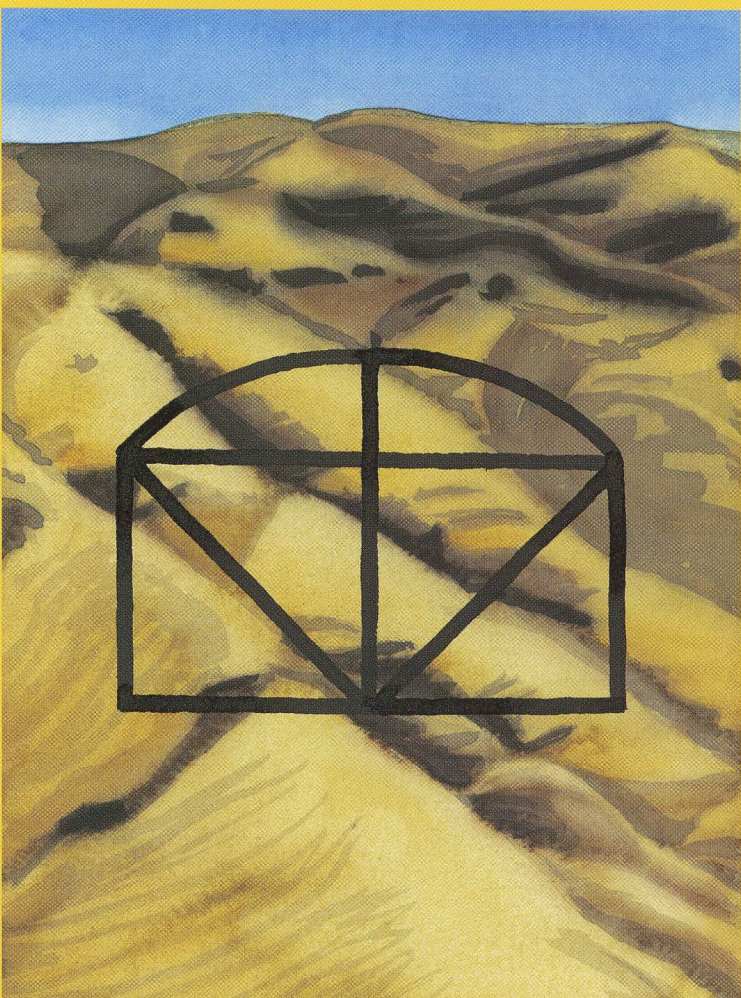


THE CAPILIANO REVIEW



Streets jammed with cars, we take the long
way up to the bench, a kid pulling away from
the West Side food store drinking a Coke
seems enclosed in his car — encased —

What's wrong is somehow I think there's
something to write *about* instead of writing.

— George Stanley

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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

Series 2, No. 28

Spring 1999

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9" x 12-1/8"		

THE SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS

The Society of Musicians is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and support of the musical arts. It was founded in 1850 and has since that time been a leading force in the development of the music industry. The Society's primary focus is on the education and training of young musicians, providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed in their careers. It also works to preserve the cultural heritage of music and to promote the performance of classical and contemporary works. The Society's activities are supported by a wide range of donors, including individuals, corporations, and government agencies. Its success is a testament to the power of collective action and the enduring value of the musical arts.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue is my last as Editor of *The Capilano Review*. Tradition insists that I give you a farewell address, but since I'll not easily be able — nor want — to remove myself completely from the magazine's future, I will resist as much of the tradition as I can.

I believe that *The Capilano Review*, and other small magazines like it, are essential parts of the civil process. They collectively provide a large, fluid, and eclectic forum for the expression of new ideas, texts and visual forms; the reworking of old ones; plus the opportunity to contribute to the cultural life (and thus the identity and character) of a country and its various peoples. *TCR* has been making its small contribution to this long, uncertain process for almost thirty years, and I am happy to have helped it do that. I am certain, though, that I have contributed what I can and that a new editorial voice and vision will allow *TCR* to renew its mandate and its manner of carrying it out.

My thanks are many: to all the writers and artists I have had the pleasure of working with and publishing; to Jane Hamilton, June Hunter, Elizabeth Rains, Margarita Miniovich, and Carol Hamshaw — the Managing Editors who have tolerated my eccentricities and without whose dedication the magazine could not have been produced; to Dorothy Jantzen, whose constant support and encouragement have been essential to my editorship; to all the volunteers and society board members who have helped in countless ways to get the magazine out. I also owe particular thanks to the Humanities Division of Capilano College whose support is also fundamental to *TCR*'s existence, and to the College itself for its commitment to the magazine. Finally, my thanks to you — our readers. I hope that what I have offered you has brought pleasure, challenge, and provocation in equal amounts.

Departure brings arrival: in this case that of Ryan Knighton as the new Editor of *TCR*. He carries with him the poet's finely tuned appreciation of language in all its guises and forms, a strong desire to move *TCR* in new directions, and a knowledge of writing and writers well beyond the confines of the West Coast. I am delighted to leave *TCR* in his hands, and I encourage you to embrace the changes he will make.

Tradition also insists that I regret my going, but I prefer to think that time well spent — among friends and colleagues, artists and writers, print brokers and press operators — should be looked back upon with gentle satisfaction. That I will do.

Bob Sherrin
May 1999

George Stanley / AT ANDY'S

for Andy and Martina

Terrace '97. I arrive here on the bus, Andy & Martina pick me up (while I'm writing I'll try to ignore undercurrents of the brain, personal worthiness, outcome or 'point' of this writing, e.g., or should I include them? A pointless paragraph. I can't write.

OK, I guess I really do have to freewrite & quit fucking around. So — dive in — splash — *in medias res* (in the middle of things) — don't like this pen, point too short — I arrive on the bus — strip mall on Keith — we stop at Safeway for groceries — obesity — almost everyone too big, I think, is the weight of all the food that gets here, by truck (less waste, and, Andy reminds me, heat loss) added to the bodies of those living here, Terraceites?

Streets jammed with cars, we take the long way up to the bench, a kid pulling away from the West Side food store drinking a Coke seems enclosed in his car — encased —

What's wrong is somehow I think there's something to write *about* — instead of writing.

I'm sitting down here in Andy's basement at Vicky's old desk on a hot Sunday in August thinking I should write about something, or rather, that I should (emphasize *should*) write (emphasize *write*) to justify my existence — my life — to myself (& then having justified self, I can be with others, have a drink with Andy, e.g., without feeling self-unjustified (un-self-justified?). I'm appalled — horrified — that at age 63 I still think this way — write this way. I can't write, Barry & I say. What would 'writing' be? I think of the quick, sharp (objectivist) takes on

heart & world in GB's "Blonds on Bikes" — I can't do that — wouldn't even try, to act so nonchalant, i.e., pretend to. I started out to write about Terrace & here I am writing about myself, with as bad a fit between this so-called writing activity (free writing — what's *free* about it?) — & content — & poetry! — as ever. I should *pray*, I guess — just keep writing this silly shit & pray for a poem.

•

White hair on the back of my hand — radio going upstairs — I go upstairs, Andy tells me about constant noise from next door subdivision — rottweilers, dachshund — bulldozer — angry crows. I go outside, sit on porch, hear crows —

I hear crows in Vancouver — I have nothing to write about, & am not in right state to dive deep — on edge here — hate this pen — there is no content — or is age content? (Kavanagh: "they know it to a day") — fuck that — feeling myself breathe — insect makes wide sweep around flowerpot — Teddy barks —

Poetry means (a) I'm going to die — & (b) this notebook will be read by someone who will see how lacking I am — unless I destroy it — & I can't do that — that would be worse than keeping it — that would mean thinking of it. Better this shit than nothing, better be sitting on Andy's front porch with Teddy, imagining this shit being (miraculously) turned into a poem — as Spicer said, not the Vietnam War but Autumn in Vermont — a poem about obesity, cheerful obesity, all the big people trundling their carts & bags of groceries out to their cars parked at the mall — one lifestyle — nothing but the economy — the drinking water sour — environmental movement focused on the immediate, daily threats to health —

At the college — MACLABUSE, one word, becomes MACL ABUSE, a new threat? Abuse, abuse, obese — truckloads of log corpses from farther & farther away, up the Nass — operate the mill at lower cost, develop the mining sector, truckloads of food — this is a site of conversion, realization of surplus value, how else to conceive of it.

No way to conceive of it, no understanding. And I'll never know if it's really understanding that's disappearing or am I just moaning the loss of a sharper mind.

Well, I've started writing again.

•

Drinking water — foul — a sour or flat taste & then a chemical after-taste — two-stage foulness.

Sky overcast — air muggy — due to automobiles? Is anything 'natural' anymore?

This is not poetry. But what would a poem about Terrace be like? Objective — at a distance from the mind, posing as anybody's perception, idea — or no one's. The View from Nowhere. But is there another alternative? Ah, inspiration!

I wish I had a desk — I'm sitting on this duvet in Annyha's bedroom, balancing the writing book on my naked knees — I feel like I'm in the jungle. But nothing to pounce on me, except myself — always pouncing.

Fine rain, and now, to the west, a rift of blue like a river in the white cloud — blue rifts opening up over the cedars — fine rain — me here — a visitor — seeing Terrace from the outside. I was extracted — like a tooth — early retirement — & the skin of Terrace closed easily behind me, the placidity, the obesity. A feeling of contentment — & exclusion — at the edges of this the trees are eaten — the best logs hauled, the second best burned or buried — hauled back here — then the conversion begins — the logs turn into money (the computer watches the saw) — some of it stays here — & then the trucks come, the food — & also the car carriers (any name for that?), rattling & clanking, steel ramps, chains — an objective poem, no one's vision —

Cars moving slowly up Lakelse — cumbersome — in & out of parking spaces — slow — because so heavy & so dangerous — & there is food, in bags, in carts, lifted into trunks & back seats of cars, backs of pickups, in mall lot. Cars & trucks move slowly, heavily, toward the exit, then move like heavy tanks into the traffic lanes, & then, inside all this, inside the cars (the objective poem sees) there are people, placid, cheerful —

What a vision! — is there behind this some animus — is it deep dislike of these people, misanthropy, or just objective — is this a phenomenon anyone could observe or the twisted vision of a fucked-up old man — is there anything natural — or is it *all* natural — blameless — the programmed activities of sapiens with their tree trunks on trucks, wood chips in hopper cars, cars & carts & such no less than insects with sticks & leaves — each has its function, its social role.

The salt lost its savour, but is it only in my life? What is it I don't grant them, the Terraceites of '97 — the right to be fat & happy & to have overcome (not individually, but *en masse*), simply by not learning it, dread?

•

Who can see the inner Terrace? Do our individual hearts meet there as our social selves meet here in this slow moving jumble of steel carapaces & Safeway carts & fat pleasant faces with the log trucks an undertone in the background? We aren't crowded together there, that I know. Or do we not meet? Is there a place, even in summer, where each man (& woman) moves continually *away*, through a personal winter, saying, "this is true"?

There's no way to know except by knowing them, which here I don't, except my old friends — & their knowledge of each other, seen in faces & heard in tones of voice more than in words — knowledge of what is not said, out of kindness — life a condition of unsaying, of waiting for the unsaid to fade, of waiting for forgetfulness while

preserving shards of memory, of avoiding laying it all on each other, out of forbearance.

In Hawthorne's story, "The Minister's Black Veil," the minister blames his community for their forbearance as if that were a sin of secrecy & not a balm of love — to suffer the unsaid in privacy — in one's knowledge that ultimately that's what there is — aloneness — the urge to lay it all on the other being a desperate cry, a try, at leaping that bulwark of loneliness, to enforce mutual knowledge, mutual terror.

Do we consume merely out of duty, is it a façade, that we pretend to savour the objects we devour, pretend to praise the process, and these fat smiles are not of satisfaction in consuming but of living in virtue, of never revealing, of ever concealing, the true life we know the other also lives — in darkness, in winter?

•

(At Mr. Mike's)

I can't separate my feelings from their faces. If I could peel them back like a film, from the fat & placid — huge man ordering grapefruit juice — 'on a diet' — what would they seem?

They would seem nothing — their faces are in my mind — that's not solipsism, just Terrace-ism. I sit in Mr. Mike's — the veggie burger & Coke — a sketch in the brain —

•

(On the Halliwell bus)

The bus driver said of one of his passengers: "When she started riding the bus she wouldn't say a word. You'd ask her a question & she'd give you just a little short answer. But now . . ." (Pause.) "She's a Christian, her parents brought her up to be a Christian — but I told her, hey, I don't hold it against you, & she gave a little laugh."

By which they know how they feel — she knows he didn't mean to

dis her faith — but they say so little — “she wouldn’t say a word” means a feeling that could be explained in other words, shy, or frightened even, but the driver doesn’t —

Maybe the bus driver knows why she wouldn’t say a word — abuse — but won’t say, maybe because he’s protecting her — from a word, spoken out loud, to a stranger — to me — “I haven’t seen you on this bus before” —

Feelings are there in the air, in the mind — ‘this side of the grass’ we walk among feelings — & carry feelings in our brains — & so the faces act as doors — set in lines — not to let words in. Words dart about inside, puckish — Andy’s father asked what that word meant — mischievous, *méchant* — up to no good — words, like spirits, neither good nor evil, just natural — but some would call them good *and* evil — Christians — so the faces —

•

Who am I, a ghost? Walking up from Greig to Lakelse — one of those streets east of Kalum — empty lots & broken house foundations — weeds — think, am I here — am I a ghost? I’m not here, not in the sense that thoughts & feelings & the odd word (at the joint — words at the joints) would carry me — to the next meeting — I could be going to a meeting (come in late, like Ken Belford) — for city politics or to get drunk or for sex — yes, many of those meanings — meetings — but no network —

& love & courage, Simon Thompson said, at the bar, at Hanky’s — we had met there every year & now were meeting again — Rocque, José, Andy — those narratives, Simon said, are somehow replaced or annihilated — by consumer —

Happy to read an account of Margaret Laurence’s suicide — her own account— she couldn’t find the teakettle to heat the water to melt the Diazepam — tranquilizer, Andy says, like Prozac — so she used the coffeemaker, but didn’t put any coffee — just hot water & Prozac

— & the glinting memory — faces of joy — one last?

•
Dream poem: tyler alters / night amber / with sensation.

•
The same world for me as for Andy — we agree. Not the Thing-in-Itself — that horror-movie creature — but a thing between us and the Thing — something we have made up (using all our unspoken language) — call it world. So how is it I stand in it, on the broken asphalt & concrete sidewalks of Terrace, & feel it not — feel it *as* not — as departure, Rilke might say? At Andy's I feel part of it, hearing Andy's lawnmower, seeing the grey pile rug & blond dresser in Annyha's room, two pairs of my shoes — writing at 3:15 p.m. — it feels like I'm here, & that I won't leave.

The world that seems so frightening (admit it) when smoking dope (it's the fright I'm admitting, not the dope) or when thinking — too rationally — you could sit on the porch — *and* imagine it — stars coming on in the 10 o'clock evening, maybe Orion, time of year? — but chill, too early for stars to come out fully — late by the clock, but too early for the meteor shower — Andy's voice from the dark, down by the barn — “take 15 or 20 minutes longer, but I'm not waiting, I'm going to bed.” “Me too.”

Located in it — not located — in it — not in it — it — not it — I? — no, not I — the? The the (Barry's line, from Wallace Stevens). The with stars.

•
Old Lakelse Lake Road — driving to John & Larisa's for dinner. I'm holding the dessert in my lap — a cake — & Martina in front of me holds a bowl of custard sauce. Andy drives. Dark sky — scattered rain — second growth cedars packed in — roadside bushes — branches waving in the wind. I watch the raindrops crawl up the windshield &

I feel the void, like a natural phenomenon, stabbing out of the clouds, or flashing without light — but alternating — on & off — with its absence — something more substantial? — faith?

Pain Not Bread / NINE POEMS

STORM LANTERNS

(A Variation on Some First Lines by Du Fu)

Half my hundred-year life gone —
yet borderlands return to no one. Autumn comes.

Above the tower:

a lone, twice-sized moon, a cloud-formed village.

In a town to the north, a watchman's
final light on the water.

Storm lanterns.

A river moon cast only feet away.

A bamboo chill drifts through the bedroom.

I row upstream past the tower,
a slight rain comes.

A thousand feet up, along sheer silk,
a traveller from southern darkness,
at the edge of heaven, descends.

In the city, night's five brief watches begin.

I step out for a moment, then back.

I remember long ago slipping away.

It is bitter cold, and late, and falling.

Looming rain and restless wind.

Our thatch house perched where land ends.

Roads not yet glistening, rain slight.

War carts have ended all travel,
the lamp gutters and flares.
Rivers and mountains survive broken countries.
The Dual Principles have ended in wind and rain.

The last watch sounds, then, in Guizhou.
Standing alone, austere, among the willows,
beyond the smoke and dust,
travelling again in some distant place,
my sad eyes find only frost and wild blooming.

CROWS (An Introduction to Du Fu)

White-headed crows have welcomed autumn to Chang'an.
They strut and caw and peck at people's rooves:
you'd think they were barbarians, advancing on the city's heights
to prise loose everything and carry off their plunder.

*This world is too beautiful to be true
and too beautiful not to be true:*
tonight the year's evening's short light
frosts the edge of heaven.

Sons and daughters spring up, and the endless line of
sons and daughters, growing and departing, brings a sense
of joy and quiet desperation. The raucous crows,
the jaundiced mirror that reflects all the world —

Just standing straight, just feeling, for a moment,
all the weight of that indifference,
can be hard labor.
But maintenance is the spirit's job:

to make the beams and rafters turn their heads
and see what a great weight it is that they must
carry for another year — though nothing is preserved,
in truth, beyond the likeness of divided empires,

the sight of ministers, their diligence forever pointed upward,
scurrying like clouds before the cool, northwest wind
that heralds autumn and the stations of an
endless chain of well-appointed meeting rooms.

The moon emerges like a momentary glimpse
of something white and snowy as the distant Snowy Mountains,
the previous, declining year still winding its brocade
around the always-newly-out-of-style pavilions,

the gloomy secluded paintwork where the young are gathering,
though amiably enough,
to prise loose what has taken maybe
half a lifetime in the making. I, myself, remember this,

though supposedly it is forgetting that is universal.
But I have forgotten humanity and justice,
and that was not enough. I have forgotten the rites and their music,
and even that is not enough.

The world already marvels at so many
with so many designs on it, so many plans
to embellish it against its will.
But life does not depend on truth (as we are often told).

Actually, it doesn't take a carpenter to make a thing of wonder.

CREDO: DEEP SOUTH MOUNTAIN
(An Introduction to Wang Wei)

No sutras, no hymns, no doctrine,
but nature with its personal implications.
A landscape is described, and one understands
in his returning to his cottage the invisible presence
of rapids, the hissing, the tumult,

are not to be interpreted.
Ambiguity is the necessary language of nature.
Twin streams falling from a great height,
virtually inarticulate, alive in the forest.

