

(043) 1490 BUK

1600267244

UNIVERSITAT DE LLEIDA  
FACULTAT DE LLETRES  
DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA  
SECCIÓ D'ANGLÈS

THE CANADIAN LANDSCAPE THROUGH POETRY

VOLUM I



TESI DOCTORAL DIRIGIDA PER LA DOCTORA SUSAN BALLYN.  
UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

N E L A      B U R E U      i      R A M O S

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into direct contact with her fleeing husband's skinny ass.  
and so the story goes.

I doubt that she paused to select a verbal attitude

threw	heaved	hurled	chucked	fired	flung
cast	launched	pitched	shied	slung	sent off
released	dispatched	interrogated(?)	defenestrated		

appropriate to her

being

generally and specifically

pissed off.

8.

Notation, in *Field Notes*, Barrie, is the reader in the text.  
The narrator, always, fears his/her own tyranny. The  
notation in the poem occasions the dialogic response that is  
the reader's articulation of his/her presence (the ecstatic  
now of recognition? the longer, if not always enduring,  
experience of transformational vision?).

"Silence,  
please."

Bugles

the gone stranger  
the mysterious text  
the necessary  
transfer

the sick (or  
chunk) of  
wood

somehow  
taking both  
flight and  
it would seem

aim

9.

Notation is the double of the poem. Or: we are the poem, and cannot hear except by indirection. We can only guess the poem by encountering (by being surprised by) its double. The notation announces the poem to the poem. Perhaps every poem is a poem lost (in the poet, in the reader), and can only find itself in the

broken  
(the remaining)  
lines

or: notation is a flying (consider the birds in autumn, e.g., flock of blackbirds, preparing to migrate from here to there, forth and back, charging the sky electric with intent)

in order to fly:	<i>Urgrossmutter,</i>
	yes. But
	he came out of
	my body.

notes (not notation) for Jan 18. all day on a train from Vienna (Graz, actually), across Austria, into Switzerland. sharing a train compartment with one person only, an ancient woman who speaks not a word of English. we use my pocket dictionary, we point and talk, pronouncing the words hesitantly, too deliberately. she points to a mountain. she knows the names of all the mountains; she tells me their names. the skiers, abruptly, swoop down the mountains toward us. we talk our way from poetry to prose, from prose into silence.

10.

Jan 22: *Züge zum Flughafen*  
*Frankfurt: Fahrplan*

I was in the main railway station in Frankfurt waiting to take a train out to the airport. I tried to reconstruct the occasion of my meeting with the double. I hadn't on that first occasion been able to read the schedules and find the track my train was on. Now, looking at the train schedules, I found them remarkably easy to read; I was able, easily, to reconstruct my itinerary and my actual journey.

What I could not reconstruct was the way which I had not been able to find my train. But the stranger had recognized my confusion. He had come up beside me and had, unbidden, spoken. His voice at the time perplexed me, because it was at once a foreign voice, and familiar.

How he knew where I had to get to I don't know. Perhaps the body speaks its own destination. But the stranger who spoke to me, the bearded man in the green corduroy jacket, pushing his luggage on a cart as I pushed mine, had a voice that I recognized only then, there, on my second occasion in the Frankfurt *Hauptbahnhof*, when I was entirely alone. Perhaps it was his hat that had deceived me on the first occasion. He was wearing a soft cloth hat of a very conservative and yet distinguished sort. I never wear a hat- though only a day before our encounter I had in fact, while shopping in Berlin, attempted to buy a hat for myself. The voice of that man who directed me onto the right train, the train that would take me to Koblenz, where I would then transfer onto another train and proceed to Trier, to give a talk on Canadian writing (and I gave the talk) had been exactly my own.

11.

like, I  
mean

out and  
in and  
out and  
in and  
out and  
in and  
out and  
in and  
out and  
in and  
out and  
in and

by direction  
(by indiscretion)

Perhaps the bearded man in the green corduroy jacket, pushing his luggage on a cart as I pushed mine, on seeing me

recognized

The notation  
keeps it moving.

I never  
wear a hat.



