was much recycled. We added clay to the armature in layers, punching and pounding out the air and driving the clay into the mesh and layers beneath. I made a conscious decision to move slowly and deliberately into this phase and we spent a long period observing other artists develop their techniques with these materials. The solutions seemed to be as numerous as the sculptors. I also had to pay close attention to the very complex weather of high heat, great diurnal temperature swings, and very variable humidity. Some days the clay would virtually dry in front of you and on others it stayed too wet. There was a constant evaluation of the moisture of the clay, too little meant crumbling and cracking and too much lead to unworkable muddiness. At the end of each day the work would be spritzed in water, supported where needed and then wrapped in plastic. The balance between too much spritzing of water and too little was very fine and changed as work days proceeded. The condition of the clay at all times is critical as errors compound significantly and we attained an obsessiveness in dealing with the medium.

The material has a wonderful personality that swings in tempo with the climatic conditions and even our own emotions. We had some rough days and I wished throughout that every day would be rainy and overcast because the clay behaved as I wished it too and I wasn’t roasting under the tin roof.

Going slowly in creating the armature and layering the clay proved to be the right strategy as in the third week other artists around me started to encounter clay failures and broken armatures. Mistakes cost some of them more than a week of repair work and some re-conceptualizing their pieces. In some cases, enormous stress among their teams caused very difficult human relations problems, compounded by cultural misunderstanding.

Day 29 Dreaming Canada is virtually done. The committee decided that assistants could be let go but did not tell the sculptors. I argued against this and appealed to the head artistic advisor that the young people were more than simply assistants. They were students in an internship that needed to be completed so they could see the process from start to finish. The next day my assistant was re-instated, this was an extremely emotional moment and statement for everyone not only on our team, but others who congratulated me on the importance of my action.

The following days were all about details – time consuming and frustrating details about final textures, light refraction on surfaces, getting the hair so that rainwater would be shed away from the face and not stain the bronze, getting the beaver to just barely smile. I was trying to maintain a very clear vision now and keep out those around me who would say, “it looks like it is done! when will you finish? This period was an interesting time of fast work and mindful patience.
Then, a photo shoot of the clay work – snap, snap, snap – documentation.

On Day 33 all the clay work was done and the fiberglass processes began. Plasterers moved in very fast and traced moldable spaces across the expanse of the two pieces. Divisions were marked by lines of thin plastic cards pressed into the clay to separate the three dimensions of the sculpture into moldable units. Then the plastering was started. The first layer is like thickish cream, second layer like thick cake batter, third layer like very sticky bread dough. This is all slathered on by hand and the dripping loss falls over everything and everyone. Rough beams of young trees, tied together with coarse raffia dipped in more plaster hold the sections of the cast. The plasterers were fast and I had hoped the next morning to be able to make a few alterations in final details of the clay – nope, they worked during the night and the morning arrived with Dreaming Canada all plastered.

As soon as the plaster was set, the sculpture was taken apart, literally. It was very challenging to see all the armature and clay torn apart and the shell of plaster/gypsum looking like a hollow phantom of the hard weeks of work that had past. I cried but not long because the fiberglass remolding started immediately. A sealant/release was brushed on the plaster mould. Squares of fiberglass were pressed and layered into the plaster molds with epoxy resin to a thickness of no more than 1 to 2 inches. It sets and then the plaster is shattered. A fiberglass positive remains. They are reassembled and sanded to remove any seams and provide continuous texture. Painters use aerosols and air brushes to layer on a faux patina finish; a black undercoat followed by successions of selected colour and highlights. A crane moves the fiberglass reproduction away to the city hall.

On Day 41 the City of Changchun holds an opening ceremony and unveiling of the works. I fussed a bit with the final position of my own. It looked great, in a choice position at the city hall garden. Two arches of flowers and shrubbery frame the sculpture. I received a commemorative traditional scroll from the Mayor, he congratulates me. A young boy drags his father over to see the beaver and climbs up on it. He then goes to touch the hand and look up at the face of the child. My interpreter Wen Wei says to me with a grin, "You have reached your target". My vision is blurred.
“Position 64”
by Stephen Bett

*Position 64: The Slip Slidin’ Away*

*Line drawing: he's facing up, sliding off the chair, barely hanging on on his elbows & butt; she has her back to him, straddling him, sitting tall 'on' him*

*Calories: Him 75.6*  
*Her 54*

*Equipment: Chair*

*Hazard: Stop Immediately if You Hear a Snapping Sound*

It isn’t all it’s  
cracked up to be

Never is

Just like the daily fare  
(the daily chair)

