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# THE ROAD BETWEEN NOW AND THEN

by
Kim Brown

A Creative Writing Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
Through English Language, Literature and Creative Writing
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for
The Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2001

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fact that nothing can exist in a vacuum is a basic principle of science, and it is one that holds true for writers as well - no matter how isolated the act of writing may make them. For this reason acknowledgments were created to rectify the problem; with them, writers may note those individuals who have unique relevance during the creation of a project and give them the thanks they deserve.

First and foremost, thanks to my advisor Dr. Alistair MacLeod who has been a source of constant encouragement, wisdom, and solace during my time at Windsor. He also taught me many valuable things about bears and the letter "n".

Heaps of thanks also to Dr. Susan Holbrook and Dr. Adrian van den Hoven who, brave souls that they are, agreed to sit on my committee and provided welcome insights into my work.

To my fellow writers in 26-590 at the University of Windsor, you know who you are, you have my thanks and admiration. Also the grad students at Windsor what can I say but I made it! Woo Hoo! And so will all of you if you haven't already. David what can I say except "pine"?

To my parents, Charles and Doris, (well, technically, Mom and Dad) thanks for knowing I needed to follow my own divergent path, and be so caring and responsive to your "arty" daughter. You two kept me going when I couldn't stand the smell anymore. Thanks also to the siblings, especially Michelle, whose house in Toronto was a welcome refuge from the wilds of Windsor.

To the crew from UPEI, I wish I could include all of the anecdotes attached to the names but I'm afraid a list will have to suffice, with the thought you all know why you're there: Lesley, Shannon, Geoff, Irene, Barbara, Catherine, Terry, Stephen, Stephen (yes, there are two), Emilie, April (Twig), and most definitely, the ever-wise Tara. Also Richard Lemm, who accepted me into my first creative writing class, thank-you for helping me put my feet on this path and encouraging me to keep them there.

To Molly and Jane who both, at different time and places, pulled me back.

To Wendy and Jane, thanks for picking up the phone when I was on the other end, and becoming two true friends.

To Ashley, Corey, and Carol, who listened to me rant, talked me down, and made me believe it would be okay, thanks for all those marvellous Monday night conversations.

Finally, I thank LEP, whose wit and wisdom is nonpareil and who, to quote Dar Williams, "gave me the language that keeps me alive." Thanks for helping me find my voice, and listening when I did.

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**Abstractions I**

**"Life is but thought."**
**– Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Academia

danger comes suited in
eminence, black robed;
forward thinking genius lends
gaseous ideas merit, consideration, when
hedged in terms of
ignominious, unintelligible
jargon.

keen thoughts become
labourious under silence;
muted, they linger,
notes of sadness their
over-arching theme.

persistence, under-valued, creates
quelled voices with dissonant thoughts,
ranting interiors,
sequential images:
terror filled, teeth ridden
undertow of self deprecated thought.

vagabond scholar,
wearied under piles of
xeroxed manuscripts
young yet yearning though
zombied by indifference.

abandoned by mentors, thrown
beyond the known,
corpses become candidates.

White Noise
*(after Don Delillo)*

white noise is made
of black letters
on delicate pages.
wintery words,
the constant flutter
of thoughts.

this abstraction,
not concrete,
tangible,
background –
yet it flows forward;
this unseen influence,
without image
no picture
on which to cling,
but it remains
comprehensible.

Simplicity

single thought
interred beneath
multiple voices
pleads to be heard;
lolls under
implicit
chaos,
intends freedom,
triggers
yearning for peace.

Beastiary

Jekyll and Hyde are in each of us,
killer and healer; the killer,
lying in wait
mindful of opportunity,
needing only a moment
of weakness to appear.

piercing is Hyde's speciality.
quickens the inner anger,
rests only when spent.

then Jekyll, kinder but foolish,
unwilling to abandon,
vainly chained in propriety,
weak in refusal,
xenolithic in pride
yearns for higher knowledge.

zoo-like interior this
animal/human
brings forth rage when necessary,
control for the illusion when required.

divide between the two
exists only by
force of will;
gains credence in authority,
hinders realisation of
individuality.