HOW I JOINED THE SEAL HERD

I swear it was not the hearing  
itself I first refused  
it was the sight of my ears

in the mirror: the sight  
of my ears was the first  
clue: my head did not please me

the seals so loud I could hardly  
accept the message: she wanted  
no other going/than to be gone the

neat bed itself strange in the  
mirror, she kneeling across the bed  
to close the window: maybe

I have this wrong: but only then  
I saw my ears/the difference  
she wanted to go I heard

a loud snort a throaty grunt:  
it was the breeding season the tide  
low, the wind still: they'd be weary

I knew, the seals lying together  
in the hot sun maybe 300 seals  
I counted slipping off my shoes

the effect was immediate I learned  
to let my body give it was not I  
who controlled the rocks I learned

curling my stockinged toes to the  
granite cracks and edges: maybe  
I have this wrong but I knew

in the first instant of my courage  
I must undo my very standing/crawl  
on the wet rocks, the sand not

standing ease down on my belly:  
it was strange at first looking up  
at the world: but I arched my back

I turned my head and paused what  
was I doing there on the beach/ wait  
the luminous eyes of a young seal cow:

I, the lone bull seal bravely  
guarding the rookery alone  
holding together a going world/ but

frankly, I wanted to get laid she was  
maybe five feet tall (long) the cow:  
I could see she didn't like my clothes/

moving carefully avoiding any fuss  
I unbuttoned, I unzipped squirmed  
out of my shorts, my socks it was, yes

quite frankly love at first sight/  
flicking, with my left hand some sand  
over my back for an instant

I thought of my wallet my driver's  
licence, my credit cards: she had dark  
fur on her belly a delicate nose:

she went towards the water looking  
back over her shoulder/ the water  
looking iceberg cold I wasn't quite ready

she was rushing me: men in their forties  
I shouted after her are awfully good  
in bed (on a sandbank I corrected myself)

alone I lay in the sand, I lay  
watching the slow coming of each wave  
to the merciful shore I humped

down to the water's curl I, yes  
without thinking, *without thinking*, I  
dove my ears shrank

back to my badly designed skull: under  
the water: opening my eyes I saw  
the school of herring SNAP

I had one in my teeth I surfaced  
hungry I let myself float head up  
on the lifting waves I hauled out

I lolled: the cow that nudged me  
awake: she might have been just plain  
curious: my ear-flaps, my exterior testicles/

that crossed my mind or slightly perverse  
but the sun had warmed me again we were both  
well I was still a man, I had to talk:

my nights are all bloody I whispered  
god, I am lonely as a lover/ my  
naked body swims in the leak of light

death has a breath too it smells  
of bedclothes it smells of locked  
windows my nights are all drenched/

my body/I saw she had no idea  
well/that was nicer, even than the  
moist hunger in her eyes

I brushed at my grey beard/  
my flipper trying to make the hairs  
look like vibrissae (I believe is the word)

I wasn't quite ready when the bull hit me  
I whirled caught at his neck  
in my teeth roared at the sonofabitch

slammed my head against his nose:  
he was gone/ the cow had noticed  
everything I could tell/she would

dance now/first dance, slapping  
the rising tide to a quick froth:  
she/I rolling the waves themselves

back to the sea I dared beyond the  
last limit of whatever I thought  
I was where, exactly, I asked, is-

my only question and when she gave  
herself/took me out of the seen land  
this, for the gone world I sang:

America was a good lay she nearly  
fucked me to death, wow but this  
I'm a new man (mammal, I corrected

myself) here and yet I was going  
too far too far past everything  
dispersed past everything here/gone

dear, I whispered (words again,  
words) I wanted to say/I am  
writing this poem with my life

I whispered, I hope (the rising  
tide had lifted my socks had swum  
them to where I might reach)

dear, I whispered I hope my children  
(ours, I corrected myself) their ears perfect  
will look exactly like both of us.

THE LEDGER

the  
ledger  
itself

the ledger survived  
because it was neither  
human nor useful

a. "in bookkeeping, the book of final entry, in which a record of  
debts, credits, and all money transactions is kept."

the  
book  
of  
columns

page 33: James Darling

1880

Mar 22: to sawing square timber	1.44	
June 21: to I round cedar bed	3.50	
June 21: to I jack shingles	.50	
Dec 4: to sawing marble [sic]	1.50	Nov 4/82 by logs 4.10

