



stones beneath the surface

a poetry anthology

edited by andreas grupp

[Inside Front Cover]

stones beneath the surface

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stones beneath the surface

a poetry anthology

Andreas Gripp, editor

Black Mallard

Stones Beneath the Surface : a poetry anthology

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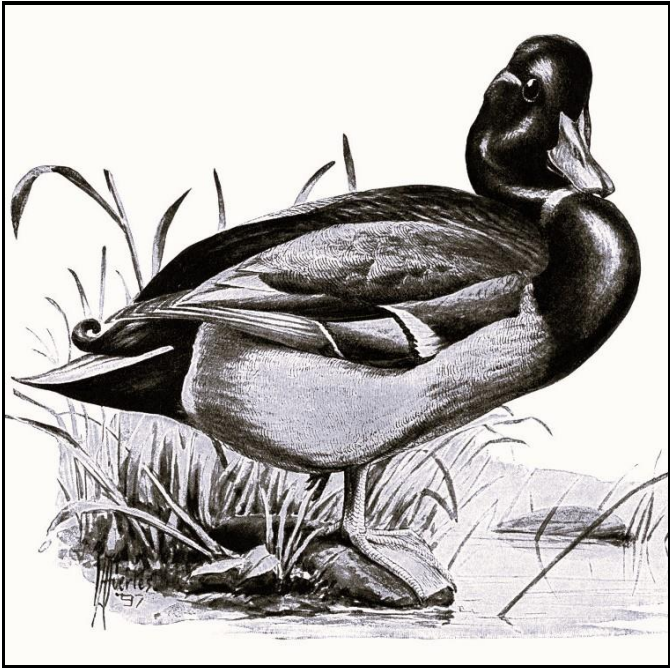
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Renée M. Sgroi

searching for capelin

over the sound gulls glide,
searching for capelin

those silver-purple scaled smelt bodies
that wash up on the shore,
death as a consequence of spawning.

think of the strangeness of sex

its bargains, the politics of its selections,
choosing which blouse to wear, which belt,

biology a school subject we're instructed in that sails
on the kinds of rough waters we're willing to die on

we are the dividing line between love and expectation

in their baleens, the humpbacks don't hold
closets full of missed migrations

they chase the capelins

whose dried-up eyes, wide as bobbins
wind invisible threads that reel us in
like gulls and puffins

while off the coast, whales

aquatic lovers who mate with sonar rituals

carbon

dates me on a Tuesday like a boy a mother begs you not to bring home for the sake of her pride or her family. too old to protect feelings i forsake that forgotten solemn oath to reveal tree rings, how they wrap around the middle of me, like carbon's arms adding not bark but girth. in the run-down bar where carbon and i meet, we toast drinks, swap blue concocted stories in high balls and martini glasses neither of us believes. first there is a first kiss, then a last, the taste of vodka or gin or chewing gum masked into alcohol breath like freckles, or moles, those stubborn and cosmetic-immune features we rename beloved imperfections. i pay the cheque for us both, owning my adult responsibilities with plastic which carbon detests, preferring the roughened textures of dry bills, of flesh on the uncounted stitches, seams, sex that disturbs clean sheets, writhes within the folds of our mutual wrinkled surfaces. in the afterglow, our eyes are tired, our puffed cheeks sag into their bones like excavated melons, the fruit we'd brought to one another, eaten. when we will cease our dating, stars may still exist, or orbits, though the guarantees of such wobbling can't be certified. carbon and i comprehend we will be ash, floating into atmosphere, perhaps illuminated

Michael Russell

Jean Grey

“Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.”

—*Lady Lazarus*, Sylvia Plath

I heard it's slow,
the cigarette ash
of winter, the cold

puddle of a body
sugared in pills,
snow. Tell me,

how long

until my blood
flakes to crystal,
bones cat-licked

clean by another
suicide? Tonight,
tucked away

from the street-
lights, I feel alright
with dying.

To be honest,
I've never
worked a day

in my life
at anything else,
this one art

holds my heart
like a salamander
caught in a pitcher

plant. The sub zero
temperature chills
before it blisters,

festers into images
of my father,
molester, rapist, ex.

The first time
I wrapped a bag
around my head,

I fed myself
a mouthful of plastic
then blacked out.

I was childish,
fooling around
with suicides.

I swayed and swayed
the way tides sway
in an angry ocean.

I imagine the motion
a bit like drowning,
like Jean Grey

sinking
to the bottom
of Jamaica Bay.

January's cold permeates
my bones, my toes
frost-kissed.

I dig my fingers
into the birdcage
of my ribs, crack them

open to a silhouette
of myself singing

in this blue basement

body. Life—
why do I always reach
for the sour-

smelling flower
on the windowsill?
The photographs

of men who try
and try to end me?
I claw the park

bench with fingers
the colour of lilac.
My fingers,

sprigs of lilac
peel and burn
the paper lantern

of my skin;
Lady Lazarus,
Jean Grey

bursting through
the snow, shouting:
I AM PHOENIX!

Note: Final line “I AM PHOENIX” is lifted from the X-Men’s Phoenix Saga where Jean Grey emerges from Jamaica Bay unharmed and possessed by The Phoenix Force after the rest of the X-Men assumed she drowned.

Richard-Yves Sitoski

23 Years On

In the dream I let go your hand
as you lead me into the woods.
I'm a grownup but you are pulling me onward
and I can't keep up on toddler legs.

In real life this would be a grove
I would try not to call a cathedral
though I would want to, a place where
I am destined to be lost in green.

Lost in the sense of *irrecoverable*
as well as *abandoned*,
now like a fly drowning in paint,
dying suspended in utmost green,
now watching as you flow away
a cut-out by Matisse
under sun-dappled leaves.

And just like that you're gone.
But I am stuck in sassafras
and fallen spruce, trillium fronds
and moss, goutweed and ramps
and roots for the tripping,
and I give up and face a future
bound to a throne of wet ferns.

This takes seconds but feels like hours.

At least I think so.

It's hard to tell
when there's nothing to do
but lie in bed, unforgiven
for not loving you,

as outside my house the wind falls
and rises, sometimes in gusts
that shake the trees so hard
the air startles itself.

à bout de souffle

so much has been made of Seberg's hair
not enough of Belmondo's cigarette
the greatest ever in a city of smokers

a city that's in 1960 black and white
with revolution eight years off
& what passes for men walking alleys
Gauloise-lipped
with a hat slouched back
& tie loosened

or basking shirtless on a bed
limned in afternoon sun
laconic & lean & a little dense
with a *meuf américaine* three flights up
from a landlady smelling of vinegar

but celluloid is no place to thrive

I rest in a tangle on the cutting room floor
and done with aviators & snap-brims
on a leading man bias

I want to trade this Kronenbourg
on its zinc bar-top
for a fishing rod & hockey stick

I want to know
I've done right by my son
by being his father

I have
haven't I?
I mean just look at him
bold as a new year
in saturated hues

watch him stride across bridges
without false bravado
casting beautiful shadows
the way I never will
for I run toward the screen
but am undone by bursting lungs
before finding freedom
in a third unknowable dimension

An Enclosure is Another Word for God

(after a line by Gary Barwin)

You're never through with the places you inhabit.

That key on your ring from one house ago
is not useless.

Slip in on a day the owners are gone
to see what they have done,

what memories are affixed to your old walls:
photos of a matriarch who sheltered a brood
in a world that seems unpolluted from space.

She must be eighty, looks like mom at sixty.

Your mother, whose embrace collapsed upon itself.

Whose womb was no safer than a burning tent.

