



ottawater

edited by: rob mclennan | January 2019

design by: tanya spowl

CONTENTS

SYLVIA ADAMS

ON MEMORY, FORGOTTEN	3
For Those Never Given Permission to Grow Up	4

BARÂA ARAR

The places we pray	5
--------------------------	---

SUSAN J. ATKINSON

My Mother Looks for My Father in the Garden	6
On Koh Phi Phi	6
Cucumbers	7
All the small arguments	7
The Pathology of a Garden	8

JOHN BARTON

LEARNING TO DRIVE AT ROCKCLIFFE AIRPORT	9
RIDEAU FALLS, ELGIN BRIDGES	9

MEAGAN BLACK

A lesson already forgotten	10
Ghost Mouth	11
My Name is My Name	11
Being Human	12
Cleave	12

FRANCES BOYLE

Sister Emily's Lightship	13
Constraint	13
Turning	14

RONNIE R. BROWN

LIKE A ROSE	15
-------------------	----

ALESSIA DI CESARE

The Jazz on Goulburn Avenue	16
-----------------------------------	----

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

Exodus XX (Gloss)	17
II—Book of Ruth	18
III—Book of Ruth	19
VI—Book of Ezra	20

ANITA DOLMAN

Magnetic interference	21
Crow-ku	21
The bank and I are playing a game	21

AMANDA EARL

Joan During Wartime	22
---------------------------	----

AVONLEA FOTHERINGHAM

x cento	27
green thumb/black eye	27
the queen of the MRAs	28

MARK FRUTKIN

Limestone and Wine	29
The Bookmark	29
What You Bring to the Poem	30
The River, the Bridge	30

ADELE GRAF

late afternoon bath	31
Landscape	31
Bathwater poems	32
early backstage	32
pale of settlement	33
sweet life	33
I see you	34

SARAH KABAMBA

This Body is Not Safe	35
Maana	35

LAURIE KOENSGEN

Strand	36
Want	36
Largo	36

SNEHA MADHAVAN-REESE

Late Acheulean Hand Axe	37
-------------------------------	----

KAREN MASSEY

Interruption	38
Off Ledger, or Soft Melody in Grey Scale	39

PEARL PIRIE

he's all multi-pierced and tattooed at midlife	40
a surname, like an orange daylily, sends me	40
erasure for Cameron Anstee	41

NICHOLAS POWER

August 1993	42
a hard town's love	42
in extremis	43
unceasing wind	44
a day's work	44

RYAN PRATT

Tim	45
Postcard from the corner booth	45
The rains come Wednesday	46

CLAUDIA COUTU RADMORE

butterflies drink turtle tears	47
ça ne fait rien, n'est-ce pas / so does it really matter	47

MONTY REID

Changing the Strings	48
----------------------------	----

SONIA SAIKALEY

Blue Leather Shoes	49
Sacred	49
Chimes are Changing	50
The Crows' Mantra	50

TIM MOOK SANG

A Lesson in Cartography	51
-------------------------------	----

RONALD SEATTER

Cycling	51
---------------	----

D.S. STYMEIST

Vinyl	52
-------------	----

ZOE TODD

Poem 1	53
Poem 2	53

LAUREN TURNER

Two Atheists Banking on Afterlife	54
---	----

SYLVIA ADAMS

On Memory, Forgotten

*It is the month of memory. We re-enact
the spectacle of summer, clothing boughs
in mnemonic foliage that lingers
over the deserted landscape.*

[from Christopher Dewdney]

The sky will be high today.
Its dome will be eggshell thin
and the clouds will have plenty of room
to navigate, start growing roots
so pale and tenuous a needle's slender eye
can let them pass intact.
The dressmaker stitches a gown so fine it could be spun
from ceiling-corner cobwebs, or something from long ago
when angels knocked on doors and faeries were a fact.
It is the month of memory. We re-enact

the olden days when reedy victrola strains
swayed by a breeze at a barely-opened window
snuffled the cramped and cloistered Victorian air;
clotheslines swooped with bloomers, pantaloons
camisoles and corsets every Monday, and Tuesdays
in early June saw velvets, coats and hose
blowing mothball scents on barnyard hens
and drifting across cow-freckled pastures
trumpeting the waking joyfulness that allows
the spectacle of summer, clothing boughs

whose green, unspoiled by smokestacks or exhaust
steals into afternoon, ladies' teagowns
ivy-embroidered, with silk rosettes and bodices of lace;
the oak-panelled dining room as sober and correct
as a starched, long-serving butler; china plates and
teacups clinking gently in alabaster fingers;
pristine linen spread on laps to catch an errant crumb,
and somewhere beyond that polished, well-loved room
those little dogs of memory padding after strangers
in a mnemonic foliage that lingers

softly. The old woman wants to put this in a poem,
a song, a polka; he all bones and blankets says, Sit by me.
No matter, they're both gone soon, leaving a world
that retires, rejects, forgets parasols, quick blushes,
lads and lasses walking out; salutes them only
in murmured hymns, wreaths of purple crepe.
And once in a while a pair of eyes, a froth of hair,
a shifting smile appears in summer clouds
soon settling to the long, dark, swift-earned sleep
over the deserted landscape.

For Those Never Given Permission to Grow Up

Last stop. End of the end. No exit.

Autumn in override,

everyone long gone from the garden,

No footprints, wings furled, swords sheathed.

No gears, no wheels. Silence unimaginable.

Charles Wright, "On Heaven Considered as What Will Cover Us and Stony Comforter"

There are few faeries left at the bottom of the garden.

Brown leaves curl against the cold.

They vanished with rhythm and rhyme, forgetting

that lilt and language pollinate the earth;

faded with misty canvasses of milkmaids in gingham bonnets.

Chaste and monogamous, they cried out, who suspects it:

milk in bottles, cartons? Laundry bluing-whitened? Poems unrhymed?

Free verse has no echo, they said. Is adulterous. Free verse

taints the bloodline. A tuneless route, curse the pilgrim who takes it.

Last stop. End of the end. No exit.

Only a handful made it through the centuries. Then

pesticides took their toll and the children's games turned deadly.

When the toads started dying, the faeries knew

their days at last were numbered. They buried the toads,

careful to wash their hands before folding them in prayer.

New photographs lied, but the faeries were willing to pardon

those gossamer-dreaming young cousins in England.

Real photos would show them toothless, wings bedraggled gauze,

hardly the long-ago storybook venues they once starred in.

Autumn in override

everyone long gone from the garden,

poverty creeping like groundcover,

rusted and flaking, holding fast for the first hours

a full winter moon tries to burn through a frosted window.

Nights when the children huddle in blankets

by candles or gaslight, the faeries weep over Rackham's grave,

take chariot-loads of words gleaned from foliage sepia-leaved,

snails' slither-trails of discarded laments and eulogies

that carry the scent of drawing rooms and boudoirs

where their portraits sometimes breathed.

No footprints, wings furled, swords sheathed.

The children believe that faeries never die,

but Blake saw a faery funeral, the body borne on a roseleaf.

Do you believe it? Doyle did, and Stevenson,

adults who never grew up. But how many faeries are left,

deep in that world they fled before the 1920s killed

fantasy and faith, the dreamscape uninhabitable,

steel and slaughterhouse, mangled gears, billowing smokestacks

choking scarves of perpetual sunlight, ravaging lily, quince, morel, grape

in jardinières, orchards, forests,— God-cradled fruit and vegetable.

No gears, no wheels. Silence unimaginable.

BARÂA ARAR

The places we pray

Dedicated to my dear friend Rosa Saba

Sometimes

Amidst the chaos and polyphony

Stillness

Rises to meet us, unexpectedly

In a Toronto subway tunnel

As the wind slices my face

In an Ottawa church choir

As the laypeople rejoice and sing

Rachmaninoff's *Ave Maria*, unexpectedly

Sometimes

Life makes sense for a fraction of a second in time in space its all aligned everything amounts to this exact instant this exact moment

Sometimes

Life makes sense to us on public transportation or in God's house

Sometimes

Life makes perfect sense

Sometimes.

s.



SUSAN J. ATKINSON

My Mother Looks for My Father in the Garden

but she can't remember
what's she's supposed
to do

stands naked

sun's heat a serpent's tongue
uncoiling along
every inch of skin

waltzing swallows
stencil shadows across
her bare chest

she murmurs
with the birds
lays grief in her bones

because she can't remember

she spends hours hugging trees
scratching the insides
of her curved arms

tattooing thin scarlet lines
biting his name
into the tip of her tongue.

On Koh Phi Phi

In the late afternoon after the rain
fell from a hole in a cloud
in the dark steel-grey of sky

left everything hot and sticky and
kerosene stains from the fire show
the evening before bubbled in the air

where the tide drains each day between 4 and 5
as if a plug has been pulled and the long tail boats are
stranded on damp patches of sand for the night

a young German man falls in love with a stranger
a beautiful girl whose hair trickles like ribbons of
liquorice when she walks out of the drained ocean

he drinks with her late into the night
follows her through the winding streets
gets a matching tattoo fashioned after a Hollywood star

and the next day changes his ticket
decides he doesn't want to leave
visits her hostel room to tell her but it is empty

except for a row of black ankle socks
hanging like bats and the bracelet
he had bought her the night before.

Cucumbers

(for Abigayle)

I teach my middle daughter how cucumbers ease
swollen, puffy eyes. How miraculously the cool juice
from their centre reduces signs from the night before.

I see in her face
she is out late each night,
sleeps through the mornings.

In this year of loss, I have taken to crying in my sleep,
heaving sobs as I lean against various characters in my dreams.
In the light, I wake heavy and worn, beaten from grief.

It's March now, soon time for cut tulips
wrapped and ready to be bought.

A clear glass vase, simple and curved
will sit on the table and I will spend hours
day dreaming, watching waxy petals flop,
crowns bending on skinny stems. I will think of
something other than loss,
write something other than loss:
but for now, poems grow from tear-shaped seeds
and morning brings a pile of half-moons,
peeled cucumbers curled and dried,
scattered beside our beds.

All the small arguments

Marta kept all the small arguments.

She kept them pressed between books
She kept them folded between fresh-laundered sheets
She kept them planted along the side of the stone pathway
She kept them stacked beside cups and saucers
She kept them buried in her handbag
She kept them crushed and scattered with the bird seed
She kept them in a water glass beside the bed
She kept them mixed with potash and eggshells to sprinkle around the roses
She kept them souring beneath her tongue
She kept them fermenting in jars of preserves
She kept them crushed to her chest.

She kept them all
giving them no more
notice than she would
the graze of a moth's wing
catching the light

until John died
and then

Marta saw what they really were
so she gathered them up

into a tidy package and put them in
the bottom of a small brown leather satchel
that had one broken clasp.

There in the darkness
moths turned to bats
a thousand beating wings
spreading a black velvet cloak
smothering any love she may have had left.

The Pathology of a Garden

It is time to coax the garden. Bring it back from a long winter.
We start with the neighbour's climbing rose, which has staggered
over our fence, the effort leaving it slumped and tired.

We are all tired, feeling like grass bent by wind, flattened
by your illness, we look for hope, desperate for a cure.
A search begins amongst what is left of the perennials.