(it doesn't balance)

some pages torn out (  
by accident)  
some pages remaining (  
by accident)

page 62: Nicholas Neubecker

1893

Nov 16: to chopping 8 bags	.40
Dec 19: to chopping 880 lbs	.49
: to elm scantling	.18

the poet: by accident  
finding in the torn ledger

(IT DOESN'T BALANCE)

the green poem:

my grandfather, Henry (dead)  
in his watermill (gone)  
on the Teeswater River,  
on the road between Formosa  
and Belmore,  
needing a new ledger:

the ledger itself (surviving)  
purchased in the Bruce County  
Drug and Book Store (Price:  
&l.00 PAID, the leather cover  
brown. In gold:  
THE LEDGER:

EVERYTHING I WRITE  
I SAID, IS A SEARCH  
(is debit, is credit)

is search

for some pages

remaining

(by accident)

the poet: finding  
in the torn ledger

the column straight  
the column broken

FINDING

everything you write  
my wife, my daughters, said  
is a search for the dead

*the book of final entry  
in which a record is kept.*

- b. "a horizontal piece of timber secured to the uprights  
supporting the putlogs in a scaffolding, or the like."

*The Canada Gazette*, August 17, 1854:

"Notice is hereby given that the undermentioned lands...in the  
County of Bruce, U.C., will be open for sale to actual settlers...  
The price to be Ten shillings per acre...Actual occupation to be  
immediate and continuous..."

To raise a barn;

cut down a forest.

To raise oats and hay;

burn the soil.

kill the bear  
kill the mink  
kill the marten  
kill the lynx  
kill the fisher  
kill the beaver  
kill the moose

To raise cattle and hogs;

"As to the climate of the district, Father Holzer cannot praise it enough. He declares that during the first nine months of his residence here they had only one funeral, and that was of man 84 years old."

*A Pristine Forest*  
*A Pristine Forest*

"That winter, therefore, timbers of elm and maple and pine were cut the necessary lengths, hewed and dressed and hauled by means of the oxen to the barn site. Cedar logs were sawn in suitable lengths and shingles split from these blocks..."

"TO THE SAUGEEN!"

was the cry that spread.

Shaping the trees  
into logs (burn  
the slash) into  
timbers and planks.

Henry, the elder of the two brothers, was born in 1856, across the river from the mill in a log shanty measuring (as specified in *The Canada Gazette*, August 17, 1854) at least sixteen feet by eighteen.

Shaping the trees  
into ledgers.  
Raising the barn.

That they might sit down  
a forest had fallen.

to a pitcher of Formosa beer

Shaping the trees.  
Into shingles.  
Into scantling.  
Into tables and chairs.

Have a seat, John.  
Sit down, Henry.

That they might sit down  
a forest had fallen.

page 119: John O. Miller, brickmaker in Mildmay

1888

Aug 17: to cedar shingles	12.50	Aug 17: by Brick	2500	
			at 50\$	12.50

(I'll be damned. It balances.)

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yes:no
no:yes
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"...a specimen of the self-made men who have made Canada what it is, and of which no section has brought forth more or better representatives than the County of Bruce. Mr. Miller was never an office-seeker, but devoted himself strictly and energetically to the pursuit of his private business, and on his death was the owner of a very large and valuable property..."

Shaping the trees.  
Pushing up daisies.

Have another glass, John.  
*Ja, ja* What the hell.

What's the matter, John?  
My bones ache.

Take a day off, John.  
Non time.

A horizontal piece of timber supporting the putlogs in a scaffolding, or the like.

(specimens of the self-made  
men who have made Canada  
what it is)

The barn is still standing  
(the mill, however, is gone)  
sound as the day it was raised.

No time.  
August 17, 1888

No time.

Shaping the trees.  
Pushing up daisies.

I'll be damned.  
It balances.



c. "one who is permanently or constantly in a place; a resident.  
*Obs.*"

"Old Gottlieb Haag was a man verging on 80 years of age. As a young man he had emigrated from Germany to America to seek his fortune and better his condition in the New World. Leaving Rotterdam in a sailing ship bound for New York, after a tedious and tempestuous voyage in which his ship was frequently blown half-way back to Europe, he finally landed on the shores of the New World. Here all his fortune lay before him."