Meditation

xenophobia can be positive. there
you separate the irrelevant wishes from
zealous emptiness.

ability to exist in solitude transforms,
becomes a powerful statement.
capable alone, you move
drift into another plane.
ethereal in nature, you are
formless in composition.
growth is limitless.

hidden from prying eyes,
insolent gazes,
jarring actualities, you dance
kelp-like under the ocean of thought,
leaning in currents of dual realities.

meaning is self-created, shifts.
nuances accommodated in thought
overcome their failures in language,
provide regions of concepts
quintessential, yet undefined.

reason is fear's synonym;
side-lined by dread, sheer
terror creates earthbound minds.

unencumbered by systems,
visionaries rise
where wisdom descends.

Unforbidden

sweet, sweet sorrow
without a gentle benediction;
mourning, unforbidden,
in a world of change.
hours pass beneath
the silence of parting;
unable to prevent their movement
they soldier on into what
becomes future, unaware
of the dark quality of their passage.

Shortest Distance

least space between two
points is a straight line,
though divergence into curves
creates art.

nothing travels faster than light,
save the pen on the page
when thoughts collide
to form insights.

nothing can fall faster
than 9.8 metres
per second squared, except
the egos of froggy sopranos and every-day writers.

the sciences quantifications,
fail.

**Narrativity**

**"But my fathers knew of wind and tide,**
**and my blood is Maritime,**
**and I heard an old song down on Fisherman's Wharf,**
**can I sing it just one time?"**
**– Stan Rogers**

Voices

two different cities,
the same woman lives;
two people, two bodied
physically separate
but same voiced.

both small,
frightened to speak
not clear, not decisive, no;
a quiet sing-song
of harsh subjects
as if loud voices added
insult to experiences
safely folded into fiction.

the same woman lives
in two cities;
two thousand kilometres
add distinction
not difference.

Nowhere is Night

Night is frail.

Rising in the East at sunset
it creeps, seeks to consume
raise a canvas over the Earth
like ancient sailors at the Coliseum
on rainy days, never
realising modernity's lust
for light.

Humans are not night's creatures.

Wanting to overcome their failing
eyes by creating constant light,
rather than enduring original darkness;
city dwellers never know the absence
of night, ambient lamps banish
the stars, make black
a pale purple-gray above a scape
where someone works under
Orion, never knowing it.

## On Holding My Niece

*(for Nicole)*

Newly formed face, still defining itself;
barely a quarter year separates
those darting eyes from an internal landscape
the steady two-four rhythm of your mother's body.
Everyone looks to you, sees others
negating your uniqueness
in favour of the familiar
not realising you are another Venus.
Fully formed at four months you sit
propped on a lap, finger sucking;
announcing your opinions by gesture,
gurgles, no doubt of your personhood.
You sit in strong arms belonging
to a once indifferent woman
amazed at your maturity.

Second Childhood

*"Dance your cares away*
*Worry's for another day*
*Let the music play*
*Down in Fraggle Rock"*

– Theme from Fraggle Rock

music floods from speakers:
washes the party-goers away
from casual conversations.
those under thirty
eyes brighten, suddenly
eight years old.

hearing the theme
they remember Sundays
CBC and the world
of caverns and talking trash
heaps, pure magic that lead
to Monday's fraggle searches.

the lyrics resonate,
instantly analysed by adult
minds remembering
play, dance, absence
of worry.

There are Still Bears

Canadian mythology proves
true but twisted;
a country known
more for snow's blinding
white than bears' black.
There are both.
Rat-pace of life passes
through woods too close
to cities, to people
who feel immune
protected by urban wisdom
when venturing, forgetting
there are still bears, that even
when the snow melts
the land is still dangerous.

Windsor, ON

once nowhere,
now here stands
the European's city, with three hundred
years of western tradition
and native graves.

undermined by those in search
of salt under the river, standing
semi-solid next to states
united by eighteenth century ideals
and their failure.

another country
enfolds this city
unaware of its difference
mutability its soul definition.

this far south
Canada is the distant neighbour.

Living Next to the Fire Station

coming back,
disappointed, trucks
that roared red down
a street cleared for their passage.
creep back quiet:
no sirens, no lights
only the clank of ladders
against their holders marks
their return, a fire fought
or simply a false alarm
regardless they come back the same.