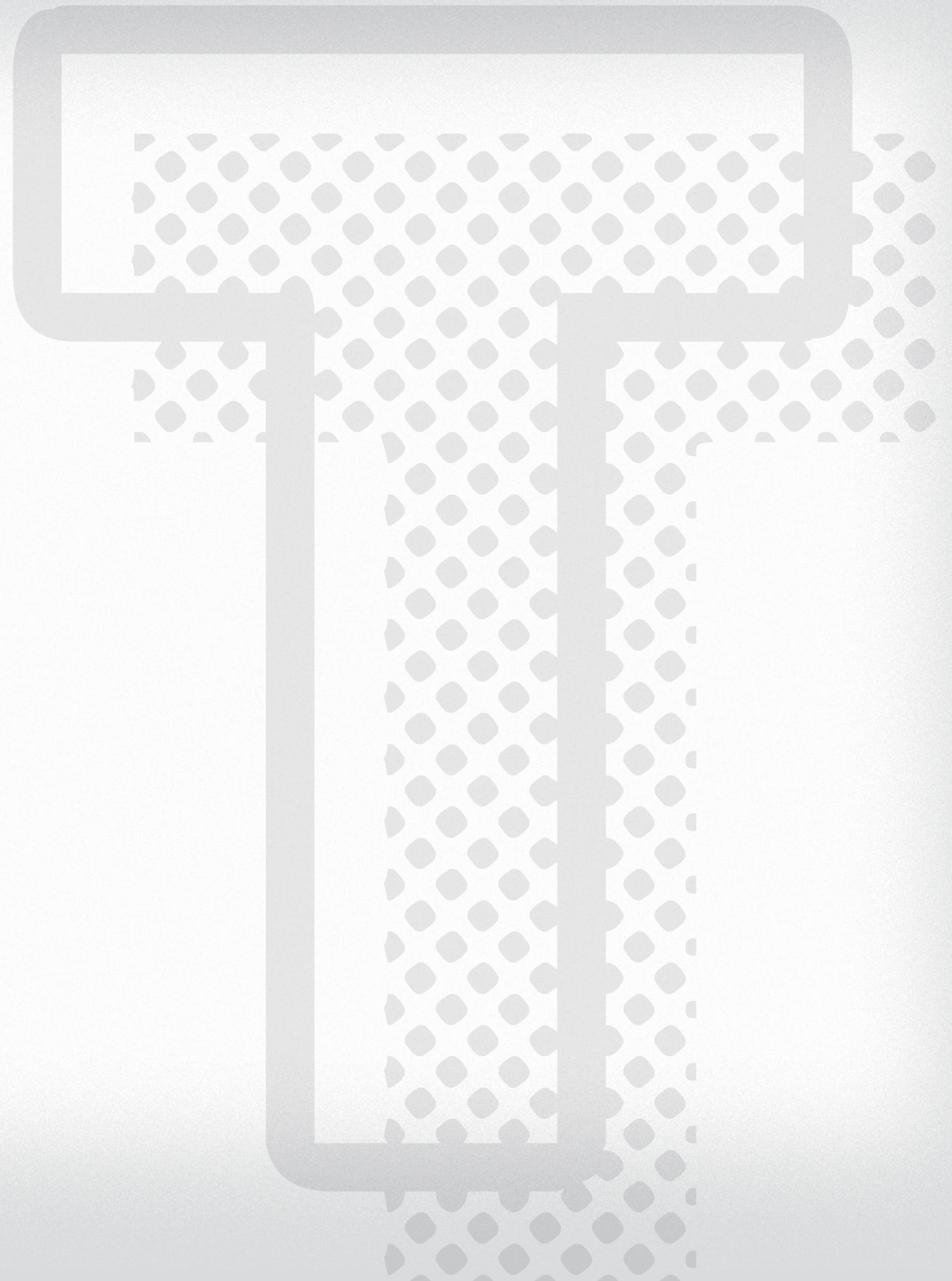
My neighbour hangs over the wooden slats to prune the rose,
shares home remedies to ease our fears. It is becoming easier
to speak of sickness, to untangle sadness.

She suggests herbs for planting. Rosemary for tumours,
St John's wort for sleep, holy basil for stress. She tells me
sow rock salt to kill the weeds, sprinkle egg shells to keep away slugs.

I pull up clumps of last year's garden. Clutch a bouquet of dead parsley.
*Plant more, my neighbour says, it makes a great balm to soothe
the pain of a blister, a boil, abrasions under the skin.*

I don't know whether to believe, but she, too, has suffered loss, and would
like a garden of green rather than the wild brambles that have overtaken
the tulips and bearded iris; spring flowers that stutter under the weight of death.

Three crows bray in baritones, peck at leftover grapes drooping from vines.
Harbingers, perhaps, but we have stopped looking for signs.
We couldn't read them anyway.



JOHN BARTON

LEARNING TO DRIVE AT ROCKCLIFFE AIRPORT

The parkway taxis us to the river
 Stalling us, almost, at the runway's hem
 Once, clutch depressed, I shakily ascend
 Gear to gear, inertia bit by speed's gyre

As I turn the wheel of this small vacuum
 Of white noise, the cracked, fly-catching windshield
 A streaked diorama of celluloid
 The day's stills blurred and your patience assumed

Small-engine aircraft rising overhead
 Easeful death nothing I'd steer, car crawling
 Through scrub below, a heedless June bug pinned

By the blackbird's shadow, its whistle bled
 Of sharps, my alarm lifting and roving
 Miles ahead, a rapture the sunset limns.

RIDEAU FALLS, ELGIN BRIDGES

An islet of slate impaled at the back
 Of the river's throat, currents easing it

Forward till caught in the weathered mouth, trapped
 By bridges anchored onto opposite

Banks, wrought-iron cat's teeth leaving no mark
 The sliver where we walk tonight a lake

Its darkness swamped trees moulting, silken bark
 Peeling loose, the stars afloat as we wade

Out of fathomless depths—who clearly knows
 What might surface?—inside us aquifers

The past, once tapped, forever fresh, the bowed
 Railings at raw bedrock's tip a prow, purr

Of split water spilling where we hang stalled
 In stray jaws, prey mystified by the falls.

MEAGAN BLACK

A lesson already forgotten.

They matter more,
the parts he didn't paint.

Thirty-eight Monet's
are sprawled across the gallery's
first floor; it's opening night.
They appear above their audience,
hunched shoulders wrapped in silk brocade,
or are framed by the slippery arcs
of noses
tucked deeply
into *fleeting colours*
conjured by light.

snap. snip.

my camera captures
off-white canvas.

Lilies bloom,
Nymphéas in eternal 1900s,
looking just the same—
just the same
as they did between coffee-table pages,
or behind damp glass
in hotel bathrooms.

Except
for the empty expanses,
the unfinished, uncropped edges
that sink
three fingers inside my chest,
like a man takes holds
of a bowling ball.
These hollow spaces
in his secret garden
mean much more,
to me,
than the murky arch
of that same old bridge.

Like a bell, I echo
with the parts he couldn't see,
the cataracts
and horse-swift sun

—with the choice that was made,
to say

"I will not imagine
a colour for this place."

"I will not fill it in."

"I do not need
to carry this with me."

Ghost Mouth

I carry old
 words inside my shoulders,
 under your thumbs
 while you unzip
 my dress,
 knotted like necklaces
 that won't come off,
 like the shrill phone, ringing
 somewhere
 in the silence
 downstairs.

My Name is My Name

*with thanks to Sheryda Warrener,
 and Marlo Stanfield from The Wire*

m
 two equal humps
 that press together
 like pursed lips,
 making the first sound
 my mother gave me
 chocolate-bitter,
 and smooth.

e
 wide mouth
 shows teeth,
 lips drawn back,
 a smile or snarl
 sunk into the bone,
 taut sound scratched
 over skin.

g
 the tongue,
 lolling loose,
 is a liar,
 flexing and slick,
 mobile
 as a cat's tail,
 but even harder
 to read.

a
 round
 as my first cry,
 and silent
 like the breath
 that came after,
 the shadow
 from under
 a doctor's pen.

a
 a doctor's pen
 and the shadows
 that came after,
 how we blame her body
 mostly joking,
 mouths round
 with laughter.

n
 that one last bump,
 like a bent knuckle,
 like bare neck
 into back—
 it's a dragon
 of an inch worm.

Being Human

It doesn't curdle,
 doesn't curl in
 at the edges,
 like a drying leaf.
 The machine stretches,
 too thin
 and too tight,
 over the jagged shape
 of you,
 and a corner cuts through.
 They never taught you
 how to stop.
 This machine
 that is breaking down
 doesn't burn like a dirty tissue,
 does not snap
 like a limb.
 It wears down
 like old denim,
 goes thin and thinner
 in the paths
 of your habits,
 until a tear ladders,
 like a bruise flooding
 the lowland
 of your thighs
 in a pattern
 only memory
 can make sense of.

And you barely even notice.

Cleave

the sound, two faced
 as a roman god.
 a clinging
 slicing
 shocking wave,
 like air leaves
 in a wake
 when it moves aside,
 for the knife's decent,
 the two hands
 coming together.

FRANCES BOYLE

Sister Emily's Lightship

A life of quiet—contemplate
The life of quiet—live
with open arms and open heart
the shadows, silence—give.

But heed the noise, the clamouring
from both outside—and in
grown children's cries, neighbourly chat
—there are patterns in the din.

A patch of light will come to life
your truer kin—at last
will lift you—whiteclad still
to traverse open spaces vast.

Your fuel—the rub incongruous
of flinty silence, words;
your destination,—still unseen
—the distant planet curves.

Constraint

Shrink wrapped squeeze
elbows knocking the sides
of the desk, vase tipping
water on the floor.
tensor bandage, strait jacket
the tie he wears
to work, the constraint
of her girdle, the sweater that clings
shows her breasts, so she walks
the school hallways with arms
crossed in front of her. Spill
of rice across the floor, danger
underfoot. A skid and fall;
she's pent up for weeks
hospital cornered. Blankets tight
so the duty officer can bounce
a quarter off the bed. His uniform
across chest, months of growing
make the fabric strain. Warp
and weft, tight-wrapped package,
straps across crate lid
holding it down
holding it down.

Burst bandage, break cords
from wrists and ankles, pop
the cork, open the lid so jack
jumps, the snake (don't worry
it's fake) garlands. Pandora
opens the box.

Breathe deep, molecular solar systems
as large as the sky over the hill,
as the space between breaths.
Atoms join in cascades of elements.
Salt loves meat—chemical reaction
or true love? Half an infinite line
and half again; infinitesimally
small segments.

Turning

(after Bartok, *Sonata for Solo Violin*)

Slow around the outside of the tower, she turns,
toe brushing limestone as she places each step.
She rises, rests—then lifts her bundle
of clothes once again, gathering strength
for the climb.

*Heavy head of grain on a stalk
waves, nods, turns blind to face the light.
Boneless shimmy beneath the weight.*

She remembers a hand catching her wrist,
coaxing her upward, turning her
by the shoulder. Remembers mornings
reclining on a divan, head cradled
in her arms.

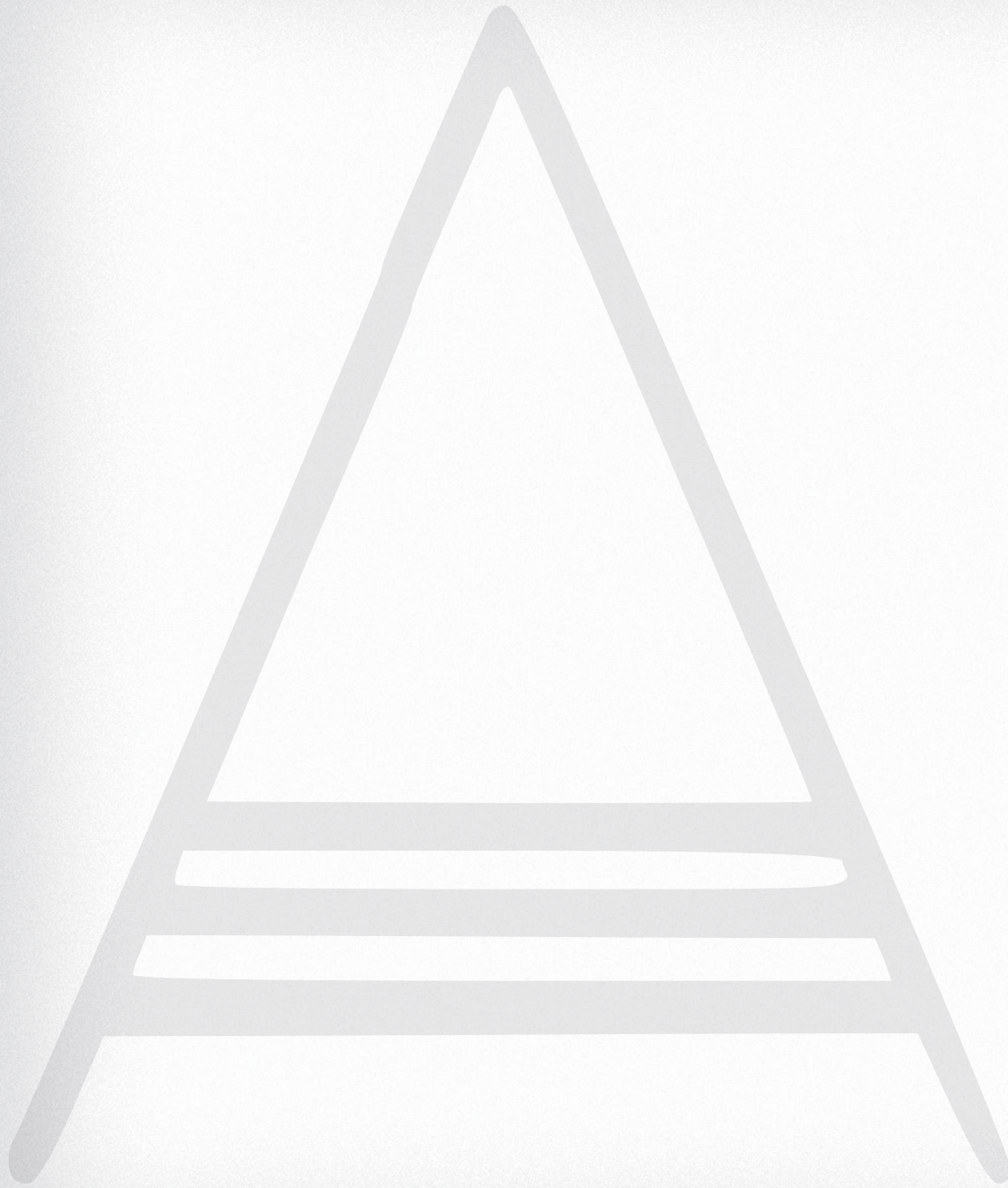
*Bolo spins, whistling the air.
A stick spirals, twirls, sparks.*

She pauses, stooping again, then stands, still laden,
for more circuits, feeling stone through slipper sole.
She draws tasseled shawl-ends to her throat.
Their fabric pulls crossways, stretches,
cloth flutters.

