

Douglas Barbour

Wednesdays'



ALBERTA SERIES #7
above/ground press

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one by one
the white petals fall
catch the light
glitter as they turn

apple & pear tree
stand white & full
some scattering slow

a day or two to go
shining occasional

when sun breaks through

Edmonton 07:15 Wednesday May 28 2003

one and the same plane
lost 4 decades ago

the common sky

octavo Meiosis septet

Panthéon Paris France 2001
's so dark the light 's
a ghost of itself

land of the rising sun raising
some eyebrows this week

unconstitutional

Muto devoted his life to pacifism says
his father devoted himself
to a romantic vision of the war

I could hear & see
much more
while I type
in the early morning light

but stop/time
now

Edmonton 09:11 06 VIII 02

light glows slow
inside cupola's dark
groined curves

or simply pure b&w
on the card

post Camere Illuminati
& Son et Lumière

already past
a late gift
to shine beside

the computer's gleam
screens scramble

& morning light

attracts the eye
again
again

'Panthéon, Paris, France 2001' gelatin silver print,
advertisement for Dianne Bos show:
Edmonton 09:00 August 13 2003

that bright red dot
in the southern sky here

memories encoded

those first bounding steps
my mother reminded me
i had spoken of when very young

she standing in kitchen
unbelieving / yet
we watched together
those leaps in black & white
on TV

(soon to thrust further
to the nearest planet

for sure

& this week
rather
a report on executive failures
even the space station
slowly sinking
while the aging shuttles
& imagination
sit on the tarmac
downed

Edmonton 08:50 27 VIII 03

continual exchange:

how imagination
's eye
now turns toward
ocean's pull
& power

now reaches
to the stars

an almost daily
discipline
two voices
becoming one

& wandering
through each
call & response

again this
morning's
language
minion

Edmonton 08:30 Wednesday September 10/03

cloud cover
s moving fast

a kind
of difference

the moon
slacking

falls behind
slowly to

ward morning
from frost

born north
by winds

rising up
across

the bared
plains

Edmonton October 22 08:19

first snow falling slow
hangs in the air
a curtain drifting there
thickening sight

you see
either the depth of
the lines of or
certain flakes shifting
immediate then
twisting & gone

while slowly the trees
& houses fade
away into
a distance made only
of white descent

as night
gently falls
into place

Edmonton 08:15 October 29/03

watched the man lie
again move as if
on strings

mouth words
once meaningful
demeaned by misuse

lay that wreath
those crocodile tears
a slow march

never learned
in the real
just the bought

and sanitized
all that quick march
sans the lonely dead

Edmonton 08:17 November 12/03

past oral
inscription

after the long
goodbye

an epitaph
etched in stone

the body's exclamations
each muscle rustle
stopped

how having writ
the moving hand
ditto

Edmonton 07:50 November 26/03

a penchant for war
forewarned is
four armed
forces

gone into the dark

a pen chants for peace
for warned is
for ward
ing off

look toward the light

Edmonton 07:40 December 5/03

is the world still with us
at all the planet turns
beneath us impersonal

but not unperturbed
by how the world's
waning law lost

in the snow or sand
plowed through
exploded the idea

thrown out against
that heatdeath of
the mind mined

and blown up out
of proportion
all the freedom

promised and denied
the world spins
its own narrative thread

Edmonton 08:25 Wednesday December 12 2003

'I 'saw'
3? ships
'come' 'sailing'
where?

in time or space
connected as if to

3 ships ply
Gulf waters
guns alert

& long before
3 sails waft
before the wind
trading
 news

& someday
circling that
planet earthly

3 ships seed
hope before
war tears

the fabric
the veil
the faith
to sail

Edmonton 16:25 December 24 2003

What a week!

the body in tatters
flayed
 displayed

in Baghdad
Karbala
Port au Prince
 deployed

the flails of safe belief
fall
the whips of scorn

no body left
to right

'My God how the money flows in'

Edmonton 08:55 Wednesday March 3/04

obdurate'
is one word
only

for a face
pretending strength
behind a lectern
turn

ing away from
what hand
held fact

a then and now
so similar

as the temperature here
falls from spring

as if

as if that 'Fog'
turned hard
into snow

the ground covered
again

whitely here
'the [fall] of
war' blinding sight

over and over
again

Edmonton 09:30 Wednesday April 14 2004

I wanted to
to get there

to get into
the words turned
as if on a lathe

of heaven sent
stutter fall
the way they
took the breath

right out of me

he was older than when
that near shout of
for Christ's sake

got my attention
& got my attention
with words that turned
on a sense of aging
wisdom

how to get there
where I might be
now now I inhale

the same unstale
air he told us we
all must breathe

some
time

(for Robert Creeley)