The Mountain

Everest remains standing,
forbidding but accessible.
groups line its slopes, moving
higher their only goal.

intent only on the summit they leave
judgement at base camp;
Katmandu becomes a fiction
lying outside the necessity of height.

movement skyward labours, breath
needs help, but the weight
of enough bottled oxygen is too great; they leave a few
phalanxes of empty casks, monuments to
quelled attempts and
rash desire.

single minded madness
triumphs in every effort, the
uniquely human desire for conquest.

vanity on the mountain
weakens the flesh;
xenoliths batter the body
yields blood, then the death
zone becomes more than a name.

arrogance re-interpreted becomes drive,
boasts of corpses
climbed over simply to
descend.

Sympathy for the Jumpers

two signs on either end of the Bloor Viaduct
invite the jumpers' call for help,
rather than a ten second dive for death
assured by hundreds of feet
and solid rock beneath the pavement below
a seemingly simple bridge.

the bridge is popular
with commuters rushing to work,
and jumpers who try not to think
of the landing; it's quick,
but not painless.

in those moments of debate,
jumpers may find comfort in the last graceful
salute, as their feet and lives gloss
over the railing, feel the subway shimmy
and know they may have an audience,
briefly.

free fall begins and though it's the ground
they fear most, their hearts may stop first;
burst by the world rushing
toward them in death, as it had in the lives
they couldn't absorb.

jumpers may realise it was that moment
they had wanted to escape.

**Journeys**

**"The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality,
and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are."
– Samuel Johnson**

Embarkation

make a new path,
not worrying about the destination
open-eyed into an unknown world.

present fear will pass
quieted by your resolve.
rare is the person
striving towards the future
trouble-free,
unburdened by doubt.

various thoughts plague
well up unbidden,
xanthine fears of your own making
you will overcome them all;
zeal your best weapon.

all begun years ago, it
brought this same anxiety
creeping into the veins,
dealing doubt.
even then you knew
fear,
galloped ahead anyway.

here is a similar moment,
instantly recognisable,
jarring;
knowing this will serve
leaving you well prepared.

Under Achieving

look past the obvious,
meander down the road
never taken;
open the door,
place your feet on
quick sand and find they
rest firm.

standing alone,
terrified
under the strain
various forms of past
weigh heavily;
x is not a part of this problem:
you are.

zoned as a space of fear,
all thought
becomes personified;
candour essential,
deepens the meaning of the
ever-repeating word –
fraud, and
guarantees the same evaluation
heard since childhood, where
incompetence is the only expectation.

Chatham, Ontario, 6:53

early houred realisation,
a place I've only
passed through
going, moving, leaving
someone, some place
I'd grown comfortable.

leave taking remains
constant,
though draining

double-ended good-byes
create absences
on both sides

constancy, the domain
of the traveller, demands
trapped energy
released unwillingly
in shaking shoulders.

comfort
becomes memory
through stares
out a hammer-equipped
window into early morning

darkness
like thought, blankets
action
becomes foolish
in a needy phone call, a wish
to be two bodied
two placed
missing neither
wanting both.

Friendship

only this moment, though
precious, will
quickly pass
reminding of
similar moments that
time rolled over
until memory
veers back to the present
with a quick smile.

xenial grin
your companion's
zealous understanding,
as your eyes
blink away the glaze
completely understanding
divergent thoughts
even during conversation.

friends make such
gentle judgements
happy to oblige
instead of railing or
jumping to conclusions
kindreds accept
lapses realising
momentary failings are
not cruel.

## Baggage

Photographs would tell
another version.

One departure,
a Christmas gift unwrapped
arms entwined
a push up and forward
made necessary
by too much baggage.

The other leaving shows
the same bags,
other arms
a gesture in a language
neither speaks, though
both understand its
salute, the thought of the fingers.

Photos remove the sound
of steel on ice,
the guttural
chant of sorrow
keeping only
a semblance of events.

## Advice to Anyone Listening

cry out, scream, something;
did no one tell you
everyone must be heard?
fight them
gain ground against whoever *they* are.

hunger brought you this far, your
innocence faded, surrounded by
jaded contemporaries,
kind but really uninterested
learning but not wise,
meaning well they'll listen
needing to tell their stories in return.

open-hearted may not be your way, the heart can be
pierced, run through, leaves it
quietly beating around a sharpened word that
remains in you.

still, closure to the world eliminates necessary
tension
uncounted moments lost to fear.

varied paths, both dangerous

watch your step

xiphoid traps are everywhere,
yattering heads with no ears
zealots
always wanting a new victim
be willing to find a voice.