That snapping  
sound—  
could be a disc  
a vertebra  
a busted heart

*You know the nearer your destination  
The more you're slip slidin’ away*

We’re getting  
real close

---

*The above poem is from: *Extreme Positions*, a parody of the soft-core porn industry. Available through Spuyten Duyvil Books, NYC: Prod.dept@spuytenduyvil.net*
SABA-SANYO-CASIO (1988)
by Xavi Sabater

E/DODOTIS/NESTLE/KETCHUP
SABA-SABA-SABA
E/MACDONALDS/KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN
IBM
SABA-SABA-SABA
PHILIPS-SANYO-CASIO
¡¡EO PRESTO!! GALLINA BLANCA
¡¡AMSTRAD!!
AMSTRAD/APPEL/TOSHIBA
SANYO-SANYO-SANYO
CASIO-CASIO-CASIO
OSTIA-OSTIA-OSTIA

CASIO
CASIO
CASIO
MITSUBISHI
ROLAND, KORG, YAMAHA
IBM, AMSTRAD, APPEL
FORD, SEAT, WOLSWAGEN
PHILIPS, PHILIPS, GALLINA BLANCA
¡¡CAMPS!!
NESTLE, REPSOL
NYLON, NYLON, TERGAL
CANCER-SIDA-CANCER
IBM, IBM, TELEFUNKEN
PSOE, PSOE, UCD
CDS, CDS, ETA-ETA-ETA
KRISHNA, KRISHNA, KRISHNA
TELEFUNKEN, IBM, REPSOL
BIAFRA-BIAFRA
ETIOPIA, ETIOPIA, ETIOPIA

TELEFUNKEN, IBM, CASIO
NYLON, TERGAL, CHIVAS
CHIVAS-CHIVAS-CHIVAS
PREISLER, PREISLER, ISABEL
IBM-SIDA-CANCER-CASIO
ETIOPIA, ETIOPIA, ETIOPIA
BACCARDI-GORDONS-LARIO
CHIVAS-CHIVAS-CHIVAS
ETA-ETA-ETA
SIDA-SIDA-SIDA
KETCHUP-DODOTIS-NESTLE
GALLINA BLANCA
NESTLE-KETCHUP-SCHWEPPES
KAS, PEPSI-COLA, COCA COLA
Excerpt from: *is/was*
A novel by Jenny Sampirisi

No. 3
Eva has started watching the news on mute. She likes the silence of the images, and the contrast between the new anchorwoman—her dark, teased mane—and the sallow hospital workers, the pensive and plain gymnastics coach, the mixed bag of senior citizens. Every time Eva turns on the television there is the single moment when sound enters the room. Bright. Snapping. Maybe it’s her own worry, she thinks, the worry that in that second, the girl’s name will fall, wet and crashing into the room, and she’ll turn to answer or not answer. So she lightly presses the mute button and the word appears at the lower edge of the screen in red capital letters. MUTE. And the room becomes it.

The photo of Abigail Wren flashes across the screen. The image has become more frequent now. It’s been almost a week since she went missing. Search parties have been organized. There are shifts. The P.T.A. at Isabel’s school (Abigail’s school) sent home a sheet: where to be, when, what to bring, what to look for.

The where consists of fields mostly, and stretches of forest. There are attached diagrams of the town, labeled with names that Eva has never heard of before. The town is built on a concession system and most of the roads are dirt. The land is named after people who haven’t been here for years.

Eva glances at the sheet again. The *when*: Tomorrow. The morning. The afternoon. They’ve left out the evening. *What to bring*: Flashlight. Camera. Water bottle. Blanket. Something to eat. It doesn’t say if these things are for the searchers or for the found. Each item except for the food implies neither a living nor a dead body. *What’s the camera for?* Eva imagines herself taking a photo, but she can’t see what might be in the frame. She waits. A *dry strip of skin, curled and white against the dirt.* It’s there, in her mind, and then it’s gone, replaced by the image of the carrot she’s been peeling for several minutes.

Isabel is wrist-deep in a bowl of flour, squeezing it until a soft cloud has formed around her arms, catching in the brown hairs. Eva has decided to make dinner as a test. If she can make dinner for her own children tonight, she can look for someone else’s child tomorrow.