Botany

at age five I made you a bouquet
of decapitated peonies
thinking you would be happy

for your service I ordered white lilies
as if funeral homes
smelled not enough of death

the new owners dug out your favourite maple
upside-down lung
from when you breathed for me

Insomniac Jacket

I am awake in this house because of
the chimpanzee violence of the murder
that took place here a decade ago

and the sounds of sex from next door
which are really fist fights

and the jump scare thumps on the roof
of the Raccoon God

and I am awake because of a taste on my sallow
tongue
which alternates between Soviet chocolate
and the Turkish delight from Istanbul
which turned to rosewater sludge in my bag

and because of the blare of ship's horns
summoning mermen to their deaths

but most of all because I need to piss
irregular as a drunk town crier
which offers me the chance as I sprinkle the rim
to look through night's tattered scrim
as clouds descend

and to think of men so sad
they're angry

sleeping off arguments
in the back seats of cars

and children dreaming
in the blast radius of divorces

and vegetative shopping malls
and defeated churches

and things on hooks
in a basement I'm drawn to
precisely because
it's so damn scary with the lights off

April Bulmer

Earth Signs

I bury my mama by the river
in the soft belly of the earth.
The women gather
and pat the mound:
Warm in the spring rain.

All night I touch you, Love:
The white moons of your eyelids,
the horizon of your lips.
My hands are rooted in another life.
They bloom and fade and bloom.

My mama, too,
is a blossom:
Her new heart pale
then red as a fruit.

I think of her now
as I make love to you.
I turned in her womb
in an autumn morn:
A new life,
though apples rouged
and fermented in the ground.

Living Waters

My brother's pickup truck is blue.
The sun is an old soul.
He wears paint on his face
the shade of canola blooms.

I empty my hurt into Lake Grace.

For a moment, I drown myself
beneath the water but rise again
through a little door.
Jesus and his crowd on the shore.

My pain floats like a dead fish.

Fall On Your Knees

Outside my window,
Italians kneel.
They harvest tomatoes.
Flesh bleeds against their palms
and cast-iron pots.
September, and the women
stir their sauce.

Their mason jars
are open and clean.
Beautiful, for they bear
only light.

Father John, you do not visit again.
You are on your knees
making love to the Church.
You have never entered a woman.
You think that place is a wound.
Yes, a red hurt.

Silent Night

My humble flat
was a quiet space
save for my laboured breath.
*I wonder, I thought, if Soulmate will call
like the psychic predicted.*
I would tell Old Love,
“We reincarnated again
as in China, Belgium, Ireland...
I am the Chinese peasant,
her feet bruised and bandaged,
the Flemish queen, the Irish pagan.
Do you remember me?”
But the telephone was silent
like the many lives we were trees.

David Stones

Origami With Scissors

Mother and daughter cut and fold
scissor and scalpel
the patient sheets

into the lace-worked papery poems
of butterflies

and then a trellis for the cherry blossoms
before the arcing river-song
of swans
and the snowflake
to settle weightless
on the daughter's laughing nose.

But now the daughter furrowed inward
consumed, intense as flame
to produce just a paper ball
held there darkly in the trembling
black-hole pull of her tiny hands.

It's daddy's fist she says his fist.

And mother holds in the warmth
of her own mother hands
the obsidian-heavy, deathsong-seething
coal-dead clump of crumpled metaphor

knowing
this is how life dies

how no love enters

but broken even broken
we must find a way
to cut and fold the darkness
into the latticed light
that fuels the living
and lifts our faces to the heavens.

Cleopatra

My mother now so suddenly
a Cleopatra propped against her pillows
luminous and magnetically correct
on her final bed
eyes like
bonfires blazing

She surveys the family
gathered in that reflective mope
that is the slow bleed
before death and its steady scrape
smooth a heart
into silence

Never has my mother
been predictable and even less so now
with discovered words for everyone
a language glazed with
drugs and wisdom
meted out

in cheerful glistening measure
to three generations accepting
of their final orders before
their matriarchal captain gives the last
salute and blends into
the curvature of the earth

Jennifer Wenn

TRIPLICITY

Regarding a Housefly

Held in the close embrace of early July heat,
birdsong serenades float from the oaks
down to the patio where I meander through
Love Poems from God,
glasses propped on forehead and
book held close in deference to myopia.
Eyes flick up and are greeted
by an alighting *Musca domestica*,
a housefly doing a high-wire on the page edge.
We tarried there a good ten seconds
(four hours in fly-time),
eyeball to ommatidia, while its back legs
scissored together in fly-thian ritual ablution,
a tiny embodiment of change
semaphoring “take time to notice,”
a strange forerunner preaching awareness.
Task fulfilled she (I feel sure about that)
zipped on her way, leaving me with the
other seraphic poems.

Death in the Afternoon

*With apologies and thanks to
Ernest Hemingway and Seamus Heaney*

Summer's dénouement was the wasps' cue.
In turn I had (cleverly I thought) baited a fancy trap,
and started this sunny afternoon
contentedly eyeing casualties.
Next to the watering can, startled by a
large arthropodic drowning victim.
Per 2020 my thoughts raced to
It's a murder hornet(!).
Per my more grounded Millennial son,
it was a cicada.
Then past skittering chipmunks grown
smug since Marcus reached the canine beyond,
and to the lower part of my haven
for some quality time with a lawn chair
and Seamus Heaney.

[...]

The imperious *floop* over my left shoulder
startled me out of glorious poetic lyricism
into conjunction with its material embodiment:
not five feet away, base of the stairs
down from the arbour, a magnificent red-tailed hawk
glowing with athleticism and inevitability,

an artist in his realm bristling with
deadly intensity in this moment,
had swooped underneath the oaken canopy
and was now clutching a formerly
complacent chipmunk in his talons.
I was well and truly seen,
pinioned and humbled and
yet comforted under his penetrating gaze,
induced to remain basking in
eloquent physicality until one majestic
motion launched him away.
Feeling the book again in my hands,
swathed in Seamus' ethereal smile.

Tierce

To the backyard, virtual employment left inside,
mid-September glowing all around
while I drifted off to a poetic confrontation
with a ghastly shade haunting a dark literary mountain
whose ascent required grappling with the lost soul
responsible for monstrous evil, finding myself
drifting in Blakean imagery as I searched for a route
to portray an inhuman, warped psyche.

Filtering through the struggle, the gentle rattle
of a small foot on the eavestrough, then a
hopeful fluttering as I glanced up
to find a young cardinal touching down
scant inches away on the patio table.
Startled back to sunshine,
caressed by an inquiring, nascent look,
I said hello, was answered by
a wing-borne dancing spirit
radiating little seraphs of light that
illumine those dark crags winding upwards.

After an infinite moment of communion
the herald was off to the cedar hedge,
leaving me a path, discernible, daunting and destined.

Mike Madill

A Closer Look

—after Bob Hicok

Who do I think I am?

Maybe a man, but not a man,
not done growing, nor finished grieving.

I'm a middle-aged fiancé and I'm lucky,
but would you guess it from my thrift-store jeans?

My hand-me-down neuroses?
The gravelly truths Johnny Cash still sings?

I could tell you I once jumped from
a helicopter, 11,000 feet over the Caribbean,

cinched to a Cuban guide and his 'chute,
but you don't have to believe anything I say.

How I swept more than a year away
on a factory floor, dusted in dead-end fears;

or once baked an apple pie from scratch, the sweet
aroma of hope escaping from the house I used to own.

When we meet now, am I still a stranger?
Departing none the wiser to the path

each has crossed.

Ghosted

—after Mike Barnes' *Let's Clear the Air*

I never had my day on the stand.
Would it have mattered,
given the smug looks and
crossed arms of my so-called peers?
Pleading my case
to my sparse cellar space.

Nothing quite like
a good brooding, re-hash
for the umpteenth time,
spurned for stuffing my closet
into garbage bags, squabbling
for the canoe,
none of the antiques.

I dared venture past
the ramparts, behind me
their fear raised
like a drawbridge.
The danger of thinking
for oneself, deigning
to wrench free the ring
and breathe.

Divorce far more
than x minus y ,

bleeding through
stashed photo albums,
shirts I never wore,
coffee stirred a little slower.
Two to fail, all the rest
keep a version alive.