**Instabilities**

**"Since you ask, most days I cannot remember"**
**– Anne Sexton**

Dissolving

seemingly solid under observation
a mirror shows a complete unit:
a form with all appendages attached.
yet back-lit, the body's frailties
become apparent,
tangible.

that subtle shift in source
bends light through once-muscled arms
illuminates frayed nerves, shaking legs.
self-created miseries wrack a once vibrant
living creature into a shade.

translucent under examination
the form slips away under light
grows weaker, until fading completely.

Mind Over Matters

the articulation of fear
fails, falls hard against
tightened muscles, spasmed lungs.
like razors over goose-bumped skin
thoughts nick, draw blood
from a shaking body, taut-strung.

dominant neuroses remove logic;
they become a hand wrapped around the throat
bruising the skin, crushing bones
under the weight of long-term dread.

Sleep Soliloquy

not the sleep of the just,
just sleep, after forty-five
hours of constant consciousness;
watching hours pass, rise
and fall of sun and moon,
cyclic certainty in sky
if not in body's circadian rhythm.

reward lies in coming
sleep, sliding into this mortal coiled
in fetal position, tired beyond
exhaustion; the body and mind agree
embrace the nothingness.

On Sexton's "Wanting to Die"

like mercury for syphilis
suicide is a damning
answer to a difficult
question, though temptation
to make the cure worse
than the problem rises
from over diagnosis:

there is no cure for life
it is untreatable.

Synopsis of a Breakdown
*(with thanks to Kate Bush)*

waking, she expected the blood
had drained from her veins
unto the rug she had slept on,
for need of floor's safety
rather than the comfort
of a soft bed and clean sheets.

finding herself intact, she rose,
walked, still dreamt of night's
snake embrace, growing tighter,
constricting her movement to jerks
of near-dead limbs; she wandered
into the space of rooms, clutching
her abdomen, thinking her innards would leap
fully-formed through her palimpsest skin.

she knew nothing but the din
of her own voices, and the fear
they would never stop.

Therapy
*(For Jane)*

this is not a confession.

if you want the record
of my sins, you'll have to crawl
inside, brave the darkness of a mind unwilling
to know itself. You'll find resistance,
to you and all you mean. The perfection
you seem to offer is not welcome here,
even if it's wanted. What do you know?

only what I chose to tell and fiction
is far easier than reality. I create
myself and my words are all you can know.
the poems are the distillation
of all my fictions.

they offer nothing more real than I.

## Dream of the Lethe

erased by one sip
to dip a cup, forget
all those moments
defined in mind as failure.

unburdened, yes, but unrealised
would I leave those waters less
than I arrived, a person
still but without those times
of bruises, bumps, and deeds
unkind, to others and myself.

I leave the cup upon its shelf
that somehow stands on the banks
in the dream that gives a choice
not what it seems.

I leave as I came:
troubled but sane.

**The Lunatic Suite**

**"He who has imagination without learning has wings but no feet."**
**– Joubert**

Meeting

You slid up behind me
saddle shoed, granite voiced
pushed your hand into the small
of my back whispered
"You have a lovely neck."

Poor choice of lines
in the lobby of the Orpheum after
a two am showing of Dracula.

I thought sure you were
Bela himself come
to take me away
from a life of stale raisinettes
and sticky floors, taking
me into the black and white world
more vivid than
the colours I knew.

## Dating

The week you thought you were Jesus
my stomach knotted
square on shank.
Radiant energy, choirs of angels
who resented the attention you gave me.

Dining became a spectacle
you kept changing the water to wine.
You tried to comfort me
but my hair caught your halo.

To comfort me you suggested an outing:
a walk along the water;
then you walked across the harbour
calming the rough sea waves
but not my doubts.

I questioned, you replied
"I am that I am."
I feared then you were
your father's son.

Marriage

The ring you slid
unto my finger had
been bought that morning
at the dollar store.

As we enjoyed
the reception, remembering
to pay the fifty
cents for the big fries and drink
I noticed my finger was
green.

None of our parents were
there or friends, but I did wear white,
underwear and your tie matched
my socks and though Niagra Falls
was an option, we honeymooned
in a tent in the living room,
only read about mosquitos.

A Failed Marriage

We sit
across a tasteful room.
I try explanations;
you pretend to listen
as your eyes slide
down columns of type.