It’s been almost three weeks since Eva’s surgery. The pain has become a consistent hiss in her day, but when Isabel is in the room Eva tries not to show it on her face, tries not to groan when she sits, or to walk with too much curve. These are the things her daughter has chosen to mimic. Even now, covered in flour, one of Isabel’s tiny hands does more work than the other, cupped just as Eva’s is. Sometimes, Isabel mixes her hands up, choosing to wound the left rather than the right, or the right rather than the left.
At first, Eva had demanded to see her daughter’s hands and belly. Isabel winced and cried as her T-shirt was lifted or as a hand was turned over and perfect skin was revealed. She would groan excessively from the bathroom as she gingerly sat on the toilet. Lifting a toy would suddenly become too much and she would touch palm to belly and let out a low moan, before calling someone to pick the item up for her.

There were days when Isabel’s borrowed ills would leave her and Eva could slump back into her own curves and swells, her own mixed breathing and pain. She didn’t resent her daughter for these gestures. At times they were affectionate, never intentionally mocking. But the small body that becomes her sick image often frightens Eva, as though what has been done to her womb has also been done to the child that came from it. Eva knows this is silly, knows that Isabel wants the same attention that she herself is getting, or perhaps, is seeking Eva’s approval by miming her pain.

But, there is something that disturbs Eva as she watches her daughter carefully lower herself into a sitting position, holding her breath, a hand hovering over her abdomen but never touching it. She wonders if Isabel does this as mere gesture or if she can somehow grasp the fears and pains that exist within it. It’s as if Eva’s own worries of tearing open, of flowing outward into the room as a torrent of hot loam and musky compost, are inherent in the movement rather than in Eva herself.

Eva tries to peel her carrot. The infected hand is healing, but she hasn’t used it this much since she cut it. The ache feels good. She’s finally acknowledging the hand rather than coddling it. She holds the peeler tightly and tries to feel the shape of it through the gauze.

Are you going to come with me tomorrow? Eva asks. Isabel’s been too quiet, too absorbed in the flour and the crippled hand. The girl shrugs. Eva is always shocked by Isabel’s transformation when she shrugs. She’s very pretty. The curls make her seem always playful and the features on her face, more Eva’s than Roland’s, are clean and neat; long, slim bones that curve into a petite chin, soft nose, and slight forehead. But when she shrugs, it seems that all the bones of her body come loose. She jangles.

Eva wonders if she should bring Isabel. Roland has been so strange lately, and Andrew so fully absent. Why is it that this feels like a mother-daughter event? She wonders. But that is what it feels like to her. She wants Isabel by her side for this.

What to look for: Articles of clothing, jewellery, or school equipment, clumps of hair (brown or otherwise), signs of a camp, abandoned vehicles, signs of a struggle, signals for help (notes, symbols, markings, etc.).

If they had put it on the list, Eva wonders, would I think about it less? This thing. This body. If the neatly typed paper acknowledged what we’re searching for, then what? Why not just say that there is a girl who existed in this town. Who was beautiful. Who is missing and probably dead and we, the P.T.A. of your child’s school, are asking you to find her body. So go. Go find it in the tall grasses of this overgrown town, the sucking mud of the moraine, the mixed forests.
Are you mad? Isabel is standing on the chair. Her brown overalls are mostly a fuzzy white now. The flour bowl is on its side and there’s a halo of powder surrounding both it and Isabel. Eva looks at the mess, feels the pain of cleaning it in her abdomen, in her hand, in her shoulders. Isabel has drawn her chin down to her chest. Her flour-dipped curls hang in front of her face. Eva wants to say yes. She wants to stand up to her full height, without pain, and hit Isabel. To feel the satisfaction of contact and to see, not Isabel’s face exactly, but the particles of flour that scatter off her skin from the impact and to watch them hang in the air for that moment before they disappear

No. Go change.

Eva doesn’t watch Isabel leave the table or look at the soft mounds of flour. She takes mental inventory. The cutlets are folded in egg in the fridge. The carrots can be cooked with their skin on. The potatoes will be roasted rather than mashed. And there won’t be dessert. The news flashes sports highlights.

Outside, Eva can see Roland sliding sheets of plywood out of the truck. Long, pale slips followed by two-by-fours, bags of nails, and tarps. He slides each item from the truck and out of her view. His body breaks into parts at the edge of the window frame. First his left arm slips off, then the low slope of his shoulder. She cranes her neck, gaining back his sleeve for a moment until he is suddenly halved. Then he is only his right arm. Finally, there is just the wood moving in measured pulls. She resists the urge to walk to the porch and ask what it’s all for. She doesn’t move. Not because she wants to appear disinterested, but because he’s starting something again. Asking might dissolve the wood, the tarp, the nails.