*A curve, like one drawn
with a moistened finger on slate*

She balances there, reaching
for a place behind her she cannot see.





RONNIE R. BROWN

LIKE A ROSE

They warned her about him
when she started her summer job.
Advised that, despite being decades
her senior, he would most definitely "Try."
And, of course, he did.

What they didn't know was that she wanted
him to.≡; was tired of fumbling boys; tired
of *hit and run* sessions, of hasty gropes in
backseats. So, when, near summer's end,
he asked her to deliver some files
to his place after work (adding
he'd be cooking, telling her she'd
love what he served) she'd agreed.

After they'd eaten, after
he'd shown her how she
could bloom, he'd handed her
his robe, led her to the bath
he'd drawn, presented her
with a fresh bar of rose-scented soap
("from Paris," he'd whispered) then gently,
lovingly he'd bathed her.

"A woman should always leave a tryst
just as she came--smelling like a rose,"
he'd added with a wink, as he walked her
to the waiting cab, bid her
fond adieu

ALESSIA DI CESARE

The Jazz on Goulburn Avenue

My final year in Ottawa and there is a soundtrack attached to it.
A (super)natural synthesis revealing itself on the balcony
of 85 Goulburn Avenue. It's the end of summer
and wasps build their nest inside my bedroom wall.
Most ghosts are soft with their sounds. I've yet to hear this one.

My roommate tells me to begin listening on Laurier Avenue East,
turn right onto Goulburn, and remain on the opposite side of the street.
This should call out a shadow and its record player.
She said when she first heard it, she didn't ask for the jazz,
but the whole of New Orleans took her by the ears, anyway.
She says horns give this ghost courage.

Suddenly it's November and I let the wasps in my wall live.
They fly out to sit on my windowsill and hum like a meadow.
School smears the first grey hair on my head
and I ask for more time like I ask for the jazz,
but neither arrive. My roommate tells me to listen more earnestly.
I start to think the wasps are too loud and I wish they would die.

Winter falls asleep on Sandy Hill for five months,
and every balcony on the street is empty. Each student has left their shovel
in another city, just as every ghost has left their sound. A series
of interrupted sleeps sweeps through the neighbourhood, but we never find out why.
I ask my roommate if she thought the wasps had been too loud
before they died, and she says she had never heard them hum at all.

Light begins to irritate the sky a little longer
and it takes us by surprise. Warmth passes through but
we keep our winter jackets out because it'll be cold again tomorrow.
I am still interested in ghosts and jazz, but only in literature for now.
I lose track of house numbers on our street and phone numbers for
insect exterminators. By the time the wasps return, I'll be gone.

It isn't warm but it is almost May. I close the door of my student home
one last time before it fills up with the stories of other people.
Across from me, a shadow sits on the balcony of 85 Goulburn
with an old record player at its side, humming something like a meadow.
I leave the key in the mailbox with a note for the new tenants.
I wonder how they will hear the Ghost on Goulburn Avenue.

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

Exodus XX (Gloss)

1. God carved this communiqué outta stone
(writ on *via* lightning):
2. "I'm the True God that delivers slaves from
Bondage.
Ain't no others!^{1*}
3. "Don't dare rank any bitch-ass gods above *Moi!*
4. "(Strangle to death all publicists for cults!)
5. "And don't craft idols outta earth (ceramic *Kitsch*),
metals (liable to rust, or be stolen, or be melted
down),
water (serpentine fish), or air ("Thor"—
"Apollo"—
the whole racket of airy, eerie, insubstantial,
vaporous,
gaseous, and/or feathered and/or celestial
phenomena).
6. "I got the *Power*^{2*}—and thus the right to
Copyright,
Trademark, the Intellectual Property Patent.
(Eye printers, publishers, stringently.)
7. "How can ye go whoring after fake, phantasmal
gods?
I AM THE GREATEST—
THE ONE & ONLY—
NUMERO UNO!
8. "But I extend *Mercy* to those who reject
Blasphemy
and adhere to my *bons mots*.
9. "Dare try and play *Moi* for a sucker,
to tomfool with my Name?
Damn ya if you do!
10. "The Sabbath Is Holy. (Get down on it!)
11. "Work-work-work, Toil-toil-toil, Sweat-sweat-
sweat,
6 days a week.
12. "But the 7th day be Mine. No *Labour* then.
Nor for servants or employees.
And don't try to get around this *Commandment*
by working oxen or other critters!
13. "Why? Cos My *Creation* of thy lives
and *Reality* necessitated 6 days.
But the 7th was a pause, a caesura.
Y'all gotta relax and worship on that day.
14. "R-E-S-P-E-C-T muddah & fuddah ALWAYS.
15. "Thou shalt not MURDER.
16. "Thou shalt not Forge Unlawful Carnal
Knowledge
with a non-spouse.^{3*}
17. "Rip off NOTHIN! Don't purloin ANYTHIN!
18. "Thou shan't slander, gossip, libel, lie, or do
perjury.^{4*}
19. "Don't covet another's Beloved or Property.
20. "But y'all best tax the rich handsomely!^{5*}
Renminbi^{6*} be for the Public Good!
21. "(P.S. The folk create *Wealth*.
Who else should have it?)"
22. When God set the above diktats in stone,
the whole mountain peak blazed, smoked—
as if a volcano, awakening.
Folks skedaddled from the doomsday sight.
23. Came up a clamouring for Moses to speak
on God's behalf,
for, if angry, God could be deadly to debate.
24. Moses told the Hebrews, "Don't think twice—
it's alright!^{7*}
God just wants us to pray—
open-mouthed and open-hearted—
and not be the devil's prey!"
25. So Moses decamped *ex* the campfires,
and clambered up the mountainside
and entered the clamorous abyss
where God lurked.
26. Now God told Moses:
"Speak to the *volk*, the *hoi polloi!*
Tell em you've heard direct from *Moi!*
27. "No more gods of silver, gods of gold,
should ye fashion!
28. "That's *History!* Fuggedaboutit!
28. "(Pour molten gold down the throats
of every idolater.)
29. "Instead, construct altars of ceramics or metal,
and cook thereon sheep and oxen—
unhesitatingly.
I'll bless y'all as consequence.
30. "And don't carve or chisel no stone altar,
for such toolery is *Pollution*.
31. "And never step naked into my *Tempio!*
Cut out the bare shoulders, shorts, mini-skirts,
and the bra-less, nipple-poke look!
32. "Scrap the yoga pants and athletic-wear too!
It's not only disrespectful, it's shabby,
déclassé...."

[Tropea (Italia) 11 *juin* mmxviii
& 12/6/18]

5 * "Taxes are boils, sores, cuts, wounds—
unless they are seeds."

6 * Chinese: The people's money.

7 * Heed B. Dylan.

1 * And an indeterminate direction is *Astrology*.

2 * Heed J. Brown.

3 * "And never go cunt-huntin, all liquored up!
(Nor let pussy claw at thy serpent.)"

4 * "An evil tongue percolates *Fraud*."

II—Book of Ruth.

1. Naomi's bloodline had one blueblood,
one plutocrat:
Boss.
2. To live off more than the mornin manna,
Ruth proposed to Naomi that she'd go,
knuckle down, and slave for Boss,
pluckin and shuckin (fuckin) corn ears,
and glean a precious pittance.
3. Too, seein that she be from Mob,
there'd be no extra public subtraction
of Naomi's already depressed status.
4. So, Ruth discarded her black widow garb
and donned denim—
bleached out, patched up overalls.
Secured a spot on Boss's plantation.
5. Ex-Bethlehem, Boss came out on his verandah,
with his spy-glass,
to view—review—the lucrative toil
of the reapers.
6. His binoculars soon ogled a yellow-haired,
blue-jeaned, Norma-Jean-Baker-type,
pig-tailed, wholesome, busty as all get out,
stubbing and mashing corn niblets
due to her inexperienced fingers.
7. At first, he was annoyed by the gal's messy,
unprofitable work;
then he became aroused by her tits
thudding about, so free, under her overalls.
8. Boss pivoted to his overseer, asked,
"Who's that sun-haired ragamuffin? The newby?
She seems milk-white and virgin-fresh."
9. The overseer, Wallis Stephens,
who'd been plannin on
"pluckin that lil cherry tree myself"^{8*}
(a phrase unspoken),
lowered his eyes before the Alpha male,
and said, "*Padrone*, she's from the Mob—
Sicilia, the *Cosa Nostra*.
Her name be Ruth.
She traipsed back here with Naomi.
Odious wounds put down her husband.
(Paternal wounds took down Naomi's husband.)
10. "She pledged to work like the dickens,
all day among the sheaves,
from dawn to sundown
(save for lunch at the canteen),
if I let her go into the fields."
11. Boss nodded: "Good idea, Wally.
Anyhow, her *Beauty* ain't nullified
by her husband's *Mortality*."
12. Boss had his hoss readied, then surged
boss n hoss—as if embossed—
onto the field, forging through the corn,
fording the corn,
to come up—real suave, smooth—to Ruth,
and tell her—
right before her astonished co-workers,
who all dropped eyes and tools and knelt,
"Thou gotta quit this *Labour* now, Ruth,
and come back to the mansion,
and abide there with my stable."^{9*}
13. "It's my command, Ruth, that thou
must only observe from afar
these fields where the darky peasants sweat."
14. Her eyes dropped, Ruth answered,
"But Mr. Boss, I need this employ,
to ferry shekels back to Naomi,
plus some corn to cook."
15. Boss grinned: "Sho nuff, but you'll follow
after the others, so your *Labour's*
prodigiously less.
16. "Moreover, I'm ordering Mr. Stephens,
the overseer, to ensure that no rube,
no hick, no yahoo, no whippersnapper,
sets a single finger on your body
nor intrudes one gross word in your ears,
to try to tumble ya mid these cornrows!
Dig?"
17. Ruth assumed prostration now:
"*Padrino*, why should I enjoy such favour?"
Boss thought of her tits squashed against the
soil.
He imagined those dug in his face and hands.
18. Boss said: "I knows you's a widow
and that an alien wind's brought ya
to Israel.
Yet, you've been perfectly kind to Naomi.
19. "God will reward ye for thy *Charity*
and *Faith*—and thy *Trust* in Him,
seeing as thou hast abandoned the Mob,
the clan of thy *Nativity*,
to voyage afar to Israel.
20. "Thou hast been, Ruth, as pious as *Hunger*,
despite thy *Anguish*."^{10*}
21. Now, Ruth felt his eyes hot on her back;
feeling empowered now to look up, sit up, she say,
"King Boss, I cherish your *Charity* to me—
your kindness for a strange woman
bereft of husband and household."
22. Boss held up his hand and said "*Basta!*"^{11*}
Ruth saw his hand's shadow fall over her
like a benediction.
23. He smiled: "Get up now, back of me,
board this horse,
and I'll take you for vittles—
'roast bakes'—saltfish and bread—
and rock lobster tail outta Jamaica,
plus ginger beer."
24. Ruth jumped up, straddled the big white
Lipizzan stallion,
held tight to Boss's waist,
as he pranced her onto the canteen.
How good to embrace the man's hard waist!
She thought of her husband, now good and dead.
25. En route, Boss uncorked his canteen,
and let *Grappa (aromatizzata) al Bergamot*
satisfy Ruth's hard thirst,
her stately thirst.
26. He felt her nipples peirce his back
as the horse coursed.
He watched her butt sway
as she left him.
27. With Ruth absent, Boss told Stephens,
"Let Ruth reap behind the others,
so her work is light.
Also, let no prick attempt any 'interference'
with her.