I see forty small men
dancing on your shoulders
laughing at my attempt
or possibly a cartoon.

You glance at me, see
my mouth move
but not the axe wielding maniac
behind my left shoulder
snickering at us
while casually running his thumb
over his blade.

So I stop.
Just in time to see the maniac
and the forty men look
to you, then to me, and then cross
the room to consult. I recline
and raise my coffee cup to my lips
anticipation overtakes bewilderment.

Gathered around the coffee table
the maniac and the forty men sit
on the floor and debate us.

They cannot agree.
The forty men are content
to dance every time I speak
while the maniac wants to hack
us to bits, once and for all.

Since they cannot agree
they all leave, to reach consensus
over a nice bottle of French wine

as I sip my coffee and you think
I'm still talking.

Old Age

The joy of deafness
for you is not listening
as I ramble. I see
you grinning as I speak
anyway, just to hear
the sound of a voice.

Growth of grey hair sent
away my minions
and now that you can't hear
rather than not listen my
maniac is impotent
lost his axe.

He sits quietly, looks
enviously at my needlepoint
At least I have something
other than watching the wallpaper peel.

When I decided not to leave
I knew it wasn't for love
or sex. I stayed to watch
you slip, sag and sink into the grave.

Death

to be without
you after thirty
years releases only
parts of me.

our fights silenced
our phantoms dispersed,
your death took
my imagination
into your grave
left me without

my anger at your aging
or even your body
only the grave stone stands
makes no reply
to my questions.

**Abstractions II**

**"Our thoughts are ours, their end none of our own."**
**– Shakespeare**

## A Problem of Personification

Anger neither screams nor cries.
It is not hot nor white nor red.
It is not a toothy beast
lurking in the mind's cobwebbed corner.

Anger is weight.
Dead in mass, it is unwelcome ballast.
It sinks thoughts fathoms below
speech's surface.

Conversation

fine words
grate, leave
hyperbolic statements
intentional falsehoods
jagged sentiments.

language no longer a virtue
kills thought,
mangles emotion;
needles fools to action
only when words become
pale shadows of
quintessential thoughts.

reason is a fashion,
slides in and out of favour
trite but true requires the
unconditional surrender to the moment
vaguely stating anything
when precision is required.

x does not mark a verbal spot when
yapping is the only discourse where
*zingers* are high thought.

anger becomes a refuge of once
bold thinkers, left
cold in the vacuum of
dead thought's
enervating conversation.

*Langue* and *Parole*

ultimate power lies in language;
versions of thoughts
written or spoken,
xeroxed eventually
yielding to mass consumption
*Zeitgeist* personified.

all we know is words;
barrage of sounds, signifiers,
consciousness of this fact adds
deep paralysis to thought,
even to the point where it
fails entirely.

gives way to want for numbness,
head emptied
idle preferable to
jumbled, a mass of confusion without
key or map.
language can overwhelm
move the individual into the many
never realising this communion
opens possibility.

presence of language
quickens the evolution of the mind,
reeks havoc on ineffability
signals to the multitude
the power of the word.

Fear

just keep moving
never feeling, fritter
away time curled
in a ball, safely
somnambulant
easier, safer and safety
is important. Danger
is not the potential man
in the back of the car, waiting
at night. It's not the darkness around
you, it's interior .

## Directions for Soup

*(for A. MacLeod)*

metal cylinder
full, closed
inside: secrets
self-contained
sea-born world.

remove the sky
view the realm
beneath – thick
liquid; swirled islands
an ever shifting
universe.

world turned on head
falls blind onto
metal enclosure
heated by unearthly
fire.

tidal wave
violent motion
and within a two
minute eon,
a lovely lunch.

Time

before now, lay then,
consider time,
demarcation is an issue.

enough thought leaves
feeble remnants of expired events:
grunts in small spaces, ill lit rooms.

heavy hands worn
intrepid, though aged, note the passage
jeer at suggestions of failure.

keep moving, a halt signals inadequacy
lingering indicates ignorance, a belief in
mortal supremacy over inevitability.

naked before the world are lines
over eyes, around mouths, happily ignored as
pride leads a merry dance forward.

quest is a dirty word;
requires whispers, allows no admission of the
shocks of passing days on the body.

tests suggested, money expended
unavailability a non-issue to those filled
with promises of striking back.

xeric Arizona becomes appealing
youth gone, face etched
zenith reached and descended from.

another string cut.