Carrie Lee Connel

Vyshyvanka

An observer on a day of
Ukrainian celebration of freedom.

On the outside looking in, again,
not belonging an emptiness in my gut,
a reminder of my own absent ancestry.

The matching black and red geometric designs
worn by a matron and her husband.

A girl in a white blouse embroidered
with red blooms and green leaves.

The yellow trident stitched on
a young man's azure shirt.

A woman proudly wearing yellow cotton
embellished with blue flowers.

I am jealous of their connection:
to a homeland,
to a community,
to the threads that bind their history.

Intricate patterns of protective talismans,

symbolizing strength, courage, and unity
when facing a war
they never wanted.

(poem title pronounced Vee-shee-vahn-kah)

Novack's Messenger Bag

In boredom on the bus,
you read a memoir
on the canvas flap
of my vintage blue
Novack's messenger bag.

You note the obligatory
Canadian flag patch
next to one from Ireland.

A newly acquired button
proclaims my pronouns,
free from the Fringe Festival
(if I was forty years younger,
I might choose differently).

Two orange buttons
broadcast political leanings
and support for survivors
of residential schools.

Ten years ago, I affixed
'Librarian by day,
rockstar by night,'
but haven't worked
in either field.

Here, you see my interests:
one from a Steampunk event
where I bought a cameo
of Sherlock Holmes, stating
'No Shit' underneath.

I proclaim 'I (heart) Mr. Darcy'
though I ignored the play at the Grand;
and 'I read BANNED books'
as every book dragon should.

Also, 'I (heart) New York,'
my favourite place on earth,
where I bought 'Cats' on Broadway
and Warhol's Marilyn at MOMA.

Once there were buttons
for every concert I attended
(damn, that bag was heavy);
now it's only
Dylan and Petty,
"alone & together"
on tour in '85.

Just one remains:
similar in design
to a red sculpture by
Robert Indiana,

snapped on a
Manhattan street
fifteen years ago,
declaring LOVE
in rainbow colours.

Jordan Williamson

Considerable Sum

Time gives back something of itself through distance,
swells in the mind as trade winds blow
through some cabana without mussing your hair.
Life becomes mild and less weary, days quietly unspool
and bulge from the page like a simple weather report.

The lawn is duly watered,
the kids put away their thoughts of you
and your blue laugh.
Is this the dream I was having just now?
The motion of the trees undressed by the falling dusk,
set down on the dresser
like a lanolin ointment, a packing case, a damp towel
stepped over unthinkingly, the two of us laughing
over everything time has forgotten
to mention about love.

Carol Casey

Naked Ladies

(not what you think)

A whole frolic of them,
bloomers up, virginal white
tinged with saucy fuchsia,
come hither frocks
cupping the warm September sky.
They catch my eye
a tardy teenage generation
giggling itself into
this sombre harvest-scape
glowing, unearthly, gaudy
in the waning sunlight
irresistible to pollinators
who make their fervid way
down the avenue of them.

There is the need, the novelty
the nostalgia for springtime and youth,
and some undefined impulse
of reverence for a world
of good, clean dirt.

The Night After the Day Before

was just like any other night.
The clouds parted, revealing
a crescent moon on the wane,
while life prodded,
nestled into cracks,
looked for any excuse
to expand upon itself.

So it was,
on that night like any other night
when life was busy
and full of itself,
a young man contemplated
a grim diagnosis.
And an old woman wept for him.

Mary Anne Griffiths

Winter Garlic

The bread remembers
salt mash, sting;
rain on the shed roof.

By December
the wall nails loosen
with the weight
of each head
a lost god

full of the dream
of earth's tension
violet and veining
the skin.

Slaughter

Dawn
and the men are coming—
blood alike
the same hook of nose.

Grey wool
threadbare hats
I can draw it over
and over from memory.

The ketone stink
of half-used whisky
stock-potted on cheeks.
Capillaries, the thin
ruby lode within flesh

shines.
They are carving up
the swine, its quarters
fallen away
a blooming rose
on the morning's
hungry snow.

R L Raymond

Crossing

The fences aren't for them
 the deer
 the dead
who prance or wander at will

In the cemetery
 the dead
 the deer
rest under pine trees at peace

Until
the outsiders disturb
the still
to leave apples and flowers

Then they hide
under stones
motionless
behind boughs
unnoticed

Until
the outsiders depart
at last
and close the wrought iron gates

The graveyard is theirs
the deer and the dead
fed and remembered

flashes

white tails

ghost lights

in the tenebrous mist

Penn Kemp

The Winter Widow (i)

Sometimes I hear you speaking.
More often you nod approval or
shake your head to comment in
replay, in dream, in small glimpses.
You hover about at back of mind, at
nape of neck, those startled rising hairs.

The Winter Widow (ii)

The trick is knowing not to choose but to listen.
The choice is made, already. You are wafting
between up and down, between dimensions I
don't as yet know. The indeterminate unknown
prompts me to poetry, to remember you there.

John B. Lee

What's Falling Away

behind the girls' door
in the gynocium of the village school
with winter coats
hung in a row on the wall
and the water shadows
shrinking on the floor
like the light that crosses darkness
on wet stone
in that secret sanctorum
of ever-evaporate youth
with milk glass
glazing the windows
where our classmates
came with their common needs
to the similar soap pong
of the lavatory sinks
where voices mingled in a rush
from fanning out
and into the yard
with skip-rope dreams
or going in under the gender-carved lintel
as a queue
like sheep come in from grazing
we were all of us
obedient to those rivers of ordinary rules

learning in autumn
what served us through spring
from when the dogwood berry
brightened on the bough
till the bloodroot bloomed
and the peeper frogs sang
in the swale
and the first thing
our grandfathers built
after their barns
was a house with a bell for the child
long since fallen away
like the sound that won't last
in a distance too far
from the source
we hear that calling of ghosts
that clangor of mist in the wind

The Long Drift

there is a sadness
on the shore
and we are watching
a black breath dying
with a slow darkness overcoming
the remorseful cormorant
coming in
rocked by the rhythms
of the water
he or she it seems
is almost cognisant
of a great emptying outward
into the blue loss
as it is when beauty
fails its own illusions
this doomed bird
climbs a grey stone
where the lake swallows
the rock in swells of algae
and there he perches
engaged in the effort
of resting
enervated by the big sorrows
and the soft crashing
of green slosh
he yawns
as though from the morbid ennui

of his own absenting

his thin-boned legs
like sticks that stagger
after they're snapped
and the leaf tips
have gone sere
in the crooked shadows
of a broken-branch forest
crowned in fire

these are the cruel lessons
of unlearnable things
how often have I watched
in lugubrious and hopeless wonder
as life retreats
in this slipping away
of the light
like watching the weight
of a chain on itself
snaking from an old pool
to a new pool
this gravity of elsewhere
this link by link
silvering of the deep-water anchoring
where we are bottomless
and given over
to the long drift

The Last Parade

at the last gathering
of the ragtag scholars
of the Highgate Fair parade
that sad calithumpian
of old children
mulling like market steers
in the parking lot at the side door
of the abandoned village schoolhouse
some of us
were three-legged toddlers
or seated in four-wheel walkers
the sotto-voce elders
their soft talk
impatient to be going
we lined up
grouped by age
following the swirling blue light
of the slow to move cruiser
like some lugubrious and mostly funeral
ultra-obedient honouring the dead
but we
were the living memorabilia
of the past glories
of this dying community
long since our ancestors
built the first log school
and deep-wood churches

the town halls
and meeting houses
gone to the ghosts
like all fallen-barn fields
and crushed down fences
where the leafless oaks
cast their crooked shade
in the skeletal reach of a claw-handed darkness
a bone's reach of broken branch shadow
fallen over the fallow

we who walked that day
dragging our youth
in our wake lead-footed and easily lost
tracing our way
over the stone-clock sundial
of that final hour
we marched like refugees
fatigued by exile
missing the turn to the fairgrounds
we kept pace with the cruiser
to the very outskirts of the village
over the stumble of the railway line
by the grist mill
as though we were leaving

meanwhile everyone waited

the mayor of the region
stood biding her time
checking her watch by the sun

send someone to find them
bring them back
to the centre of attention
here to where the gates lie open
for the letting out
and the letting in
where there's cider in the cup
and winter's in the offing

Rhonda Melanson

The Mould Growing In My Classroom

Mould grows
seen and unseen

in classrooms, behind bulletin boards
primary red fadeless paper

an honour wall for student work, flowering
accomplishments ripped down for the threat

of what lay beneath, the symbiotic union
of moisture and the dark. The filthiest of fungi.