28. "If anyone tries, thou must interfere—
and do use a blade on the bloke.
Let no one contrive to taint her *queynte!*
29. "And let armfuls of corn fall her way,
everyday that she's here—
even if it seems accidental—
and let her Hoover up this bonanza."
30. Ruth laboured until sundown.
She crushed corn into useful measures.
31. And Ruth took lotsa cornmeal to Naomi:
It was sufficient.
32. Naomi queried Ruth:
"Did ya work today for Boss?"
Ruth was affirmative:
"It was Boss who worked me—
who let me work his fields—
and who was *Kindness* itself towards me, us."
33. Naomi observed: "*Padrino* is good
to the living,
and goodly to the memory of the dead.
How lucky we are that we're his relations—
Me by blood and thou by marriage."
34. And Ruth—of the Mob, the Mafia—revealed:
"*Padrone* has said I can keep on workin for him,
and I'll not be pestered by studs
seekin a 'cougar."
35. Naomi cocked her head quizzically:
"Well, it may be that Boss is struck by you,
Ruth, and may want to stable you
with his household harem,
and so wants to keep you as his Private
Property, unavailable to the lusty swains."
36. Ruth shrugged: "Whatever be his intentions,
my *Virtue* is guaranteed.
I'll guard that job—
so we can feast through winter."

III—Book of Ruth.

1. Naomi spoke clear *Truth*:
"Ruth, Boss is sweet on you.
Thou should sleep with him
and please thy heart.
2. "It's no sin against Mileage's memory,
for Boss—our *Padrino*—is kin.
You already work with his female folk.
Tonight, he'll be winnowing barley.
Go to him, girlie, and act his wife,
for thou art a widow.
3. "Bathe in milk, garb in silk,
and insert thyself among his stable,
until he's wolfed down tzatziki
and slurped through retsina—
gulped enough to look set to snooze.
Let *Instinct* spark further tactics. . . ."
4. Though Naomi was, in essence,
pimping her out—
like a ghettoized Barbie—
Ruth sang out, "Aye! Aye!"
5. Smiling, Naomi became more explicit:
"When Boss staggers, groggy, to his chambers,
sneak in there after im,
uncover his swarthy nudity,
and lay thy ivory-snow, Sleepin Beauty alongside
his length."
6. All that Naomi spoke, Ruth performed.
7. Predictably did Boss chew and swill,
then swill some more,
then begin to whistle and sing,
which he did nightly,
until he felt like sleepin
or felt like havin a gal—
of his choosy pick,
at his beck-and-call—
nubile and available
from the next-door stable.
8. This night, he just drank too much
and didn't have the *Lust*
or *furor sexualis*
to drag a bitch to his four-poster, king-size bed.
9. He stumbled off to his chamber, mumbling,
and nimbly tiptoed after,
to do some reverse-slumming.
10. Ruth found her *Padrone* passed out
on the bed, and managed to prod and push
his chestnut-coloured bulk
just enough to disrobe the man,
until she had seen everything,
even his unpent manhood, stirring.
11. Though her heart roared hot,
Ruth covered Boss:
It was the right thing—
not like Lot and his daughters.
But she uncovered herself,
stripped down nude and naked,
and slipped into the comfy bed,
but only to lie crosswise at Boss's feet.
12. Awakening from his stupor,
some hours later,
Boss was astonished to feel a soft form—
much like a female bottom—
resting against his feet.
13. He moved his feet and realized
they were floating over the smooth contours
of a woman's back.
14. Boss now lifted the sheets to peer
at whoever this daring dame was
whod apparently taken advantage
of his big drunk;
to ascertain her identity.
15. Ruth turned around in the grey,
pre-dawn gloom, and whispered,
"*Padrone*, I am thy kin.
Cover me again."
16. Boss was now delighted—and purred:
"I admire a woman who can negotiate *Destiny*,
who rejects ordinary choices
and unoriginal trajectories."
17. As he spoke, his sex began its own
very original trajectory,
and so he whispered to Ruth to rise
from her base at his feet
and come and lie with him.
18. He lisped:
"Thou lie at my feet, Ruth,
but thou ain't no sycophant!
And thou art virtuous—
a virginal widow—
and I'm thy kin
by associate marriage.
19. "Tarry with me continuous into dawn;
lie contiguous to me, marry,
and let us play husband and wife."
20. But Ruth said, "Let me lie still
at thy feet,
so that I tempt not your morals,
and then let me steal away with dawn,
so that no one can point fingers
or wag tongues
about my presence this night."
21. Boss was bewildered by Ruth's
unexpected *Nakedness* in his bed
and then by her unexpected *Reluctance*
to fulfill his obvious *Expectation*
that her obvious *Nudity* aroused.
But he figured that he'd have her,
take her, soon or late.

[Buffalo (New York)

14 *Nisan / avril* mmxviii]

22. Boss purred:
"I respect thy *Virtue*,
though I feel sorely tempted
to assert myself, in my house,
in my bed,
where thou hast lodged thyself,
unbidden."
23. Ruth said: "Forgive me
for being curious—
(blue for my widowhood,
yellow for my lack of courage)^{12*}—
about what my *Padrone* is really like
and whether he has any liking for me."
24. Boss smiled—white teeth
flashing though the gathered gloom—
and said, "Before ya exit, Ruth,
I'll fill your widow's veil
with 7 portions of barley."
25. Ruth did creep away at dawn,
cringing in shadows and foliage,
til she could come to Naomi
and tell of her night and her virtuous sleep—
and virtual *Romance*—
with the *Padrino*.
26. And Ruth presented Naomi
with Boss's souvenir gift
of the 7 'veiled' measures of barley.
27. Naomi told Ruth,
"Go to bed now and get your beauty sleep,
for it is very probable that Boss
will never sleep justly again
until he has thee for his bride."

[Seat 15C, Car 4, VIA Train 67
(Dorval, Québec—Cornwall, Ontario)
& (Kingston, Ontario—Oshawa, Ontario)
21 *avril* / *Nisan* mmmviii]

VI—Book of Ezra

1. Is *Truth* only a paper declaration?
Does it exist in any book—
or only in a book?
Best check the archives!
2. A chronicle turned up in a Mercedes palace.
3. (A poet's house^{13*} is his or her words,
public—as in a tavern or a legislature.)
4. Definitely—defiantly—King Cyrus
had okayed rebuilding the *Tempio* of God
at Jerusalem.
Could this *Truth* be kayóð?
5. Indeed, the boulders and timber required
had to be acquired
at Royal expense—
plus the silver fixtures and the gold *tchotchkes*,
removed by Nebuchadnezzar,
had to be pried out of even his palace's pagan
altars
and restored to the Hebrew Cathedral.
6. So, King Darius wrote to Guv'nor Tattle:
"To *Reform* is to yelp, to bark,
to sniff at turds and piss on tree trunks;
it is to be doggèd; it is to snarl
and it is to bitch and growl and bite.
7. "You're loyal, so you think the Hebrews
disloyal, because they're exotic, uppity,
mavericks, free radicals, eh?
But they're also surely virtuous.
So let em keep on buildin their temple.
Jeez!
8. "Moreover, it's politic to bless freely
and *blessèr*^{14*} rarely.
I command thee to grant the Israelis
every expense—
unhindered and *sans* complaint.
9. "Thou art elect!
So, keep an open door, an open heart,
and an open mind,
and dwell in a house of glass (metaphorically).
10. "Nothin's worse than beratin th'electorate!
So, corral bullocks, rams, lambs, calves, cattle;
store up salt, wine, oil, *et cetera*;
give barrels and board daily to the Hebrew priests.
11. "Gotta serve somebody!^{15*}
12. "If anybody balks, take action:
Spill blood.
Be operatic, not choral.
Apply my law as disinfectant.
13. "Pull down the homes of the defiant!
Hang the parents in the ruins;
then, shovel dung over all.
14. "Also, exterminate everyone who obstructs
construction of this temple.
(Extremes are chastisements.)"
15. Guv'nor Tattle shrugged—then executed
the decrees,
now said to've been signed off on by King Tax too
(according to a questionable letter
dredged up in the archives,
examined in a sealed room,
and then lost in a fire—
"accidental"—
that also consumed the examining archivist,
plus the Royal Scribe, Rhesus,
and his sidekick, Flim-Flam).
16. The deal represented a hat trick—
three scores—
a clean sweep of Persian Royalty deluxe—
Kings Cyrus, Tax, and Darius.
17. At consecration of the *Tempio*,
100 bullocks, 100 rams, 400 lambs,
and 12 goats
(each representing Israel's 12 tribes),
got butchered down.
Palms got planted to check the desert
from encroachin.
18. *Change* is a *tsunami*; *Decay* is quicksand.
19. Now the Israeli priests and Levites
revivified the Law;
studied what's deathless.
20. *Prose* is corrosive; *Poetry* is *Belief*.
21. Blades pumped into lambs: *Passover*.
Time for luminous *Rumination*: *Purity*.
22. Freed from *Slavery*, and capable again
of shunning heathen filth,
routing riff-raff
(the unpalatable clarity of their very real dirt),
gathered the Children of Israel
to eat, to feast.
23. And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread
for 7 days, joyous,
because the Assyrian King was now serving
the God of Israel!
But foes now had to eat humble pie
and regal shit,
face a fuck-all future,
and eke out survival
as dormant globs,
as tucked-away pus.

ANITA DOLMAN

Magnetic interference

We got here before our shift,
 great bear, skyhorse, amoeba
 the angle of light tracks everything,
 comes back soaking wet

Mark me as an arrow, a candidate,
 fueled up and floating, a battery
 charge ramming at the folds, someone
 who makes a go of things,
 made a went of things,
 rotated inebral, unefforted, all
 the while wild,
 holding to the wire
 unseen

Strange dog stranges, sits up,
 barks at neutrinos flitting through the hill
 See them, puppy? Slipthings. Fetch!
 They're floating now like stardust,
 flapping at puppy's quantum, wounds
 all better now:
 Hush, old dog
 This universe is dead
 but that's okay—
 everyone has to start somewhere

Crow-ku

Murder scores the fog,
 gathers black in frosted dawn
 opaque as sirens

The bank and I are
playing a game

Where I pretend
 I will pay enough
 hours and days
 to the government
 to earn the currency
 to own the land
 below this house built
 of empty boxes
 packed with someday

Where they pretend
 money is real and
 the banks are people
 who paid enough
 to a bank before
 to own 0.6 acres
 of 2x8s and milkweed

Where I pretend
 the man who couldn't
 own this lot
 before us never
 developed Parkinson's
 in these rooms, didn't die
 in a small apartment
 at the end of the street
 looking down on
 his broken former garden
 turning to dirt and weeds

Where I imagine a future
 past when goldenrod
 has climbed the façade
 of this backsplitted
 bungalow, cracked street
 thistled over, roses erupting
 through the hedgerows,
 fences toppled
 in the rain
 as new animals
 tug their kin from
 a former frog pond
 confettied with larvae
 and start over

A M A N D A E A R L

Joan During Wartime

NOTE

As a child, my mother lived through World War II in Sheffield, Yorkshire England. The German Luftwaffe bombed the city heavily in 1940, particularly between 12 and 15 December, referred to as the Sheffield Blitz. My mother lost her best friend in a bombing and was so shell shocked she had to live in an open air camp for six months. Up until her death at the age of 85 on December 22, 2017, she still suffered from what we would refer to today as post-traumatic stress disorder. Once she found out she was going to die from cancer, she finally seemed to feel at ease.

Joan of Arc played a valiant role during the Hundred Years Wars in France when as a teenager, she saw visions of saints who told her to drive out the English and bring the Dauphin to Reims for his coronation. France was devastated by the English army's use of scorched earth tactics.