**A Man(y) Splendoured Thing?**

**"In every parting there is an image of death."**
**– George Eliot**

Lust

never ending agony
overwhelming desire
pleads for release
quickening the blood.

rages in the body
silence coherent
thought.

under this weight,
violence is inevitable
when need is so strong.

xstasy is no drug
yearning converts to pain

zeal is not
all from one look,
barely noticed

crowned in a moment
desire becomes
entire whole
feeds off itself
gains strength
holds against logic
itself, is
jagged edged though
kinder than death.

## Tender Mercies

groans echo,
hit walls, stop only then.
intense pleasure
jumbles logic.

kinetic
limbs entwine,
makes need desperate
numbs thought
only values
present pleasure
quickens pulses;
restless in desire though
safe in lover's arms
tired, spent.

united in flesh
veins pulse,
would break the skin
x-ray vision unnecessary
you see the perfection

zenith reached,
all in the space of hours
beneath now sodden sheets

can two bodies
dance with two minds
effortless in communion
fascinated in flesh?

Re-vision

with you, I confused my myths
at once and every time
different but dangerous.

you were my sweet-voiced Circe;
I, Odysseus tied to the mast.
not for my safety
for your pleasure.

Attraction

pleasant voice
quick wit
ready smile
simple taste
transient lifestyle;
union of these
visionary qualities
would make a heart mark
x on your forehead
yelp audibly, turn life into a
zany cartoon.

anyone may apply
but remember,
candour is required
divorcees acceptable
everyone welcome who
finds life absurd,
given the fact
humans think they're in charge
i.e. ultimate creation of god/evolution.

jangled nerves, ok,
keep in mind
love is difficult
many fail;
needs will be met
only in time.

The Lovers

heart held in hand
beating barely, as he wraps
his fingers tighter
around her wrist.

she would leave, refuse
submission to biological
drives for the sake
of propriety.

hearing only blood
in her ears, feeling
only his touch, her fear
of him is a rabbit's
seeing a fox's gaping mouth.

she was warned
about him, his rampant
desire, completely unchecked.

yet when he hears
her ragged breath
from fear and desire,
he knows not to let go.

kiss

words
failing
falling;
sound,
rising
like
ashes;
want
and
need
are
not
the
same
thing.

close,
like
hands
touching,
holding
linked
briefly
like
pictures
always
there.

**Prose-iac**

**"Growth is the only evidence of life."**
**– John Henry, Cardinal Newman**

Dear Maude

Never read the books nor saw the musical
though I know the words to the ice cream song. Do
you know, Maude, what's been done? Your fiction
is truth now: Anne's on the licence plate and tourists
ask where she's buried. What of the stories never told?
Ones where orphans remained orphans and twelve hours
in the fields ruled out flights of fancy. That's not all Maude:
not everyone was Protestant or English; the Scots, the French
and the Mi'kmaq were all there long before the Loyalists and
the ancestors of the IODE. You wrote what you knew, I
know, put a happier face on your troubled life but here's
the problem, Maude. The happy face wasn't true for everyone
and now your fiction has eclipsed the history.

this poet
*(for Susan)*

darkened café on Sunday afternoon leaves
the poet standing in a pool of red light;
carefully conscious, this poet's self-comparison
to heat rack French fries lingers
over the audience of thankless
listeners, staring at the body of the woman bathed
in winking red, thinking of the images spilling
like a cup too full, expanding in the heat of light and words
while the poet herself grows
into her language; her voice becomes
an exultation of word that would convert
a vampire to solid food
with the fervour of humour and honesty,
never realising that she, delicately
warmed in light, has such power.

False Charms

I watched for ten minutes as she tried to find
the vein in her arm. I know you'll ask:
what were you feeling? The truth is I'm uncertain.
Fascination perhaps, as a vein rose. The belt around
her bicep had forced it to surface: dolphin blue against
ashen skin. More colour as faint red, the blood of her
body washed back into phial, followed quickly by the plunger
determinedly pushed all the way down. Revulsion? No.
I had been taught to love her false charms: the chalk skin,
the high relief cheekbones, the circles beneath her eyes so dark
no foundation could cover them. She was a death beauty.