Roland has begun to over-talk himself and his days, filling evenings up with mismatched details and falling into stark but brooding silences. So Eva stays in the kitchen and doesn’t ask. What a strange thing to do or not do, she thinks, to not ask your husband why he has trucked home these things. Abigail has again found her way to the screen.
AVOID VERTIGO: Saccadic Eye Movements
by Kaitlin Tremblay

lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations lobe patietal of the memory erases lobe jumps of the all memory erases of your jumps of the all memory eyes of your jump of the and leaves eyes you only jumps eyes and leaves with of your and leaves you only fixations eyes your with vertigo and leaves only with fixations in order you fixations vertigo your only with vertigo in order to avoid fixations
2 Poems
by Rolland Nadjiwon

antelope

there where prairie
sky
wind
fire
touch together each other
into shadow
there in the illusion of shadow
wind sings an antelope song

we have forgotten how to listen
to the there where prairie
sky
wind
fire
touch together each other
into antelope
into deer songs

we who have chosen the gift
of incapable words
cannot see the vision in the shadow
or hear the songs in the shadow wind
there
where we all touch shadow
there
where we all touch song
there
where antelope stands watching us play
pretending the centre of fire

memories

i remember you
each time a little less
each sunrise morning
or greying dawn
tideliike
over the remembering
of another so quiet
so still last night

without you

each dreaming
awakens
trembling the thin veil
we have imagined
between our realities

of absences that are not

each dreaming
tracing in detail
your features
your being
until morning

i see your photograph
realizing i have redrawn you
and i am not remembering you
but forgetting
Cortez At Algoma
by Mark Dunn

In a black robe in a mackintosh and bowler, in a suit tailored by Italians, Cortez stands on Superior.

Ice is new to him – his heels slip. The stuck bull (his boots) pigeon toe through snow. He will not tumble – God does not fall.

This pantheist bluff worked before. His beard and good timing brought him to shore, a serpent.

Everyone is waiting for something. It might as well be me.

Here they wait for Spring. And although he is sunned brown, flecks of red in his hair, Cortez is nothing like Spring.

White Pine galleons rigged with cattails took to the lake at Wisconsin where the fat bow flattened the rice marshes, spilling the harvest, but mostly kept going.

North. Dark waves on the great lake. The ocean inland sighs, knowing what comes next.
"Inspired by Correspondence, as so Often, a Clinic Visits Rotunda" by John Barlow

My leg was really waved. I could hardly walk. Couldn't live my life. The spasms and cramps were maddening and could happen anywhere. One trip to a complicated medical drop in I went in the wrong doors, got down into an unused area of the basement, the leg cramped all up, i was waved, it gradually forced me to the floor. So I'm lying there on the floor with the leg turning into a kind of orgasming pelican hoping to find a stretch that undid it and i thought 'i hate this waving clinic, i'll try someplace else next time'
	his was the fateful logic that brought me to the big hospital emergency downtown where all the street patients get brought

after registering i spent an hour looking around at the miserable republicans who'd all been waiting when i first got there i was thinking that despite the leg not working i'm pretty healthy compared ...but we'll see what the doctor says.... "sooo i have no leg, i can still ride the bike" 'no i'll wait, i shd see what they say'

finally with great excitement i was led down a hallway to a room with a bed and a curtain completely sealing off the other side of the room and told to lie down

i was eager now, and really really curious what would the doctor say

every 25 minutes or so a staffer would walk by i'd ready myself for answers, process, examination and they'd go right by

then i heard a guy brought into the other side of the room whom behind the curtain was not silent ever for the next hour and a half as it seemed, whimpering & crying out shrieking down the hall

every set of footsteps over in the hallways on his side he'd shout his whole life story medical history and needs

i lay back staring at the ceiling, listening leg, no leg, leg, no leg, does it matter?

the guy had a compound medley of drastic conditions but had the habit of fleeing hospitals after a few days of captivity until he'd be found with all his symptoms blown together at once brought back in promising he'd stay this time
he really knew hospital schedules
he explained to at least 5 passing nurses
that because of the time he'd been brought in
he hadn't been registered for breakfast
and so hadn't eaten for 36 hours 'anything! anything!

but then he'd be screaming about some pain he was having

i lay there on my side of the curtain
at least some of his troubles sounded contagious
i kept wondering if he could walk or would suddenly realize
i was silently lying there the other side of the curtain
i was always a quiet patient, even as a kid

at last my doctor showed, who looked like he
hadn't even slept in 36 hours, pale as a fridge
dry eyed, gaping at me, and he says 'what do you want?'