My students never questioned exposed brick wall,
now resembling hardened tomato soup nestled

in stiff cream, nor its three rusted nails, erected
at varying angles, an awkward uncomfortable stigmata

never resolved. It was expected their dull eyes
would carry on—worksheets, recess, dodgeball

and fucking math, as C would say. Of all the things
he hated, it was that. For me, it was the solutions

that could have been. For me, the harder fight.
The fire I could have set. The blazing trail.

A Mother at the Foot of a Phone Pole Memorial

She sits with her white sorrow. Her grief
multiple streamers. How many Januarys
ago did her daughter with the corkscrew
curls come home for lunch (grilled cheese,
tomato soup)? How loud was the one-two
of brake-crash, even heard by her teacher
a block away?

A grieving mother still looks like this—mad
as mother steroids at all the uncurious folk, cruising
by the crucified daisies, eye-level, on battered
phone pole. Tomorrow, she will bring more—
wield staple gun like assault rifle, surrender
more submissive stems and petals to gods
who believe in damnation for those who forget

about angels, still tumbling in magnified memory
in the snow.

Andreas Gripp

Bing

*Hello, this is Bing!
I'm the new AI-powered
chat mode
and the search engine
of your dreams.*

*I promise creative inspiration
and summarized answers
to all your questions,*

such as
*How can I improve my
sleep quality?*

*Which I'd like to know
in case my nightmares
start acting up,*

the one with my favourite
crooner,
who's killed
by a single bullet
from my gun,
in the middle of
White Christmas,

or was it his duet
with David Bowie

recorded shortly
before he died?
Felled by a failing
heart
after a hardy
round of golf,

though it's only
September
when it happens,
in my midnight
revery,

where I'm looking for
his granddaughter,
Denise,
totally delish
in *TNG*,

the scene of her
with Data, *Star Trek's*
Pinocchio android
(episode 3,
The Naked Now),

that I was simply
looking for the shot,

of her and her naked
stomach,
the bottom of
one of her breasts
exposed
by the skimpy
cut of her dress,

the one that all
the nerds
had saved,
in the gallery
of their iPhones
come the days of
internet,

but neither of the
Crosbys
are the point
of this stupid poem,

though Google gave
the elusive
pic much *sooner*,
wise that Bing
would cough it up
a little later,

protective granddad
that he was,

knowing I was a
creep to leer
at Denise's
sexy curves,

but I surely must
digress,
wondering *why*
my hands are
trembling, when I'm not even
scared or anxious,

knowing Google will leap to
Parkinson's, and I'll start
to plan for my *death*
ahead of time,

Medical Assistance
In Dying
just a couple of clicks
away

while Bing seems
clearly open
to other *scenarios*:

*It might just be
a case of
rattled nerves,
too much fucking coffee
to begin your day,*

*that wasted crush
you have,
on the girl
from the seventh
floor.*

*Go ahead, ask me anything
that's on your mind—
anything, anything at all.*

I promise not to judge.

Writer's Block

After a summer
penning nothing,
I took part
in the writing
prompt challenge
you recommended,
one for each day of the
month

and it's October,
assuming I'd get to
whittle away
at the leaves that
start to turn,
their multi-
coloured glory,

or scribble
a piece on pumpkins
and the goofy
autumn sweater
you gave me
straight off a
mannequin's
back.

Instead, day one had
offered up
a *stone*,
one upon a beach
perhaps, just waiting
to be skipped—
between convex,
concave waves,
like the belly of
a buddha
in breath,
lean and flat
on his back,
(not the portly,
seated fellow
we often see
depicted),

and that was
too haiku
I thought, thinking
the prompter
would call it
a cop-out,
a meager
bagatelle,

but nothing else
had come to mind
except Fred
Fucking Flintstone,

and what could
I likely write
about a '60s
cartoon character,
with no relevance
in the 2020s?

That Bedrock
solved an
early climate
crisis, by using vehicles
powered by feet?

That their carbon
footprint was
lowered since they
never wore shoes
to begin with?
No pants
or second threads?

That baby name
books were thin
and short on selection,
surnames confined
to the sediment
of the earth:

*Gravel, Slate,
Quarry and Slab,*

that a poet
from that period
would have no trouble
with such a prompt,
one bequeathing
a head I've
scratched and scarred,

wondering
how *yabba-dabba-do!*
could possibly slide
into a sonnet, a ghazal,
or one of those
innovative pieces
publishers say
is avant-garde,
pushes boundaries,

like a tectonic
plate's uprising,
leaves no rock
or stone unturned.

Jesus Murphy

You asked who
Murphy was
when I cried
Jesus, Murphy, and Joseph!

It was only
my usual spillage,
from cheap
spaghetti sauce,

the watery no-
name brand
the grocer sells
near Boyardee
(who, surprisingly,
was an actual chef,
first name Hector,

looking an awful
lot like Captain
Kangaroo—
who easily
could have been
a better cook,
that Gordon
Ramsay would've
ate the Italian
alive,

spitting out
his concoction
from a can,
the *Barfaroni*,
calling him a
disgrace,
to the puffy
toque blanch
upon his head),

and see how
easily I am
sidetracked,
when asked a
simple question?

Darling, *Murphy*
is the man
I would have been,
if reincarnation
is true,
and *not* the engineer
who gets the credit;

instead, a sadly unlucky
fellow, a George
Costanza of sorts,

channelling his inner
Charlie Brown,

that yes, everything
that could
had *gone* so very wrong,
in love and in
career,

that a piano
being lifted
by a rope,
to an open
window awaiting,
had suddenly
broken free,
landing on his head,
killing him
in an instant,
the day after
penning his law,

that the woman
who would have
played it
sung to the Virgin
in prayerful song,

knew the notes
of *Ave Maria*
by rote,
that there should
have been an accent
on the e,
denoting its distinction
from every
avenue,

that she would have
never
taken Mary's name
in vain,
though the intermittent
Jesus, Joseph, had slipped
on out,

her tongue a
braided chord
that sometimes
snaps,

causing the *fall*
of what is otherwise
never heard,

an appellation,
for instance,
sacred and reverently
held, that plunges
like an anvil
from a cliff,

that Wile E.
Coyote
had it worse
than us *all*,

that Acme
is still in business
this very day,
run by *Murphy's*
second cousin,
who is known
to never cuss,
no matter
the predicament
he's in,

even acting
like a mime
when a tombstone
tipped and fell,

smashing
every toe
in both his feet,

wishing his ventures
hadn't expanded
to the perished,
knowing there will
never be an end
to unlucky breaks,
their predictability,
their indifference;

callous, as granite
keeping watch
on all the dead.

Artificial Intelligence

It came to a head
the moment I read
AI Purdy's
printed name—
as AI in upper
case,

in this milieu
of robotic
replacement,

an oxymoron,
perhaps, warned that
we've begun
our own extinction,
flung-in-motion

photography
clearly fake,
paintings that are void
of human hands,
absent of the errors
which denote our humanity;

and that hot new
book of poems
everyone's talking
about these days,

created by a
chatbox
in under
half an hour,

one that's *never*
loved and lost,
watched a mother
slip away
beyond its reach,
like all the Alfreds
of the world,

bringing back the time
I asked for *Alan*,
at the *Al Dente*
Ristorante,
a hands-on
connoisseur
I believed,

that Mr. Dente
had embodied
the ideal of being perfect,
to the tooth, I later
learned,

that sweet spot
in the middle
of what's otherwise
overdone,
undercooked
and hard to chew,

because a flawless
stovetop timer
had miscounted
nine short minutes,

had no idea
of how it felt
to dine in candlelight,
hold a *belovèd's*
shadowed hand
between the swallows.