OAS Conference, Windsor, ON – June 2000

This may not be precisely hell, but the helicopters
circling give it that sound – the steady thump
like the wailing of lost souls – vaguely rhythmic,
echoing across two countries, signalling the importance
of the event. This city is a police state. I hear
the foot falls of SWAT teams drilling as I walk
from the bus stop and I think of the helicopters
and know a week ago all that I heard was the sound
of traffic and squirrels. Now the drum beat of drilling police
teams and the wailing of sirens are the harmony
to the vague protestors in bright colours; pinks, reds,
blues, deep contrast to campus green and police black.
This is a fugue without end, a battle between point
and counterpoint and I am not a member of the orchestra;
not the politician's bombastic brass, police's percussion,
nor the entangling strings of the protestors. Unwilling
listener, I am trapped in the auditorium that was a city
a week ago. I wait for the mad music to stop
and the musicians to become people again.

Beethoven in the Moonlight

There is more to music than simple notes, rhythms, and scales. Saying that music has a soul is anthropomorphic and a cliché. But music contains more than its bare bones, its structure. The composer is communicating what the listener is willing to hear. But it takes a listener, a skilled or at least an imaginative listener to hear what may lie under the notes. For example:

Imagine that you have just returned home from a long, annoying day at a job you despise. It is summer and the night is warm, hot actually, too hot to sleep. It's nearly midnight because you've been working overtime and there's an hour commute. Your boss has spent the day berating you, as usual, and you find that sleep will not come. At least not in your house so instead you grab a pillow and blanket and head for your patio. You live in the country so you feel perfectly safe. You also take a few candles, a portable CD player, a bottle of your favourite liquor and a CD of Maurizio Pollini playing three of Beethoven's sonatas.

There is a full moon and as you light the candles you realise that you don't need them, it's that bright. You pour a glass of, let's say scotch, and settle back into the lounger. You slip the headphones over your ears and begin to listen. At first it's the number thirteen. *Sonata quasi una fantasia*. After the day you've had, a little fantasy may work wonders so you listen, even though it's not your favourite. You take time to drink the scotch you've poured, which you realise is probably a triple at least but you don't care. You've decided to call into work fed up and you think tomorrow is supposed to be your day off anyway. You pour another scotch even though you can still feel the effects of the first, the heat in your chest and heaviness of your feet, and you stare at the moon and wait, wait for the music that is perfect for the night.

It is the next piece on the CD, the number fourteen. You realise that you will finally hear the moonlight sonata in the moonlight.

But it is not moonlight you think of as the opening bars of the first movement hit your ears. You listen to it once all the way through and then fumble for the button to repeat the piece in its entirety. You hear something you've never heard before, and though you think it may be because you've had three triple scotches in less than an hour, the music strikes you as being far more than music. You realise that music can be the physical world. Beethoven is communicating with you alone as you listen and you partner him as he works his music over, on, around and about you. As you listen, the moonlight sonata becomes sex abstracted, written in pure sound rather than clumsy fumbling.

The first movement, the *adagio sostenuto*, is foreplay. It's the repetitious variations on the same themes: the kisses on the pulse points, the whispers in the darkness. It's the movement of two people. It's a slow, dull ache for each other.

The *allegreto*, the second movement, is the beginning of the consummation, the steady movement toward the same goal. It's the full tongue kisses, the miscellaneous fingers, the ride to the *presto agitato*.

And *agitato* is an understatement. The third movement is hard core fucking. Trills up and down the scale of the human body, the left hand striking the base notes so hard you fear the keys of the piano and the bones of the body may break. The final triumphant notes strike your ears and you know that the lovemaking is over and both you and Beethoven are satisfied, spent.

You realise that you've drunk the whole bottle and it's three in morning and your neighbours will think you're crazy. The moon has moved in the sky but you're still flooded with moonlight. Beethoven continues to play in your ears and you think you may be ready to listen to the *adagio sostenuto* again, just to see if the same thoughts will occur, if you will once again hear the play between lovers. And whether or not it's what Beethoven intended, is meaningless, because it's what you heard.

**The Road Between Now and Then**

**"The map appears to us more real than the land."**
**– D.H. Lawrence**

Message from the Sky

overhead,
sound of a jet
a shining sky-mirror
reflecting the day's light;
its exhaust marking a path
between two cities too distant.
the sound signals one sure thing:
leaving.

the sound alone
marks its existence
for one who has never
known it, nor the people aboard.
but I realise, as do they, one certainty:
sometimes you must go.