'i want my leg to work, can't live my life without it,
can't work, can't do anything, i'm totally waved without it'

he said 'but what do you want?' he mentioned various painkillers.
'no,' i said, 'i'm not here for drugs, i need my leg to work,'
he said "but what do you want me to do?"
"i was hoping for a diagnosis. i want to know what the wav is wrong with it."
he said "well what's wrong with it?"
"you're the doctor. what do i know about legs?"
he bent it up and down, once. "Not broken."

I thought of bringing up other medical matters
since nothing was happening with the leg one,
but he just looked so exhausted. I could just imagine
the life he lived in that lightless bleak building.

Still I had to express my impression of the absurdity of the visit.
He was unphased. He listed again the painkillers I could have.
I gave my whole hatful of 60 minutes and morning radio and
tv news medical update reasons why i'd never
take any of the pharmaceuticals he was offering.
His eyes narrowed, (he had the least sense of humour
of anyone not engaged in writing poetry as a serious practise
as i had ever seen), he looked at his watch, he looked at his notes,
(a young guy too, not some old sleepy doctor, no more than 30)

in all honesty i don't remember how the visit ended
but thats when i made the switch to chinese medicine,
was taught in depth what was going on in the leg
with a blend of shiatsu and yogic and swedish positionings
so that i knew precisely how the muscles were getting waved up
and she showed me three primary stretching excercises for the leg
and explained the timings likely for its restoration to normality
and maintenance
and in that one half hour with no other items exchanged but the fee it was done. the knowledge and early stretching enthusiasm quickly brought it down from mindboggling crisis level to dangerous nuisance level to odd moment twist up to lingering slowness and risk going down steep hills

after months i "could" run except that'd spaz out later once relaxed or asleep and the knee still might bend off mid stride

another month or two and the weird speeds of leaping i'd been using instead when in a hurry were starting to almost amount to running and the knee was holding up fine so i'd run a bit

by two summers ago soccer was as natural as sipping a cool smithwicks and the knee the best its been since i used to use its foibles to get out of midweek football practises

stretching is so valuable to every human being it's tragic republicans don't stretch. anything without circulation mortifies including heart disease, bunyons, sprung toes, hair loss, sexual dysfunction, constipation, blood disorders, panic states, neuroses, trouble learning math, back aches, blindness, and chronic indigestion

so come on, do the arms around wrap around left, the arms wrap around right, do the knee to chest then lower leg straight up, each leg, then put your hands on a wall, keep one leg under folded and the other jet due back, both legs,

if your apartment's large enough move on to the standing up versions or out in the yard: stand on one foot lean forward, put the arms and other leg out, and wrap backwards around left like you're reaching for gramma's hand, then do the wrap around right all the way back to the beginning of evolution

then perhaps repeat briefly the on the ground stretches to settle things down then come in and write for five hours it helps if you've got a cat watching your back because the raccoons will attack in the summer ...who knows how it'll go this year i might just wind up a rare case of back yard massacre since raccoons are appalled and instigated by weird human stretches but what the hell you've gotta stretch to live
3 Poems
by Kemeny Babineau

In Time

When the shimmering blue
birds at dawning
dew

When boughs are ablow
    in moonshine
and the winds bent bride

steals the garden breath
    in the thicket
a madrigal and
...

Midnight Carriage Shush

Appearing fashionable despite the rain
upon a deck of peculiar vowel endings
and highly regarded fauna
filled to the tits with gibberish
spelling gold from straw
sight over sound, being
reabsorbed
into an eco-system of wood
and hung up: on generations of want:
in a full out broken falter
we have misspoken beauty
amidst a wretched hush

Fibula Fib

There are many keys to my legs.
Reference is a jungle where the sky opens
One of them is two feet under mud under
The belly of a pregnant anaconda. It is no longer there.
The snake gave its eggs to elsewhere. Untended.
The keys are a fiction. We employ all their time. My legs
Hold me up in the world. Both are hind.
They possess many keys.
GATE CRASHER

*after John Barlow*

*by Stan Rogal*

“A party in which all were not only naked
but amazed and at ease with being so”