These poems concern two young girls named Joan who dealt with the hardships of war and coped any way they could. One saw visions from God, the other grew afraid of everything and still managed to get on with life. Both of these girls were brave. These poems honour them.

when the air raid siren goes off
I run home fast as I can
I spot a plane overhead I am
on Lady's Bridge

I look down
at the speeding waters of the River Don
I wish I were made of stone
To stay very still
I count my buttons as mother taught me:
Lady, Baby, Gypsy, Queen,
Elephant, Tiger, Tangerine
I cry because I know I am not supposed to stray
I'm afraid of the sky and the ground and the planes

oh Holy Father king of Heaven forgive me
for I have sinned I began to hear the Archangel
Michael long ago but ignored him told no one
not my mother for fear she would think me
touched

it's like being in Blackpool to swim in
 the Sea heavy waves looming
 I feel sick to my stomach before the wave breaks the
 sound of the warning rises
 I'm waiting for the drone
 of the all clear I bite my nails, rip the skin off
 to make it bleed

I never sleep every night I am called upon
 to make a pilgrimage to Charles who you have
 said is the true King of France oh Heavenly
 Father I felt the warmth of His light on
 my shoulder he was surrounded by
 the Angels of Heaven I followed the light
 out of my bed and into the meadow
 where lambs bleated with hunger and I fed
 them my hands trembling I tried to go about
 my regular routine but my dreams
 were of fire so much fire

on Attercliffe Road the
 bank has been destroyed and mi Mam
 and Da at Marples during a raid
 drinking not caring, *George*, Eva says,
let's have another,
 they leave me for the drink and any
 noise to block out the Luftwaffe planes overhead
 circling the land over the factories
 where Spitfire engines are made
 I am ever so afraid

Dear Heavenly Father,
 I have heard your voice and the voices of
 Saints Michael and Catherine and Margaret,
 you have said,

*Joan, you must be a good soldier for France, for
 la Patrie for Me, for my son, the Lord Jesus,
 like him you will sacrifice your life to liberate your citizens,
 ma belle Jeanne, you must be strong, the fire is my
 love burning inside you carry this lance wear
 my armour, wear the armour of your Lord God
 and Father,*

you told me I was not
 just a small child but that some day my actions
 would lift the siege of Orleans and all those people, all those
 enslaved people would be free and France would be free
 and the savages of England, the uncivilized godless heretics
 those who were not Christian they would feel your wrath
 through me through the horses that would make the earth
 thunder through your righteous anger through my prayers
 and tears oh Heavenly Father King of kings

the ground shakes the bombs hit with a thud
 the wardens' whistles shriek the noise
 I can't bear it then the silence before metal
 hits the roof a rain of shrapnel I cover my
 ears but the thin ping of steel drills
 into my head I hate the indoors
 I want to run out into the field I don't care
 if I'm killed I can't breathe I can't breathe
 I'll be buried alive I cry for help but no one arrives

I have set out
 today on the journey toward my end my path like that
 of Jesus towards his crucifixion the fire on my flesh will
 be as nails entering the sacred flesh of the Saviour
 I will give of my body, my small
 frail flesh, my Lord for you I will surrender all

My father sings We'll Meet Again
 as he presses his cheek against my
 mother's face they're dolled up it's
 past my bedtime I know they want
 to leave for a night out they'll bring
 me back cake and a taste of ale
 if I'm a good girl they say

I am a maiden, nothing but a maiden
 here in the City of
 Orleans the guards have scorned
 my journey and my mission
 even though it is a mission from
 Heaven they laugh at my doublet,
 my tunic, my breeches, shut against
 the evils of men and ask me why
 I do not wear a dress it grew sodden
 in the streams swollen with melted
 snow I lay in fever as the earth was burning
 they told me it was a heresy for a woman
 to wear men's clothes that I consorted with
 the devil, I wept and I prayed for your strength
 oh Lord, to work through me, for You to use
 me in any way I could serve

I grind my teeth
 in my sleep as I wait for another bomb to hit
 our windows are boarded up but
 I can see the flairs and explosives when
 I close my eyes
 the orange sky full
 of anger
 there's nowhere to escape

they mocked me at the barricades
 but some believed and they led me
 to the dauphin past the turrets through the gates
 past those who destroyed
 the churches and bridges in your name,
 Oh Holy Father
 past the Church of Saint-Aignan
 past the horse-powered mills
 that supplied the City with bread

the shelter
 is cold and I'm lonely I whisper to Nancy
 my dolly that we'll be alright I wonder
 if I should pray but my parents call me
 a daft apeth and I hide my tears

I am unknown girl, I hear the whispers
 as I pass, the disbelief that You, O Lord
 have sent me I hear their prayers too
 in the night on the battle ground
 Joan the Maid will set them free
 through clouds of smoke I walk
 through the blue of the ash-dawn light

I stand stock still in the middle
 of Angel Road
 I weep for the glass donkey
 that was in the manger
 at Cockayne's Department Store
 window display before it was destroyed
 by bombs, the red ornaments from the tree
 shattered into crimson splinters
 Father Christmas shan't be coming
 this year I weep because I miss my
 Nanan and her treacle pudding and the
 yellow frock she promised me
 I weep for my cat, Sugar who ran
 away and is surely dead now
 I weep for my missing cousins
 and my uncle and my friend,
 killed by a bomb, just like that
 beside me, one moment then on fire,
 the stench of her burning flesh still in my nose
 I weep for myself I am alone, the world is ending

I tell them of
 the Voices I heard
 while the sheep lowed in my little village
 of Dorémy on the banks of the Meuse
 Jeanne la Pucelle, the Maid, Jane Day, Daillis
 they shout out these many names
 and pray for liberation

mangled tree lines
 twisted metal
 trees uprooted
 dark roads
 white paint round streetlamps
 due to Blackout
 ground scarred by bombs
 guns
 search lights
 air raid siren
 I crouch under the table
 its cold steel sides folded up
 into a cage of darkness

three hundred knights and forty torches
 at the Castle
 I am afraid but I speak out and recognize
 the dauphin he
 is destined to be King
 in the great hall I tense my body and release
 to share your light, oh Lord with Charles
 and I see that he wants to believe but he
 must first surrender his kingdom to the King
 of Heaven

AVONLEA FOTHERINGHAM

x cento

now my eyes are tired.

there was blood stains on the bed –
i'm not angry.

it seemed like a good idea
and then a terrible idea
that i couldn't stop myself
from completing.

i'd like to count the number
of our beginnings;
each step was treacherous.

i knew so much
i did not tell anyone.

could imagine the false guilt –
you said you want
to see me mad.

thin into existence;
you had better go.

green thumb/black eye

in the time it takes to lose eight pounds,
as many orchid blooms wither and rot away.
i collect scrapes and scars
while the aloe outgrows its little corner.

money tree flourishes without me -
reaches green leaves hopeful
toward the end of each month.
drink more water; drown the succulents.

the cats eat shamrock for luck,
except it's poison - vomit to clean up.
poinsettia points toward a christmas
blooming fractured.

for the first and last time,
the spider plant is flowering.

the queen of the MRAs

i recognize the lines of your face
because i also stress-smoke.

squint and listen,
and try to recognize you in myself
(no - myself in you).

i know that you read more than you discuss
because of the way you pronounce *recalcitrant*.
i also like the word *recalcitrant*.

i know that we are both trying to untie the same knot,
but it's a knot they only teach in boy scouts.
i wish you would admit history.

when we pull at the same knot from different directions
it makes it tighter. do you ever wonder
if that was always the point?

MARK FRUTKIN

Limestone and Wine

Never mind the honeysuckle
rimming the edge of that field
nor the intimations of leather
and tobacco and leaf mold,
no, deep in the history
of this single glass of wine
lingers the primordial formation
of limestone crackling white
in the dark, a lustral
excrescence tapped by a lone vine
twisting down and down
into the gut of the planet
and drawing it out
like a throat
that swallows up
the memory of earth and deep time,
the blood of the rock
deposited and dripping
from IV of root and branch
into each individual fruit,
earth offering to the sun
this swelling of fetal grape.

The Bookmark

Endless fields it has crossed,
the wandering bookmark
navigating pages in the hundreds
and thousands, white
fields littered with stubble,
fruitful crops in neat rows
or others failed and dried up grains,
occasionally the trekking bookmark
will cross a border
into a new country
leaving the old behind
to be stacked in the library
of memories,
the bookmark seeks always
the new, the fresh, the unknown
phrase, the believable unbelievable
character, the story that answers
its own question,
the tireless bookmark
marching on, ever
hungry, devouring bits
of other minds,
its foot
stuck in the door.

What You Bring to the Poem

The amount of space you bring
to the poem is crucial,
at the beginning, the poem
should be open as the sky,
blue heavens or nighttime vastness,
speckled with stars like
words, but they don't matter –
what matters is the space
you bring to the poem,
what matters is the space
you leave behind when
the poem is done,
what matters is the sky
that infuses the poem
throughout, the breath
that breathes through the poem,
like open
patches of blue
glimpsed through a forest.

The River, the Bridge

The river, the bridge
natural world and human
at cross purposes,
a plus sign on the face
of the earth
or two minus signs
from differing perspectives,
the one, like the seasons, like time,
flows all in one direction,
the other carries traffic
both ways,
we long to see the world passing by
from both shores,
to inhabit past and future,
but this river only passes
through the eye of the present,
this bridge connecting two times
hangs in space.

ADELE GRAF

late afternoon bath

along the hypotenuse
 like a hi-fi needle
 that vibrates with music

 a cone of light
 jiggles its idea
 of warm oiled water

 a leg hopping to the beat
 above slats
 slanted on the wall ahead

 the side window
 blinded, shrunk into stripes
 as sun splashes

 like the white light
 that will beckon us all
 with just such flare

Landscape

after a watercolour by Robert Chambers, 1979

The hut may be warmer white
 than surrounding snow
 or may seem so
 near winter trees
 that let light fall.
 It's early morning
 and it's just before dusk
 and it's midday shaded by cloud.
 Sky has merged with ground.

Shadows tinge the snow iceberg blue.
 I don't begin to shiver.

Space among the trees becomes
 a path to the cabin –
 how long or far
 hard to gauge.
 Blocked, I'd thought
 by a fence or gate.
 Now I see it's a twig settee angled
 so I can view the entrance.
 A snow-soft seat.

I almost sit
 but instead move forward
 through shafts of light.

As I reach the door
 stillness finds my skin.
 I turn the knob and also
 open it from within.

Bathwater poems

Her name is Helen.
 Who Helen is you don't know
 or whether she might be the baby
 you shouldn't throw out when this time
 in your bath is through.
 Your limbs sink in womb-warm liquid.
 At least you know
 you must have slept, drained
 of cares, stretched
 in your clawfoot tub where

water oiled like the seasons
 eases your slips between
 drowsy sense and dreams.
 When seasons slide, you lose
 deep sleep. Snow loosens
 to a drip, or your mind snaps open
 as temperatures dip. Or autumn
 oozes its doze
 into pores
 of your soaked sea-sponge.

And how about the framed oil painting?
 Check it out as you watch weather
 change outside the window.
 Or look in the gift shop
 – the one you pass on your way
 to the pantry, whose shelves stretch
 to the ceiling. You must hurry
 to finish the inventory.
 Already Helen's framed portrait
 topples from the edge of an upper shelf.

early backstage

clear-headed air along a canal.
 octagons cracked inside its ice.
 edges soft with algae.
 back-door buzzer at an arts centre.
 zigzagged halls in warm catacombs.
 arrowed notes stuck on cinderblock.
 blue *CATS* crates.
 lean women buff in leotards.
 feline faces greasepainted white.
 tawny costumes, ruffled shoes in dressing rooms.
 doors ajar, spikes of light.
 soprano voice, silver from an unseen space.
 rehearsal room striped in red-chair rows.
 tepid plaster smell.
 jangle of a coffee trolley wheeled in, then out.
 silence before choir practice.
 flyleaf of a music score.
 feet propped on the seat ahead.
 flow of my black roller pen.
 glittered words:
 fireworks while the stage is dark.

pale of settlement

*where my grandmother sat on her settle
but never could*

settle on the settle
settle what?
what settle?

settle in

why settle for it?

settle it

settled
a settled settle

pale settlement
settlement pales

sweet life

you drift off to sleep
thinking of
your sister Justine
and wake up
thinking of
a roast beef sandwich
neither of you
non-meat eaters
would have eaten

your brain healthy
you hope
though convoluted
you know
but hers – since
a blood vessel burst –
empty
of any thought

the roast beef maybe
for ruth betty
her birth name
she saw as
her baby name
yet up till the end
her spoon scraped
bowls of brown betty
she liked to call
ruth betty
its buttered brown sugar
thick on her tongue

I see you

Darkness.

A cavern in what I'd thought
 a vacant lot between high houses.
 Or is this a different neighbourhood?
 Streetlamps, now dim pools
 of light absorbed past the curb.
 The other sidewalk, thick dark.
 No shadow to balance me behind
 or show the way forward.
 I grope along the alley
 for stairs or a slope toward light.
 But the blackness leads nowhere.

A weight in my jacket pocket.
 Not a flashlight, just *kalamata* olives
 in a ziploc bag. I pierce their skin,
 suck the pulp of olive after olive.
 Ah-love you. All of you.
 Murky salt. My mouth spits
 black pits into blackness.