(Das ist doch nicht möglich!)

arrivals: the sailing ship  
arrivals: the axe  
arrivals: the almighty dollar

departures: the trout stream  
departures: the passenger-pigeon  
departures: the pristine forest

arrivals: the stump fence  
arrivals: the snake fence  
arrivals: the stone fence

(Here all his fortune lay before him)

"As sample of the condition of many of the early settlers on their arrival, the Clement family (who came from the Niagara frontier, crossing rivers on rafts and swimming their cattle) possessed only two axes, a hoe, ox-yoke, log-chain, a "drag" made from the crotch of a tree, and an "ox-jumper" in the way of agricultural implements; and, as things went in those days, this was considered a first-rate stock. Though very few families in this country ever suffered any inconvenience or annoyances from the aborigines, the Clements were rather roughly used by the wandering band on one occasion, who forcibly took possession of the whole roof of their shanty (which was composed chiefly of birch-bark) for the purpose of canoe-making."

departures: the birch-bark  
canoe  
(ledger: a resident.  
*Obsolete.*)

Census, 1861: County of Bruce:

2,663 horses	turnips: 848,403 bushels
6,274 working oxen	wheat: 642,110 bushels
19,830 cattle of all ages	maple sugar: 170,365 lbs
29,412 sheep and swine	cheese: 24,324 lbs

The enumerator "got his feet frozen  
and another had to finish the work.  
Both made oath to their respective  
sheets and these are numbered and  
designated separately."

Census, 1861: Township of Carrick:

"Indians if any"	Name: Catherine Schneider
	Year of birth: 1841
	Place of birth: Atlantic Ocean

none

Place of birth: Atlantis,  
the kingdom sought  
beyond the stone gates,  
beyond the old home,  
beyond the ceaseless  
wars of the Rhine  
Palatinate. The sought  
continent of fortune  
lying beyond  
your father's recurring  
nightmare of the (forced)  
march to Moscow  
(my bones ache),  
beyond the flight  
from the burning  
fields. Beyond  
the night of terror  
crossing the closed  
border. *Atlantis*:  
the kingdom dreamed

Gottlieb Haag's only son  
grew up to be the first man  
hanged for murder  
in the County of Bruce

(I can't believe my eyes.)

having, on a wintry night, in  
a sleigh box on the road from  
Belmore to Formosa, clubbed  
to death his arrival

(I can't believe my eyes.)

in love.

DEPARTURES:

"It is well watered by the south branch of the Saugeen and a number tributaries, which afford fine mill privileges almost in every section."

DEPARTURES:

Henry, on quiet days at the mill, on wintry days, made furniture for sale to the thriving inhabitants who intended to stay.

page 95: Mr. Peter Brick

1880

1881

Dec.5: to I bed	4.00		
" " 6 chairs	4.50		
" " 2 "	1.00		
" " I sink	4.00		
" " I dressing case	16.00		
" " I sideboard	10.00		
" " I table	4.00	Settelt [sic]	
	43.50	by I horse	43.50

Mr. Peter Brick, on the road from Belmore to Formosa, intending to stay ("Beer also was plentiful and cheap.")

bought new furniture for his new brick house and turned

the old log shanty into a summer kitchen where on hot afternoons he might wait out the heat.

ledger: a resident.  
Pushing up daisies.  
*Obsolete.*

d. "the nether millstone."

They were drainig the pond to do  
some work on the dam. Seeing a few  
fish at the floodgate, Henry sent one of  
his sons for a bucket. The boy, step-  
ping into the water, catching fish with  
his bare hands, filled the bucket.  
Henry could hardly believe his eyes.  
But he sent the boy for a sack. And  
couldn't believe. But sent the boy for a  
tub, for a barrel.

Joe Hauck got his arm caught in the water-wheel.  
He screamed. But no one heard him.

He couldn't get free. The wheel was trying to  
lift him up to heaven. He couldn't get free.

Joe Hauck had a good head on his shoulders, a  
cap on his head. He threw his cap into the racing

water. The men unloading logs below the mill  
noticed the cap; they ran on up to the millsite.