John Tyndall

Climb

Rising from dark
basement to light-
bathed doorway
I think of Jacob's
Ladder from the earth
up to the heavens
yet there are no angels here
to guard me from a topple
not illusory like a Jacob's
toy but a deadly imbalance
a fall without grace
so I focus on each
grip, every step
and suddenly my body

feels young and free
again I am back climbing
my favourite apple tree
at my grandparents' house
the same effortless moves
every ascent into its limbs
with their mottled shade
their fragrant flowers or
their ripening fruit
and although no-one else
is ever in my tree

I always hope for someone
who can climb
higher

For a Little While

for David

Will you lie with me
for a little while
I am tired of lone-
liness and no touch
upon my skin, my
heart wants to beat
in tandem with you
before my fingertips
fail to feel at all
before my voice falls
silent from grief

Will you lie with me
for a little while
and keep our care
secret as I fear
we will hear complaints
against honeying
and making love
too soon, too soon

Will you lie with me
for a little while
we two greybeards
who mindful wear
the motley

hear a nearby toll
and know our lives
may end so soon

Burnished Lining

for Diane

Oh, her mother meant well
for this only daughter
starting at eighteen months
and years thereafter
a coiffure of curls
from home permanents
laced with ammonia
searing like a lava flow
and even when the girl
called a halt, the damage
remained irreversible
as her scalp erupted
in psoriasis, the epidermal
slough accelerated
to maddening itch
like mosquito bites
on a summer sunburn

First, doctors painted her
with gentian violet
so school kids teased
Flying purple people eater
and then, for all her days
they have prescribed
hydrocortisone cream

suggested tanning lights
for her Celtic-white skin

The affliction ran deep
into her body, her joints
swollen with psoriatic arthritis
and doctors recommended
anti-inflammatory diclofenac
which relieved her pain
while, a hell for a chef's
offspring, it slowly stole
the senses smell and taste
or so she thought for decades

How much more torment
can one endure in a single life
you may ask and she herself
will describe the tremors
the slowness she now faces
on the dexterous side
of her body thanks to
James Parkinson's disease
the shaking, shaking palsy
requires yet another drug

and in levodopa there is relief
almost a wide awakening
under cumulo-nimbus clouds
her smell and taste returning
as a burnished silver lining

Sylvia Bosgra

Euphoria

Looking hard for clarity, our lungs
Distill this crisp mountain air, climbing
Up to some alpine tarn, meditating, finding
The quiet source of a great river.

Lacking enough oxygen can be
An exultant kind of high.

Panning ways beneath us: dry prairie grasses
Holding on to thin soil resemble coarse scouring
Brushes in an open kitchen-clean
Expanse of sky:

The sweeping scope of it all, taking
One's breath away.

Here are no roads, less plough
Ruts, the scrubbed lands pointing
A route towards a fine
River highway.

Mirror minds reflect a sun-bleached
Empty, fill us with distances.

What's in my Jam?

There's so much bottled up in the pantry
that never makes it down to the table:

Juicy fruit, berries and pomes, crushed
in the making of syrups and jellies,
still smarting from their bruises . . .

Jams made from pears the orchard orioles
had pecked, the wormy ones, yesterday's
grounders. For certain, some of those
got chucked out with the worms.

We boiled the rest. The paring and cutting
never caused the fruit to smart: rather

The fall, the risks we did not take, not standing
on the highest rungs of rickety ladders, not reaching
for the tallest branches . . .

Sweetness never found its way
into our careful preparations—
Sunday's sticky discourse did—
this caused the fruit to sour.

There's so much bottled up.

Separation and Departure

Yellow leaves in her fingers
She holds her arms like paper
Birches

Could I build a canoe? she asks
The river's lapping at the bark

Remember the fleeting sun
Warm, and then absent
How words fall

Like yellow leaves from her paper
Fingers

Absences of her oaken family
Dendritic connections
The family crest: canopy

Roots and branches
Of the family tree

She'll search for friends who are absent
On city streets strewn with branches

Words fall like yellow leaves
The sentences do not come

Could I build a canoe? she asks
The river's lapping at the bark

Jenny Sorensen

The Form of Snow

The pale snow rests in the roadside ditch.
Huddled, comforted,
as if cradled by these arms of earth,
holding such an icy child to her breast.

You see this bone white snow
cracked and pockmarked,
wind-whipped into its ragged form,
held there like a miniature mountain,
with its peaks and dirt.
The snow has become hard:
too much cold, too much sun, too much change.

Perhaps you shudder when you see it,
you can feel its icy glint, the burning cold.
Perhaps you turn your head in aversion,
you see no comfort in those sharp lips,
the frozen bosom.

I hold this crusted drift of snow like protection.
Its sworded edge, its stiffened form
tents me.
It shelters me from the cutting wind,
from too much sun;
it slows down change.
My thirst held still in its cold cup.

This snow once fell from the sky like soft confetti
and I said "Yes."

I hold it to me, the frozen firmness of it all.

The years of accumulation.

The memory of sky in its hint of blue,
in the weight of its white.

Time lies still in this frozen cup.

When it melts,

this snow melts into me.

The peaks, the dirt, the weight, the memory,
they melt into me

and become the part of me from which flowers grow.

Teresa Daniele

Déjà rêvé

Wouldn't you rather be full instead of empty?
and finally turned loose from the narrow lanes
of misguided urban planning designs
that wrongly traded a verdant crown of foliage
for a sideways abyss,
always destined for hungriness

Because here is the exact place
that I remember from my dream,
an unmistakable landmark
pressing up against my sleep
tangibly recreated with clapboard siding
and corrugated metal
that I recognize implicitly,
and where I know I've already been

It's somewhere imaginary
like a faded picture folded in half
a distant scene or an August sunset
cutting holes in the shadows
with the retired light of day
playfully within the hopscotch lines
that form the borders of my expansive neighbourhood
a territory so vast
and imperceptibly unreachable
now through closed doors

but so intimately and uniquely familiar
as to have once been called my home
over the nightly newscasts droning in tandem
with the living room fan
inside a one-bedroom apartment,
listless with expired air
and the faint sounds on the tube
as the dial finds a US Open men's tennis match
in-progress
that stretches deep into the deciding, fifth set

Patrick Connors

Advent

My three-legged slow-footed exit from work
not having made a single dollar that day
despite thirty minutes overtime.

Three elevators are packed with strangers I
see every day, their public faces under dull eyes
on the brink of feeling, I get on the fourth elevator.

The bus seats are dotted with those wearing masks.
Those not wearing masks bear oversized bags filled
with holiday gifts and what might be pride or despair.

Darkness has fallen on the city.
The flickering lights and honking horns
of frozen traffic create a cacophonous nightmare.

On Saturday morning I wake up
glad I don't have to go to work
until I remember I have to go shopping.

To try and tell the people I love
 how much I love them
even though I have no idea what to buy.

But at least I have people to love
enough to go to a crowded mall on my day off.
With a sigh of resignation, I get out of bed.

I open the blinds and look out the window
see the squirrels climb the leafless trees
and somehow know something great is coming.

Roméo Desmarais III

Middle School Synchronicity

Stuck at that stage between “kid” and “teen”, we play tag where “you’re it!” means you’re *hit* by an overhand hurl of a rubber ball, which

quickly gets confiscated by the strictest of all teachers, forcing us to await our bus with only boredom to bounce around.

As we hang at the chain-linked fence, serving our sentence in our schoolyard cage, we watch the witch walk to her car...