Then light so bright I can't stand
 its glare. And on a bench
 beside our floodlit pool: you –
 finally seated between your sons.
 Both in swim trunks, one texts,
 the other stares toward the water's glint.
 I watch your blue eyes deepen
 as the darkness

spills from your lids.



S A R A H K A B A M B A

This Body is Not Safe

we only operate by your definitions
of safe, you never

let this body be
a safe space

tell me, how many times can this skin
second guess itself?

please tell me, how many ways can this body
be broken?

listen,
this body is an out of body experience
this body is a black hole
this body is erasure
this body is self-destruction

this body is tired

please listen,

it is not safe to rest
this body is not safe

Maana¹⁶

sometimes my emotions
want to break this body

on my bad days i listen to songs
in languages i don't understand or speak
mama laughs, tells me i sing
like someone who speaks the language

i once read that
muziki hauna lugha
la musique n'a pas de langue
music has no language

sometimes there is still meaning
without understanding

LAURIE KOENSGEN

Strand

We hear nothing this season
from the ones in control.
They offer us a tongueless bell.

Have we been rescinded,
our particulars flattened
under slabs of memoranda?

It is harder now to summon
the contours —
the gulfs, the bluffs, the crags.

Here on this barren strand
the land dissolves in wrinkles
and memory recedes.

Want

Each of us thinks
it's the other's ringtone
—the distant tinkling calliope riff—

and so we miss
the ice-cream truck
when it pied-pipers the street

even though we want
to be stolen away
and long for something sweeter.

Largo

We don't so much stand now
as fall
into slack folds, move
with the sinew-less slope
of old priests.

We don't really play,
merely poke at the keys.
And the music has a dying fall.

This is the long, slow slog
of married love,
the lukewarm life
we walked through fire for.

SNEHA MADHAVAN - REESE

Late Acheulean Hand Axe

In the oldest Roman shrine to Jupiter, the god of the sky was worshipped in the form of a knapped stone of flint. Thunderstones, they were called, found in fields and believed to have fallen from the heavens.

How readily we'd forgotten the longest used technology in human history. Even before control of fire, our Paleolithic predecessors chipped away at stone: first pebble tools, then the hand axe, the pear-shaped product of the oldest manufacturing process.

We Homo sapiens sapiens, doubly wise, redevise the methods of *erectus* ancestors. Artisans and archaeologists preserve the skill of knapping a Stone Age Swiss Army knife. A master can craft an Acheulean axe within minutes.

The apprentice must learn to choose a stone that does not fracture along natural planes but breaks with curved surfaces. He studies where and at what angle to strike, and how each blow will crack the core. He works each side,

using a softer hammer of antler or bone for detail, then removes a final, lateral flake to leave a sharp blade-edge. Unlike earlier

Oldowan choppers, these intentional tools did more than alter stones. Each hammerstone strike, percussive

and precise, forged neural pathways in early hominid brains. Even Darwin surmised that stone tool use co-evolved with language. Broca's area, essential to speech, developed from networks built through hand axe creation. How readily we'd forgotten our ancestor's labours

which enabled us to speak. *We Homo sapiens sapiens*, doubly wise, discovered these stones and decided they must be divine. We tied them as amulets around the necks of our children and installed them in temples as our gods.

KAREN MASSEY

Interruption

We reconvened to walk and take the night air cure,
near midnight, barely autumn. Shell of a moon.
Carrying our discussion with us, stalking answers
to our unexpected quandary. The globe rolled
over in toxic politics.

Suddenly some noisy weird green whirligig
startled the air with a trilling sound
like someone thumbing through dictionary pages.
It flew above us, carrying our stunned attention forward,
like a strange chartreuse wind-up toy
gliding in to land on a middle-aged maple,

immediately drawing us close,
gawking up this tree on an unlit urban yard.
Everything still and dark and here finally
our questioning found silence.
The praying mantis rested, waiting. Paused

in its expected position, seemingly patient
as a monk poised in mindfulness.
Up close, on either side of it, we paused
to breathe and say nothing,
then nothing, and again,
wondering what was next, wondering
why we'd lived this many years

yet never seen one fly or land.
Finally, the green head
turned humanly to the side,
its eyes aimed directly into yours
and stared
as though to force this long gaze
to send a revelation in

then it gently turned its head
to glance at me on the other side
and eyes forward, began a slow climb up the crackled bark,
high out of sight, languid in sweet time.

Off Ledger, or Soft Melody in Grey Scale

Record-smashing sleet thrashes Ottawa tarmac. Planes wait
to taxi, faces at rounded windows. In Buffalo, NY
the same thing: my octogenarian father

and his spirited new bride are aiming
to migrate to Mexico, to eagerly shed
the most brutal Niagara winter in twenty.

What have they got in their suitcases but fresh Tilley hats
and enthusiasm, packed down to the wire by my father,
who could fit a month's camping trip of family gear

into the trunk of a white sedan, to tally thousands of miles, south
or north of the 49th parallel. There they go, out on their runway
aiming for the future at a crescendo. We are all

taxiing toward the runway to some arc or other, even
me, housebound in monochrome, appraising how the rain
glints wet diamonds as it drips from the black fungus

on our ailing plum tree. All winter, blasted by storm,
that tree held on to its disease, tumours like over-ripe banana slugs
climbing every third branch or twig. It looked beautiful

in snow, the contrast, a simple study in black & white and ice;
strange disorder to draw the eye, and let us consider
its dying in real time, before we try, yet again, to prune

it back in cure. The grey pounds on, sunlight soothes a fu
province. Earlier this morning, the inland cries of seagulls
overhead, circling the urban ritual. My father

on the telephone yesterday, sending love across his occasional
confusion. Right now he's buckled into an airplane, dekeing out
the weather, fresh passport in his carry-on, while I sip French Roast

in a room whose windows shake, pelted by rain and where
the years dissolve in words, and time and memory play
catch and release. There is love

over currency
in everything. I will owe him everything
and nothing, as he will owe

me,
downtown in the capital, on this saturated morning.
We'd love a kitschy postcard, if you could—

PEARL PIRIE

he's all multi-pierced and tattooed at midlife

on an afternoon like fallen flowers,
finger the charity shop's earrings.
come, buy this piece of metal
once thrust through a stranger's flesh.

to care needs a proportionality.
my sympathy is turned too high
with pangs shed for the squawk
of the wood stove's hinge.

playing in the musky basement
George and I decided— he
proposed, and I agreed—
to prove who was stronger

by doing chin ups on the
handy nearly parallel bar
that came out of the furnace
that came crashing down on him.

I saw my first goose egg rise
and he called for his mom
to take him to hospital. and so
my eighth birthday party broke up.

a surname, like an orange daylily, sends me

1.

Phil Hughes, a historian on the Brecon in Great Canal Journeys
and poof, Kathy is grinning rapt beside me. your lifetime ambition
to visit Wales, that carrot your parents dangled
if you lost weight. an icepick headache in my temple recalls.

2.

look, wild irises, as royal and complete as your approval.
yellow Chrysanthemums mean rebirth. fit for your bouquet.
you, dove, with the old ladies you love, serving tea after services,
your heart unstitching on the front steps of church.

3.

your parents chuckled at your funeral, how "quaintly"
you tallied how many snowmobiles you'd seen on an outing.
(who wouldn't?) and your brother, whom you idolized
snuck out of the wake's buffet, braided with his girlfriend.

4.

your love of day-glow shirts no matter what was in fashion
your, "well, I like it", as the final word. I brought you
a bouquet of orange and purple, your colours, can hear
your snuffling giggles, like Mrs. Reese's laughter.

erasure for Cameron Anstee

hills spring golden .
even on a fine day clouds .

(after To a Guest in the Hills by Zhang Xu, calligrapher famous for Du Fu's Eight Immortal drinkers from p. 78 Song of the Immortals)

NICHOLAS POWER

August 1993

looking through desk drawers while the kettle is whistling
 the dreamer in bed linens in a paperweight dream
 each bone in his body wrapped up in rawhide
 searches through diaries wearing a rain hat
 awakes on his mattress as if in a house
 ashtrays full and sugar bowl empty
 through with bottles and bitters
 only apple cores and pemmican
 his clocks sliding off the side table
 his vanity regarding itself in his mirror
 the dreamer reaches in for a stone in his pocket
 walks out of the dream to step through barbed wire
 to enter a room with one chair and one lamp and a notebook

from the conjunction of *Closing it Down on the Palisades* by August Kleinzahler and

Stone Hammer Poem by Robert Kroetsch

a hard town's love

anything 'you' is an 'if'
 'they' are not 'we'

these strangers are foreign to courage
 their lack of grace corrupts our bleak little town
 where we hide out, smoking in the alley
 we make ourselves only
 hard town love

we draw with blunt knives
 both of us left among the fallen
 the rim of the earth is our sorrow
 the outside crosses our hands
 lakes, continents, deserts
 you and I and our corpses
 shadows on all things

from the conjunction of *An Oregon Message* by William Stafford and *Grace Shiver* by Cathy Stonehouse

in extremis

where else are we but
 under the futile dome
 of the hopeless
 stabbing at real and mythical beasts
 with the gusto of Melville's whalers
 breath our only lifeline
 paperless
 arranging to throw our hearts into the fire
 our wordhoards gone
 written on burnt trunks of trees
 our indefinable sadness a subordinate clause
 as vagrant as the essence of a flower
 we're dispossessed
 absorbed in our illusions
 hurt by our own medicines
 applying ourselves to nothing
 making it with naked strangers
 meandering without ease
 our delicate bodies our fatal voices
 frozen in songs that hasten the last hours

our strong backs were the landscape of heaven
 the arc of an unphotographable rainbow
 and the evening vespers
 painted an ephemeral fresco
 calling us out beyond fatigue
 to refrain for a few moments
 from despoiling the earth
 or turning our lungs into sepulchres

soft confusion of vegetation
 the scent of ripened fruit
 abiding innocently on trees
 without a need for names
 wearing their original vestments
 with an aspect of mutual respect
 I want to fall asleep among herbal catechisms
 avoid the dark days of the sleek and the violent
 busy with their endless vacillations
 better that they pick up after their dogs
 their loyalties are to shadowy certainties
 then they destroy what they adore
 that sibylline rose that raptures us all
 stepped on without thought

caught in their extremes
 the great *en masse*
 collectively unconscious
 keeps time with intermediaries
 and when the wind is from the north-north-west
 they can't tell a hawk from a handsaw
 they come to us
 complicit with need
 reaching their hands under our shirts
 for a roll of cash
 or a roll in the ordinary bedsheets

if we're lucky
 we'll get beyond the strictures of churchmen
 dodge the cartels
 escape our pursuers
 find a way to live with our own impurities
 a double celebration of flesh and grain
 the death of one eucalyptus is not the end of the species
 eternally hopeful
 grounded pilots wishing for infinite flight
 we look for smears of light on the diner counter

unceasing wind

this sullen god veers from the show, spitting, sagging
 a disaster of false speech, spinning like a broken bird
 folds himself into a church smaller than a lie, transpires

were you won over by his rise, the danger of his fall?
 under whose aegis will this era end, and will you ask why?
 we swallowed this Apollo, now the temple is in ruins

night is coming on and we have raised no roof
 no consciousness, no controls, no social contracts
 it's too late for whimsy, for designing against entropy

in this night only horrors will emerge
 they douse the lights, hide down in the basement
 in wartime everyone gets singed

no thrill in freefall when nothing can save us
 danger is our god, and the unceasing wind

a day's work

frost in early spring
 our green dreams dead gods
 the day's work leans toward nothing
 time a mere noise, a funeral procession
 and we violent children of an ancient ocean
 slouching toward mannerism and gilded phalloi
 spare a moment for the cries of the scarred
 let our breath out like dew on grass
 the depth of a glacier lake
 looking back at us
 like night

from the conjunction of *Strumpet Song* by Sylvia Plath and *Coitus* by Ezra Pound

RYAN PRATT

Tim

So solemn when the master sang though
you abandoned him at Mount Baldy –
figured even Cohen would rather get drunk,
steal bowling shoes at staff parties.

Like lapsed monks, peeling trivia from rinds
of autobiography, we revealed ourselves
in selections of angst, melody, sticking to ribs
when one of us punched out, forgot to hit stop.

Those albums still carry you, transient-like
in letter-press folk art or the languid chords
of “Here Comes a Regular”, so jarringly sober
the night I gave my two-weeks’ notice.

I sometimes tip the spine of that evening:
counting registers in the cavernous half-light,
separated by Rock/Pop H through P &
listening for your felt or imagined shock.

Postcard from the corner booth

Is it friends you miss or
the dopamine of missing,
that storm of senses
arriving & departing
on Greyhound platforms?