Wednesday 09:30 April 21 2003

Leaves

trans
lucent let be

lated come into
greening as rain
falls the occasional

parent purify
colour so thin
it slow it grow
it darken now
beyond snow

ference how mind
mends as it moves beyond

position
that the world
goes on despite
& as

endant to blight
what's

left

Edmonton 08:20 Wednesday May 26 2004

such a small dark
mess / age of
discovery repeats

dotting the bright page
in a slow arc
across that reflective
glow the eyes
can't apprehend alone

a sign then
& now a sign

that so small
a defect drains

some light from
the seen

the sense of
all proportion
gone

Edmonton 19:30 Wednesday June 9 2004

a single horn no
two sometimes at once
piano (or that old
fashioned looking
electronic keyboard
bass & drums

the small theatre
small crowd how

lucky

thompson's ghost there
at the end
hovering above
wild blowing in
& out of swing swung free

stepping soft
flying loud
slowing into speeding

there & back again
so often out upon
the many roads

ranging across the world
riveting / ratcheting
through all possibilities

when the saxophonist
grins through his reeds
shares so much with
his rhythm

they with us

the music gives
to everyone

Edmonton 09:20 Wednesday June 30 2004
after hearing Blake Tartare at Jazz City last night

fragmented snapshot
(from David Milne)

When north
train stayed summer

different or far place
old tent settled

moved from reasonable distance
time painted waterlilies
captured in bottles

the waterlilies were excuse

diffuse light

Edmonton Wednesday July 21 2004

the calligraphy
of clouds / plane signs its name in
invisible ink

or the Cézanne lines
below / a geometry
blue green and fading

into the eye's grasp
on paper or canvas / those
shattered surfaces

some walls harbour more
light fractaled on flat entrance
meant denying depth

Edmonton Wednesday August 18 2004

latest news: snapshot haibun

the brand new bright blue gates to the city of Babylon originals
museumed in Berlin hang askew in the rockets' red glare where
are the little goddesses light encased once but gone walkabout
with thieves as Hammurabi and Saddam looked on askance
from the perch in the painted clouds of their muraled eternal
presence incapable of anything more than silent acquiescence
such robbery once the prerogative of kings only only now the
rabble rouse to emulation as beside the dried out riverbed
who weeps for a green garden lost forever in the blown dust
of explosives machine guns the blade in the chinks of stone

Babylon's blue gates
gone down what goddesses dance
for life and love now

Wednesday September 1 2004

Robert & Robert

'the river is quiet
unperturbed'

it is it was
the oyster sticks laid down
just below the waterline

sun or moon
light laid along that smooth
surface

'my double loves touch me
very simply'

their words
across the Hawkesbury
or San Francisco Bay

Robert & Robert singing
a catch

phrase phase
of the tune

Edmonton Wednesday September 15 2004

deceptive simplicity

is not so simple really
deceives with hidden
complications
uses too much power

abuses stations everywhere
cant seem to avoid cant
throws its weight around
slips from reason's grasp

how does faith then insist
on such simple truths
it cannot see
what shadows
every black & white equation

lurking

so deceptively / simply
afloat

Wednesday September 22 2004

just one
just one child
just one child dead
just one child dead just
just one child dead just one
just one child dead just one just

ice in the eye of
such beholders hold
ing such power all
righteous mess all
gone down as

just one child dead
lies there demonstrating
lies there

Wednesday October 13 2004

a white haze hangs
across the city

snow fog pale beauty
s bounty hunted
down

on roads run slick
as oil
2 cars slice blindly
into each other
or the open-eyed
presses the toggle
boom

'accidents happen' or
they don't

do things that way
when blinded by
blighted sun on ice crystals
sand swept by winds
of regime change

the fog of
the fault of
no one in
particular power

checking the crash site
for burnt bodies

the pure white bright
ly tarnished air surrounds

who says who's
to blame

Wednesday October 27 2004

take away
heresy then hearsay
evidence becomes a

wandering gesture
away with words
yes to say

ought to / go
figure what

time to get to
heaven I'm in
even token

war renders the
overlord beyond
reform / laying down
law lawlessly
denies the ground stood upon

Wednesday November 10 2004

'We intend to find ourselves. In the burning city.'
Rachel Blau DuPlessis

But who are 'we'
& what can any one intend
any more as tanks surround us, all to
deliver their salvation. How find
it here or anywhere so saved our selves
have disappeared, gone in
communicado or incarcerate as charred totems, as the
TV cameras roam above the burning
homes & cars, the liberated city.