What may or may not be a Hitchcockian dream sequence situates him vertigo at the roof edge, fickle finger of fate to one side, stars a’twitter on the other, configuring quite divested Mercury in retrograde, sun in Cancer, moon in Uranus other constellations unkimonsoed vacuously in the swirl lesser heavenly bodies toppled bare from the bell tower even Erato defenestrated by the vision of a black habit that would itself drop naked at the feet of a well-hung corpse if given a snowball’s chance in hell meanwhile, jammed stalwart on the eave, beer in hand head ticked with dope, cigarette nailed to lower lip around him & everywhere neighbouring cats prop like bicycles against dormer walls, rub fur into cedar shakes & burst into flame OK, nothing so far out of joint, it seems, him conjecturing just another Saturday night in the hood when suddenly

he goes Alice, tumbles arse over tea kettle, sails into the firmament through an open window, stumbles into a room of dead people who bear resemblances beyond death, say: Moose Lodge, Elk Royal Order of Buffalo, Legionnaire or Ku Klux Klan members they initially appear full of merriment, high jinks & shenanigans they wear funny hats, wave flags, have name tags pinned to lapels they brandish shots of Jack, mugs of dark ale, tumblers of rye they puff on fat, hand-rolled Cuban cigars, there are bowls of potato chips, dip, fake flickering candles laid upon paper tablecloths from the kitchen wafts the distinct aromas of baked potatoes fried steaks & onions, mom’s special home-made apple pie they are surrounded by a bevy of buxom broads clad in classic spiked heels, lace g-strings, tasseled bras, bouffant hairdos they sing the same old songs & seem happy enough wearing each other’s faces nothing politic. bereft of any solid language save secret hand signs & unsafe telepathy they are really living it up!
trouserless, they rush blindly through the blue smoke din
transporting their Beardsley erections in slings, hand carts &
wheelbarrows
their harried chests pounding wet & breathy from the chase
their necks hung with sausage links of coloured condoms
their noses to the wheel, their eyes on the game
doing their best to ignore him (I mean, the joint barely O’s)
as if he were an uninvited ghost
it was obvious he reminded them of something best forgotten
maybe:
the wife, the kids, the family pet
the job in the office, the warehouse, the factory
the mortgage on the house, the cottage, the car
the monthly bills, the insurance policies, the college fund
the mail taken in, the garbage taken out
he was the hot water tap left running, the back burner left on
he was the not-so-buried memory of middle-class North American
guilt complex & the luggage that entailed
he was the bungled opportunity, the ship that never came in
the horse that never finished, the number that never came up
he was the mysterious stranger who augured eternal bliss
& never showed
he was the dreaded three in the morning bad news phone call
he was a stitch in the side, a cold in the nose, an ache in the head
a stab in the back, a kick in the groin, a bad smell, a rude noise
a king-sized pain in the ass & a real fucking downer
he was the fly in the ointment, the sty in the eye, the pig in the poke
the thorn in the rose, the chaff in the wheat, the swine among pearls
he was the single sour lemon in a field of sweet oranges
he was the thought police, he was that guy, that guy, you know?
he was your worst nightmare
he was the missed period that took your youth your dreams your life
he was HAL
“I can tell from your voice harmonics, Dave, that you’re badly upset.”
damn rights
this due to fear &/or obligation; mostly fear; primarily fear; fear
he was the dangerous alien & not about to spoil the party
the dead turned & doubled in serious laughter, locked arms, pressed
shoulder to shoulder, forced him out the window & shut the pane
it was then he noticed he too was naked, & amazed & at ease, &
aw shucks, ma’am, not so bad, this set adrift like a kite floated
toward
the clouds, party noise still ringing his ears: heavy sigh of ectoplasm
squeals of pinched bottoms, calls for more drinks, growing, raucous
chorus of “John B’s Body” raising him above the rooftops
into the night air.

8 new books of visual poetry: reviewed by derek beaulieu

Visual poetry is the poetic genre by which authors treat the building blocks of language—from punctuation to letters to more traditional poetic devices in way which foreground their physical or graphic sensibilities. While I would not so far as to suggest that visual poetry is undergoing some sort of renaissance, it is good to see a steady stream of work appearing internationally that can add to the array and discourse around visual poetry. These eight books—published in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Canada and the United States—all feature differing aspects of visual poetry.

Monica Aasprong’s *Soldatmarkedet* (privately published for distribution at the Oslo poetry festival, November 2007) is a section of an on-going project of the same name. Aasprong’s 160–page collection is a cross-section of her computer-generated digital output. Aasprong, a Norwegian, has created a computer logarithm which randomly scatters spaces within a page covered with the letter “t”. While the description sounds rather banal, the output resembles aerial photographs of the movements of populations around public squares, which is no coincidence. Aasprong’s poetry attempts to respond to a public square in Berlin from the mid–1770s titled the Soldatmarkedet (in German, the “Gendarmenmarkt”) breaking the word into its smallest units of composition, reassembling them, as Paal Bjelke Andersen writes,

in long series and geometrical, iconic or seemingly random shapes. But [...] integrated in these works characterized by an extreme dispersion and discontinuity, there is a more semantically based study of the connotations of the title word, its referential qualities, a drifting through its historical, social and imaginative surroundings.