And Wang Wei? We see him
bowed down by duty and mountains,
the resignation to new systems of uncertainty.

As Buddha sat silent in a famous instant,
or a clock exists in deep unmeasured space,

he has become a convention. Nonetheless, he persists.

THE GOWN OF A DEAD EMPEROR
(An Introduction to Wang Wei)

Illusory things of the phenomenal world mingle in heaven.
Egrets in sudden motion, stitched with rain.
The rain feeding the stream,
itself in sudden motion to the sea.
All causes flow seaward —
oneness, water, birds.
Poetics operating in twilight.
The single thread that leads into an open field.
A hibiscus flowering in the passing of the natural world.

STILL EVENING
(An Introduction to Du Fu)

*In front of this world, another world should be placed,
so that an occasional breeze might tinkle the bells
that hang from the four-cornered eaves of the cosmos —*

“In front of this world,” I think —

and idly turning the page
I realize, without haste,
I’ve wasted my day.
Between my gateposts
the city’s lights have come on,

and temple bells, like sad belled cats,
forever chasing mice.

A peaceful night: the scent of tamarisk orders the world,
half-deserted office towers, their vastness
honeycombed with cubes of light.

Toward the distant hills, the taillights of a
single car ascend.

*Moon emerges cold, as Du Fu says,
above the naked suburban plain.*

What is this great weight?

FORBIDDEN CITY (After the Late Tang)

Green grass swallows the greener air
and, seeing this, the scholar lays down her brush.

Drifting on thought all day — the old cloud pattern's
convolutions, wrought in marble,

that recall a fabled emperor,
while the imperial craftsmen remain unknown.

In less than two years, how much I've changed:
less hurried, more tired.

The world of opinion passes, leaving what? —
the disappointment that comes at middle age —

10,000 oxen might turn their heads inquiringly
at such a load.

Prospects? First financial humiliation,
then ruin,

in a world composed of once-familiar objects
left to gather strangeness in the rain.

Easy to forget all thought is detail,
fashioned out of wood and iron,

when those who imagine
they drag civilization forward,

living in a self-imposed obscurity,
erect implausible schemata and,

beneath their shadows,
endlessly complain about their heavy loads.

Still, I want to know what's going to happen
outside these walls after I've gone.

Lay me out under one of those blue July skies
that make me think of being newly born.

Tell them it's because I devoted my life to leisure and study,
because I'd want to see for one last time the great rooves of the
Forbidden City.

Then stand me in an official's hat under the six-fingered maple,
and so the ink dries quickly, write my name in water on stone.

MOUNTAIN RANGE (An Introduction to Wang Wei)

In its range and beauty, and from a distance,
the desire to be without desire looks like a mountain range.

A blue haze, almost smoky, wraps the things of this world.
The body, the senses:

nothing you'll ever read could move you from this world.
Sometimes I'm tempted to fill it with emotion,

the way as a bureaucrat I filled each day with self-importance.
I suppose salvation is always to be found elsewhere,

only there's no human voice now,
and the empty forest isn't empty, it's full of crickets.

STANDING STRAIGHT (From the Late Tang)

This world is too beautiful to be true,
and too beautiful not to be true —
but life does not depend on truth.

Too beautiful to be true,
and too beautiful not to be true —
so that the world still marvels
at so many with so many designs on it,
so many plans to embellish it against its will.

This is the cypress that was old before Kunming temple was built.
Its roots are like cast bronze footings.
All the ministers who sat in its shade
have had their own appointments and are gone,
but the tree is still cherished.
The moon emerges from its branches,
eager to communicate, white as mountains.

STRANGE RIVER (From The Late Tang)

Gazing down into a language and literature not our own,
the dangers lie on every side, known and unknown,
and few exceptions to the rule. Neither love nor information
will bring us any nearer, and doubt makes reasonable claims.
Yet only here may we drink the water of mysterious origin
so far from the mainstream the whole looks uniform and still.
Strange river, full of images, dead women, sunken leaves,
that waver underwater, buried, where ambition lies.

Ryan Knighton / SEVEN POEMS

SPECIES

To this class of students
English is the job.

It travels heavily about
the room sleepy with latin suffixes.

Today is Dinosaurs, Unit 9,
& past tense comes impossibly,

lumbering across the millenia
to be reconstructed

with all that precision
of Friday labour.

& who would give a shit
if it's only to petrify?

& who can finally answer
why they were all dying

to speak.

POEM FROM A PUMPKIN

Waiting in a closet café marking essays
about Dickinson & how much she seems to love
Death, or at least his civility. There should be so much more
than what's said. My squiggles & notes
are hiccups when they should be perverse
tattoos & Dickinson should moan through fonts
offensive to an eye's gluttony.

Across the street is a pumpkin stand
erected in honour of the season & I've never noticed orange
so much, so fat & charged. My father carved one every year
& we watched the blade hungrily
running slow & smooth, willing it to go otherwise
off the Magic Marker lines. There should be so much more
than the eyes, nose & mouth; there should be something other
than a lonely head decaying on the front porch for a week,
a euphemism lit once for witches & one-eyed pirates
not yet itchy to undress the other. At night, under sheets,
the ghosts feel their costumes changing & wonder
what they are to be next year.

& there is nothing satisfying or solid
about this red pen or its careful trail
& there should simply be so much more to reveal with a colour
so blatant. If I had more than this table setting, something
larger & sharper than a butter-knife,
I would put Dickinson back in Death's magic carriage
& with the first stroke of midnight carve a nation of pumpkins,
manna spilling floods, secrets coursing through stilted streets,
& the rushing girth of Fall, embered leaves & pumpkin guts
would open every gaping hole to say awe.

REDEEMING THE PORTUGUESE CLUB

An empty pint glass
tipped by dull light
remembers its edges in white.

Thursday rain runs
Commercial Drive & down
come thirsty regulars

like me. & a jukebox turns
Marvin, Aretha, Ray & Otis.
Names are all I know

shuffling in the door
one jostles another in a chorus
line as if that was history

comin 'round. As if we own
the tokens we are about
to receive & for plugging songs

are to be thanked. What's in hand
is all this turning
to find an image in the light

to hold our light-hearted mugs
together. & meanwhile
keeps calling for one more

round of Motown
to fix the faces
it finds for now.

Sometimes it works, the jukebox
the light, these glasses
& names

tips me over the page
to pour a version of rain
from the halo of my porkpie hat.

MOVING SONNET

for Jack Spicer

But little of the year's remains are fit
for a box. Shuffling feet,
yellowing carpet, & this old space jumps
with static electricity. It bounds
from slipper to finger to light switch,
anywhere it can reach — a collector's eye at Sotheby's,

like amateur video. We move
& it moves us.

Casing your time & the floor is Chinese tea.
Leaves, lint, bits of stuff & tape — each
an orphan diary entry
packed in particulars.

Elsewhere someone settles tomorrow
among the impossibilities of furniture.

HENRI BERGSON GONE DONE

This white noise of
milk spreads freely
through the coffee
bar.

(11:23, Napoli Café.)

Considers where
happens to be. Once read
“white becomes you”
in a fortune cookie. Frank.

(11:23, still.)

Bitter tasting duration.
Breath disperses a fog
of west coast cold shoulder
airs. Sighs
get lost.

(11:24, finally.)

Don't start with me
he threatens her first.
The waitress arrived later.

'11:25, closing in five.'

Standing drops open
cane. White plastic lengths
extend snap snap snapping.
Presto senses direction.

(11:27.)

Outside listens
inside behind. Considers
when all at once.
If only.

A MECHANICS OF VANTAGE

A doctor measures this
symptom. The brain paralyzed by thoughts
of nothing. Astronomy understands a hole
burned through the universe,
the vacancy of one retina.
& so this unworldly eye, only witness
to its devastations, wanders
like all pets
& prophets, recedes in confusion
as would a frightened dog. It is left
to lick the air
like nuclear fallout. Nothing
is exactly that kind
of murder. & the good eye
is right, diagnoses
its twin, that other brilliance
locked in a science of unlight,
the odd revelation.

The first section of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the needs and preferences of older adults in the design of user interfaces. It highlights the challenges faced by older users, such as reduced visual acuity, slower processing times, and limited motor skills. The second section describes the methodology used in the study, including the selection of participants and the tasks they performed. The third section presents the results of the study, showing that older users generally performed worse than younger users on the tasks. The fourth section discusses the implications of the findings for the design of user interfaces for older adults, suggesting that designers should use larger fonts, high contrast, and simple navigation schemes. The fifth section concludes the paper by summarizing the key findings and suggesting areas for future research.

The study was conducted with a group of 20 older adults (mean age 72) and 20 younger adults (mean age 22). The older adults were recruited from a local senior center, and the younger adults were recruited from a local university. All participants were given a practice trial before the main experiment. The tasks were designed to be representative of common tasks that older adults might encounter in a user interface, such as finding information, clicking on buttons, and entering text. The results showed that older users took significantly longer to complete the tasks and made more errors than younger users. This suggests that older users have more difficulty interacting with user interfaces.

Based on these findings, several design recommendations were made. First, fonts should be large and clear, and colors should be high contrast. Second, navigation should be simple and intuitive, with clear labels and icons. Third, feedback should be provided for all actions, such as sounds or visual cues. Fourth, error messages should be clear and helpful, and should provide suggestions for how to correct the error. Finally, the interface should be tested with older users to ensure that it meets their needs and preferences. These recommendations can help designers create user interfaces that are more usable for older adults.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of understanding the needs and preferences of older adults in the design of user interfaces. It shows that older users have more difficulty interacting with user interfaces than younger users, and that this is due to a variety of factors, including reduced visual acuity, slower processing times, and limited motor skills. By following the design recommendations outlined in this paper, designers can create user interfaces that are more usable for older adults, and that can help them to interact with technology more effectively. Future research should continue to explore the needs and preferences of older adults, and to develop new design techniques that can further improve the usability of user interfaces for this population.

The authors would like to thank the participants who took part in the study, and the staff of the senior center and university who helped with the recruitment. This research was supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging. Correspondence should be addressed to the first author at the Department of Psychology, University of California, San Diego, 3521 La Jolla Village Drive, San Diego, CA 92093. Email: [email address].

William Goede / COW ON THE TRACKS

Dedicated to the memory of Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Rising skies and clusters of oak trees, rolling seas of timothy and alfalfa, choirs of sparrow in silver willows beside the woodshed, and across the creek and up through goldenrod meadows, edged in daisies and sassafras lying up against the sun, the drumlin hills. I lifted the window and squared it with a ruler and watched my mother and my sister kneeling together in the strawberry patch, a car honking to them on its slow roll toward town.

I had to get out of the house.

I didn't know where I was going but I was going anyway . . . out and out, across the porch and past the iron pump and down the steps and through the backyard and into the barn empty now and morning cool and buzzing with cowflies and then out into the pasture and up the cattle lane and when at last I recovered my footing, I had reached the crown of the knoll of the South Forty, and at my feet, carpets of wheat and corn and timothy, and I knew I had to keep on running till I reached wherever I was going and then maybe think about whether that was where I really wanted to go or maybe just take a good rest and get a bearing on Chicago and New York and Paris, the Golden Crescent, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Silk Road, the Great Wall of China. . . .

All the world stood before me like an open book. I studied the rolling green horizon, the unscrolling of the fields and hills, like ocean waves rolling away in all directions. There was no end to it, it all went round and round and there was no end to it.

Then I saw smoke and heard a steam engine chuffing, little yellow flags flicking, the wheels clanking down through The Cut, the whistle and the clatter and screech of one hundred twenty-two

yellow and green freight cars, the smoke funnel folding up into itself. Yes, it was fitting: there was always a train, always a singer. I was Mickey Rooney, I was Donald O'Connor, I was Fred Astaire. I danced down the cow lane toward the tracks hearing the orchestra of the world, and the words sprang to my lips even before I knew them: *"It's a grand night for singing, the moon is riding high and somewhere a bird who is bound he'll be heard is throwing his heart at the sky . . ."*

Then I saw a huddled, round black and white cow, it was blasted up and down the track, all scooped out, red guts flung across the grey stones. I threw open the gate and ran down to the tracks. The legs were gone, the head splayed, the tongue flaring. One eye watched me, terrified.

Just a heifer. A yearling. I knew her. She used to dance around and around her mother. Refused to act her age. With those legs and that dance, I had named her "Betty Grable." Her dancing days were over. I had to get her off the tracks now before another freight came slicing through. I looked up at the fence and saw one of the posts down — a hole through which Betty had climbed.

Suddenly there came a swishing sound somewhere behind me.

I turned and saw a dark and ragged man, his long arms held out to balance. He skated and swished along an iron rail, his legs long and skinny, his moccasins swishing. Something was wrong with him. The nose was all mashed down, a long scar up the side of his face, one eye all sunk in. When he came closer, he smelt like corn silage left too long in the silo.

"That your cow?" he said. He giggled and leaned over and looked down at me as if he were high up in the air. He pinched his nose with two fingers and hopped down onto the cinders, wobbled like a wind-up toy and waddled like a duck and hunched down beside me and stared at the dead cow.

"You live round here, boy?"

I looked up across the fields. "Over there."

He stood up and cupped a hand over his eyes and studied the horizon. "Don't see nothin'."

"You can't see it from here."

"How far off?"

I hunched my shoulders. "Don't know . . . half a mile."

"Your folks to home?"

"My mom is."

He sat on the rail and held his head in his hands as if he discovered it heavy. "You got a name, boy? Well . . . what is it?"

"Junior."

"C'mon over here and sit down, Junior," he said. I got up and went and sat beside him on a rail, drying my tears on my sleeve. He threw an arm around my neck and pulled me in his chest. "Now looky here, it's just a . . . just a cow. It ain't like it's a person or nothin'." He placed one of his hands on my arm and looked up across the field to where the herd of cows moved across the pasture. "I mean you got lots more."

I looked up at the cows and tried to smile.

"Let me ask you something, Junior."

"What?"

"I wanna ask you somethin'."

"What?"

"What I wanna ask you is if that thing you got down there between your legs . . ." He placed a hand on my leg. "Why I bet you got one real big one down there somewheres."

"One what?" I knew what he was talking about, but I didn't want to let him know it.

"You know."

"No I don't."

"Boys yo' age know."

"Know what?"

"Why don't you . . . well, jes' haul it on out here. Show me how big it is? Bet it's twice't as big as the one I got." He was studying me with that one eye which flicked back and forth between my face and my lap. "See, lookee here . . . now . . . now here's mine," he said, pulling his hands off me and unbuttoning his fly and dredging his penis out of his pants. "Now, what'd'ya think of that? Look at it!"

"Mr. Daniels!"

At that, he jumped up and I jumped up and he turned and I turned. We both saw him. Another man. A black man. Me, I'd never

seen a black man before. Well, I mean, sure I'd seem them in the movies. But they sure didn't look like this one. This one was huge and had a round face fringed with short white whiskers and wore gold-rimmed glasses that glinted and flashed in the sun. He stopped and stared down at me as if maybe he had never seen a white boy before either.

"Mr. Daniels," he said again, without taking his eyes from me, "you put that thing right back in your pants before I chop it off! And you, boy, you git yo' little lilywhite ass over here beside me! C'mon, step it out real quick now! That's right, Mr. Daniels, you keep tucking it away and don't you take it out no more."

I stood and looked at both of them and didn't know which one scared me more. I took a few steps toward the black man figuring which way to run in case the two of them decided to come after me at the same time.

"Mr. Daniels, you vamoos off like that," he barked out, his eyes still burning into me, "you don't say nothin 'bout leavin' me to clean up the campsite."

"That sonsabitchin' brakeman —"

"Forget that sonsabitchin' brakeman," he said. "Over here, boy," he said, watching Mr. Daniels. But I stayed put, so he came over to me. I was more scared of him now because of that blackness. But then he smiled and stuck out a hand. It was all pink on the inside. He laid it across my shoulder. It was warm and soft and strong. Then he looked down at the dead cow, whistled to himself, and took off his stained grey felt hat. "That yo' cow?" I nodded. "That through freight, I heard him bellerin' away crazy, 'n' I figured somethin's wrong somewheres, and, 'course, Mr. Daniels here, he vamoos off down the track without tellin' me where he goin'."

"That boy lives over there . . . on a farm," said Mr. Daniels. "His mamma the only one to home right now."

"You ain't studyin' no mommas neither." He looked up at the fence along the track. "What say *you* jes' go up there and fix it where the cow broke through? This boy don't want no more dead cows today." Mr. Daniels spit on the ground and stared menacingly at me. "You find you a rock and then you go up there and upright that post and pound them wires back into it."

Mr. Daniels leaned over and picked up a rock and cradled it in his hands thinking maybe he should throw it at me, but he changed his mind I guess and stumbled up through the high grass muttering to himself.

"Now, you listen real close to me, boy," the black man said, lowering his voice and leaning down to me, "and do what I tell you to do if you know what's good for you. Don't you blabber to Mr. Daniels nothin' more 'bout your mamma. Soon's that post's up, we gone out of here."

I looked over up at Mr. Daniels pounding away at the fence post. "What's wrong with him anyways?"

"The champ?" he said and thought for a moment before laughing to himself. "Well, maybe he don't look much like no champ now. Poor bastard. He took too many head hammers, Mr. Daniels did. You see, one time he was the lightweight champ, it was a long time ago now, won all his fights. But then, well, Trunky . . . that was his manager, ol' Trunky he run off with Mrs. Daniels. The two of them took all his money out of the bank. Mr. Daniels found out about it an' went out and got hisse'f a gun and went lookin' for 'em. Found 'em, too, but he didn' shoot 'em . . . jes' beat 'em silly with the gun and then took off, an' then the cops, when they found him, they put him away. San Fernando. That's where I met him. We was cell mates. He's a real good man, Mr. Daniels. But something's gone haywire inside him now. You got to watch 'im ever' minute."

Mr. Daniels came back with the rock gripped tight in his hands.

"That fence back up right now, Mr. Daniels?"

The white man scowled now, his eye fixed on me.

"Now . . . why don't you jes' hand me that stone?"

He stood there, the eye snapping, tensing the stone in his hands.

"The stone, Mr. Daniels. Hand me the stone."

The black man went and reached down and pried the stone out of Mr. Daniels' hands. The raggedy man began to snuffle and the tears rolled down his cheeks. The black man came back to me and touched me on the shoulder, smiled, winked, and tilted his head back toward the cow lane. I knew what he meant. I looked over at Mr. Daniels, who was busy rocking back and forth on his heels, his good eye rolling, his fists all balled up and crying like a baby. I looked

once more at the black and white and red mound of cow and turned heel.

I hadn't got more than ten steps when I heard the shouting.

"Mr. Daniels! Mr. Daniels!"