Wednesday November 24 2004

snowfog's filigree
etched branches / calligraphy
whitely glows against
grey tent sky / beyond the smoke
breath offers to fading moon

Wednesday December 8 2004

'there is a lot of ruin
in a nation'

so much beyond this dark
night sky

white ground
held together by
the slow fall
ing snow flakes
their silence
a veil & reproach

before the gathering ruin
in so many nations
silence alone

no voice
as ever before death

singular or
improbably beyond counting

a few bent notes
blue
hover still
in the bleak air

Wednesday 29.XII.04

an absolute
clarity of air

pastel sky pale
blue falls toward
 an almost unseen green
orange gauze darkling pink
the black crouch of low hill beyond the river

above god
s pared fingernail
 hangs there
 tossed aside

indifferent

to all tidal twists
& turns below

Edmonton Wednesday January 12 2005

mud slides
south or north
coast lines
up such damage un
control

No one can impugn
what has always been
my relation to truth.

& no one does

watch the mud
the slide of

animosity
a relation
in nature
killing some
times

Wednesday January 19 2005

'passion flower'
beyond cold night
opening up &

outwarding off
 that tangent
ial spread of wonder

meant whose fingers meld
the notes
 whose breath
scatters all the possibilities
heartbeating into ears

with just the gentlest brushstroke
shhh sshhhh

the petals fall
 ing
sing

Wednesday February 2 2005

the blue through the bell tower
beckons &
 fades inwards
enclosed as heaven held fast

while all around more blue
hastens outward pale
shadows shift
their possibilities
across the snow
so whitely blued below

St Peter's Abbey Saskatchewan
Wednesday February 10 2004

what worlds float
fragmented washed astray
into & through
lenses held apart

a necessary distance

oil slicks on a northern lake
blue & rainbowed
& sluicing across
a sunburnt arm down south

so a city streets of
river bursting
through first storey windows

the broken
the lost
the gone

silence only
a rhetoric sufficient to

the washed away

August 31 2005

Snap – ancient & modern

Then the 'Babylonians themselves say
owing to the great size of the city

the outskirts were captured
without the people in the centre

knowing anything
about it' But 'Babylon

was now doomed
to destruction'

and now these words & the ruins
they celebrate are but craters

in sand stretched far away
walls fallen in then & elsewhere

but others new built
beyond that rusty horizon

where some prepare to cull
the usual suspects

Wednesday April 5 2006

semper empirical
the return each year
transcends pessimism

first phantoms of
other springs arrive
in their translucence

something new derive
a newest green
transitory gleam

as the trans sports
into fuller summer

16 V 07

World full of trouble
but Planet keeps on

keeping small things
bird on a wire cheeping
in bright sun lit

& in their nest upon the hydro
pole eaglets squall
hidden still
grey mother hovering

male's aloof white head
impervious to cries & traffic noise
gazing out upon the river
bridge fields the small
running food to come

(Grand River, Cambridge Ontario)
27 VI 07

against the scarves
of drifting cloud
& slowly dimming light

the cranes appear
stark sigils
of steel tower

above new poured concrete
stiles stand attentive
against the still bright dusk

Southgate Mall Edmonton 15 VIII 07

ghosts sketch
a mood
caught on the wind
blows hot from engines
engineering catch meant
across the desert
storms trooping
a long way
from home

31 X 07

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Douglas Barbour, poet, critic, and reviewer, is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Alberta, where he has taught creative writing, poetry, Canadian literature, twentieth century poetry and poetics, and science fiction and fantasy. Books of poetry include *Visible Visions: The Selected Poems of Douglas Barbour* (NeWest Press 1984), which won Alberta's Stephan Stephansson Award for poetry, and *Story for a Saskatchewan Night* (rdc press 1989). More recently, *Fragmenting Body etc.* (NeWest Press 2000), *Breath Takes* (Wolsak & Wynn 2002), *A Flame on the Spanish Stairs* (greenboathouse books 2003), and *Continuations*, with Sheila E. Murphy (University of Alberta Press 2006). Critical works include *Daphne Marlatt and Her Works*, *John Newlove and His Works*, *bpNichol and His Works* (ECW Press 1992), and *Michael Ondaatje* (Twayne Publishers 1993). *Lyric/Anti-lyric: essays on contemporary poetry* appeared from NeWest Press in 2001. *Transformations of Contemporary Canadian Poetry in English* appeared from Adam Marszalek in Poland in 2005. Essays have appeared in journals and anthologies in Canada, the United States, Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, Denmark. He has delivered papers at conferences on Canadian Studies and modern poetry, in Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, Scotland, and, of course, Canada. He was inaugurated into the City of Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame in 2003.

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