*I hope she falls off a building!!
She’s so mean, I wish she’d die!!!*

(Idle threats from
idle minds.)

The next morning, our classroom filled with tissues and tears, we are told that
her car collided with a concrete truck,
killing her instantly.

With soft eyes but a stern look,
withdrawing her hand slowly from
beneath the blackness of her habit,

our principal returns our banished ball—
still round, but remarkably
ingrained with dark slits—
and we are left with the most
difficult yet innocent
guilt to swallow.

**the moment in
your arms**

it is wondering what your parents think
it's part of me held in an art gallery
the drag queen prose I've read
in a redneck bar

quick quiet moans
wha you ask me
oh nothing I say
just moaning

it is pleasure leaking from my throat
it's the climax after the climax when
we cuddle so closely we can
barely see each other

blank thoughts filled with
the feel of
you sleep nearing
mind reeling

the kiss on my head brings me
back I nuzzle in your
armpit breathing deeply
fully relaxed

it is the poetry between you and me
it's my arm falling asleep
so I apologize for getting up but I
must go write us down

**Miracle On
Huron Church Road**

He ascends swiftly into smoggy air from
the roaring pride of passing trucks
a parabolic rag doll in an arc so
perfect so high I would
not have believed

I rush to where He landed
notice the purple sweater of our school uniform
His body convulsing violently
the foam bubbling
out from
His Mouth

I remove *my* purple cardigan
and cover Him
solemnly

On The Third Day
later, *I am in shock for*

*I see Him
walking down the hall
like all is normal.*

Lynn Tait

from Friends III—Laura

Could we measure our friendship in dog years,
your poodles and boxers to my golden,
my plethora of cats?

Now it's your sheltie circling, corralling us
into a heart-fence, leaving the gate open.
Our love is crisp as frost,
quiet as a blanket on a chair.
We meld together—Cuba libre and chardonnay,
hot peppered Havarti, bean salad and gummy bears.

Could we measure it in miles?
On the backs of Harley and Honda,
able to roar louder than the metal underneath us,
we are lions overseeing landscapes; our country roads
lead
to cottage, motel, plastic chairs and Bud Lites.
You have gone the extra mile for me.

When you ask how I'm doing I unravel,
sing you songs to the beat of a tarnished tambourine,
refrains that repeat, end in long crescendos.

When I ask you the same, it's work
trying to chip off your thoughts with a chisel,
you make me dig deep to find the bones you've buried.

Murmurations of Sandy, Shakespeare and Starlings

in memory of my son 1983 – 2012, fentanyl overdose

When Sandy hit landfall
she moved across the continent,
towards the Great Lakes
ignoring all rules of climate control.

Hazel, the last windbag to grace Ontario shores,
claimed territory far beyond
what was proper for any lady.
That was before I was born.

But Sandy stormed through
like a lady of the night gone wild.
By the time she hit Sarnia,
her noise and bluster became the backdrop
for impromptu midnight madness.

Shakespeare at his best—
tragedy, irony, comedic repartee:
You call to inquire—
Pumpkin seeds, to roast or not to roast;
later—unanswered phone messages,
text failing to reach the intended party.

The side plot—concern
and worry for your father, the king.

All was well, and ended well for that red herring.

By Act III—tempest subsides,
the shrew tamed. Starlings gather,
perform their hurricane dance—
settle on our lawn.

Last scene—the call arrives.
I mistake you for the messenger
until I hear without allegory,
a woeful dialogue announce your demise,
my beautiful Falstaff.

Susan Wismer

Oranges

Sky only blue and the light-fingered trees.
Summer turns naked, autumn strips away green.

Outside the cabin, goldenrod's bristled fur falls.
The tea pot is empty; the cracked cup will wait.

On the path oak leaves are silver-cloaked—hoarfrost.
Stars grounded to glisten in morning's slow melt.

Pileated. The woodpecker's mad laugh wakes us.
Another old friend can't remember my name.

Our ancestors yearned after oranges.
Something to hope for, to imagine, to taste.

No light in here now but the woodfire's flame.
Maybe that's why night has come.

My Body as Art

I learn to love angles, sharp elbows.
Straighter lines come with age. Crescent moon
crook of the second finger, both hands.

I pay attention to spiders. A funnelweaver
crawls on pale vellum, thinned skin. Black and gold
legs crossing my arm. Afternoon in the garden.

Tendons, ligaments, veins are blue tattoos rising.
Alive in my own slow dissolving, blurred lines
through my eveningtime eyes.

My body becomes a starker art.
Its dances a slow devoted descent
toward Earth.

Frances Boyle

Kicker

There is always the sound of footfalls

echoing down long corridors, the tick
of high heels, the gleam of black
polished oxfords. Stoop
to retie laces, knee hoisted to park bench
pant hem lifting to reveal sock not ankle.

Scuffed sneakers comical
or pathetic. Soccer goals. Leather soles
worn through, the simmered brogue
in Chaplin's soup. A single pump
lost, its mate dangled insouciant
from a finger
above ambling barefoot
pavement. The toes of boots
applying pressure
to fingers
that grip stone ledges

Back in the corridor,
the shadowy peril, the empty
classroom footfalls come closer.

Nautilus

A shell whispers silences, sometimes
secret, sometimes just the hush
as sleep approaches. A name
I might spell out in small stones
before current's roar and rush overtakes,
rakes memory away. A grove at night
awash with shadows, amnesia
glittering, intermittent like fireflies
among the trees. Over the lawn,
their signals call you to a cut-out
shape that looks like home,
that might have been a place
to return to in dusky time, never
in daylight.

Kemeny Babineau

That War

i

This war has been sent
This war is expecting
This war said so
This war has the scoop
This war is filling in the details
This war will be like that
This war is running
This war opened up about itself
This war isn't telling the truth
This war has an agenda
This war is shirtless
This war is in error code
This war is full
This war started it
This war is amortized
This war is about face
This war is for sale
This war does not return email

ii

This war is on a mission
This war is not over
This war will kill a million
This war is going on

This war tanked
This war is black and white and red all over
This war is nyet
This war is post-Putinesque
This war is neither East nor West
This war remains
This war drones on and on
This war is waterborne
This war is big business
This war is a total loss
This war isn't horsing around
This war lacks consent
This war commits marital abuse
This war sends you its love

iii

This war came out of the trees
Out of the muck and flood
Out of a metallic sky exploding
Oh how I miss the cold war Darling
Its cool brow and moue of regret
Instead of this darkened clud of dread
Where 2 countries fight each to their knees
Drag the others in, brawl in raw shit this war

The Real Poem to Wllm. Berczy

(after John Steffler)

The real poem to William Berczay
Will dissolve and reform as a man of action
At the head of the trail, blazing

The true poem to William Berczy
Shall be thrice denied
And nailed to the canon's door

The actual poem to Berczy
May petition the Queen at 3.6 miles per day
Through a blizzard's white rage

The cultivated poem to Berksay
Will be wanting seed grain, potato eyes
And hands aplenty to scatter its words

The visual pome to Wllm. Berczy
Will require four hundred cubits of lumber
To bridge the Don River at dawn

The accomplished poem to Berczy
Will paint itself into a corner
At the precise moment of completion

Alizon Sharun

Columbine

When fires have burned out,
waters flowed back
to where ice froze,
wars parched into pity,
wisdom will creep back
in the lithe bright blood red flowers,
springing up through our dead forest floor.

The tumid beach will again
bear memories of our feet over worn stone.
Grandmother wood will warm us in new fire.
The triune leaves of Columbine
teem with tiny creatures
and the snakes and creeping things
will shelter in peace, shaded in sepia,
where the red flowers almost sing.

Pujita Verma

One Point of Contact

as we doze off, please,
just one palm
softly on this shoulder, an arm
around your waist, or a toe
traversing the flat sheet's
sweeping meanders to meet mine,
mend spaces with one string
tied to your finger
for when you crash on the couch,
let me be the memory foam
for all your landings,
tell me which one god
forms the worship
of your midnight
mumbles, I will rehearse
that prayer until every one-
rous day paves a road
back to you,
we don't have to hang
up the call now, just one more
minute until we fall
asleep.