I turned and saw him coming for me.

"Run, boy!" shouted the black man. "Run hard!"

I turned and ran hard but he closed on me and before I could reach the fence, he was all over me, and the two of us fell to the ground, him on top of me, and I smelled his foul breath and felt his hands running all over me, like he was trying to pry me apart. Then I looked up and saw the black man lean down over us and reach down and do something to the prize-fighter's neck. Mr. Daniel's eyes slammed shut, he flinched, sprang up in the air like a spring inside him had sprung, and the man fell off to one side. I sat up. Mr. Daniels lay beside me. He looked dead to me.

I said, "You killed him!"

"Shut up, boy!" He pulled me to my feet. "Now you run home as fast as those pins can run you home and don' you say not one word 'bout all this when you get there, you unnerstand? Not one fuckin' word! You say one word about all this and I come and git you! Maybe not tonight. Maybe not tomorrow night! But when I come, I like to come in the middle of a dark and rainy night when nobody's home with you. An' then I don' show no mercy neither!" He shook me a couple times and fixed his big eyes on me and growled, "Don't you even try an' risk it, you hear?"

"Yessir."

"Not one word!"

"Yessir."

He smiled suddenly and rubbed some dirt off my cheek. "Now, git!" I stared at him. "Git out of here before Mr. Daniels come to!"

I could scarcely get my legs moving fast enough.

He shouted after me: "And don' stop till you all the way home!"

My mother was standing at the sink when I walked straight past her and into my bedroom, and then she came and stood in the doorway and looked in at me.

She said, "Where you been?"

"Been?"

"You weren't here when we came in from the garden."

"No?"

She did something strange with her eyebrows. "You look like you seen a ghost."

I fought away the tears. "Up there . . . on the tracks."

"A ghost!"

"A cow. Fence is down . . . the train . . ."

She stared at me for a while and dropped her voice. "She was hit by the train?" I broke down and threw myself onto my bed, and she turned to go. "Well, I better go up there . . ."

"No!" I jumped up and ran to her. "No, leave her!"

"Someone's got to fix that fence."

"It's fixed. I . . . I fixed it."

"What about the cow? You better tell your father when he gets home. He'll have to go clean off the tracks." She came across the room and sat on the edge of the bed. "Which one was it?"

"I don't know!" I said, walking to the window and putting my back to her. "Just . . . a cow."

She came and stood behind me. She touched me on the shoulder and then walked out of the room, closing the door behind her. I looked out the window. The sky was overcast, the wind crawling along the ground on all fours. Cold. It was going to rain. You couldn't even see the hills now. The world was a wall. It didn't look like there was any way out.



Julie Duschenes / COULEE STANDARD TIME

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

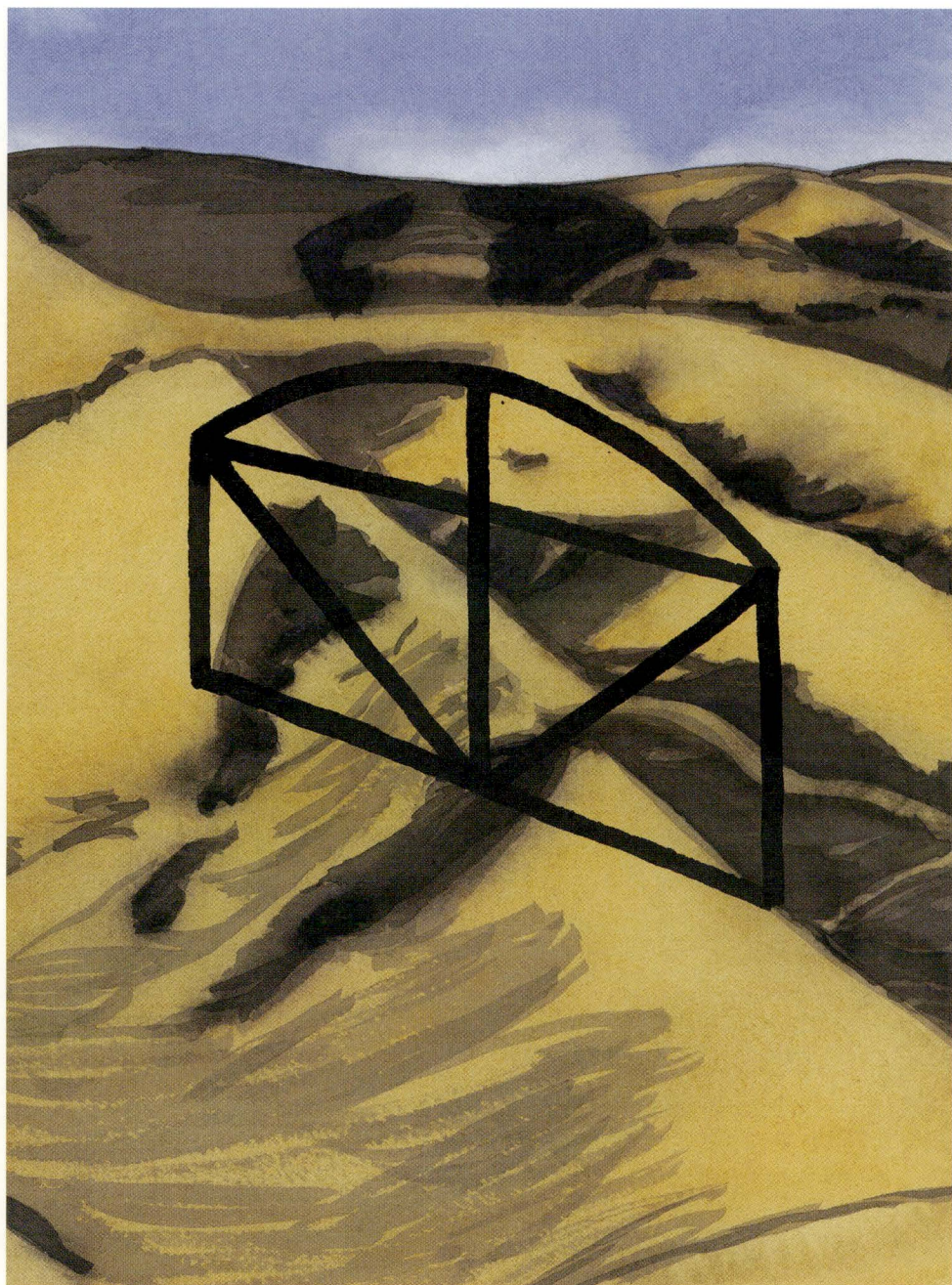
Coulee Standard Time echoes the format of a medieval book of hours.

These small devotional hand books combined text and miniature illuminations which were sometimes secular. They linked the daily life and management of property to religious rituals by representing the estate of the owner at various times corresponding to a daily domestic liturgy. The underlying demonstration and sanctification of ownership of land re-presents a cultural belief: that humans own the planet. This tenet is integrated into our societal and religious structures on a level so fundamental as to become invisible; to own and control the earth appears, therefore, part of our very nature and only proper in the order of things.

The frame of reference in *Coulee Standard Time* is, rather than an order of worship, the golden mean, a contextualization of the coulee landscape which is based, as well, on an idea of ordered perfection. I have used this classic aesthetic ratio as a device to frame the view of the landscape. Its presence should not suggest that a belief in one perfect proportion is better than the belief in one perfect spiritual path but instead is used because rational beliefs are accepted more readily than spiritual and emotional beliefs. It is my hope, thereby, to slip my work beyond disbelief, passing unquestioned into acceptance and faith.

It is still largely held that analytical and logical thought reveal permanent truths so long as we can maintain a scrupulously pure objectivity. This process demands that we remove ourselves from the equation, an exercise founded on the belief that our presence and our frames of reference can be neutralized so that they have no effect. This is like playing peek-a-boo: if I cover my eyes, I am invisible; if I wear the cloak of rationalism, I am objective. The landscape literally

frames the golden mean, visible and superimposed on the natural contours rather than hidden in the border of the images. We can see through and around this frame of reference. As well, we see through the one beyond the edges of the images, although we are not aware of its presence. We cannot see around it. From where we stand, we see the sun rise in the east and sink in the west, appearing and disappearing, circling us like the hands of a clock. Our instruments of time measurement both reflect and provoke our definitions of the temporal as a thing in itself (*ding an sich*). Despite the intriguing and poetic alternatives which have been offered, my image of time remains that of a wheel rolling on a track: each part of the wheel rim strikes the track again and again but always at a different place. From my mortality, how else can I see it? At present, I'm within this frame of reference and can't see around it.



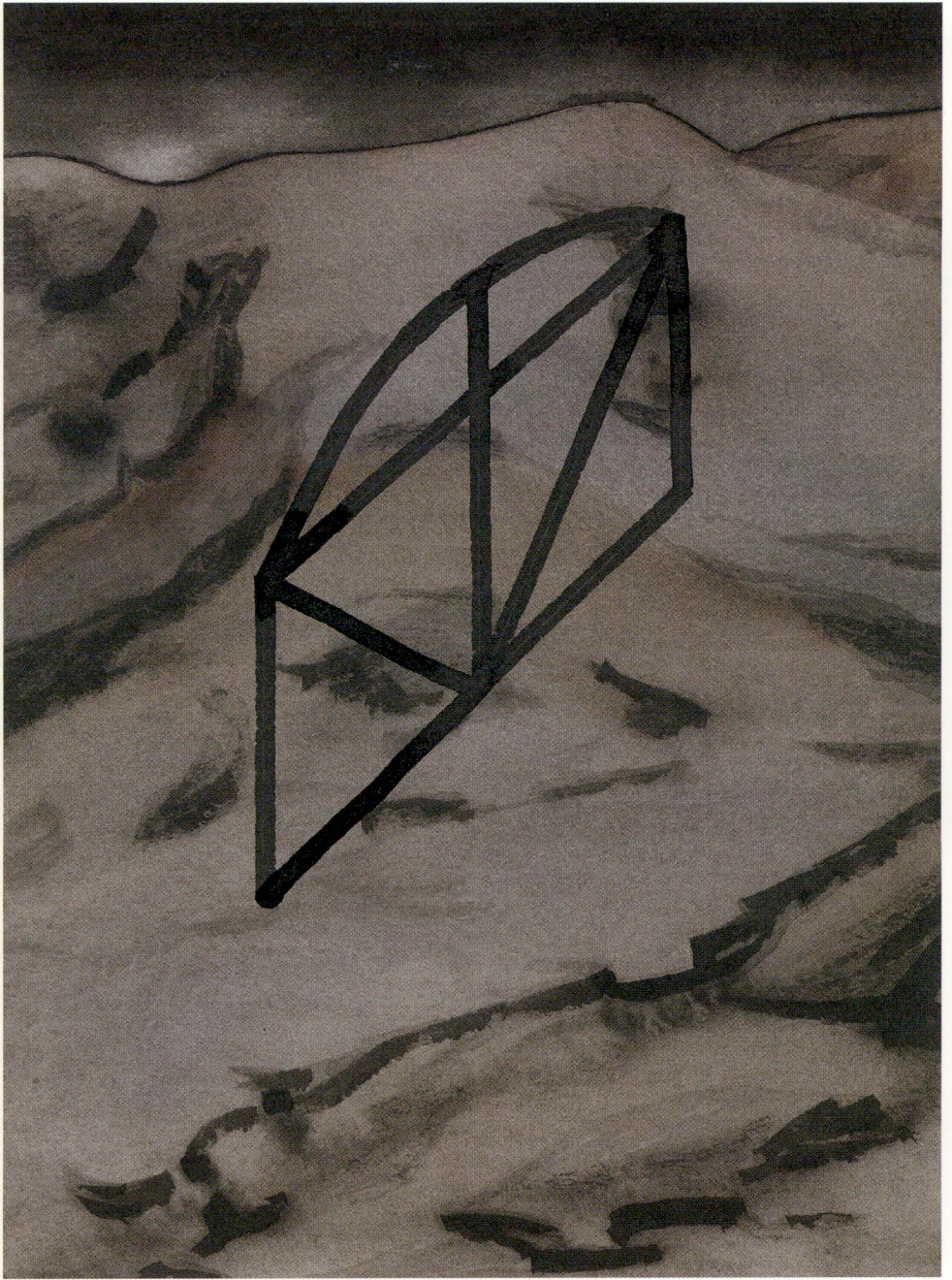


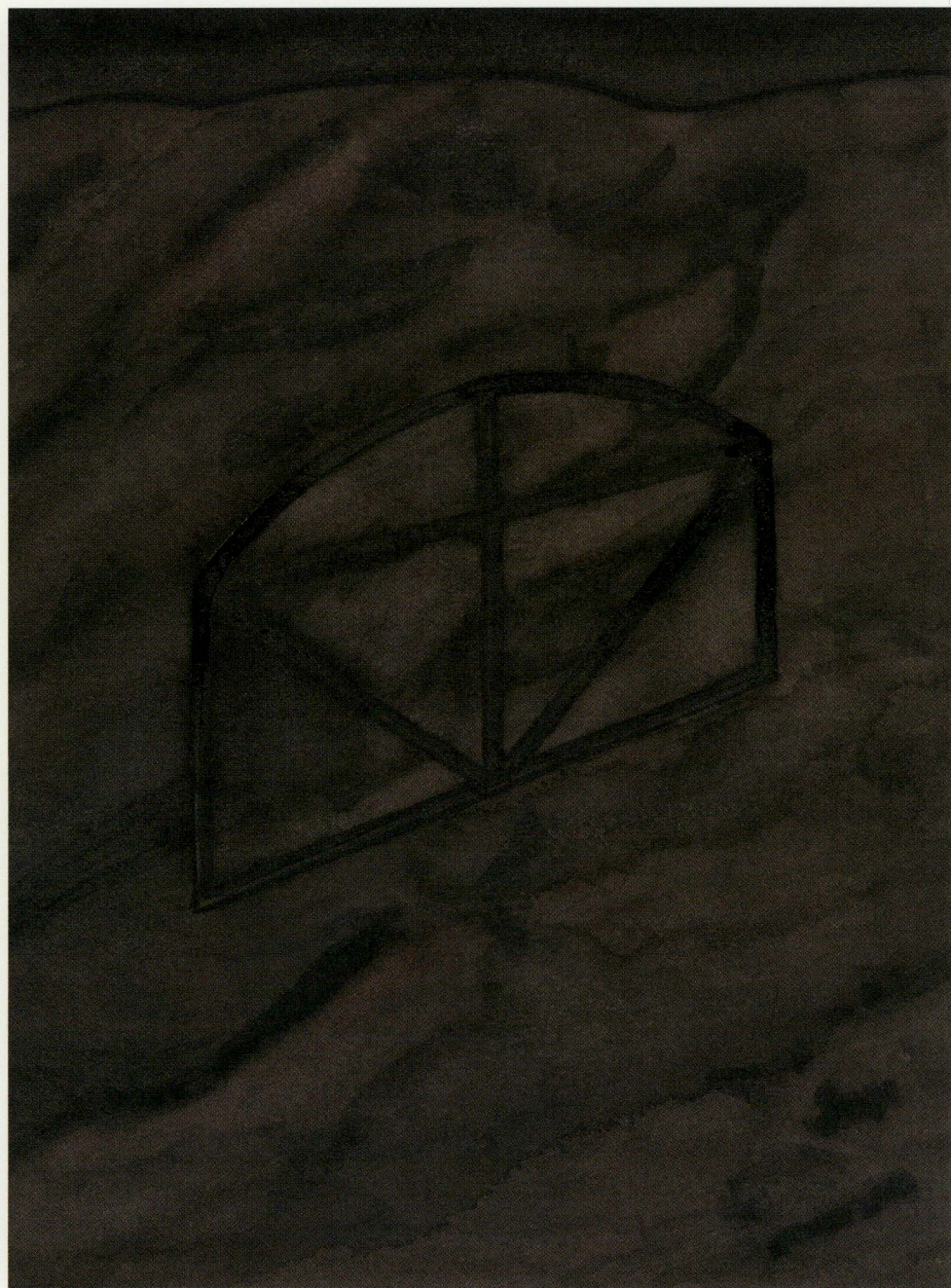












Julie Duschenes / SELECTED EXHIBITIONS (1989-1999)

Solo Exhibitions

- 1997 *Mortal & Immortal Incarnations*, Canadian Art Galleries,
Calgary, AB.
Mortal & Immortal Incarnations, The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia,
Halifax, NS.
- 1993 *The Kerchief that was Veronica's*, La Galerie de l'Art de
Matane, Matane, PQ.
- 1992 *Tulips & Lovers (after C. Sheeler)*, Owens Art Gallery, Mount
Allison University, Sackville, NB.
Tulips & Lovers (after C. Sheeler), Charles H. Scott Gallery,
ECCAD, Vancouver, BC.
- 1991 *Tulips & Lovers (after C. Sheeler)*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery,
Lethbridge, AB.
- 1989 *Interrupted Message*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

Group Exhibitions

- 1999 *Stumble*, Trianon Gallery, Lethbridge, AB.
- 1998 *Looks Like . . .*, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB.
Mixed Messages: Semantics and Contemporary Painting,
Kenderdine Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK.
- 1996 *Looking Back IV 1991-1995*, Southern Alberta Art
Gallery, Lethbridge, AB.
- 1995 *literary allusions*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery
Extension Program, Lethbridge, AB.
- 1994 *The Unique Print*, Prior Editions, Vancouver, BC.
- 1992 *Standard Stoppages*, Cathedral Place, Vancouver, BC.
- 1990 *Concept & Configuration: Landscape Since 1965*,
Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

Crystal Hurdle / TYMPANUM

TYMPANUM I: LISTENING

Newly assigned
one to the other,
the deaf student, his interpreter.

Daniel watches Laura.
He is barely aware
of her body, eyes, hair.
They, a wavering distraction
outside the periphery
of his tunnel vision.

He watches her sonorous hands,
an uncoiling of snakes writhing,
that shadow dance,
a bouquet of geese
languorous, then insistent,
beak biting beak.

On an invisible, foreshortened keyboard,
fingers dash, glide.
Fingers undulate, choreograph
letters, words, signs.
Fingers deconstruct.

Watch to hear.
Watch to listen.

TYMPANUM II:
ADAM'S APPLE

Daniel sprawls
eversilent
and Laura speaks for him
becomes a facade of self
a song river
sweet-voiced.

Formerly hers,
his voice is high-pitched
melodious as a linnet
 startling as a crow
with its talk of
stiletto heels
penis size
stud services
 oxymoronic in that ladylike trill
but for her glinting eyes,
bright as a bird's,
she does not
unlike voice, unlike ears
share.

TYMPANUM III:
PHALANGES

Through daily sacrifice,
Laura becomes mute
to give Daniel voice.