This manifestation of *Soldatmarkedet*, consists entirely of the lower-case “t” and spaces, and within those elements, Aasprong has created a text which occupies the public space of geography and architecture of the page.

Roberto de Vicq de Cumptich’s *Men of Letters and People of Substance* (David R. Godine Publisher, 2008) takes a playful position towards visual poetry. Instead of metaphorically constructing portraits of writers and famous personalities though literary description, de Vicq projects those writers’ media back upon them. Born in Brazil—but now a resident of New York City working in graphic– and book–design—de Vicq works in a richly illustrative style, using typefaces to create portraits of famous authors made entirely out of the letters of their names. Each portrait is made out of a suitable, characteristic typeface—from the blocky Ziggurat typeface used for Ayn Rand to the flourished Nuptial Script of Gustave Flaubert With *Bembo’s Zoo* (2000), de Vicq crafted a menagerie of animals, each in the typeface Bembo, using only the letters in each’s animal’s name. De Vicq has more anthropological prey in *Men of Letters and People of Substance*. With this volume, de Vicq continues under a similar constraint, using only the letters in each author’s name—and includes a listing of the frequency of each letter’s usage.

As an example, de Vicq’s portrait of Kurt Vonnegut is crafted in the flourished script “Aja” capturing Vonnegut’s playful, fanciful style in a typeface of his time. Just as much of Vonnegut’s prose engaged with self-examination and personal history, de Vicq’s portrait of Vonnegut uses only the letter’s in Vonnegut’s own name (2 K’s, 3 u’s, 8 r’s, 3 t’s, 4 V’s, 4 o’s, 7 n’s, 1 e and 4 g’s) created a self-reflexive textual portrait. *Men of Letters and People of Substance* is a light-hearted book, but one that is a useful introduction to shaped poetry and portraiture will appeal to enthusiasts of unusual writing, graphic design, and the visual arts.

Donato Mancini’s *Æthel* (New Star Books, 2007) is Mancini’s second book of poetry and his first solely dedicated to visual poetry. With *Æthel*, Mancini—a resident of Vancouver—dedicates his eye to the combination of letterforms into abstract patters, which at their finest echo the organic shapes of Henry Moore sculptures. *Æthel* is a beautifully designed book, with an excellent use of white–space which compliment the poems’ cool design. That cool design, I think, is the book’s only drawback. *Æthel*’s poems are, for the most part topnotch, but the book is a bit repetitive. I would like to see Mancini challenge himself further than the poems in *Æthel* by switching up the construction and methodology. The resultant poems are often of organic form, and several in fact include the images of hands forming abstracted sign–language gestures—but these organic forms are clearly designed using technology which marginalizes the poet’s hand. Mancini’s first book, *Ligatures*, was broader in its execution, showing several different compositional strategies, than *Æthel* is, but the poetic within *Æthel* is stronger, though over-extended. I eagerly await his third book to see if these two forms can temper each–other.
Gunnar Wærness’s *Bli verden* (Forlaget Oktober, 2007) is one of the strongest books of visual poetry I have seen in a number of years. Wærness—a native of Trondheim, Norway—has combined a lyric sensibility with hand-made collage in a way which seamlessly joins the two. Wærness’s collages—which are created by hand with scissors and glue—are a disturbing, surrealistic landscape created from classical etchings and medical illustrations and create the ground upon which the poems (written in a combination of English and Norwegian) are placed as both labels and as speech-bubbles arising from these nightmarish figures. The combination of a lyric sensibility and surrealist collage challenge the beauty often associated with a lyric voice, while also adding much to the possibilities of collage within a poetic milieu. By having his imaginary, collaged, creatures voice lines such as “In the middle of all words shines the I”, Wærness undermines the assumptions of speaking associated with the lyric “I”—his work is a picture perfect combination of text and image, using a tradition of European visual-poetry and collage in a way which challenges in any language.

James Carl’s *Content 1.0* (Mercer Union / Art Metropole, 2002) is a brilliant interrogation of language as a ‘container’ for meaning. Carl has created a pair of typefaces which transform the 26 characters of English into the component plastic parts for containers of solvents and cleaning products, and then has provided with the book, a CD which contains the font itself. Letters here are scrubbed of meaning, having been submitted to a scouring by the very products they are meant to hold. *Content 1.0* reduces the alphabet to a parade of detergent bottles, bleach containers, soap dispensers, and other hygiene products. Freed of semantic value, the letters are now products (as many theorists already postulated) awaiting consumption and, ultimately, recycling into more of the same.