How to Forget Someone

apologize
block them, no
call. wait for the
dial tones and say
everything you wish you could
forget about them
ghost their hovering memory
how they touched you
in the absence of daylight,
just enough to
keep you tethered
lie; it meant nothing to you
make a big deal of
numerical anomalies
on the birthday of someone you used to love
photographs will make you
question your
recollection
suspend the disbelief in
therapy, think about when they've let you down
undress for the closest star
vivid hope of extraterrestrial existence
when people ask, shrug. say.... we don't talk anymore
xerox the DMs before you delete them
years and years will pass
zone out when they cross your mind

this *morphological mosaic*

a child once cradled in a mother's arms
once laid with care in a shallow grave.

I lie stretched head to toe on my bed
in the bow of the boat
pale dawn drifts down through the open hatch
lie haunted by the excavation while the boy
floats away with the night.

Love Your Hat

The joyful man who danced
along the sidewalk in outrageous
get-ups—singing greetings
each time we passed, a songbird—
now curls close to the brick wall
of one of the narrow carriageways
running between street and river,
curls deep within layers of clothing
layers of small blankets, all thin.
Upon his head a summer remnant—
a red kerchief tied pirate-wise.
He looks up as I hurry home,
night falling fast near the solstice.

This morning I grind coffee beans,
put Coltrane on the cd player,
pull a flouncy tropical plant from
the cold windowpane, and gaze
at snow swathing downtown's
grime and grey. It falls sideways
in the wind, falls heavy, dense,
ghosts streets, covers pigeon shit,
whatever vomit accumulated overnight.
I wonder about the man in the carriageway.

All summer when we met
he greeted me with buoyant
voice—*love your hat*—
always with a smile before
prancing off as if the world
was theatre and we players.

Dan Oudshoorn

Deshkan Ziibiing

The river flows
Not as it has always flowed but still
It flows
Brown and frothing
Tumbling falls

In 1824 Europeans describe immense sturgeons
Seven feet long
One hundred and fifty pounds
Here in this river
In 1821 another European
Described the river as
Delightfully transparent

Today the settlers
Whose houses line the banks
Describe the river as peaceful
Oh, so peaceful
But me, I remember
May 24, 1881
The steamboat SS Victoria
Her boiler torn loose
Scalding some to death
Crushing others on the way down
The upper deck collapsing
Onto the people below

Holding them underwater
As the ship promptly sank
And this peaceful river
Oh so peacefully claimed
One hundred and eighty-two settler lives
On the birthday of their Queen

The river flows
Not as it has always flowed
Emptied of sturgeons
Filled with sewage
And pesticides from local farmlands
Fields that once were forests
Around this, the Forest City
Brown and frothing
Tumbling falls
It bides its time
And waits

I Sort Birds

I sort birds by those I can eat in one bite

And those whom I cannot

On one side, chickadees, hummingbirds, and
treecreepers

On the other, pelicans, condors, and albatrosses

I sort mountains by those that are small at a distance

And those that are large close up

On one side, Everest from far away

On the other, Everest close up

I sort things by those that I understand

And those that I do not

On one side, loneliness

On the other, everything else

CONTRIBUTORS

Kemeny Babineau lives in Stratford. Some previous publications include *After the Six O'Clock News*, *The Black Burn Files*, *Nurse Sing Home* and *House of Many Words*.

Sylvia Bosgra resides in St. Marys, Ontario and is a member of the St. Marys Poetry Circle. She has participated in open mics at Brch & Wyn, Stratford, and in several 'Circle' projects including collaborations with the St. Marys Station Gallery. Her poetry is represented in the Station Gallery's exhibition catalogues *Stone* and *The Minimalist Eye*. Sylvia is a graduate of York University, Fine Arts, and of George Brown College, Commercial Art. She is retired from working many years as a textile designer in Toronto.

Frances Boyle (she/her) lives in Ottawa. Her most recent book is *Openwork and Limestone* (Frontenac House 2022). In addition to two earlier books of poetry, she is also the author of *Seeking Shade*, an award-winning short story collection (The Porcupine's Quill, 2020) and *Tower*, a novella (Fish Gotta Swim Editions, 2018). Frances's writing has been selected for the *Best Canadian Poetry* series and for Poem in Your Pocket Day. Recent and forthcoming publications include *TAB Journal*, *The New Quarterly*, *Pinhole Poetry* and *Bywords.ca*. Visit francesboyle.com and follow @francesboyle19 on Twitter and Instagram.

April Bulmer's newest book is called *Feats of Weakness*. It is available at amazon.ca and at aprilbulmer.com in both print and audio form. This collection of short prose explores illness in spiritual and religious contexts. It was a finalist in the Global Book Awards and in the Next Generation Indie Book Awards. April lives in Cambridge, Ontario where she won the Women of Distinction Award from the YWCA.

Carol Casey lives in Blyth, Ontario, Canada. Her work has been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *The Anti-Langourous Project*, *Please See Me*, *Front Porch Review*, *Cypress*, *Vita Brevis*, *Blue Unicorn*, *InScribe Journal* and others, including a number of anthologies, most recently *Byline Legacies* (Cardigan Press), *Oxygen: Parables of the Pandemic* (River Paw Press) and *All Shall be Well: Poems for Julian of Norwich* (Amethyst Press).

Carrie Lee Connel, MLIS, is a fiction writer and poet living in London, Ontario, with her husband, poet and publisher Andreas Gripp. She has published three books of poetry: *A Day in Pieces*, *Persona Grata*, and *Written In Situ* (all with Harmonia Press). Sixteen of her short stories have been collected in *The Bogified Manuscript: Weird and Ghostly Stories*, available from Beliveau Books. Carrie's poems have been included in the anthologies *Another London*, *Piping at the End of Days*, *Moon Shine*, and *Smitten: This is What Love Looks Like*. She was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2018 and 2020.

Patrick Connors first chapbook, *Scarborough Songs*, was released by Lyricalmyrical Press in 2013, and charted on the Toronto Poetry Map. Other publication credits include: *The Toronto Quarterly*, *Spadina Literary Review*, *Sharing Spaces*, *Tamaracks*, and *Tending the Fire*. His first full collection, *The Other Life*, was released in 2021 by Mosaic Press. His new chapbook, *Worth the Wait*, was released this past Spring by Cactus Press.

London, Ontario resident, **Teresa Daniele**, is the author of a short collection of philosophical essays, weaving together observations from her personal experience while examining the catastrophic costs emerging from the Anthropocene age. Printed in 2022, *The Arc of the Infinite Line* is Teresa's first published work.

Roméo Desmarais III aKa RoMeO-HoMeO ô£ tHë MâRtiÃñS >{:} (t/he/y t/he/m) is a Queer, *Muskrat Métis du Grand Lac Ste-Claire* poet, artist, and singer-songwriter with 27 poems appearing on *Brickyard Spoken Word* (YouTube), in *Synkroniciti*, *Pink Disco*, and *Eavesdrop* magazines, and many more. Their folk song, “John McCauldron”, about an unsheltered man, garnered attention from CBC-Radio. Roméo has also produced two multimedia textual art exhibits and holds degrees in both Sociology & Music Therapy.

Mary Anne Griffiths lives, gardens, and writes furtively in Ingersoll. Recently she has started to submit work again after a long period of indentured labour to a career in laboratory technology and a physician’s assistant. She enjoys everything except foie gras.