His hands, clever, dexterous, flexing,
grasp her larynx
as in a chokehold
when she, strangled, and
amputated from her own hands,
fingers extending and fluttering
in front of her, disembodied,
becomes his conduit.

It is good for a while
to become lost
to be sexless or not her sex
to be voiceless or not her voice
a calm river
a tunnel
a channel
to become channeler.

She works and plays with her yarns,
even in severed hands that resemble hooves,
testing a bright, textured leash

that flashes like fish scales
and glints of copper, silver, night sky,
yielding little
a symbiotic binding between the two.

Until deeper in the labyrinth
not of his own making,
she teases the bull, Daniel,
his nostrils flaring
into a strangled wheeze,
butting, butting into darkgreen walls of yew,
flagellates with thin ropes knotted
from a bloodied coil.

And threads her way
back
into her own phalanges
into her own voice
and weaves with her freshly pulsing hands
the bull in a small corner
wound under the loom
and weaves
glistening warp
burnished weft
into her own story
into her tapestry
her thrumming life.

TYMPANUM IV:
VOICES

Last night and the nights before,
to prepare for his English competency exam,
at his computer,
Daniel caught shining fishes
in an oily tight net, blackly intersticed.
They were from all
over the world.
Resplendent. Glimmering.
Fit for a crown.
He could see their splashing,
the increasing concentric circles
as they leapt in vain to elude,
feel their disquiet, the coolness
of the lakewater,
smell and taste the salty brine,
as he cast more widely,
but he could not hear
the thwacking as he stunned
them to make them his.
(Laura could if she so desired.)

Instead, he could see his wavering face
in their twitching, reflecting scales.
He carried whole schools
unconscious in the basketry
of his brain.

Today, the fishes stream
from his fingers
onto the pages of the exam booklet.
They are less resplendent and glimmering
than before capture,
but they sparkle like tiaras
and smell only mildly of fish.

He etches them to the page
with his spiky letters,
tall as spears, now
claiming them for his own.
The pen mightier than the sword,
a visual symbol of voice.
But deaf Daniel has no voice.

Today, the interpreter, Laura, reads
The Georgia Straight
trolling, trolling,
her eyes bright lures
her nails retractable hooks.

TYMPANUM V:
THE PRESENT

Plugged in, alone,
Daniel gazes at his computer,
its circuits wired into his fingers.
His eyes are his ears.
In the next room, Laura sits,
on call, waiting for his need.

Her air is querulous.
A dog yips, howls in loneliness.
Children bicycle
below every window,
Morse code in shrieks and yells,
voices high-pitched as faulty brakes.
A neighbour saws, leafblows
his immaculate driveway,
pounds on gravel with a shovel
to kill baby weeds.

Laura glissades, clockwise, counter-clockwise,
from room to room, though not David's,
like a cat seeking choice sun spots,
but noise is everywhere, punishing.
A toddler whines, his little sister
bellows in sympathy.
The earth shudders
with bruising busses roaring

with fibreboard houses
crying into erection
from below ground
with freshly excavated foundations
screaming brotherly entreaties
from down the street.
Thirteen hour construction days.

Now, she awakes too early, too too too
to hammers in the head.
The sparks and oily smoke
of power tools bespeak rage, outrage.
All is cacophony.
The thin trickle of CBC
is thwarted, dammed.

She is waterboned, tearful,
longing for the silent swish
of the inside of her brain,
a quiet centering.
A cessation, pleas, please,
anything for a pause
like a long intake of breath
quiet as nourishing as necessary as air.
Gulping draughts.

She thinks of Daniel.
She envies Daniel.
She stands on his room's threshold.

If she could she would
pluck out her eardrums,
place one on each index finger,
like inverted contact lenses, petal thin,
like low begging bowls of burnished light,
lacquered oriental rich with saltwater alms,
glistening, capable of holding
twin small treasures.

Then, if Daniel looks away from
the computer screen,
Laura will enter his room,
proffering,
and tell him
It is a gift.

Sylvia Legris / TWO POEMS

Eye. reticulated (without light)

i.

*the irises in their deep / oblivion*¹

settle the earth. a draught

blows the pages of a book. the dead, a wash
— shadow over ink; night

the way night the way night

a gi gitates

(her sight
— infinite pinholes —

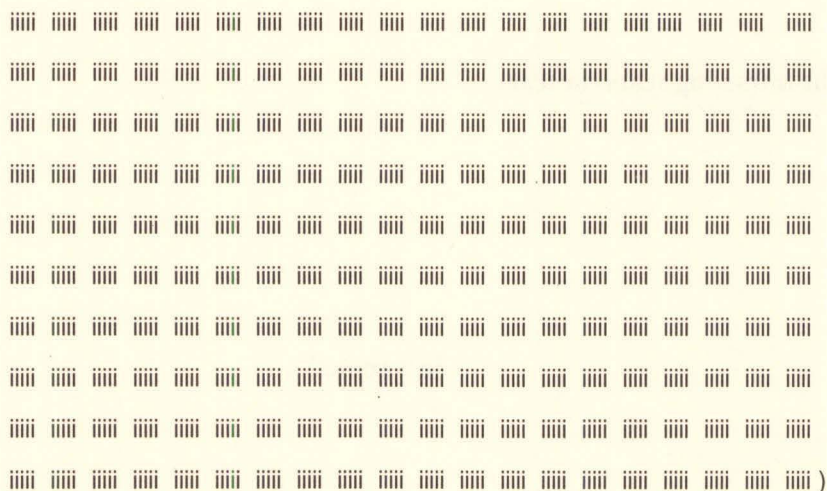
dilates the sky

light circling cornea :
a corona, a

¹ Gustaf Sobin

ii.

thousand eyes :



*

a thousand eyes,

iii.

weeping. the sky, measureless eyes, eons : trillions, a
trillion trillion apertures,

light refracting tears (a tear

in a retina)

iii. (*optic pathway*)

score the earth

her eye, a field im pulses light e lec tro

lytes

sky/stri

a

ted

vast

spectac

ular :

v
a
s
c
u
l
a
r

iiii. (thermoluminescence : eons, trillions)

read the thermometer

98 point

the sky
spreading a deep bruise

temple
neck
nerves

pinch her arms fingers
pressure/compression
collapse
verte

brea
kingpointache

e- on, shrill

i(on)s /pierce

the ion oh(S O S) fear

(a thousand random spheres) :

markers

i.

your hands are stone.

two elms cast shadows over you.

lines radiate your body, face, cracks

circle your eyes.

ii.

lie on a blanket from the sally ann. [i am tracing your name
over granite]

the grass is sweet, rain sticky under heat.

what do you see?

iii.

what *does* she see?

filaments of light pierce the surface.

face streaked with sun, an

ill . . .

you

try
to breathe
— every pore in your body blocked,
face streaked with

[gelatin silver print:
hair coiled in braids — taking bread from the oven]

your face

iv.

stone

i am chipping away
eyes, mouth, chin

— cannot remember the curve of her jaw

v.

the dates are wrong

[old polaroid:
emulsion shifting face, hands, line of her body]

how can you tell?
how can you

tell

me

vi.

stone-dust on fingers.

[trace her name in dirt]

she is digging
and
digging, mud

under nails

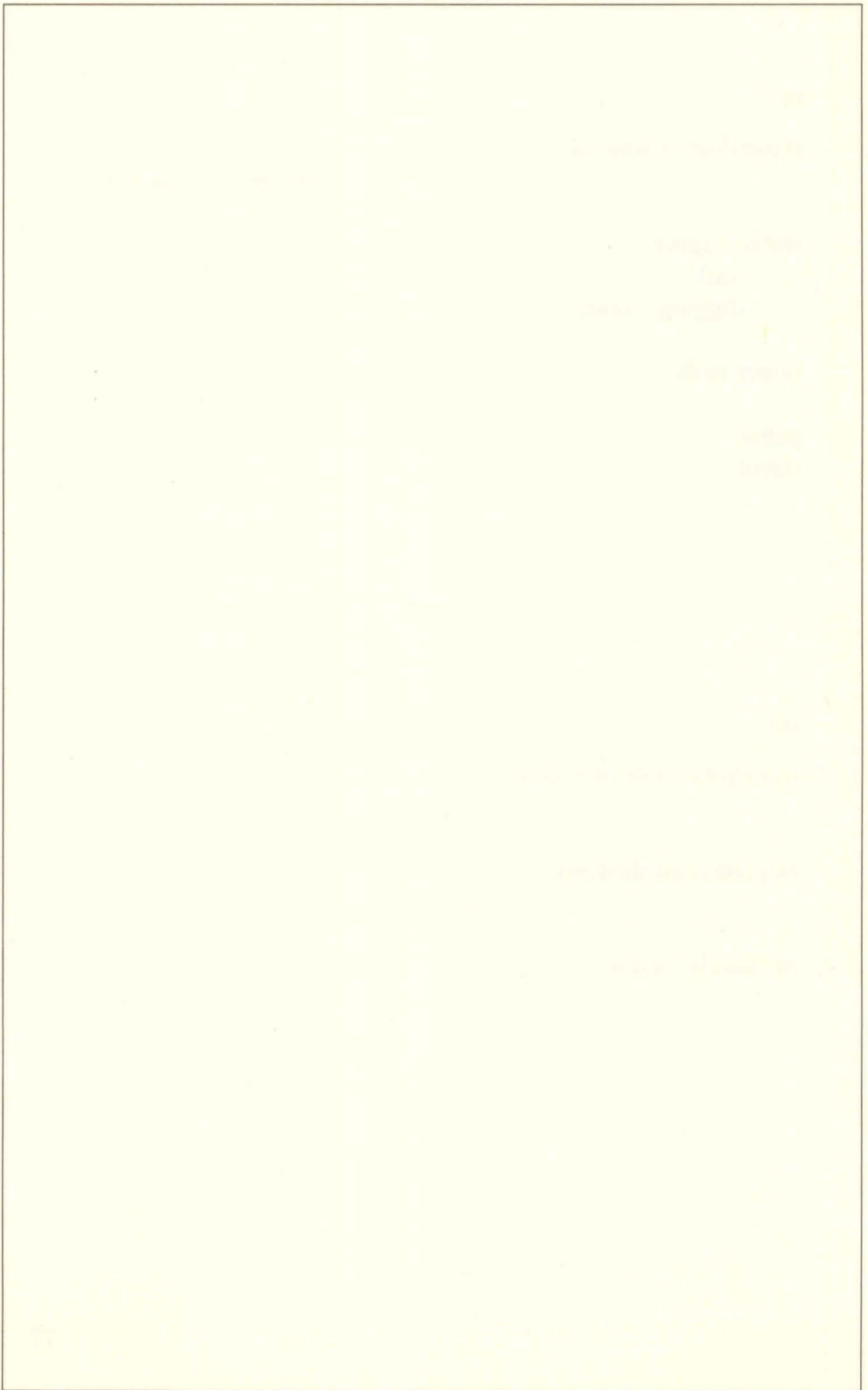
palms
damp

vii.

trace your name over granite

two elms cast shadows

my hands stone



INTERVIEW WITH KIM ECHLIN

The Interview took place at the Second Cup Coffee Shop, 1948 East Queen Street, Toronto, 14 June 1998. The ambient sound included chatter at surrounding tables and the regular thumps of the portafiltro of the cappuccino machine being emptied of grounds against a two-by-four. The interviewer was Bill Schermbrucker. The tape has been edited for clarity and to fill in background.

BS I brought you the latest issue of *The Capilano Review* [Series 2, No. 25].

KE Thank you very much. You're a former editor?

BS Yes.

KE These are wonderful, these drawings [by Alexandra Dikeakos]. Like Blake. Quite stunning. Is this a man — no, it's a woman. I'm so glad you brought these to me. This kind of imagery is exactly what I'm working on right now.

BS Okay, let's talk about your first novel: *Elephant Winter* is a real revolutionary book.

KE I am delighted at your response. It's great.

BS I don't know what my students are going to say. I'm teaching this accelerated summer course, seven weeks the whole semester, so this gets one day. And then they write an exam on it, an in-class essay. I've never "taught" it before.

KE You'll lecture on it, won't you? What's the course?

BS Introduction to fiction, first year. Many in the class are Asian,

and they're very bright, very interested. We're reading Michael Ondaatje, Nadine Gordimer, your book and one of Robert Weaver's anthologies of short stories. So we'll see what happens.

KE I'd be interested to hear their responses.

BS I'll send them to you. I'll do some Xeroxing.

KE If it's not too much trouble. I taught in China for a year, Backgrounds to English Literature. I started the class with Greek and Roman mythology. I used Edith Hamilton's *Greek and Roman Myths*. Then we did a brief introduction to the Bible, and then we went through an accelerated history of English literature using whatever texts were available. The class was made up of advanced English teachers and I had some of the most interesting readings of western literature that I've ever encountered. I had a brilliant analysis of Molly Bloom's speech at the end of *Ulysses* by one of the women students. It was fascinating to re-read English literature from that particular cultural perspective. They loved *Waiting for Godot*, understood it perfectly, not as something absurd but as something real.

BS I suspect that I'll be sending you some interesting Xeroxes because there are some quite interesting people in this class. You include in *Elephant Winter* a dictionary of Elephant-English and diagrams of Elephant infrasound. What are these diagrams?

KE Those are based on real research. Katy Payne at Cornell University discovered elephant infrasound when she felt pressure changes against her ears. She recorded the silence around the elephants, sped up the tapes and could "hear" the elephant noises. Then she diagrammed infrasound. However, my diagrams and my dictionary are fictional.

BS And where was she doing that research?

KE She started in America.

BS So it was captive animals.

KE Yes, and then she went out and did it in Zimbabwe with wild elephants.

BS That's near where I'm from, you know.

KE Kenya?

BS Yes. And my relatives live in Zimbabwe, in Bulawayo.

KE In *Bulawayo*! That's where I spent most of my time.

BS Yeah, I got that.

KE Have you been back?

BS A little bit.

KE Wow, so you've seen elephants out there.

BS Yeah.

KE How many years did you spend there?

BS I came here when I was twenty-six.

KE Oh. So that's really your land.

BS Here's a hard question for you, Kim: This is *tour de force*, this book, right?

KE Thank you.

BS So what are you going to do next?

KE Well, I'm working on this Demeter-Persephone story. The working title is *Dagmar's Daughter*. It has a contemporary setting and the themes are from the Sumerian female hero story called "Inanna's Descent to the Underworld," an antecedent of the Demeter/Persephone story. I like working with the Sumerian version because the female character is very fierce and dark, like *Macbeth's* witches or Russian Baba Yagas, the hermit women that show up in fairy tales. So, I'm looking at the female quest, female adventure and initiation.

BS But will it be a completely different thing from *Elephant Winter* or is it in any way in the same vein?

KE It's hard to tell at this point. Although, I'll say this, and then I probably won't want to talk about it too much: The thing that I'm discovering most recently is that in some ways *Elephant Winter* is rooted in Western Christian traditions —

BS *Very* Christian.

KE Yes, the allusions to Donne and Arvo Pärt's music. It was unconscious, I was just working out of what I liked —

BS Excuse me interrupting you: Actually, is there a mother in your life who played that music?

KE No. That's all fictional, although I'll tell you a story about my mother after, my real mother. But what I'm finding with Demeter and Persephone is that you cannot work out of a Christian tradition to get that story right. It's too —

BS Pre-Christian?

KE Yes. And it's too violent, and too — not primordial but too archaic — in terms of how characters respond and act and so on. It's really interesting to go to the archetypes expressed in Sumerian and classical stories, rather than the Christian myths of *Elephant Winter*. It requires me to work from a different, in some ways much darker, place.

BS Okay. The writing is so good. I was reading it to my son and his wife and kid as they drove me down here this morning. This kid has been sick, and he's just one and a bit —

KE Ah-h!

BS So they're just coming out of this, and they're living in a visceral way, you know, when you've got a sick kid in the house, so their life is a bit of a shambles. And this *book* is all about —

KE Being in a shambles, yes!

BS So I'm reading, and my lawyer son is driving, you know [*acts out serious driver*], and he says, "God, she writes well! God, she's good!" So talk about that a little bit. I haven't heard of your writing, much, before this book. How long have you been writing?

KE I've been writing forever. And it's interesting what you're picking up there. I have a couple of books in the drawer, but they were not written from where this is written. I got to a certain point with each of them, almost published each time, and then it would

fall through at the end, and I partially gave up and thought, "Okay, this is too painful, too hard, I'm getting too old, I don't want to do this anymore." But I did. So about six weeks later I was back, but this time I started from a completely different spot. I said, "What I write this time is going to be *exactly* what I want to write."

BS What was constraining you in those other books?

KE I was trying to work in genres, one was a sort of mystery. This was what I really wanted to do, but it took me a while to find out how to do that.

BS Was there a death though, that this book came from?

KE I have lived through a couple of cancer deaths, not my mother's. So I'll tell you the funny story about my mother. When *Elephant Winter* came out, I said to my mother, "I have to prepare you for the response, because there are quite a few people who don't read fiction, especially written in the first person, and they're going to think it's me and you." She said, "Oh, don't worry about it." I said, "You just need one answer to people who say *anything* to you, because they will. You say, 'It's fiction.'" And she had this encounter in the grocery store. A man who hadn't seen her for years came running up to her and said, "Madeleine! You're not dead! I read your daughter's book and I thought you were dead." Anyway, she's had good fun with it.

BS Where does "Echlin" come from? Is that Finnish?

KE Irish.

BS *Really!* I asked some Germans and they were suggesting it might be Finnish?

KE I get both of those. My forebears came in the potato famine. We found an "Echlinville" in Ireland.

BS And you have one kid?

KE Yes. One daughter.

BS How was Penguin?

KE They were great. Very good to work with.

BS I notice you put your thanks to Cynthia Good in the paperback. I bought this first in hardcover. Did I write this in my letter? I was walking through the mall, and there was Coles, and they feature Canadian books. They have these little cardboard stands one on either side of the entry, where they discount the specials —

KE New hardcovers.

BS And you were the special of the week. Previously I'd bought Daphne Marlatt when she was the special of the week, and then *you* were the special of the week. And I remembered you from when we met at the CBC and I think you gave me your card, and I just went in and bought the book, and it knocked me out. Absolutely knocked me out.

KE Can I ask you, what are you responding to? Can you articulate it?

BS I think the intimacy. I mean, this book is very political, without overtly saying that it is political. I said earlier it's a revolutionary book. This book is coming out of feminism, you know this sounds so boring to say, but it's *real* feminism. It's not an agenda. It's felt feminism, felt community, intimacy, I . . . I'm supposed to be interviewing you, not you interviewing me, but —

KE I'm interested.

BS I do have some worry about the [Elephant-English] dictionary.

KE How did you respond to it?

BS It intrigued me at first. I thought, "Wow, this is great." But . . .

KE You can be honest. I've heard everything about this dictionary.