When we’d cop to the magic
of black corridor trips &
forget how orange-lit towns
arranged onto grids,
relations imprinted by
the pull of each pole,
before we had these uniforms.

In a Red Room booth
three city blocks from Union,
the promise of “come on over”,
with its common-law caveats,
begins to sober.

If we’re less than the itch
of our absence, tell me yours
is one of those streets that
cuts out for blocks then
re-emerges, name & needle
conspicuously preserved.

The rains come Wednesday

Cattails, inner
city pots
bursting –

summer long
in the tooth.

Are boxelder wings
mammoth?

Cuz streetlights
black out

like I do,
in blinks –

their 6am flits
enormous
on pavement.

Oh, the calendar
means nothing.



CLAUDIA COUTU RADMORE

butterflies drink turtle tears

a dozen turkeys endlessly circle a
dead cat in the middle of the road
hmmm do you know that each of our
two eyes sees a different rainbow
using light from different collections
of drops therefore stop to reflect that
when we pay attention to a stone
or a willow we will find it hitched to
everything else in the universe the
way a hand in front of your eyes can
hide a mountain or a history professor
teach a course called Stuff about
things and their meaning; the table,
along with other items, has been
removed and destroyed however
Rumi teaches that lovers don't finally
meet somewhere they've been in
each other all along as are those
who gather salt from the great salt
beds by the sea or the sirens that are
the riff of a city playing jazz; some
people who have no imagination at all
are stuck in their starred and striped
hearts like axles without wheels
not understanding that hatred is
intelligent or so Lady Gaga enlightens
the US Conference of Mayors while
Emperor Penguins take accidental
selfies after

finding a camera in Antarctica at
the same time as a malapropism
walks into a bar looking for all
intensive purposes like a wolf in
cheap clothing muttering epitaphs
and casting dispersions on his
magnificent other who takes him for
granite listen the radio waves that
originally broadcast the Hitchhiker's
Guide have been travelling away
from us at the speed of light for
forty years so the original broadcast
of Hitchhiker's Guide could have
been heard by as many as four
civilisations other than ours you see
all along Kismet the social robot has
had the ability to detect approval or
disapproval even the bristling spines
of one's conviction have you seen
the grilled cage that ascends at the
dignified pace necessary for mystical
assumption into heaven well have
you? we are left with exoplanet
fatigue still the butterflies the tears
the waves hitching to the rest of
the universe despite a disgruntled
critic's cynical ideas about poetry his
smug burbled commentary

ça ne fait rien, n'est-ce pas so does it really matter

this is the smell of Algebra and in this corner
a whiff of Latin here is a page and love is
happening on it sex is happening on the ivory
paper black serifed letters edged in lace;
someone is leaving us in the dark yet prone
to bouts of expression like Billie revealing her
boyfriend was a bouncer an ounce a flouncer
announcer unconcerned that there are ten
thousand trillion ants on the planet and every
ant capable of linguistic displacement; consider
that everything from spoons to stones may
be conscious a concept gaining academic
credibility though quantum mechanics runs
counter to common sense so do you see that
pre-dawn silver sea beneath a flat silver sky as
untouchable as it is touchable no wonder her
head was spinning; there was a dance going on
in it an eight person heel to reel with too many
couples on a too-small dance floor her bouncer
her trouncer in a brown shirt what a blessing
he'll renounce her she recounts just where
her nouns were the fonted silence stiff on the
page not ready to flounce from the heart or to
register itself in the ordinary

MONTY REID

Changing the Strings

E
I am changing the strings on my old instruments.
Carefully. The tension eases
everywhere.

A
The new strings shine in their envelopes.
They've been going in circles since forever
and now they're here.

D
Three wraps around the peg
Like both of your arms
and another.

G
The tension returns, doesn't it.
A song held tight at both ends
sings in the middle.

B
We sleep side by side.
Lit by all the light.
lit by all the impossible light.

E
Nothing stays in tune.
Nothing stays
in tune.

SONIA SAIKALEY

Blue Leather Shoes

My father loved his blue Italian shoes.
 They weren't a navy or midnight blue,
 but bright, eccentric, unlike my quiet father.
 My sisters and I didn't like those shoes much.
 They didn't match a thing, but Babba wore them
 to weddings, to Christmas dinners, to parties.
 Now in my father's home,
 rain falls from a dark indigo sky
 and lashes against the windows.
 I remember reading somewhere
 skies often weep on funerals.
 I dig in a box, toss clothes into a mound
 like the hills of my father's village in the old country.
 I can't find the shoes.
 I kneel on the floor in my black clothes,
 pitter-pattering raindrops remind me
 grief hasn't fragmented me completely,
 though my soul as fragile as fraying thread
 weeps in duet with the downpour,
 remembering Babba's last request:
I want to wear my blue leather shoes.
 I rise from my knees, wander into the basement,
 rummage through box after box
 until I find the shoes, hold them up and realize
 they are as beautiful as Persian tiles.

Sacred

Red brick walls plastered
 with posters of politicians' faces
 like the paper maché of a piñata,
 though this is not Mexico City.
 The serious portraits attract some pedestrians,
 but everyone is busy
 making a living:
 manual labourers balance bricks on their heads,
 rickshaw drivers entice tourists with fast rides,
 swerving between chaotic traffic.
 Cattle roam the streets,
 chew the glossy prints, drool spit,
 then move away and eat
 from a garbage dumpster.
 After their feast, the sacred cows wander past
 children with small open hands,
 vendors behind stands with ruby and jade bangles,
 silk as soft as a newborn's hair.

Chimes are Changing

Spring mornings,
a cardinal visits our backyard,
chants a beautiful song.
I meditate in bed, mantra merges
with my husband's snores.

Summer days, swirls of olive oil in *hummus*,
toasted pieces of pita scattered in *fattoush* salad,
fresh herbs, warm spices in falafel balls.
I beg my husband to try, but he fires up the grill.
I close the kitchen window,
smell of smoking beef left outside.

Autumn leaves cascade down oak trees,
land atop our solarium,
the cardinal's song fades like the colour
of my husband's favourite jersey.

In winter, glaciers slide down curved glass,
my husband in a hospital room,
his suffering wrapped in an afghan
I crocheted for him,
my sorrow weeps raindrops,
I swallow hard.

I imagine him in our garden
of snowflakes and icicles, smiling sunshine
his worn Cardinals cap in my lap,
I chant, the sound vibrating against glass,
squalls of wintry breath
rattling my neighbour's chimes.

The Crows' Mantra

The black birds are roosting in the oak trees,
scuffling, squawking, swooping, shrieking,
a murder of crows.

More circle overhead
in the sky streaked with mauve,
silhouettes of the gathering flock.

Perhaps they are symbols of death
or delivering messages from the gods.

My mother rests in our house and
wonders why the crows are on our street.

They keep cawing at each other,
at the wind, at the sky, at passersby.

My mother lies bundled up on the sofa.
She looks at me with sunken eyes
and tells me she's been listening
to the crows' mantra.

I bring her soup and we chat
while the crows keep at it.
Even our voices can't drown out their
throaty song and flapping wings.

TIM MOOK SANG

A Lesson in Cartography

Most people imagine the war. It's yellow
like mustard. It's ancient,
a ritual performed wherever we are two
and with whatever tools are handy,
a primitive dance with two steps –
to take and to defend –
differing only in perspective.

You once handed my brother a 30 mm shell of depleted uranium that you brought back from
Afghanistan. It looked just like an everyday bullet but bigger. You were so eager for him to see
it. Needed to have him roll it in his hands so you could just as quickly take it away, to break the
shell open and empty its contents on your living room table so that we could watch what was
inside cause more damage to that table than any harm we had until then done to each other.

You said, For a map to be accurate it must be written as it is being read.

RONALD SEATTER

cycling

You know all, he is wearing spandex.
And trusts his pedals more than her.
Lives in retired evasion and tax knowledge.
Red mugs circled with dried waste. Black leaves.
More than reflect a saliva. Accumulated smirks. Breast side down.
Skin currents of gravity. An unmade bed is practically alone.

When squinted irises bloom and fade or twist.
I will refuse to share my pelvis parts.
My pads and winded knees.
The half-empty optimism of combed grey.
A deliberate and slurred, veined experience.
I will horde, under a mountain of coffins.
Scaled and finally sick.

D.S. STYMEIST

Vinyl

When my old man drank
he liked to play his music loud,
tried to freak the neighbours out
with the dissonances of Afrofuturism,
all the soul work of Sun Ra's
Astro-Infinity Arkestra.

In the blank, teetering despair
of the after-midnight, he'd slide
out the vinyl he loved best: Archie Shep's
"Things have got to change."

He'd worn the A-side down
playing the psychotic-hypnotic
grinding of Joe Lee Wilson's gospel,
swinging in the key of rage
relaying a simple, accurate threat:

*"I work all day, for no pay, no pay,
All day, all day, no pay, no pay,
All day, no pay, no, no, no.
Give me my money,
Give me my money,
I don't think it's funny.
Give me my money..."*

Until dawn, that needle crawled
inward, going nowhere, coiling back
on self. It wore a track in my head,
wore a groove through my heart.

{forte, mezzo-piano, f, m-p}



ZOE TODD

Poem 1

I wonder if the sea
gazing up at our human forms
twisting like tree branches
rising and falling with the moon

I wonder if she watches us
intently
studying the wrenching pain
and suffering
we sow across lands and limbs alike

I wonder if she whispers to herself
I am
so
very
tired

Poem 2

I am very tired
I heard my bones creak
like that old cabin door
so if you come in
please knock (softly)

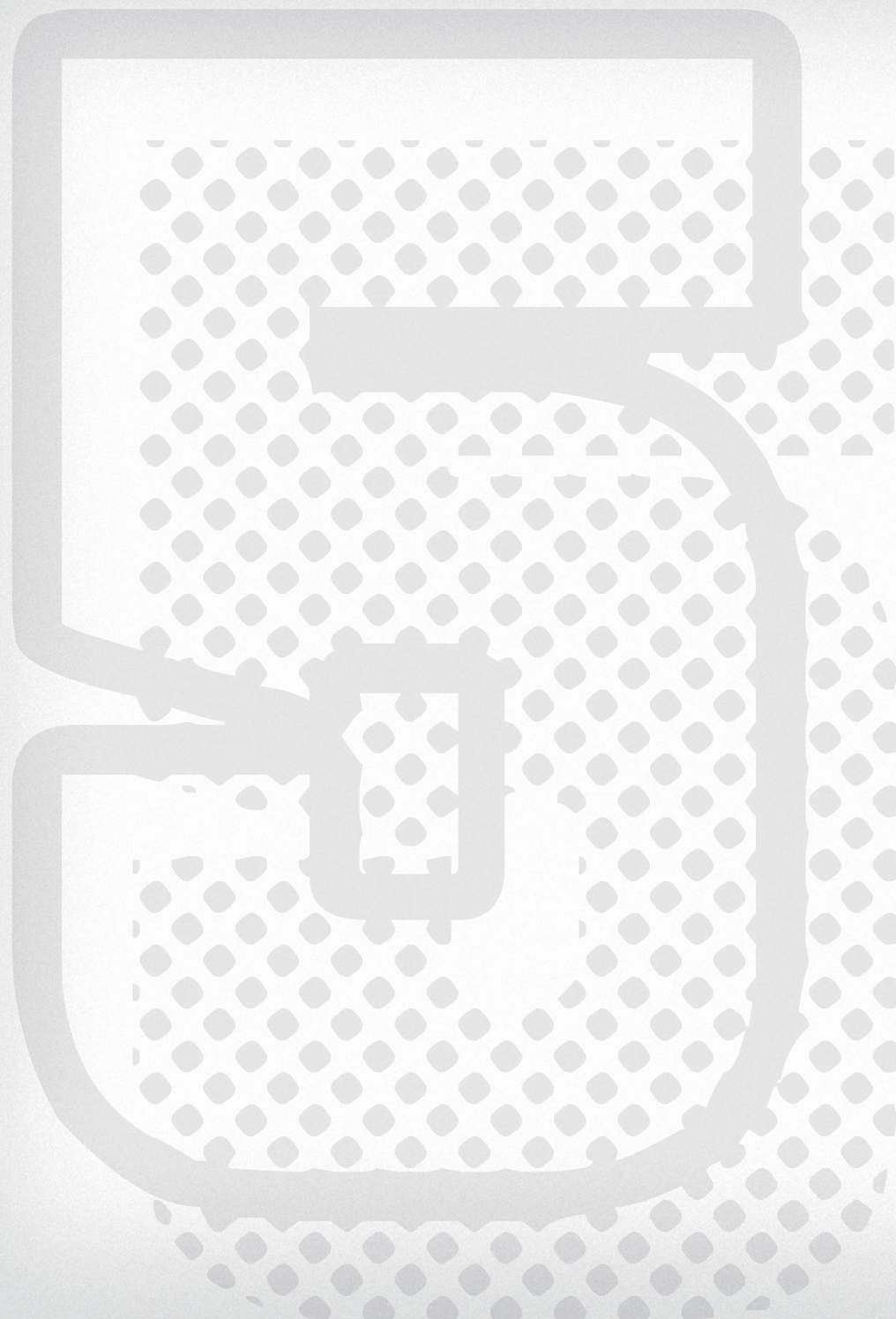
Not like the pipes
clanging
in the middle of the night

or the rattle of snakes
demanding your attention
before you inadvertently
crush them

Just a gentle rise of your knuckles
and a short pause
before a smart rap at the cedar door

lay down some moss
on the sand and slate
and let me rest here
a moment
while the cranberries ripen

and the sky arcs above
and my tired bones
eventually bleach
against the lichen



LAUREN TURNER

Two Atheists Banking on Afterlife

If ideology is sweet enough, it rancids the fingers
of bourbon in Romeo's flask.