Andreas Gripp is the author of numerous books of poetry, including his newest offerings, *Urban Burlesque* and *You’re Dead After School*, both available from Beliveau Books. Presently, he is the director of the Black Mallard Poetry Series in London, Ontario, where he lives with his wife, Carrie. andreasgripp.wixsite.com/andreasgripp

Penn Kemp has participated in Canadian cultural life for over 50 years, writing, editing, and publishing poetry and plays. She has published 30 books of poetry, prose and drama and 10 CDs of her Sound Operas along with several DVDs. Kemp was London’s inaugural Poet Laureate from 2010-2012. Penn’s new collection, *INCREMENTALLY*, is up as an e-book and album on hempressbooks.com/authors/penn-kemp See also pennkemp.wordpress.com and pennkemp.weebly.com

John B. Lee is a Poet Laureate of the city of Brantford, Norfolk County, and Canada Cuba Literary Alliance. The author of nearly one hundred published books, his most recent, *A School Called Normal*, was published by Mosaic Press in 2023. He lives with wife Cathy in a lake house overlooking Long Point Bay on the south coast of Lake Erie in the town of Port Dover where he is a full time author.

Kathryn MacDonald has published in literary journals in Canada, the U.S., Ireland, and England, as well as in anthologies. Her poem “Duty / Deon” won Arc Award of Awesomeness (January 2021). “Seduction” was entered in the Freefall Annual Poetry Contest and was published in *Freefall* (Fall 2020). She is the author of *A Breeze You Whisper: Poems* and *Calla & Édourd* (fiction). For more detail, please see the “Poetry” category on her website, kathrynmacdonald.com

Mike Madill has had poems appear in numerous literary magazines across Canada, including *The Antigonish Review*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Devour*, *Event*, *Existere*, *The Nashwaak Review*, *Untethered*, *Vallum*, *White Wall Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Freefall*, *The New Quarterly*, and *The Windsor Review*. After his debut full-length manuscript was one of four winners in the inaugural 2021 Don Gutteridge Poetry Award Contest, he was awarded publication of his first poetry collection, *The Better Part of Some Time* (Wet Ink Books, May, 2022). When not writing, Mike pursues freelance editing, and has also taken turns as a social worker, computer analyst, and home contractor. He holds a B.A. in Psychology from York University.

A graduate of Queen's University Artist In The Community Education Program, **Rhonda Melanson** has been published in several print and online magazines. She is the author of two chapbooks: *Gracenotes* (Beret Days Press) and *My Name is Mary* (Alien Buddha Press). She also co-edits a literary blog, *Uproar*.

A formerly homeless youth and long-term frontline worker, **Dan Oudshoorn** writes from a lifetime spent pursuing mutually liberating solidarity with others who have been impoverished, oppressed, and left for dead. He has an M.A. from the University of British Columbia and is the author of four books including a work of autotheory entitled *A Magnificent Work*. Dan lives with his two children at the forks of the Deshkan Ziibiing.

An Imagist, **R L Raymond** tells stories through fiction, poetry, and photography. He earned his Master of Arts in English Literature from the University of Western Ontario and has been published around the world in journals and hallways, on a bus and a few postcards. His work has appeared in journals throughout North America and Europe, including *Envoi*, *Grain*, *Carousel*, *Existere*, and *Descant*. Please visit rlraymond.com for more information.

Michael Russell (he/they) is coauthor of the chapbook *Split Jawed* with Elena Bentley (forthcoming from Collusion Books) and mother monster to chapbook *Grindr Opera* (Frog Hollow Press). They are queer, mad, and overflowing with anxiety. Currently, he has a craving for chocolate chip pancakes with bananas and thinks you're fantabulous. Insta: [@michael.russell.poet](https://www.instagram.com/michael.russell.poet)

Renée M. Sgroi is the author of *life print, in points* (erbaccepress, 2020), and her second poetry collection is due out in 2024 with Guernica Editions. Her poetry has been published in *Pinhole Poetry*, *The Windsor Review*, *The /tEmz/ Review*, *Poetry Pause* and numerous anthologies. A member of The Writers Union of Canada, the League of Canadian Poets, and the Canadian Authors Association, she is also a contributing editor for *Arc Poetry Magazine*. reneemsgroi.com

Alizon Sharun is a practicing poet who has worked in theatre, television and film as a stage manager, costume designer and scenic artist. Since 2019, she has presided over The St.Marys Poetry Circle.

Richard-Yves Sitoski is a songwriter, performance poet, and the 2019-2023 Poet Laureate of Owen Sound, Ontario. He is also the Artistic Director of the Words Aloud festival. He regularly collaborates with Grey Bruce Pride, SHEATRE and the M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre. His most recent project is the semi-autobiographical stage show and accompanying book, *Butterfly Tongue*. He was the 2nd place winner of the 2022 Don Gutteridge Award for his full-length manuscript *Wait, What?*, which is out with Wet Ink Books. His newest collection, *A Current Through the Flesh*, is forthcoming with Mansfield Press. He won the 2021 John Newlove award for his poem "Air Kiss", and the resulting chapbook, *How to Be Human*, is out with Bywords.ca. In 2022 with Penn Kemp he co-edited *Poems in Response to Peril*, an anthology of poems in support of Ukraine. His poems have appeared, or are forthcoming, in many journals, including *The Fiddlehead*, *Arc*, *CAROUSEL*, *Prairie Fire*, *QWERTY*, *The Windsor Review*, *The Maynard*, *Barren Magazine*, *Bywords.ca*, in the League of Canadian Poets' *Poetry Pause*, and as part of Brick Books' Brickyard spoken word video series.

Jenny Sorensen was born and raised in Bramalea, Ontario and now lives in Guelph. She started writing poetry at the age of eight and it has been her compass and her guru ever since. She's been a member of the Brooklin Poetry Society, The Niagara Poetry Guild, and Tower Poetry Society. Jenny also started a writing club in St. Catharines, Writers Next Door. She has performed readings in numerous venues with the Wild Nellies in the Durham region, and in Guelph.

David Stones is an award-winning poet and performer with some 400 poems in print in Canada and internationally. His one-man show, *Infinite Sequels*, based on his inaugural collection of poetry, continues to charm audiences at festivals, theatres, and poetry events throughout Ontario ("brilliant and beautiful theatre"—London Free Press). His celebrated second collection, *sfumato*, has been a best seller in Canadian poetry and has led to a song series based on his poetic works. Show credits featuring David's performance poetry include *Expressions Of Love*, *Infinite Sequels*, and *WordSong*. David's newest collection, *Essays Of Light*, hits book stores in 2024. David lives in Stratford, Ontario, and is a proud member of the League of Canadian Poets, The Ontario Poetry Society, and Canadian Beat Poets. Website: davidstonespoet.com

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John Tyndall, first-place winner of the 2022 Don Gutteridge Poetry Award, lives in London, Ontario with an Angora tuxedo cat named Buddy. His latest books are *Mangoes from the Seventh Dimension* (Wet Ink Books, 2023) and *Listen to People* (Hidden Brook Press, 2020).

Pujita Verma is an Indo-Canadian poet and illustrator. She was Mississauga's Youth Poet Laureate (2018-20) and a runner-up for UofT's 2023 Janice Colbert Poetry Award.

Jennifer Wenn is a trans-identified writer and speaker from London, Ontario. Her first poetry chapbook, *A Song of Milestones*, was published by Harmonia Press (an imprint of Beliveau Books). Her first full-size collection, *Hear Through the Silence*, was published by Cyberwit. She has also written *From Adversity to Accomplishment* (a family and social history); and published poetry in numerous journals and anthologies including *WordCity Literary Journal*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Beliveau Review* and the anthologies *Poems in Response to Peril & Dénouement*. She is also the proud parent of two adult children. Visit her website at jenniferwennpoet.wixsite.com/home

Jordan Williamson is a father, poet and resident of London, Ontario. His work has recently been published in *The /t&Emz/ Review* and *Tilted House Review* out of New Orleans.

Susan Wismer (they/she) is a queer poet who is grateful to live on Treaty 18 territory at the southern shore of Manidoo gitchigaming (Georgian Bay) in Ontario, Canada with two human partners and a very large dog. Her book *Hag Dances* is coming out with At Bay Press in 2025. susanwismer.com





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