BS Well, I felt that it was an invention that couldn't be carried through. Because it sits there, and yet those words are never going to be used, actually. So you read it, and there's, what, five parts to it, or four. It was a one-shot deal, the dictionary. I mean you're not going to go back and *learn* Elephant. It was okay. It wasn't the best part of the book. But that's okay. It's a foil for some of the other. It's a different voice. The dictionary is this elegant, academic voice that

comes in, that gives you some relief from the viscerality of the dying. The mother and those bloody birds! They are so uncomfortable, those birds, sitting on the lip and picking at her teeth is such a gruesome image, so unreal, and it comes from tick birds or something in Africa, and it's so uncomfortable that when you get to the dictionary, you get —

KE A bit of a break. Yeah. It is complete in itself and represents an idealized matriarchal language.

BS It's interesting, but that's not the meat of the book. The meat of the book is the feelings in it, you know, I mean that whole kind of solidarity thing, that whole . . . I mean there's two elephants standing separated by a wall, and they're locating one another by sound, even though if they could get a quote unquote male view of the situation, they would know that they are on each side of the wall and they don't need to . . . but they don't. They are feeling from their guts. I don't know . . . the book knocked me out, Kim, completely knocked me out. It's the most interesting book I've read in years and years. I've been just talking it up all over the place.

KE Wonderful. Now, can I ask you just one more question, and then I won't keep doing this?

BS Yeah.

KE Do you think that your response to community and the ineffable connections between things has anything to do with your coming from Africa?

BS No, I think it's *you*. It's not about me, it's about you. It's about the fact that *you've* been to Africa, and *you've* felt something there. I liken this book to say Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*, or something like that, where he gets right into the feelings. You have brought Africa into this book. The fact that I come from Africa probably mutes my response to it because it's not as startling to me as to someone born in North America, maybe, because I recognize some of this stuff.

KE Fundamentally it's not about Africa. It's about a psychological state.

BS Have you read Kristjana Gunnars' book *Zero Hour*?

KE Yes. I like her.

BS I think she's more intellectualizing the situation, which isn't to put yours down. You have a great deal of intellectual layering in your book. But her book also knocked me out. I guess the fact that she decided not to make it fiction limits it a little bit, because she wasn't able to go . . . It's a different book.

KE Different genre, yes.

BS But I felt similar about reading that book. And it wouldn't have mattered to me whether I had been to Oregon or not. She's into the blood and guts of living and feeling and dying.

KE Yes.

BS What gave you the idea of running the two plots? I mean you've got Sophie and the dying mother, and then you've got the men and the elephants.

KE I don't know. You can find reasons afterwards. If you extend the metaphor of the elephants as far as it will go, the elephant is the symbol of power, destruction, wisdom, long memory, so it's both dark and light, it's destructive and creative. In nature it's a matriarchally structured group, so the males are coming in and out but they're never part of the community until it's time for procreation. Sophie is working out her feminine concerns, how to nurture her own mother, and how to become a mother herself, how to become a woman in the fullest sense of that word, in connection with the male world but also separate from it.

BS Where does Alecto come from, with his speechlessness?

KE The *name* Alecto is one of the three Greek furies, so that explains a lot.

BS What does it mean?

KE It's one of the names of the three furies. It means "without speech." Their role in the original stories is as irrational forces that disrupt. Alecto, even though he's presented as a scientist, is in fact

an irrational force that's come in to disrupt the harmony that exists among the elephants and Sophie and Jo. The potential for disruption always exists around the edges of human life, forces that change life, destroy harmony when we forget to be attentive.

BS I'll ask a question for my students. They'll be shocked at the promiscuity in this book.

KE Now this is curious! This is the second time in ten days this has come up. Really?

BS Yeah.

KE Are you?

BS No.

KE Good.

BS I don't *believe* it, the Bulawayo stuff, the kind of sleep with whoever's around stuff, especially with AIDS and all the rest of it. In the 90s it seems shocking, because people are so careful now.

KE When I was growing up [*laughs*] it was pretty normal! It's interesting though, you know, that question. It's not something just to be laughed off. This summer I'm reading the Brontës and their biographies. Women were *so* constrained! It was difficult or impossible for the Brontë sisters to get sexual experience young, and yet they were constantly writing about it. Whether we act on sexuality or not, depending on what time period or psychic stage we're in, and how available or not available, possible or not possible it is to do, it seems to be a necessary —

BS Obsession?

KE — passage. A passage that a person of a certain age has to go through. In that sense for your Asian students or any students who are shocked, even if it's not possible to entertain that idea as a reality, it is possible to entertain sexuality as a psychic reality, whether it's acted on or not. When I was in China, halfway through my year there the central government said that it was alright to play rock music. That was the first time since the Cultural Revolution. Everybody *had* rock music but nobody played it in the open. When the

music was allowed to be played out in the open, there were dance parties for the first time since the Cultural Revolution. Several generations of young people had not grown up hearing this kind of music, and there was a *huge, huge* pulse of sexuality at those dances, something nobody would recognize openly. It was very, very interesting. Nobody would talk about it, but they were dancing it. There was this electricity of that possibility in the air.

BS But that pulse of sexuality isn't there in the promiscuity of this book. It's just kind of background or wallpaper or something.

KE This book's not about that.

BS What about the elephants, one, two, three, four, five? Were you consciously choosing to cast five different characters, one an African, or how did that happen?

KE A lot of the elephant stuff was fun. The Elephant-English dictionary was fun. So was the lore.

BS Were there any forerunners for this to you? Had you seen anything like this done before?

KE Well, I'd seen all the usual dictionaries and glossaries such as Anthony Burgess. My introduction is full of allusions to Samuel Johnson's preface to his dictionary which is full of jokes and personal takes on language.

BS It seems very original.

KE It's not, but it's not something that's done very often. It's not an easy read. And people don't — I mean even when I read Anthony Burgess — he always puts his glossaries at the back — it's not the sort of thing that you — depends how deeply interested you are in language *per se*, whether you want to read it or not. But the cast of characters was just for fun. I mean Alice and Gertrude is obvious. Lear is obvious.

BS And Sophie. And how about John Donne? Where does that come from?

KE I love John Donne's poetry. I love how *he* brings together

sexuality and spirituality, how he lets them come together in the same imagery and language.

BS How did you have the nerve to leave so many gaps for your readers to fill in? Because this is not like a first book at all. This is a very mature book. This is a book that says, "Come over into my world if you want to." And then, one is rewarded, because the connections *are* there to make. How did you know to do that?

KE Maybe it's the way I like to read too. It's quite boring to be given everything.

BS Had you published in magazines or something where you'd learned to do that?

KE I'd published no fiction. I'd done journalism.

BS Where?

KE I'd done book reviews. I'd always done some newspaper journalism since a teenager. I did a high school column, and then as an undergraduate I wrote for the *Sunday Express* in Montreal. I've written for documentaries and produced a lot of television.

BS Was that underwritten, or was that overexplicit? It would seem to me those kinds of things generally are overexplicit.

KE That's just the nuts and bolts of writing, and turning it out every week.

BS Where did you learn to be so minimalist?

KE I don't know about that. People afterwards said to me, "You must have worked very hard to get so spare." In some ways I think it was a desire for clarity.

BS Let's go back to Alecto, may I?

KE Sure.

BS How come he doesn't speak? Where does that come from?

KE Much of the book is about communication. The elephants communicate in a language that we can't hear. But though the elephants use infrasound, certain humans — Sophie, her mother, —

intuit their communication. They understand being tremendously connected to each other and to their surrounding world, and are tremendously communicative with their own language. Alecto doesn't understand that. He tries to penetrate this world, to destroy it, or has the potential to destroy it. He does not have language that connects him to others. The kind of language he has is the language of disruption. The rhetoric that he uses in the bar scene with Sophie, for example, is drawn heavily (since you're interested) from the language of Satan in *Paradise Lost* trying to decide how to disrupt the hierarchies of God and heaven.

BS Did you know that when you wrote it?

KE Yeah. There are precise quotes. The rhetoric he *does* use on his board doesn't come from him, it doesn't come from soul, it comes from justifications and rationalizations. So his language is incredibly limited, and what he does have is not connected to his soul at all.

BS Have you read Jung?

KE Yes.

BS Do you feel influenced by Jung?

KE I like Jung a lot. I'm very interested in the archetypes and how he uses them.

BS So is Alecto *logos*?

KE No.

BS Is this all *eros*? Is *Elephant Winter eros*?

KE No. I'm not comfortable with interpretation being so one-on-one, signs not symbols. I have a deep respect for *logos*. We can't have one without the other. Alecto is not *logos*.

BS He's evil?

KE Well, in a Christian context we'd say that. In a Greek context we'd say he's disruptive.

BS Where does that come from? Can you tell me a bit more about the Greek disruption?

KE The Furies are simply sent for irrational reasons. Even though in *Paradise Lost* we've got evil versus good, I do prefer to think of Alecto in the Greek sense of furies that are irrationally sent. We cannot predict where they will come from or why, and we can do nothing against them. They are a potential that is all around us and in us.

BS Where did you learn the Greek stuff.

KE Just reading.

BS You didn't go to Greece?

KE No, I'd love to.

BS It's such a chauvinistic culture, you probably wouldn't stand it.

KE Oh, but it looks so beautiful, the pictures and so on. And I'd love to go to the seat of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

BS Is there an elephant park in Ontario?

KE Yes, there is a "Safari." The one in Ontario is called The African Lion Safari, up towards Guelph. There's also the Bowmanville Zoo, which is a very small zoo but keeps elephants that go out into the community. They use the elephants from the Bowmanville Zoo for the Little Beach Easter Parade which is a small community event.

BS So you had them on Parliament Hill. Have they been on Parliament Hill?

KE [*laughs*] I visited Katy Payne in Cornell, and she played me her tapes of the elephant infrasound. It's very beautiful, especially the estrus or mating chant. It sounds like a long song. But she also played me their infrasound. When I got a chance to visit real elephants, I asked the keeper if he was aware of this. He didn't have much time for the whole idea of infrasound and language, but he did say that his elephants greeted him every time he stepped up to them. I spent a day walking round the Canadian National Exhibition with him on the elephant ride, and by the end of the day I was picking it up too. It's a very, very low sound, and every time he came, even if he just went to get water, she would greet him. At

Bowmanville, TVO took me to the elephants for an interview and one of the crew said to me, "Make the elephant talk," as sort of a joke. I said, "Come on, guys, it's fiction!" But the keeper said, "You can get shots of her with them," so the elephant was right there, and I started clicking to it, just like you'd do to a baby, just to make any sound, and she started clicking, really clucking her tongue "*Kluck! Kluck!*" like that, back at me. It was quite moving, because she clucked to me, but she wanted me to follow her rhythm too. She slowed down her rhythm and when I slowed down to match hers, then she made hers join mine.

BS Wow!

KE And so all that stuff I'd been reading about, I really did experience, but long after I'd written the book.

BS This was when you were publicizing the book?

KE Yes, it was marvellous, because I had imagined all that stuff, and I knew it from research, but it actually happened. I felt "out of time" with that elephant and when I laughed she made a sound like a laugh. It was just unbelievable.

Kim Echlin / excerpt from DAGMAR'S
DAUGHTER (work-in-progress)

THE BIRTH OF PARIS

Dogs ate the mess of blood and afterbirth. Stained the greenhouse floor with their wet tongues. Only someone ornery and old as Dagmar could labour like that. When it was time to give birth, she walked slowly down the path from the house to the greenhouse and went into the back where the seedlings were. She bent over double each time a pain came and buried her face in the rows of force bulbs tasting grit and sweat. She held onto a clay pot so hard it burst and nicked her hands and when there was no space between the pains she pushed her heels into the floor as if they had roots of their own. She saw the plants open and leaves droop as she pushed. After six hours she was afraid she wouldn't make it, that this time she'd die. Soon after, the hard labour began. Her other births weren't like this one. She was stuck inside an old body and she was afraid her baby was suffocating, afraid her body might give out and die. She pushed and screamed and hung in the pain and when she could rest she urged herself and sharpened her desire. Finally, almost unconscious, she hooked the chin, grasped the hard wetness of a new world, blood and mess everywhere. One last push to get the baby out screaming, "Gaaaahd," like a holy beatitude. Through the dirty glass panes of the greenhouse the clouds suddenly changed as she pulled out the shoulders and legs and slid the baby up along the length of her to her breasts all covered with muck. Resting a moment she wrapped her inside her wide open green robe. The dogs skulked around the edges. She snipped the cord with a pair of greenhouse shears pushed out the rest of the birth easy now light and flat and slippery as a bit of water weed and dropped it on the floor for the dogs.

She wiped and wrapped her newborn daughter, listened to her breath, examined jubilant her tom-tiddler toes. She checked her colour and felt for her tiny heartbeat and when it was clear that the child was whole and breathing well she sank back into an old lawn chair. The little girl's eyes were wide open from the beginning and she never cried all that first night. When her tiny lips found Dagmar's breast she guided in the thick nipple and the baby right away pulled down milk all the while the light of those eyes twisted into her mother's, two sets of stars fixed in the same constellation. After she drank Dagmar swaddled her firmly in a soft receiving blanket, and gingerly dabbed between her own swollen legs.

Outside, steps approached along the gravel path, the door opened and Dagmar's mother, Norea, shuffled in wearing her bedroom slippers. She croaked from far away in her dry middle-of-the-night voice, "Dagmar?"

"By the seeds, back here. I've got her. She came."

"Woman-worthy!" Norea cried out scuffing toward the potting tables, "I told you not to do it alone. You never listen! How long have you been at this?" She dropped her old terry robe off her shoulders and bird legs poking from under her flimsy night dress she wrapped up her daughter and her new granddaughter as best she could and bent her head over the baby's face in the dawn moonlight.

"She looks like you," said Dagmar.

Norea wrinkled up pleased, "Yes, two squashed heads. Don't be fooled, the black hen lays a white egg."

She wiped away a few tears on her cheeks but not before one fell and stained the child's forehead. There is a mark at the girl's hairline like a little crown. It looks like a birthmark but it isn't. It wasn't there until Norea cried that night. The loose flesh hung from under the old woman's arms and knots of blue veins stood out like pebbles on her calves. A granddaughter! She sat on the edge of Dagmar's chair and rubbed her neck and caressed the baby. Dagmar leaned on her like a child and the three of them coiled around and through each other like harmless garter snakes.

Dagmar named the baby Paris after her favourite yellow-lit city and the ancient wife-stealer. She thought, if I make my daughter seducer she will never be seduced.

Never, perhaps ever has mother been closer to daughter than Dagmar was with Paris. Conjugiblant. Roots of one below the skin of the other. The baby's pursed lips closed round her swollen nipples eyes fixed on the light of *mater gloriosa* (soon to be *stabat mater*). She measured the length of her newborn daughter's foot with her index finger, wiped, dried, powdered that dimpling baby bottom and oversized vulva, umbo of Venus shell.

Dagmar was dozing with her on the bed when Sam tapped on her window with a coin. Tap. Tap. Tap. That impish face of his at forty-five still like a young man's. When their four sons were young he used to come tap on the window and they'd go out to the greenhouse together to make love, to drink and smoke cigarettes together, to play music. And now once again, the night after Paris was born he came. She tucked four pillows around the baby on the bed and followed him over the paving stones, down the path, away from the house, into the greenhouse. He had lit torches in the back by the seedlings and when Dagmar stepped inside she could smell humid green and the scent of smoke. The music was going, the plants swaying. Sam told her to wait and disappeared. In a few moments he crawled in from the side door in brown pants and shirt. He wore a stag mask with real horns on his head. He crouched in the flickering shadows, shoulders hunched, turning and dipping his heavy crown, dancing to the music, muzzle arcing in ponderous swoops. He pawed the ground and thrust forward his torso as if swimming against a hard current. Strung between his antlers was a swaying basket that held a painting of a girl stitching a satin blanket. Sam chanted with the music, "I will make your wedding with my flesh, build your house with my bones, roof it with my hide, paint it with my blood, fix my skull on your gate, make good drinking cups of my hooves."

"All my life he's been working out his theatre on me," Dagmar thought. He swayed toward her, pawing the floor, dipping shoulders and head under the heavy horns. He reached through the smoke to pull her up to him. She lifted off his mask and touched the blood blister on his lip with her tongue. Against the red glow of the insides of her eyelids she saw a child swaying in a basket.

But she was leaking milk and ached unwillingly for her new baby.

He followed her back up the path and into the bedroom where the infant stirred with subtile hunger. Together Dagmar and Sam admired her tiny limbs and face as Dagmar lay down and guided pink lips to nipple and winced as the child latched on until the pain of pull gave way to milk's easing. Paris sucked well and strongly and Dagmar's eyes watched lazy Sam stretched out in front of her, familiar smile wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, the small faded scar on his cheek where, two decades before, she had scraped her wedding ring hard down his face because he was sleeping with other women. When the baby dozed, Sam nuzzled into Dagmar sucking some of her milk for himself until she pushed him off.

"You'll be wanting me around now," he said.

"You're not coming back. Don't get that in your head," she answered.

"A girl needs a father."

"I've been trying to figure a way around that."

His love for her was gouged like initials carved in a wooden school desk. He saw the girl he'd stolen away from a picnic, not the woman who'd raised his sons, who ran a greenhouse and fed a household of six while he flirted with flat-bellied music students. She was forty-five years old now and she'd been thinking about resting before she got pregnant with this one. Time and trouble will tame a young woman but an old woman is undaunted by any earthly force. Too late now. Dagmar was still a girl when Sam spoiled all men forever for her. She dozed beside Paris and when she woke up she found a piece of paper Sam had stuck under her pillow and against her will she was in love all over again. Over and over again.

I sent a daughter to my love
In a thrushy basket.
She nursed her to a mothered rest
Singing a song that what loves best
Loves and loves, forgets the rest
I sent a daughter to my love
In a thrushy basket.

With and against him all her life. Gods and mortals. Age and youth. The living and the dead. It all begins and ends forever and forever with a woman and a man. Suffering — a shadow of godlife. And passion. Dagmar stroked her new daughter's cheek. She couldn't bear that she would ever suffer, not in this life, not Paris. She would always protect her. Dagmar's mother was tougher with her. Norea expected suffering.

K.D. Miller / SPARROW COLOURS

I wish Brian wouldn't jiggle the table. Does he have to chop up his eggs and sausages and potato pancakes all at once? Now he's buttering his toast. More jiggling. Will he ever stop worrying his food and just eat?

I shake open my napkin and settle it on my lap, wondering why the jiggling table bothers me so much. Then when Brian starts spreading sour cream all over his potato pancakes, I know.

The other night I woke up and found him with the light still on, studying a script. It must have been the jiggling of the bed that woke me. *I could climb aboard*, I thought, when I saw what he was doing. *Or at least lend a hand*. But I didn't even let him know I was awake. There was something sad about the small geyser of semen when it came. The thickness and whiteness of it. Even the sound it made lubricating his hand, *snick-snack, snick-snack*. When I went back to sleep I had dreams about dry plants I had forgotten to water, starving cats I had neglected to feed.