Martin Högström’s *TRANSFUTURA* (OEI editör, 2005) creates a series of interstitial forms which occur between the characters of the 26-letter alphabet. While the bulk of the book is in Norwegian (although it may be translated soon), an English reader will be challenged by the work that Högström has done creating his new typeface “Transfutura” whereby the spaces between letters are, “pataphysically, a segue—way, a snapshot of movement. Through a series of charts, Högström devises the interstitial letters for every letter combination in both majuscule and miniscule forms of *Futura*, thereby creating *Transfutura*. *TRANSFUTURA* is a tour-de-force creation of the poetic intersection between poetry and graphic design, literally transforming the language we use. While many poets purport to change how we see language, how we represent ourselves, few have literally done so. Högström is one of those few.

René Siegfried’s *The Serif Fairy: Explorations in the World of Letters* (Verlag Hermann Schmidt Mainz, 2006 / Mark Batty Publishers, 2007. Translated by Joel Mann) is a playful children’s book which contains within its whimsical story an examination of the style encapsulated in different typefaces. Similar to de Vicq’s *Men of Letters and People of Substance*, *The Serif Fairy* creates an entire world out of type (with a small flourish of colour for scale) and then indicated to the reader which letters (and in what quantity) were used to craft the environment. The adventures of the Serif Fairy, “a clever little letter-fairy,” in search of her magical left wing leads her through Garamond Forest, past the Zentenar Gate, to a short residence in Futura City (which makes me wonder if Martin Högström has visited that metropolis) and ultimately to Lake Shelley. Each of these locales is built entirely with fonts which embody the different environs (whether they be the Germanic black-letter of Zentenar Gate, the modernist sheen of Futura in Futura City or the scripted romanticism of Shelley Andante Script at the shores of Lake Shelley). Playful, enjoyable … but this conceit has been done with greater acumen in de Vicq’s *Bembo’s Zoo*.

ottar ormsstad’s *bokstavteppekatalogen* (gallery briskeby, 2007) is a real triumph. ormsstad has a style which is very traditional, and would not be out of place in one of the classic anthologies of concrete poetry like Solt’s 1968 volume *Concrete Poetry: A World View*. Despite this traditional style, ormsstad’s work uses Indesign to breathe fresh life into this clean form. ormsstad’s 24-page collection which varies from lyrical abstractions to beautifully rippling Op Art canvases which undulate in way reminiscent Victor Vasarely’s work. By manipulating the kerning of blocks of texts almost imperceptively, ormsstad uses letters to create the appearance of movement. ormsstad’s work is difficult to locate, but is worth the effort as *bokstavteppekatalogen* exemplifies a simplicity rarely exhibited.

DB
2 Poems
by Brian Henderson

Portrait
The night is a liquid dark, reeds lay themselves in silver lines down on its black surface, the slowly returning abundance of earth, though a stump shines like the burning of the towers of a ruined city, and, like dragonflies, fuel-less helicopters are arrayed on the jetty.

There is a fear someone may enter the room. Inside, a man, someone unknown, whose face is a stop-frame film of emotion: just holding back tears, smiling hopefully through them, rinse of panic, hint of an attempt to muster resolve, to lay itself down on what is held dear, and what is still held at a distance. And whatever it is, returning, that is looking at him, says, I am not a woman, I am a language become soul, arrayed in splinters of thirst.

Poisoned
Broken into and lost across the light grid, holed up in the century after the first flowering plants, the ruined chimneys, rubbled roads having long ago exhausted the nutation of the carbon zone, the member states' slab suction under the spell of the luminous night streaming scimitared moons, I'm waist deep in gragger grass, the barcode burning on my shoulder just beneath the awareness threshold, the forest up ahead filled with night fog, shadows a writing on the greensilver I've forgotten how to read, each leaf a lens. If only my map were still alive. The girl's poisoned lipstick – I would not normally have said anything. So I follow the hoops of stormcells windmilling on the rise, and from there down below in the valley to my right, rising on stilts in the middle of the river, the lacrimal, ethmoid, parietal house, about to fold up and dive like a pelican into the river's memory's slow tuolene.

Brian Henderson's Nerve Language (Pedlar Press), was a finalist for the 2007 Governor General's Award