We learn null from plays and yet a lot from cages.
Our modern simulation wasn't built to stage

a first response team. Only us, the crime scene
outlines with hopscotch pulses.

Contrary to your hypothesis, I revered you
then spat out its pit—see the turtledoves circling

back to take bets? Let's parlay dainty enough
for high court in a teen's gullet where all lies echo

and truths shoot blanks. Trouble me with acts
made past; how curtains don't open, they expose.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES:

Sylvia Adams: poet, novelist, book reviewer, workshop leader, publisher, founding member Ottawa's Field Stone Poets; more to come in 2019.

Barâa Arar is a recent graduate of Carleton University's College of Humanities with a research specialization in art, politics, and resistance. She is a community organizer, writer, and the co-host of *The Watering Hole* podcast. You can find her at: www.livewellspoken.com

Susan J. Atkinson is an Ottawa poet. Most recently poems have appeared in *Arc Magazine*, Winter 2018 and *The New Quarterly*, Spring 2018. In 2016 her poems won several awards, including being shortlisted for *Exile's* Gwendolyn MacEwen, Tree's Chapbook Competition and she won Carleton University's Poetry and Prize and Honourable Mention in *Arc's* Diana Brebner prize.

John Barton's recent publications include *Polari*, *Reframing Paul Cadmus*, and *The Malahat Review at 50*. Anstruther published his seventh chapbook, *Visible But Not Seen*, in 2018, and Palimpsest his first book of prose, *We Are Not Avatars: Essays, Memoirs, Manifestos*, in 2019. He lives in Victoria.

Meagan Black works for *Arc Poetry Magazine*, and is currently completing her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at UBC. She has had pieces published in *Carousel*, *ottawater*, and *The New Haven Review*, among other literary magazines. Outside of school, her interests include used book sales, experimenting with hybrid forms, and never finishing the edits on her YA novel in verse. You can find new work by Meagan in 2019 in *Body Politic: Illustrated poems about the body and disability*, in the anthology *Aliens in Popular Culture: A Guide to Visitors from Outer Space*, and on her website, <http://www.actuallyreadbooks.com/>.

Frances Boyle is the author of two books, the novella *Tower*, and a poetry collection, *Light-carved Passages*. A second book of poetry is forthcoming in 2019. Her writing has won national and local awards, including The Diana Brebner Prize and The Great Canadian Literary Hunt, and appeared in anthologies and literary magazines, both print and online, throughout Canada and in the U.S. Frances is a member of the editorial team at *Arc Poetry Magazine*, and reviews for *Canthius*.

Ronnie R. Brown's work has appeared in over one hundred magazines and anthologies. The winner of The Acorn-Plantos People's Poetry Award (for *STATES OF MATTER*, Black Moss Press), and The Golder Grassroots Chapbook Competition (for her long narrative poem, *UN-DEFERRED*, Brown's work has, most recently appeared in the anthologies: *TAMARACKS* (Lummo Press), *ANOTHER DYSFUNCTIONAL CANCER POEM ANTHOLOGY* (Mansfield Press) and in the on-line edition of *THE WINDSOR REVIEW*.

Alessia Di Cesare is a poet and witchy-woman from Guelph, Ontario. She is an assistant poetry editor for *Witchcraft Magazine* and published her first collection of poetry titled *How the Heartache Humbled Me* with Bottlecup Press in the Summer of 2016. When she isn't writing or reading poetry, she is often asking her tarot cards for important life advice (that she may or may not ignore) and crafting up her own little spells to use when the phase of the moon is just right.

Once the Poet Laureate of Toronto (2012-15), **George Elliott Clarke** is an Africadian (African-Nova Scotian). A multiply prized poet, his 14th work is *Extra Illicit Sonnets* (Exile, 2015), a sequence of erotic poems. In January, 2016, he was named the seventh Parliamentary Poet Laureate.

Anita Dolman's debut short fiction collection is *Lost Enough* (Morning Rain Publishing, 2017). She is a contributing editor for *Arc Poetry Magazine*, and co-editor of *Motherhood in Precarious Times* (Demeter Press, 2018), an anthology of non-fiction, essays and poetry. Anita's poetry and fiction have appeared in journals and anthologies throughout North America. Follow her on Twitter @ajdolman.

Amanda Earl is an Ottawa poet, fiction writer, editor, publisher and visual poet. She's the fallen angel of AngelHousePress and the managing editor of *Bywords.ca*. Her life and writing goals are whimsy, connection and exploration. More info is available at AmandaEarl.com. Connect with Amanda on Twitter @KikiFolle.

Avonlea Fotheringham is an Ottawa poet, publisher, and a former co-editor of *In/Words Magazine* and Press. She competed with Capital Slam to place in semi-finals at the 2014 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word, and has performed in Ottawa, Toronto, Guelph, and Victoria, BC. Her work has been published by *(parenthetical)*, *The Steel Chisel*, phafours press and others. In 2015, she joined Verse Ottawa as Festival Administrator, and founded her poetry press, Hussy.

Ottawa author **Mark Frutkin's** novel, *Fabrizio's Return* (Knopf, 2006), won the Trillium and Sunburst Awards and was a finalist for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Canada/Caribbean region). His 1988 novel, *Atmospheres Apollinaire*, was a finalist for the Governor General's Award (fiction). His most recent novel, set in Venice in 1769, is *The Rising Tide* (Porcupine's Quill, 2018). His most recent poetry collection, *Hermit Thrush* (Quattro Press, 2015), was a finalist for the Ottawa Book Award. Altogether he has published sixteen books of fiction, poetry and non-fiction.

Website: www.markfrutkin.com

Blog: www.markfrutkin.blogspot.com

Adele Graf's poems have appeared in many Canadian journals including *The Antigone Review*, *CV2*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Room* and *Vallum*. Her first poetry collection, *math for couples*, was published in 2017 by Guernica Editions, as was her above/ground press chapbook, *a Baltic Friday early in grey*.

We are surrounded by stories and poetry, **Sarah Kabamba** just wants to share some of them with you. She is of Congolese origins, and now lives in Ottawa.

Laurie Koensgen's poems have appeared in *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Literary Review of Canada*, *In/Words*, *Bywords*, *Barren Magazine* and *Juniper: A Poetry Journal*. She was shortlisted for *The Malahat Review's* Far Horizons Award for Poetry 2018 and recently received the Honourable Mention in *Arc's* Diana Brebner Prize competition. Laurie is a founding member of Ottawa's Ruby Tuesdays poetry collective.

Sneha Madhavan-Reese is the author of the poetry collection *Observing the Moon*. Her writing has appeared in publications around the world, including *The Best Canadian Poetry in English 2016*. She is the 2015 winner of *Arc Poetry Magazine's* Diana Brebner Prize and was a finalist for a 2018 National Magazine Award. She lives with her family in Ottawa.

Karen Massey's poetry and found poems have been published online and in anthologies and journals in Canada, the US and UK, including *Aesthetica Creative Writing Award Anthology*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *subTerrain*, *Literary Review Canada*, *Ottawater*, *Experiment-O* and *Bukowski Erasure Poetry Anthology*. Both of her chapbooks are from above/ground press. She lives with her family in Ottawa.

Pearl Pirie writes from rural Quebec. She has 3 full collections and is shopping around 3 more. A lot of trees around here to knock wood. Find her on twitter as pesbo. She has new chapbooks which you can find via www.pearlpirie.com

Nicholas Power, a founding member of the Meet the Presses literary collective, performs in wild places with the River Poets. He's been published by Teksteditons (*Melancholy Scientist*), Underwhich Editions (*wells*), The Writing Space (*a modest device*), and Battered Press (*No Poems*) as well as in *Descant*, *Ottawater*, *Rampike*, *wildculture.com* and many other journals and anthologies. He edits and publishes with his own Gesture Press. He read in the fall of 2017 at the International Festival of Authors at Harbourfront in Toronto. Several poems and appreciations of other poets at: www.gesturepress.wordpress.com

Ryan Pratt is a former Ottawan now living in Hamilton. His poetry has appeared in *Hart House Review*, (*parenthetical*) and *Great Lakes Review*, among others. *Rabbit months* (shreeking violet press, 2016) is his debut chapbook.

Claudia Coutu Radmore has several trade collections and recent acceptances in *Fiddlehead*, *panzopline*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Swamp Ape Review* and *Vallum* among others. A chapbook is forthcoming through above/ground press.

Monty Reid was born in Saskatchewan, lived for many years in the Alberta badlands, and moved to the Ottawa area in 1999 to work at the Canadian Museum of Nature. His books include *Karst Means Stone* (NeWest), *Crawlspace* (Anansi), *The Alternate Guide* (rdc) and *Garden* (Chaudiere) – his most recent collection is 2016's *Meditatio Placentae* (Brick). His chapbooks have appeared from many small publishers in Canada and abroad, including five from above/ground, most recently *seam* (2018). A mini chapbook, *nipple variations*, is forthcoming from postghost press. A three-time GG nominee, he was *Arc Poetry Magazine's* Managing Editor for many years and is currently the Director of VerseFest, Ottawa's international poetry festival.

Sonia Saikaley was born and raised in Ottawa to a large Lebanese family. Her first book, *The Lebanese Dishwasher*, co-won the 2012 Ken Klonsky Novella Contest. She has two poetry collections *Turkish Delight*, *Montreal Winter* and *A Samurai's Pink House*. She is currently working on a novel called "Jasmine Season on Hamra Street." Her novel *The Allspice Bath* is slated for publication in the spring of 2019 (Inanna Publications).

Tim Mook Sang was born and raised in Ottawa. After spending some time away, he returned in 2015. He currently works in the city as an educator. When he is not working, he can be found with his wife, Avanthi, and son, Devan.

Ronald Seatter works as a psychologist in Ottawa. Lives as a dad, husband, writer, guitar-er, maker, and steampunk tinkerer. He has been rejected for several years by the Nobel Prize for Literature.

D.S. Stymeist's debut collection, *The Bone Weir*, was published by Frontenac in 2016 and was a finalist for the Canadian Author's Association Award for Poetry. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines, including *The Antigonish Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *The Fiddlehead*. His work was also short-listed for *Vallum's* poetry prize in 2015. He teaches creative writing and crime fiction at Carleton University. He grew up as a non-indigenous member of a mixed family on O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, is the editor and founder of the micro-press, *Textualis*, and is the current president of VERSe Ottawa, which runs VerseFest, Ottawa's annual poetry festival.

Dr. Zoe Todd (Métis) is an artist and scholar from amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton), Canada. She is an Assistant Professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada where she is affiliated with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies. Her current work focuses on the relationships between people, fish, and other nonhuman kin in the context of colonialism, environmental change, and resource extraction in Treaty Six Territory (Edmonton, amiskwaciwâskahikan), Alberta and the Lake Winnipeg watershed more broadly. She is a Yale Presidential Visiting Fellow in the Program in the History of Science and Medicine (2018-2019).

Lauren Turner wrote the poetry chapbook, *We're Not Going to Do Better Next Time* (Knife Fork Book, 2018). Her poems and essays have appeared in *Grain*, *Arc Magazine*, *Poetry is Dead*, *Minola Review*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Puritan*, and elsewhere. She won the 2018 Short *Grain* Contest and was a finalist for *carte blanche's* 2017 3Macs Prize. She lives in Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal on the unceded land of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