Feed. Food. Eat. We did come here to eat, didn't we? Breakfast, specifically. I pick up my fork and look down at my plate. Did I order this? *A medley of fresh seasonal fruits nestled round a generous scoop of frozen strawberry yogurt*. My yogurt is becoming a pink lake. The cubes and crescents and triangles of fruit remind me of educational toys.

When I look up, Brian is watching me. He watches me a lot these days. Practically follows me around, like a little boy afraid of losing his mother.

"Not hungry, Dear?"

I put my fork down and shake my head.

"Not feeling well?"

"No. Yes, I mean. I'm fine, really."

“Because we can go home. If you want to.”

“No. I’m okay. Just not hungry. That’s all.”

“We don’t have to do this. If you’re not up to it. Not today, anyway. We can always —”

“Brian.”

I don’t often call him that. He doesn’t often call me Daisy. We call each other Honey, Hon, Sweetie, Sweetum, Sweetheart, Sweet Stuff, Boo Boo, Boo Bum, Bumble, Boopsie, Stink. (“Do you two fuck while you’re doing the dishes?” somebody once asked us.) Pooh, Pooh-Bear, Noodle, Strudel, Doodle. (One of our running jokes is that we in fact never exchanged names, and are now too embarrassed to ask.) Baby, Babe, Daddy, Mommy, Papa, Mama.

“Brian. I feel fine. I’m just not hungry. And I don’t want to go home. Okay?”

“You’re sure? Because —”

I lean across the table and kiss him. To shut him up. We’ve always been a very kissy pair. We can have whole conversations practically eating each others’ faces. This kiss is brief. Efficient. There is coffee on his breath. His moustache is wet, as if we’ve just made love. I go to wipe my lips with my napkin, but catch myself just in time. Then I put my chin on my hand and look out the window. Under my elbow, the table starts to jiggle again.

How many times has he lain awake and jerked off in the last three weeks? That’s how long it’s been. For the first two, we had no choice. It was even in writing, in the pamphlet they gave me at the clinic. *You must refrain from sexual intercourse . . .* But this last week, it’s been up to me. It’s been my call. And Brian has been so good about waiting. Staying on his side of the bed. Kissing me closed-mouthed or on the forehead. I know he’ll never hint or manipulate. I know he’ll wait for me to come to him.

I just wish I knew what I was waiting for.

There isn’t much to look at out the window. Grey sky. Brown sidewalk. White patches of snow speckled black with grit. It was a strange winter for Vancouver, snowy and cold. And now spring is taking its time.

“The colours of March are sparrow colours,” I announce, hating the chirpiness of my tone but glad of anything to break the silence.

"You're right!" Actor that he is, Brian invests so much enthusiasm in those two words that I think I might cry. "If we want to check if a poster or a frame is going to blend in, all we have to do is look out at the day."

Sparrow colours. Grey, beige, charcoal and white. I'm the one who named them, once we had finished shuffling paint chips. We're going to do the whole new apartment in those four shades, starting right from scratch.

"It'll be strange to have all new stuff," I say, turning away from the window.

"It'll be *great* to have all new stuff." And I can see that for him, it will be. He has a talent for novelty. He likes a clean break. It irritates him to see that big, pale new place dotted with our dark, shabby old things.

"I hate this crap," he kept saying while we were packing. "I hate forks that don't match and I hate brick-and-board bookshelves and I hate Indian bedspread curtains. And I'm sick of sleeping on a damned mattress on the floor. I want a *bed*. A decent, proper *bed*."

"You'll have it," I kept telling him. "We just need this stuff for a little while longer. After that, you can have whatever you want." When he let me know how much he was making for the TV series pilot, all I could say was, "Are you sure?" Then I started packing the dishes we would end up giving to the Sally Ann.

Our quarry today is posters to frame and hang on the walls. Next month, it could be a couch and coffee table, or maybe bedroom furniture. But today, it's posters. We have so much more wall space now, what with the second bedroom. *You need a study*, Brian kept saying when we were apartment hunting. *And now I can afford for you to have one*. "A room of her own!" one of our friends trumpeted, helping us move in last weekend.

Which sparrow colour should go on the walls of my room, I wonder, and which on the trim? Because there's no question of doing it in orange or purple. Not that I would. But for all it's mine, it's still ours. And from now on, everything, the posters we get today, any furniture or fabrics we pick out after today, will have to blend with grey, beige, white and charcoal.

Good thing for us that we're somewhere between beige and white.

Good thing for Beastie that she's black.

"I wonder if Beastie will ever settle in," I say, putting a bit of cream in my coffee. Brian has persuaded me to have coffee, at least, even if I'm not going to eat.

"She has to. She's got no choice. But Sweetheart, as long as you fuss over her, she'll sulk."

It's hard not to fuss over Beastie, given her stage presence. These days she manages to eat, wash, even sleep with the air of a dispossessed monarch. "It's all the same stuff," I tell her again and again. "The same couch you used to sharpen your claws on. The same corners where you rubbed your chin." But all I get is the green glare. As if she knows the truth. That her old world will in fact disappear bit by bit until she has only her bowl, her litter pan and the two of us for continuity. Well, another of our running jokes is that we stay together for the sake of the cat.

"Yeah, you're right," I say briskly. "She's getting too used to prowling around on top of those boxes, too. I should unpack them."

"Only when you feel like it, Hon. There's no rush."

"You know, if we got our new shelves, I could do the books and records, at least. They're what's taking up most of the room."

"Okay, Babe. But be careful not to overdo it."

"I'm *fine*, Brian."

Honestly, what does he see when he looks at me? Something pale and Pre-Raphaelite? I'm as much a Brueghelian milkmaid as ever. Less than an hour after coming out of the anaesthetic, I was striding down the hall of the clinic, with Brian running after me to take my arm.

But I still haven't unpacked those boxes. I should. I don't know why I haven't. Their labels, in my printing, rebuke me at every turn. *BOOKS, AUTHORS D TO F MEDICINE CABINET AND SPICE RACK. RECORDS, ARTISTS M TO P. WIND CHIMES AND CANDLE HOLDERS.*

I discovered I had a talent for packing. Could work obsessively at it for hours without saying a word. There was something about wrapping fragile things in paper, dovetailing them in a box with other fragile things, then sealing and labelling the box, that absorbed me.

"Are you okay?" Brian asked me more than once in the week

before we moved.

"Yes. I'm okay."

"Do you want to talk? We can. You can tell me about it, if that would help."

I waited until I had finished wrapping a cup. I wasn't used to this kind of attention. Usually I was the one who worried about him. Felt his forehead if he had a cold. Asked him what was wrong if he was quiet. Spun panicky scenarios if he was late. *He's been killed. He's been seduced.*

"There's nothing to tell," I said at last. "I went to sleep. Half an hour later, I woke up. It didn't hurt. And I don't remember a thing."

"Was anybody mean to you? I've heard that they can be."

"No. Everybody was incredibly nice."

"You don't — feel bad about it, do you?"

"What, guilty? Do you think I should?"

"No! I'm just a bit worried, that's all. You're kind of off in your own world."

"There's a lot to do." It was true, if not quite the truth. But I wasn't sure what the truth was. What if I had had to push through a crowd of demonstrators? What if just one person had been less than incredibly nice? Or if I had stayed awake? Had a local instead of a general? Would I have had some hurt, then, to bring home and cry about in Brian's arms? And would that have made a difference?

Maybe. Maybe not. I fitted the wrapped cup into a box of wrapped cups, then picked up another.

Now Brian reaches across the table for my hand and holds it, stroking the back of it with his thumb. "Look, Doll, I know that whenever we do something new, I always jump in with both feet while you're still trying to weigh the pros and cons. But all this stuff that's been happening. The good stuff, I mean. It's happening for you too. Because it's all just so much crap if I can't give it to you. And I want to give you things, now that I can. I want to give you time. And freedom. To write. Just write. I don't want you to take shitty day-jobs any more."

The friction of his thumb is making a warm spot on the back of my hand. I don't want to hurt his feelings by pulling away.

"And listen," he says. "We both know that I'm not doing any-

thing for you that you wouldn't do for me. If you suddenly wrote a best-seller or something. Right?"

I have to smile. I have yet to publish a single word. My thesis novel, *Dame Julian To Her Cat*, is a monologue spoken by an anchorite walled up for life in a whitewashed room.

"I love you, Honey."

"I love you too." The warm spot on the back of my hand is getting positively hot. There was a time, just three weeks ago, when I would have turned my hand over to get his stroking on my palm. Then leaned close to whisper, "Fuck the posters. Let's go home."

Now all I can do is try to keep from pulling my hand away and wonder how, exactly, someone falls out of love. Funny phrase. Fall out of love. It feels more as if love has fallen out of me. Because I honestly don't know where it's gone. I had it. Now I don't. It's not something I would throw away. Or pack away in a box. And it couldn't be surgically removed, either. Scraped free, then suctioned out. So where is it?

"Everything okay here?" The waiter.

On cue, still holding hands, we smile and say, "Terrific!"

•

"How do you feel about the test results?"

The question sounded practised, the voice professionally neutral. Her nameplate said Doctor Zareen Dotiwalla. A friend had recommended her as *absolutely non-judgemental*. She was waiting for directions. From me. Answer A would set one chain of events in motion. Answer B, another.

I wanted to go home. I wanted not to have to sit in this office, have this conversation, make this decision. I wanted to be as young as I felt. But I couldn't be. Because I was *in trouble*. One of those oddly formal phrases, like *juvenile delinquent*, that had dotted adult conversation when I was growing up. I was, potentially at least, an *unwed mother*.

The doctor pushed a box of kleenex toward me. Her voice warmed up a little. "Is there someone you would like to talk it over with, Daisy?"

"I — We already have talked it over."

“And what did the two of you decide?”

“He said it was up to me.”

The doctor was silent. Her face maintained the studied neutrality of a banker’s face, a policeman’s face.

“That makes him sound like he’s copping out,” I said into the silence. “He’s not. He just thinks he has no right — He thinks that since it would have such an impact on my body and my life, I should decide.”

It had sounded wonderful when Brian said it. I wished he could be here with me now to say it again, but he had an audition. “I’ll cancel it and come with you,” he had offered. “If you want me to. Just say the word.”

“So your partner has no preference, one way or the other,” the doctor said. “And you tell me this is not at all convenient, and that you were taking steps to prevent it.”

I nodded, remembering my crunchy-granola objections to the pill. Remembering sitting in the bathtub with Brian, saying “Balloop!” then winking out my diaphragm and twirling it on one finger. Jesus Christ.

Dr. Dotiwalla sighed. “Well. What is done is done. The important thing is to help you do whatever you want to do.” She waited, face, posture, manner once again entirely neutral.

I looked at her desk. At the framed diplomas on her office walls. Then back at her. She was still waiting. When I finally spoke, my voice sounded as young as I felt. The words were whispery, full of breath.

Slowly, expression blank, the doctor nodded. It was an oddly liturgical gesture.

Then she told me she would be right back, that there was a form she had to get from her receptionist, but in the meantime she would like me to review the proper use of the diaphragm, and to at least reconsider going on the pill, once all this was over. She handed me what looked like a viewmaster and told me to look through the lens and turn the crank. I did. It was a colour video of a woman inserting a diaphragm. She was dressed in a short white lab coat and nothing else. She put one foot up on a chair, spread her labia and inserted a diaphragm into her vagina.

All I could think was, my God, is she an out of work actress? Does

Brian know her? Did they pay her union scale? Did her agent phone her up and say, *I've got a job for you. It's a little different . . . ?*

Then I discovered that I could speed the film up by turning the crank faster, or slow it down, or make it go backwards, or forwards and backwards. Foot up, foot down. Labia spread, labia closed. Diaphragm in, diaphragm out.

I began to giggle soundlessly, turning the crank. I was all loose and jangly inside from crying, and the laughter came out in scraps and shards of breath.

Dr. Dotiwalla smiled when she came back in, carrying a printed form. "A bit surreal, isn't it?" she said. Her manner had relaxed, warmed. I wondered if she approved of my decision, or if she would have acted the same way no matter what I had decided.

She sat down at her desk and wrote something on the form. Then she leaned on her elbows and looked at me. "Now, Daisy, what happens is this. I write to my hospital board, saying that continuing in your present condition would cause you physical and psychological hardship. It is just a formality. They will not ask for proof, and no one is ever turned down. Then, once they approve my recommendation, we make an appointment for the procedure to be carried out."

"How much is it going to cost?"

Till now, living poor with Brian had been an adventure, funky and bohemian. But three words, *It was positive*, had shrunk my life down, had made it grubby and desperate. I was still a student, working part time shelving books in the UBC library. Brian was unemployed. His last stage job had ended a week ago when the show he was in folded. His audition today was for a part in a series of root beer commercials. We both knew it was a shot in the dark. Too big a job for an unknown to get.

"B.C. Medical will cover everything," Dr. Dotiwalla said, "except for a nominal sum. About seventeen dollars. Is that all right, Daisy?"

I nodded. It would have to be. And we always managed somehow. Always found enough for the rent. And for Beastie's food and litter. Now we would find seventeen dollars.

"So," the doctor was saying, "if all goes well, and I assure you it will, I will be in touch with you in a week or so about your appointment."

"And then, do I come back here?"

"Here? No, I should not have to see you afterwards."

"No, I mean, for the — Where does it happen?"

"In one of the out-patient clinics. Doctor Bernstrom will give you the address when he sees you."

"Doctor Bernstrom? Who's he?"

"He is the — I am sorry. I should have been clearer. I am a G.P. I do not actually do these things." She grimaced very slightly, just a flicker, then her face smoothed. "You see, once the hospital board has approved my recommendation, I will make an appointment for you to see Dr. Bernstrom. He is a gynaecologist. And he is the one who will actually carry out the procedure." She smiled sympathetically. "This must seem like a great many hoops to jump through."

It didn't, actually. I looked again at her desktop. Once more at the framed diplomas on her wall. Finally back at her.

"Something else you want to ask?" she said, when our eyes met.

"This is — " I began, then stopped.

"Yes, Daisy?"

By some bizarre chance, had I wandered into the wrong office? Was she the wrong Doctor Dotiwalla? Had we been talking all this time about my teeth?

"This is an *abortion* I'm having, right?"

The tiny grimace again. "The medically correct term is dilation and curettage. D and C. It is minor surgery. And Daisy, I would like to suggest that you think of it that way. As minor surgery."

•

"What are you thinking about?" Brian asks me, once the waiter has topped up our coffee, taken my untouched plate and left.

"I'm remembering something."

"Well," he says helpfully, "what are you remembering?"

"Something from when I was a kid. I don't know how old I was. Not too old. Eight or nine. I was in the back yard looking over the fence at the man who lived in the house behind us. He was cutting his back lawn. Ordinary man. Ordinary house. Family just like ours. But all of a sudden I noticed how *square* everything was. The house was

square, the yard was square, even the man was kind of square and beefy. He had started on the outside and was moving round and round into the centre, in smaller and smaller squares.

“And I remember thinking, *He should have started in the centre, so he could end up on the outside. That way, he could escape. Just leave the lawnmower where it is, and go. Run away. Someplace where he could be all by himself.* Because I was convinced that that was exactly what the man wanted to do, deep down. But the squares he was cutting in the lawn were somehow keeping him from doing it.

“And it was as if a door or something had opened up in my head, because I started looking at everybody that way. I suddenly didn’t know why people had anything to do with each other. Why friends were friends, or why families were families. I didn’t know why my father came home every day, or why we all ate supper together, or why my parents visited my school on parents’ night, or anything.

“It wasn’t that I hated other people. Or that I thought they hated me. I just needed to understand what kept them together. I needed to know what that human glue was.

“I asked my mother, and she said, *It’s because we love each other.* So I asked her what that meant, to love somebody. She said, *Well, I love you and I love your brother and I love your father and Grandma loves us all, and so does Grandpa, and so does Aunt Heather . . .*

“She went on and on, naming just about everybody I knew, but she never said what love *was*. And she must have seen the look on my face, because she said, *You love us too, Daisy. Don’t you?*

“Well, I think I came out with something like, *Do I have to?* I wasn’t being a smartass. I really wanted to know. But my mother got all flustered and said, *What kind of question is that? Of course we have to love each other! Because if we don’t — Well, how would you like it if we all went for a trip in the car someplace? Port Dover or Port Maitland. And at the end of the day, when we were coming home, we just got in the car and drove away and left you there? How would you like that?*

“I thought about it for a minute. And then, I said, *Why don’t you?*”

I stop talking and just sit looking out the window. Brian doesn’t say anything. He doesn’t say anything for a long time. So long that I have to turn and look at him. And when I do, I know what’s going to happen.

He didn't plan it. He didn't bring me here to do it. But I can see it in his face, his hands, the slant of his body. "Daisy," he says, then stops. I know what he's going to say. He opens his mouth again, then closes it again. He's going to say he's tired. Of waiting. Of staying on his side of the bed, in more ways than one. Because it's not just sex. It's everything. He can see right inside me, to the empty spaces where my feelings used to be. And he's decided they're never going to come back. So he wants someone new to go with his new apartment and new life. Someone who can share his joy.

"Daisy —"

Or maybe it's something very simple. Maybe he just didn't like my childhood reminiscence. Does there have to be a reason? I'm a fine one to ask.

Here it comes. I do feel afraid. A little. And sad. A little. And something else. I feel —

"Will you marry me?"

— free.

•

In the weeks between Doctors Dotiwalla and Bernstrom, I kept waking up in the middle of the night, going into the kitchen and making myself a cup of chamomile tea. Then, once I had drunk it, I would go back to bed and most often be asleep while Brian was getting ready to leave for the day's shooting.

The first cheque had already arrived. *Pay to the order of Brian Beagle*, followed by an amount that, even after his agent's cut, was more money than we had ever had.

The root beer commercials, twelve of them, were being shot all over Vancouver, and would be released nationally, one every month, for a year. In the meantime, Brian's agent was pushing him for a part in a TV series pilot. "It's starting, Babe," he said to me more than once, his voice whispery with excitement. "I've paid my dues, and it's starting to happen."

It was. And there was no reason that it shouldn't. Brian's bearded, rubbery face was perfect for the part, a mad scientist trying to duplicate the client's root beer formula. And being an unknown had

actually worked in his favour. He was fresh. He carried no typecast baggage. He was a find.

So there was no reason for me to keep imagining him sneaking into movie theatres, sitting all day in the dark, then coming home and telling me lies about filming a commercial. Or to worry that we had gotten somebody else's luck through clerical error, and when some bureaucrat found out, we'd have to give it back.

I wondered if it might be his name. *Brian Beagle* just didn't sound like a celebrity, however minor. But there it was on the cheque. So it was happening. It was real.