Land and Water

hearing of the prairies
infinite space,
jacquard fields,
kaleidoscope skies,
limitlessness
means little:
never seen them;
only contemplated
peering through dreams'
quiet mist.

realising imagination's
substitutions
truncates the dreams;
unreality becomes unpalatable
vanishes prairie visions under
water.

xylophonic waves crash
yowling into a steady shore.
zones defined once become
absent in a November storm
brings the Atlantic forward
compels the prairie comparison.

dreams stay rooted in the known;
ever mindful that the prairies appeal
finds no hold
grounds the land in the ocean.

Jealousy

when today you leave
this place, four days by
car, by day, by stops
for cigarettes, coffee
washrooms, bad
take-out, four days will
leave you there
where the world expands
by water; trees dominate
the skyline, and white caps
roll toward land; when today
you leave this place and see
that greater world, stand
look, look longer,
for one who can't see it.

## The Idiot's Lament

*"I take nothing free, and that makes me, an idiot, I suppose."*
– "The Idiot", Stan Rogers

portable poet
who sings to my ears
through an electronic wonder
not in vogue when he died.

a later-day Adam
who knew a world
he wasn't born into better
than century counters.

he named us,
those who leave;
circumstantial victims, thousands
strong, though singularly called

Idiot.

never offending,
regardless of mentality
or education, status, a catch-all
for inter-provincial refugees.

song still sung,
not always drunkenly,
by his preserved voice
and a new generation.

perhaps he thought time
would change the necessity
of leaving. That "The Idiot"
would pass into nostalgia;
an anthem of time past,
not present.

yet twenty years separates
his death from this life,
where his words are found
in bars, where the idiots still gather.

there they sing, inattentive
to bewildered stares
of those who find no communion
in their idiocy.

Free Man in Paris
*(after Joni Mitchell)*

Paris changes location
becomes other
cities, unstable homes in modernity's
transitory lifestyle.

Paris becomes whatever
is distant, shiny
in memory, green in unlived
possibilities.

Paris' freedom remains fixed
in the equation:
distance equals liberation
when x is spirit
and why is the necessity of leaving.

Watching Iron Chef

Connections come unexpected.
Japanese cooking show,
American cable network,
Canadian lobster,
clearly East Coast in origin.

Japanese passion for seafood
brings their buyers to that Island
far from Windsor on the river
where one woman
watching television, smiles,
sees home.

Pilgrim Progressing

I moved;
joined the flood of family
kamikaze migrants
laden with expectations.

mobility means sacrifice;
nobility found in simple living.
one chair in two-bedroom apartment.
people don't visit much.

quirky is the adjective;
rests easy on one
surrounded by books
taken instead of furniture.

unique in origin,
vain in pride,
willing to scream from the roofs
xenial means hospitable!

yearning for something familiar in this
zoo of strange creatures I found,
absolutism falls away
begs a question:
can I exist alone
deliberately separate
even for the place I love?

frailty is a fear
growing in separation,
holding out against evolving fondness.

At Sunset

flourescent glow replaces
the dimming sun and a wood-wind hum
adds to the music of walking.
a prickle of uneasiness
as the neighbourhood declines;
pace quickens, focus shifts
notes the derelicts
buildings and people.

they are foreign.
far from known disintegration:
paint peeling from barns
collapsed roofs on abandoned houses,
overgrown by wild roses and thistles
green overtaking the gray weathered wood.
familiar comparison to "back home" echoes.

the city was unexpected, unexplained.
visits' brevity do not prepare
for permanent habitation.
there is no guide book for moving
for exchanging rural for urban,
the ocean for lakes. Constant comparison
offers no solace: a cement light pole
is no fir tree, however active the imagination.

no one mentioned the smell;
shift from wheat and potato plants
with manure and salt water
to chemicals and exhaust.

six months and the scent of the city
lingers on the skin, deadens the nose.
however unwelcome the city feels,
the smell has become familiar.

## Vita Auctoris

Kim Brown was born in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. After completing her education in the schools of Kensington, Prince Edward Island, she entered the University of Prince Edward Island in 1994. She graduated from UPEI in 1999 with a BA Honours in English. She is currently a candidate for the Master's degree in English Language, Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Windsor, and plans to graduate in Spring 2001.