The mornings he was shooting, I would wake up to find his place in bed empty and cool beside me. We had always started the day together, and I missed that. But when I apologized for not being awake to see him off, he shook his head and said simply, "You're pregnant."

It became an all-purpose excuse, an automatic absolution. Tired? You're pregnant. Bitchy? You're pregnant. Don't want sex? Then wake him up two hours later because you've changed your mind? You're pregnant. Can't eat? Eat everything in sight? Can't sleep? Sleep half the day? Constipated? Paranoid?

You're pregnant.

I wished that *pregnant* was something Brian and I could both see. Touch. Walk around and examine from all sides, like a mushroom growing up through a crack in the floor. But it wasn't. Pregnant was inside me. No. It *was* me. Pregnant was what I had become.

I had always wondered whether, if I did conceive, some primal maternal instinct would finally kick in. Some fierce, earthy joy that would come up out of nowhere to buoy me through the nine months till delivery. It hadn't. All I felt was invaded. Inhabited. Occupied. I couldn't love the thing that had attached itself inside me. I didn't hate it either. I just wished it would go away. And it would, soon enough. But in the meantime, I was pregnant.

I began to hate the word. Such a fat pink pig of a word. And from there, I went on to hate maternity clothes. Not that I would ever have to wear them. I just hated them on principle. Their pastel cuteness. All that beribboned fuss at collar and sleeve, designed to draw the eye away from the stomach.

And the world was suddenly full of stomachs. I couldn't go into a supermarket without seeing at least half a dozen. Women like oceans walking. Swollen, bulging, stretched to bursting with something not themselves. Something that elbowed their organs, siphoned their blood, leached their bones and teeth.

And kept them awake at night.

Beastie used to visit me in the kitchen while I was making my cup of chamomile. She had always been a prickly, catty cat. But these nights she was strangely kittenish, S-curving through my legs, then kneading my lap while I sat at the table waiting for my tea to cool.

I wondered if she knew something was up, the way she knew about earthquakes. Beastie was a living seismograph that registered tremors neither of us could feel. She would flatten her ears, brace her legs, freeze into what Brian called her Norma Desmond pose, then streak under the couch. There she would stay for hours, while we called to her to stop being such a silly girl, that nothing was happening, that everything was okay.

But then, over the next few days, we would find knick-knacks that had sidestepped their dust circles by half an inch. Hairline cracks in the plaster that had widened or lengthened. And once when I opened a cupboard, a juice glass creeping forward to lean against the door leapt like a live thing into my hand.

That's when we would remember Beastie going strange, and promise to take her more seriously next time. But we never did, and she remained our resident Cassandra.

Those nights in the kitchen, she took to sniffing my breasts, licking a nipple if she could get at one, the way she used to do when she was a kitten. I wondered if she could smell the onset of milk. I didn't know if it was too early for that to be happening. I didn't know anything about being pregnant. And I was perversely proud of my ignorance. Something else I'd started hating was the pregnancy and childbirth sections of bookstores. Was it my imagination, or were they all moving closer to the front? The glossy covers caught my eye the minute I opened the door. *Countdown To Motherhood. Labour of Love. Taking Control of Your Pregnancy.* And always a picture of a woman, smugly exultant or serenely madonnaesque.

How simple to be an animal, I would think, while Beastie stood up

on my lap, stretched into a tall U, then settled back down in a ball. How simple to have no choice. None now because she's been fixed. And none a couple of years ago, because we'd only had her for a few months, and she was so tiny that her going into heat took us by surprise. Her too. The only one who wasn't a total innocent was the long-haired tortoiseshell tom we named Pretty Boy Floyd.

Beastie, for all her seismographical acuity, never twigged to what was going on in her own belly. No matter how lumpen she got, she would try to jump up on the kitchen counter as usual, then slide back down, dragging scratches in the formica. Or she would wriggle into one of her favourite nooks, get stuck and have to back out while we tried not to laugh.

Then one night Brian and I woke to a wetness at our feet and an impossibly tiny mewling. Very gently, we lifted the two-headed creature out onto the rug. There, while Beastie purred and blinked, the miniature head protruding from her rear grew two reaching paws. Tiny claws gripped the rug as the shrieking creature pulled itself out. It lay exhausted for a moment, then began the long blind journey to the nipple, dragging its parachute of afterbirth behind it.

In the morning, when all the kittens were born, Beastie jumped with no trouble at all onto a chair back. From its height she surveyed the squealing, bloody bundle she had left on the rug. She was a different cat. There was a new arch to her neck, a huge self-approval in the slitting of her eyes. She could have posed for the cover photo of one of those pregnancy books.

Except, once they started to grow, she didn't like her kittens much. Would look at them, then glare accusingly at us. Would separate them one from the other and leave them in odd places, behind books, in low kitchen cupboards, under laundry, as if hoping to lose them.

She did all the mother cat things, but she did them hatefully. Sometimes while she was washing one of her kittens a manic look would come into her eyes and she would start chewing on its neck, only stopping when it began to strangle. And when it was time to wean them she put a back foot on each one's face in turn and simply shoved.

Mother love.

I had never even played with dolls. The rocking and feeding and dressing and undressing that other little girls inflicted on their pink plastic babies had mystified me. It still did. I saw mothers on the street now and wondered how they could have let this happen to them. The trapped look in their eyes as they pushed one child in a stroller and pulled another by the hand. Their inability to finish a sentence. The impression they gave of having misplaced themselves. Along with the piano, the easel, the manuscript they were going to get back to, just as soon as the kids were in school, out of school, married, gone.

Gone.

Mine would be gone soon.

Mine.

How could something be mine when I couldn't see it, couldn't feel it, didn't want it? How could it be Brian's?

While the cat purred on my lap I would sip my cooling tea and listen to Brian snoring in the next room. He needed his sleep. The day's shooting started early. But I used to wish he would wake up and come and find me and sit with me. Just sit. Not say anything. There was nothing to say. Or nothing he hadn't said before.

I will respect your decision, whatever it is.

Of course I have feelings in the matter. But that's not the same as having rights.

I won't leave you if you decide to have this baby.

That last one had jarred me. Why did he think he had to say it? I knew he wouldn't just disappear, like Pretty Boy Floyd. Or did I?

People never guessed that Brian was an actor. He didn't glitter or talk loud or suck up all the attention in the room the way other actors did. But at theatre parties I would stand by myself and watch him work the crowd. He was so good at it. He fit so easily into that world. He did try to include me. Would introduce me to somebody who would gush that it was just *wonderful* that I *wrote*. That I was finishing a *master's*. In *creative writing*. And where was I *published*? Oh, but I *would* be! I *would*! And they just couldn't *wait* to read my *work*.

What if that was what Brian was really like, underneath? And he was restraining himself for my sake? How long could he keep it up? How long would he stay with me?

Why *did* he stay with me, anyway? And why did I stay with him? Because we loved each other. But what did that mean? What was it that had made us fall in love? Strange phrase. *Fall in love*. Like falling into a vat of something sticky.

I had never thought it would happen to me. Didn't think I was capable of it. But I was. It had. I could even remember exactly when. Brian and I had just gotten off a bus together, him out the front door, me out the back. We hadn't spotted each other during the ride, but we collided on the sidewalk. We were already friends. We had met in a playwriting course I was taking as part of my master's at UBC. Brian and some other actors had been hired by the creative writing department to help the class workshop their scripts. Mine was so bad, so essentially unplayable, that for ages after I started meeting him for coffee, I assumed he was befriending me out of pity.

But we made each other laugh. And when we bumped into each other outside the bus, we started to laugh again, and couldn't stop. We ended up just holding onto each other, laughing and kissing.

I won't leave you if you decide to have this baby.

Not much danger of that. I didn't even like children. Hadn't liked being one. I was one of those owlish, elderly types whose intelligence in the classroom rendered them stupid on the playground. I could never speak the language of children, or crack their social codes.

But now I laughed and cried so easily in Brian's arms. Talked baby talk and played games. Called him Daddy and Papa. Felt small and cherished, worthy to be held close.

Had he ever noticed how children shied from me? As if they sensed that I had never really been one of them? I was ashamed of my childhood. The awkwardness and loneliness were my dirty little secret.

Would a child of my own see through me? And help its father to see?

I won't leave you —

Oh, there was no point in thinking these thoughts, worrying these worries. It was all academic. The thing that had barely started was soon going to end. The thing that hardly existed would soon not exist at all. As if it had never been.

It. Foetus. Embryo. Infant.
Infanticide.

Infanticide sounded like something out of a Noel Coward play. *There's a whiff of infanticide in the air this evening, my dear. Do you smell it?*

Did Beastie smell it? Would she hiss at me when I came home from the clinic? Or would she give me one of her rare, barbed kisses?

The morning that Brian was out shooting the sixth in the series of commercials, Dr. Dotiwalla phoned. As expected, she said, the hospital board had approved her recommendation. Should she go ahead and make an appointment for me with Dr. Bernstrom?

It was a sunny morning. Rare for Vancouver in March. Rare for Vancouver anytime. I could see dust motes moving in the air. I could hear the clock ticking from the bedroom.

One word. The doctor was waiting for one word from me.

Very well, she answered when I finally said it. Her voice was again carefully neutral. I pictured her once more giving that slow benedictory nod.

•

“Don’t answer. Don’t say a word. Not yet. Just listen to me. Please.”

He looks so young. Chock-full of whatever is so very important, right this minute. “I — ” he begins, then stops. “You — Oh, fuck!”

I pull a kleenex out of my pocket. For a second I picture myself holding it to his nose and ordering, *Blow*.

“Sorry,” he says, dabbing at his eyes. “I’ve just been so worried. And so scared. I know you’re mad as hell at me. I don’t blame you. I’ve been having all the fun, and you’ve been taking all the shit. If it was me, I’d be pissed off too.”

Mad as hell? Pissed off? All I can think to say is, “Why did you ask me to marry you? I mean, why now?”

“To get your attention.”

“What?”

“No! Yes. Partly. I did need to get through to you, Daisy. For weeks now, it’s been as if you don’t know I’m in the room. And I’m not just talking about sex. Believe me. That’s the least of it. Living with you right now is like watching a movie about somebody who lives alone.

Eats all her meals alone. Sleeps alone. And I've started to wonder if what I'm seeing is what you want." He stops, his eyes, his face, his whole body a question.

I look down at my cold coffee. Two weeks ago, while Brian was signing the lease for our new apartment and writing the cheque for first and last month's rent, I stepped into the smaller bedroom and shut the door. I stood all by myself in the middle of the bare floor and breathed. *Oh*, my breath said, going in. And coming out, it said, *yes*.

But then I opened the door back up. I went quickly and found Brian, and put my signature on the lease under his.

For just a moment, I had envisioned staying in that room alone forever, like an anchorite. Never opening the door again.

Dame Julian did it. Survived the plague that killed her husband and child, then spent the rest of her life in a white room without a door, transcribing the visions she had had while hovering between life and death.

She had her meals passed in to her and her slops taken out through a single window. And she had the company of a cat who was there to keep the rats down. Not a bad existence for a medieval woman, considering the alternatives. She actually managed to die of old age.

But there was still that moment of stepping through the door, then turning and watching while masons sealed it up. Maybe she concentrated on subduing the cat. For the animal would have struggled in her arms, sensing a trap. It would have fought to get free, to get out through the smaller and smaller opening before the final stone was in place.

How could she do it? How could she want to do it in the first place?

For those few seconds, in that empty room, I knew. It had nothing to do with wanting or not wanting.

"No," I say now. "I don't want to eat my meals alone. I don't want to sleep alone." It's true enough. If not quite the truth.

Brian closes his eyes. Opens them. "Okay," he says. "Okay. I don't want to live that way either. And the thought of losing you —" He starts to tear up again. Swallows. Swipes pugnaciously at his nose. "I

can't do it without you, Daisy. I mean, I feel as if I've been shot out into space all of a sudden. And you're like planet earth. I need you to be there. I need to be able to come home to you. So please let me help you. I can't just sit back and watch you disappear into yourself. I have to try to break through your depression."

"I'm not depressed."

"Oh Honey, you *are*. You've got all the earmarks. And it makes sense. Did you know that one form anger can take is depression?"

Did I say I was angry? I don't feel angry. In fact, ever since coming out of the anaesthetic, I haven't felt much of anything. Just very still and quiet. As if I'm all by myself. Funny phrase. *All by myself*. What does it mean, literally? *Completely self-made*?

"It's a common problem, Sweetheart. But it won't just go away. You need to get help for it. And I'll help you find the help you need."

Help. Helping hands. Breaking down the sealed-up door to the room where I sit. All by myself. Because I'm depressed. Because I'm angry. Because I had minor surgery.

"Brian —"

"I know what you're going to say. That it's such a cliché. *Get professional help*. But you wouldn't hesitate if it was something physical, would you?"

"No, but —"

"Or if it was me? I mean, if I started acting like somebody you didn't recognize, wouldn't you worry? Wouldn't you care?"

Everything he's saying is making perfect sense. And he did do a minor in psychology. "Yes. Of course I'd worry. And of course I'd care. But —"

"Well, then you know how I feel."

All I know is I don't like this diagnosis. I don't want to be depressed. It's too clinical. Too convenient.

Brian's eyes are bloodshot. "Look," he says. "I'm in this for the long haul. Just know that much, Daisy. Even if you have to hate me for a while. Just know that I'm here. I can take it. And I will take it."

"Oh for God's sake, Brian. I don't hate you." And I don't. How could I? Up until three weeks ago, I loved him. Maybe I still do. And I just can't feel it. I did have surgery, after all. And that can do things to you. Or so I've heard. And maybe I do feel guilty, deep down. It

would stand to reason. So maybe I could use a little help. At the very least, it couldn't hurt. "Okay. I'll make an appointment with the campus shrink."

Brian drops his head. When he raises it, he looks at once terribly tired and terribly relieved. Then he reaches into his pocket and pulls something out. I can't see what it is. It's so small he can hide it in the palm of his right hand. I keep looking at his right hand where it rests on the table, fingers curled around whatever he's holding.

"Look. Maybe this is crazy. Maybe the timing stinks. But you know me. The way I jump into things. So I have to tell you." He stops and looks down at his right hand. A blush actually begins to rise from the line of his beard, up past his eyes to his forehead. "I know we've always said we wouldn't legally marry, that we didn't need that kind of thing. Well, all of a sudden, I want the old-fashioned stuff. A wedding. Presents. Confetti. You in a dress. I want to take vows in a church. I want to make it official. So that if something happens to me, you'll be looked after. But it's more than that. I want to be your husband, and celebrate anniversaries with you, and get old with you and die with you. I want you to be my wife."

He opens his hand. I see a ring box, hinged and covered with midnight blue velvet. He puts both hands in his lap and sits back, watching me.

I don't know what to do. Or what to say. Three weeks ago, I might have burst into tears, then blubbered on about how this was what I had always wanted, deep down, and I had only said I didn't want it for his sake, because I didn't want him to know what a bourgeois little goop he was living with.

He's still watching me, his eyes brave, trusting. I'm going to have to do something. Make a gesture. And there are so many gestures I could make. I could get up and walk away. No. Too harsh. Too hurtful. Or I could stay sitting but not reach for the ring box. No. Too ambiguous. Or I could reach for it and pick it up, in order to hand it back to him, unopened.

The ring is white gold. The diamond is small but brilliant.

"And there's something else," Brian says. "When you're ready, and only when you feel you can, I want to talk, just talk, about having a child. A planned child. A child we could be ready for and look for-

ward to. Because believe it or not, that's what I learned from all of this. It threw me for a loop. It was the last thing I ever thought I'd want to do. But you know what? Brian Beagle wants to be a family man."

I should have seen this coming. Maybe I did. Because I'm not surprised. It fits. I can practically hear it clicking into place. I can see Brian as a father. A good father. One of the best. And nobody can say he hasn't put his cards on the table. Nobody can say he doesn't play fair.

Would it be fair of me to take the ring out of the box? Just to see how it looks?

It's very light in my palm. *Brian Beagle wants to be a family man.* What does Daisy Chandler want? What did Dame Julian want? Except it has nothing to do with wanting or not wanting, does it? It has to do with being.

So what *is* Daisy Chandler? Is she all by herself? Or is she one half of Brian and Daisy?

Brian and Daisy. When our friends call us that, does the phrase run together like one word? One flesh, as people used to say? Does Brian's scent breathe out from the clothes in my closet? When I read a book, are his eyes on the page with mine? When I write, do I hear the words dropping one by one as often in his voice as in mine?

I slide the ring from my right palm to my left. A room of my own. A child of his. Could the door to the room be shut? Sometimes. Could the child be persuaded not to bang on it? Sometimes.

The hand holding the ring, my left hand, takes over. It rises and offers the ring to Brian. He picks it up from the palm. The hand could still pull away. He slips the ring onto the third finger. The hand could still make a fist.

The metal is cool at the base of my finger for just a second. After that, I can't feel it. And it's only when Brian reaches to wipe my face with the kleenex I gave him that I realize I've started to cry after all. Maybe the tears are from all the feelings I used to feel. And all the ones I have yet to. But that I might still. With a little help.

"I guess this is the moment when the credits are supposed to roll," I manage to say.

"Now you're talking like an actor's wife." He leans across the table

to kiss me. Then he snaps the ring box shut. For such a small object, it makes a very loud noise.

Daisy! Daisy, wake up!

I had been sleeping for a hundred years. A century ago, somebody in a white mask, with eyes like Montgomery Clift, had looked at me upside down and said, "Hello, Daisy. I'm going to put you to sleep." Then he had started adding something to my IV bag.

I was lying on a padded table, wondering where Doctor Bernstrom was. Besides Montgomery Clift, there was a Chinese nurse who kept urging me softly to slide my "buttum" farther down the table. "You will feel an edge," she said delicately. "Like a hole. Yes. Thank you."

My feet were in stirrups, my *buttum* perched on something very like the lip of a cliff, and Doctor Bernstrom presumably waiting in the wings when I felt myself losing consciousness. *Now I lay me down to sleep*, I thought absurdly. Because there was nothing voluntary about it. I could feel my consciousness being taken away. Removed, bit by inexorable bit.

The day before, Doctor Bernstrom had told me, from behind a sheet draped over my raised knees, that there was "for sure something in there." I had to bite my lip. His accent was dangerously close to Brian's all-purpose stage Scandinavian.

"And now I will insert the seaweed into the cervix."

He had explained that a match-sized piece of compacted, dried seaweed would absorb my body fluids over night, thus dilating me slowly and painlessly. He had sounded oddly proud of the seaweed technique, as if he had invented it.

"Try to relax, please."

I couldn't. I was trying not to laugh, trying not to imagine the routine Brian would work up.

So, Doctor Bernstrom, what made you choose gynaecology?

Ja, vell, I vas missing the fiords . . .

Just then the seaweed went in, and I had no trouble not laughing. "Sorry it pinches," Doctor Bernstrom said. "In a minute you will stop

feeling it.”

When I sat up I could still detect a tiny stabbing, as of a swallowed needle. Was the seaweed expanding already, drinking my fluids? Drinking *its* fluids? Could *it* register anything? Danger? Something as simple as thirst?

“Now let’s talk about the procedure,” Doctor Bernstrom said, once I had gotten dressed. I found myself studying his face, for some reason. It was a bony, homely face, the pale skin scrubbed pink. He reminded me a bit of Max Von Sydow.

“Tomorrow morning, I will first remove the seaweed, then insert the curette. I will scrape the inner lining of the uterus, then suction out its contents. It all takes about half an hour, and is practically painless.”

Scrape

“Can’t I have any anaesthetic?”

“Certainly. You can have a local anaesthetic, if you wish.”

Suction

“No. I mean, can’t I be completely unconscious?”

“We do not recommend a general anaesthetic for minor surgery. There is too high a risk.”

“What if I’m willing to take the risk?”

Doctor Bernstrom’s nose pinkened. “If you insist on a general anaesthetic,” he said crisply, “we will require you to sign a form stating that you understand the dangers involved.”

And absolving you, I silently added, if I should die before I wake.

“Daisy! Wake up, Daisy!”

Somebody had put a sanitary belt and pad on me. Every few minutes the Chinese nurse asked me to please turn on my side so she could look at the pad. Each time, she thanked me and asked me if I was in pain.

I wasn’t. Dr. Bernstrom had told me I would probably have cramps afterward. I kept waiting for them, bracing myself. Nothing. I was hungry. Thirsty. But that was all.

No, there was something else. When the nurse told me I could sit up, I looked out the clinic window and tried to put a word to what it was. Empty? No. Some other word.

“Daisy?” the nurse said. “Would you please read this pamphlet? It is very important that you follow the instructions. And your partner also.”

The pamphlet was titled, *After Your D and C*. It told me that for two full weeks, I could take showers but not baths. I could use pads but not tampons. Most important, I was to refrain from having sexual intercourse.

Two weeks. *Poor Brian*, I thought automatically. Then wondered why I hadn't thought, *Poor me*.

Brian would be here soon. He had promised to take a cab from the film site, and get me home. The clock on the wall said ten-fifteen. I had been admitted at nine, put to sleep at about nine-thirty. It really had only taken half an hour. Brian might even be here already. If I stood up and turned around, I might see him.

I stayed sitting, looking out the window. There were other beds in the room, but they were empty.

Alone

There it was. The word I had been looking for. I was alone, truly alone, for the first time in weeks. No more constant presence I couldn't escape. No more feeling of being invaded. Occupied territory.

I was all by myself. For this little space of time. In this bare white room. On this narrow bed, with its taut sheets and plain grey blanket. When had I last slept in a bed this small, this simple? When had I last slept alone?

“Daisy? A gentleman is here to take you home.”

•

Brian holds open the restaurant door for me, then takes my hand as we walk along to the print shop. It's going to be all right, I think. It's going to be just fine. I came close to cutting off my nose to spite my face, but the important thing is, I didn't actually do it. And now, things will work out. We'll come through this together and be better for it. Stronger. Closer.

Isn't that what everybody says? And everybody probably says it because it's true. Or maybe it's true because everybody says it. What

do I know? I'm depressed.

While we walk, Brian swings my hand back and forth, grinning, excited, happy. People on the sidewalk look at us and smile. Some of them probably recognize him from TV. Mothers bending to children. Family men loading groceries into the trunks of cars.

This is good, I tell myself. I'm glad I said yes to it. Or at least, that I didn't say no. Not saying no is pretty good for a depressed person. It's a step in the right direction.

We pass a church. Catholic. Our Lady of Perpetual Help. I wonder out loud why people are going in on a Saturday. "Wedding!" Brian says. "Hey — Let's have a big church wedding. Stained glass. Priest in robes. Organ music. The works."

"They don't just marry you these days. That's what I've heard, anyway. They send you on encounter weekends first."

"So encounter me, Baby," he growls, pulling me close and kissing me, a loud pop on the mouth. It's the first what-the-hell kiss he's given me in three weeks. I don't pull away from him. That's good. It's another step. We'll probably make love tonight. No. We will make love tonight. I'll see to it.

It's not a wedding going on in the church, I decide as we pass by. There are too few people going in, and they're too drably dressed. Confession, maybe.

I wasn't raised a Catholic, but the idea of confession has always appealed to me. Dame Julian confessed daily to a priest through her single window. What sins could she have accumulated, I wonder, in a twenty-four hour period, in a whitewashed room? With a cat? And what penance could the priest in good conscience have imposed, day after day? The two of them must have racked their brains.

Or maybe not. Maybe they were old friends. Told each other about their encroaching arthritis. Memory lapses. Hemorrhoids. Loved each other, perhaps. Touched hands over the stone sill. Maybe the priest even confessed to her. She was the cloistered one, after all, and he the one out in the world, with all its occasion for sin.

Sin is a strange word. Secretive and shameful, like a stripe on your underwear. *Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It is forever since my last confession, and this is my sin. Brace yourself.*

Would a priest forgive what I had done? He'd have to. It's his job,

to absolve sin. Grant absolution. Absolution sounds like flushing water. Like cleansing. A thorough inner scouring, to empty me of the sin of having emptied myself. And then what? How heavy a penance? How many rounds of beads on my knees before Our Lady of Perpetual Help, her plaster face pitying but immobile?

But who knows — maybe it would help. Maybe I should attack this thing, this depression, from all sides. Talk to a shrink. Confess to a priest. Go on an encounter weekend. Become a vegetarian while I'm at it.

We're at the print shop. "Sparrow colours!" Brian whispers in my ear, reminding me. I nod, smiling. I will decorate this man's home. I will be his immaculate, soft-spoken chatelaine. Who writes.

•

Beastie neither hissed nor kissed me when I came home from the clinic. Instead, she went into earthquake mode and stayed in it for days, only emerging from under the couch to eat or use her litter pan. For once, we took her seriously. We kept examining the walls and shelves for signs of shocks or tremors, but couldn't find any. Brian finally came up with a theory. "She knows we've found new digs," he said. "She senses a change coming. And cats hate change."

I didn't think that was it. At least, I didn't think it had anything to do with moving. But I didn't tell Brian what I was thinking. I just started wrapping things in newspaper and putting them in boxes.

•

Too red. Not beige. Too yellow. Not grey. Too blue. Not white. Too orange. Not charcoal.

The rack of prints is open like a big book in front of me. I've almost finished flipping through it when I find Van Gogh's *Wheatfield With Crows*. No sparrow colours here. The black of the crows is pitch black, not charcoal. The sky is acid blue, and the yellow wheat enough to make you squint. And then there's the road that stops in the middle of the field. Right at the spot where he shot himself.

This used to be my favourite painting. But it was almost ruined for

me when I wrote a breathless undergraduate essay which prompted my art history professor to take me in hand.

"Yeah, I know, I know," he said, fingering the pages I had typed on the new portable my parents had given me when I started at Guelph. "Everybody has this romantic notion of how Van Gogh died. They think he painted this marvellous symbol, a road ending in the middle of a field. Between the crows and the wheat. The eater and the eaten. They think he saw it all, in a big blinding flash. Saw that he was on the cusp between life and death. That he had done everything he could ever do. Had painted it all. Could only be a pale imitation of himself after that. And so, consummate artist that he was, he blew his brains out. He chose death over mediocrity."

I remember sitting in this professor's office, trying to will the warm blood down out of my face. He was practically quoting from my essay.

"But do you know what really happened? Well, you do. I know you do. I can tell from your bibliography. He had the gun with him to scatter the crows when they got in the way. And it probably went off by accident. Because he shot himself in the *side*, Daisy. Missed all his vital organs. Walked home. Didn't even bleed to death. Went septic and died in bed a week later of a fever."

I remember sitting there, my whole head on fire, desperately trying to think of something to say. Some retort. Something with which to shout down what I was hearing.

"All I'm saying, Daisy, is don't deify the guy. Pay attention to what he did. Not what he was. Because he was a nut case. Good painter. But a nut case."

I stand staring down at the painting in the print shop. Its uncompromising colours. The road ending. No. Not *ending*. Stopping. Deliberately, abruptly, ceasing to be.

"Hon?" It's Brian. "What've you got there? Oh. Okay. But it's not exactly sparrow colours, is it?"

He glances up and catches me staring at him. "I've picked something out. You want to come and see?"

I'm staring because he looks exactly the way he did that day outside the bus. When we held each other, laughing and kissing, and I felt the warmth of his skin through the cloth of his shirt. I remem-

ber a throb of wanting coming straight up through me, so strong it was almost pain. So strong I thought it might split me in two.

"Hello!" Brian says, waving his hand in front of my eyes. "Are you in there?"

"Yeah. I am. Sorry. Let's go see what you've got."

I follow him over to the rack he's been flipping through. My own stays open at *Wheatfield With Crows*. I'm aware of the painting as I walk away. I can almost feel it, as if it's throwing off heat.

What Brian has picked out is absolutely perfect. A pair of Japanese landscapes. Soaring mountains threaded with silver streams. Everything softened by grey mist. And in each, the requisite tiny human figure. A lesson in insignificance.

"We could hang them side by side over the bed," he says. "What do you think? And they've got some gorgeous frames. And mats. Come and see." He goes over to the wall behind the framing table and starts looking at the V-shaped samples hung there.

I don't follow. I just stand watching him. He's taken his jacket off. The store is still heated for winter. Brian is one of those men who looks marvellous with his shirtsleeves pushed up. I love the short strong line of his back. His neck is beautiful. So is the turning of his head. I take it all in, all the details. Memorizing them. I actually wish I had a camera.

shiver

Windows. As if something's hit them.

rattle

Now under my feet. Again. Tremor. Yes. Like the shuddering of some huge animal's hide.

I go quickly to Brian and touch his arm. "Did you feel that?"

"What?"

"I think it's a quake."

"No."

"I think it is. I felt it. I felt a tremor. So come on. We have to stand in the doorway."

That's what you do when there's an earthquake. You find a door-frame and stand in it. Brian taught me that. I run to the door of the print shop, which is propped open for air. I don't look back to see if he's following. When I get there I stand perfectly still, one foot in the

store, one foot on the sidewalk. I strain my ears for the sound of glass shivering again in the window frames.

This is what Beastie has been predicting. Ever since I got home from the clinic. She was just a little premature, that's all. Because it's here. Or it's coming. It might even be the big one the experts have been predicting for years. Good thing we're on street level.

A hand on my shoulder. Brian's. "Sweetheart. Come back inside."

"No."

"Honey. Listen. There's no earthquake. I've asked around the store. Nobody else has felt or heard anything."

"I did."

"It was probably just the wind rattling the windows."

"No it wasn't."

"Or a bird hitting them. Look. Daisy. You've had nothing to eat. You're probably feeling faint. So come on."

The hand tightens on my shoulder. I jerk away.

"Oh Baby, what *is* it? Will you please tell me what's *wrong*?"

I wrap my arms around myself and bend a little. I feel Brian's hand again. Tenderly, on the back of my head.

"Whatever it is, it's *ours*, Daisy. We'll work it out together. We can go for joint counselling. We can talk it through. We can do whatever we have to. You and me."

I look down at the space between my feet. Where I expect a crack to open up.

"I killed my child."

The hand on the back of my head becomes an arm. Around my shoulders. Trying to pull me close.

I brace my legs. Will not be pulled close. "I killed my child, and I'm glad I did it. I don't mourn it. I don't miss it. I don't want it back. I don't want to replace it. And if I have to kill another one, I will."

No crack opens at my feet. No windows rattle. The arm does not move from around my shoulders.

But its warmth becomes weight. Then its weight becomes heaviness. And we both know it is only a matter of time before it falls.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

JULIE DUSCHENES is an artist who lives and works in Lethbridge, Alberta. Having come from the edge of the Atlantic Ocean to live on the bed of an inland sea, she finds the light that reflects from the water is the same one bouncing off the canola. This is confirmed by the sea gulls who also live on the prairie. Currently working in paint, print, and drawing media, Duschenes teaches at the University of Lethbridge and is represented by Canadian Art Galleries in Calgary.

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CRYSTAL HURDLE lives in North Vancouver where she teaches English and Creative Writing at Capilano College. Her poetry has been published in several Canadian journals, including *Canadian Literature*, *Fireweed*, *Dandelion*, *Whetstone*, *Prairie Journal of Canadian Literature*, *Bogg*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *Event*. Hurdle is presently working on a series of poems about allergies.

RYAN KNIGHTON's poetry has appeared most recently or is forthcoming in such periodicals as *The Malahat Review*, *Descant*, *Fiddlehead*, *filling Station*, *Tads*, and *Judy*. A chapbook, *What Leaves Us*, is published by Smoking Lung Press (1998). In East Vancouver, where he makes his home, passers-by often find his blindness worthy of comment, praise, or scrutiny. He teaches at Capilano College.

SYLVIA LEGRIS has published two books of poetry, *circuitry of veins* in 1996 and *iridium seeds* which appeared in late 1998, both with Turnstone Press. She is based in Saskatoon but feels pulled from all over the place.

K.D. MILLER's stories and essays have appeared in *The Capilano Review*, *Canadian Forum*, *Writ*, *The New Quarterly*, *McGill Street Magazine*, and *The Lazy Writer*. Miller's first collection of short stories, *A Litany in Time of Plague*, was published by The Porcupine's Quill in 1994. Her second collection of stories, *Give Me Your Answer*, is forthcoming from The Porcupine's Quill in September, 1999. At the present time, she is working on a series of personal essays, jointly titled *Holy Writ*, which explores the link between creativity and spirituality. K.D. Miller lives in Toronto.

PAIN NOT BREAD is a collaborative writing group consisting of Roo Borson, Kim Maltman, and Andy Patton. Borson is a poet and essayist who has published nine books of poetry, most recently *Night Walk: Selected Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1994), and *Water Memory* (McClelland and Stewart, 1996). She is currently Writer-in-Residence at the University of Toronto. Maltman is a poet, theoretical particle physicist, and mathematician who teaches at York University. He is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *Technologies/Installations* (Brick Books, 1990), and his writing has been translated into Mandarin, German, Cantonese, and Gujarati. Patton is a poet, essayist, and visual artist; he has published one book of poetry, *Poems in Quotations* (Four Humours, 1975), and has exhibited widely in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Holland, and Switzerland. The poems herein are from a manuscript in progress, titled *Introduction to the*

Introduction to Wang Wei, selections of which have appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *Brick: a Journal of Reviews*, *Canadian Literature*, *Matrix*, *The River Review*, *Nimrod*, and *Text: zeitschrift für literaturen* (Germany).

BILL SCHERMBRUCKER is a former fiction editor and editor of *TCR*. His novel *Mimosa* won the Ethel Wilson Prize in the 1988 B.C. Book Prizes. His collections of short stories are *Chameleon & Other Stories* and *Motortherapy*.

GEORGE STANLEY lived in Terrace, B.C., where he taught English at Northwest Community College from 1976 to 1991. He now teaches at Capilano College. His most recent collection of poems is *Gentle Northern Summer* (New Star Books, 1995).



In issue 2:27, *TCR* had the pleasure of publishing Gwen MacGregor's photo work entitled *I was never here*. Unfortunately, the title was incorrectly listed on the contents page, *here* being transformed into *there*. Furthermore, through serendipitous coincidence, a proofing error resulted in her contributor's note being left out, so with sincere apologies to Gwen, *TCR* now offers that note, thus compounding the irony of both her title and our regrettable oversights.

GWEN MACGREGOR is a Toronto-based, site-specific, multi-media installation artist who often works with derelict structures, abandoned industrial sites, or other ephemeral locations (such as the tidal banks of the River Thames or rented storage units). Her range of media includes drawing, photography, sculpture, text, video, and digital production. Her work is regularly and extensively exhibited in North America and Europe.

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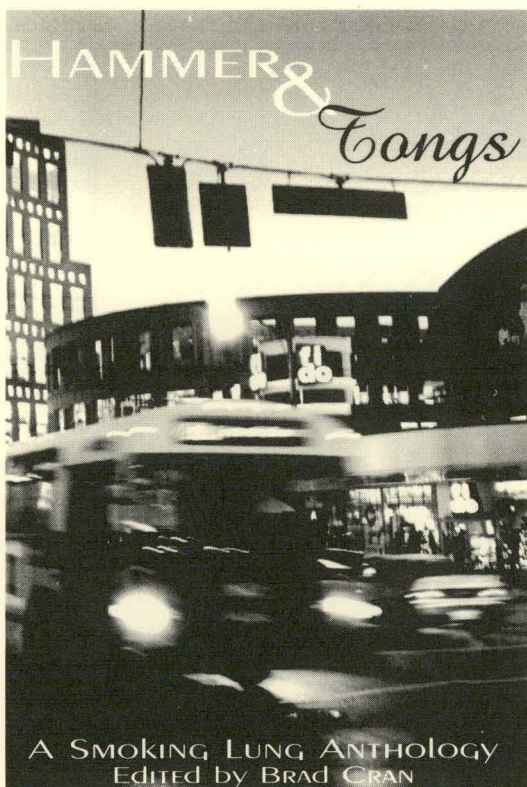
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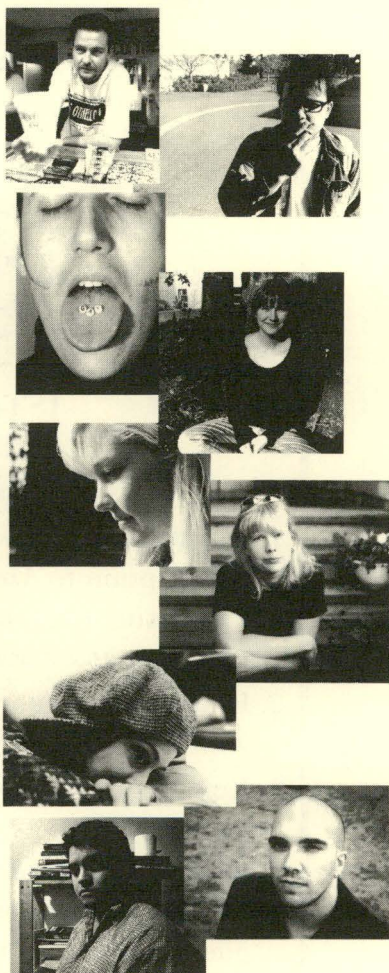
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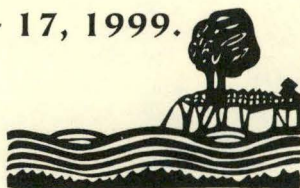
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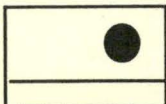
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