The doctor had good horses; he got there that same  
day. Three men held Joe Hauck flat on a table,

right next to a saw, while the doctor patched  
and sewed, ran out of thread, broke a needle.

to  
chopping  
8  
bags

.40

you must see  
the confusion again  
the chaos again  
the original forest

under the turning wheel  
the ripened wheat, the  
razed forest, the wrung  
man: the nether stone

page 117: Paul Willie

1893

by 1/2 Day Work	.38
" work with team	2.00
" 100 lbs of flour	1.85
" 25 bushels lime	3.12
" plowing potato patch	1.50
" working at dam	2.00
Team to Mildmay	.50
by 5 cord of wood	8.00
" beef 87 lbs at 5\$	4.35
" hay 1,000 lbs	4.00
" 2 hemlock logs	.75
" 1 20-ft cedar log	.50
" 3 16-ft cedar	.75

it doesn't balance

1854 to 1910:

to sawing	Butternut
" "	Pine
" "	Basswood
" "	Birch
" "	Soft Elm
" "	Rock Elm
" "	Cedar
" "	Tamarack
" "	Maple
" "	Beech
" "	Black Ash
" "	Hemlock
" "	Cherry

it doesn't balance

The bottom of the pond was not so much mud as fish. The receding water was a wide fountain of leaping fish; Henry sent a daughter to go fetch Charlie Reinhart, Ignatz Kiefer, James Darling, Peter Brick. The neighbours began to arrive (and strangers, bearing empty sacks) from up the road to Formosa, from down the road to Belmore; the neighbours came with tubs and barrels, with a wagon box, and they clubbed at the eels that skated on the bright mud. They lunged at the leaping trout. They pounced like bullfrogs after bullfrogs. And they swam in the quick, receding flood.

the grinding stone  
that does not  
turn:

under the turning  
stone: the nether  
stone: the ledger

intending to stay

The children screamed after  
their leaping, swimming par-  
ents. They didn't believe their  
eyes. They bathed in the  
clean, the original mud. They  
flung the fish onto dry land  
and themselves stayed in the  
water: they usurped the fish.  
The floodgate was open, the  
dam no longer dam. They  
rose, blue-eyed and shouting,  
out of the tripping, slippery  
mud: while the fish, their  
quick gills strange to the sud-  
den air, drowned for lack of  
water.

The children, sitting hunched on the dam,  
hearing Joe Hauck scream, were silent.

In all their lives they had never heard Joe Hauck  
scream (his arm mangled: by the turning wheel).

People said Joe Hauck was never the same  
after the water-wheel tried lifting him

up to heaven. No matter what he did, people shook  
their heads. "He's not the same," they said.

When his brothers went west to homestead, Joe  
elected to stay at the mill. He wasn't the same.

e. "a large stone, esp. one laid over a tomb."

Dear Bob,

... In regards to information about my Grandmother- your great Grandmother- Theresia Tschirhart. She was a sedate tall heavy-set person, well read and could visit with the best. She did love reading and mixing with people. She was widowed three times before going west... She passed away after trying to sit on a chair and missing it, broke her hip and was in bed for a few weeks, died and was buried in Spring Lake, Alberta. She was still very active before her fall...

all my love  
Aunt Marie O'C

born in Alsace, she spoke  
German with a French accent,  
English with a German accent,

looked down on all Bavarians  
for being the tree-chopping  
beer drinkers they all were:

Married three Bavarians.  
Buried three Bavarians.

it balances

What did most men feel  
in her presence?

Terror.

What did they do about it?

Proposed.

(I can't  
believe my eyes)

An A-1 cook.  
Kept a spotless house.  
She wasn't just careful,  
she was tight.  
Went to church more often  
than was necessary.

Men felt terror.  
They proposed.

Census, 1861  
County of Bruce:  
Deaths in 1860  
(Age and Cause):

I yr: croup  
blank: born dead  
5 months: fits  
blank: dysentery  
16 yrs: hurt  
by sawmill wheel  
38: I Deth  
Inflammation

Henry's father: dead  
(The doctor had good  
horses)

page 88: John Mosack

in a/c Theresia Kroetsch Messner Hauck

Jan 19: to white ash	12.05	PAID IN FULL
Aug 24: to black ash	2.84	PAID IN FULL
Nov 10: to pine 216 ft	2.16	PAID IN FULL

Owing that woman money  
was a mistake.

What do I owe you?  
Seventeen dollars and five cents.  
What'll you settle for?      You MUST  
Seventeen dollars and five cents.      marry the terror.

Finally succumbed to the grave herself.  
Spring Lake, Alberta. 1913. *Ruhe in  
Frieden.*

The Canadian climate:  
a short summer  
followed by a short winter  
followed by a short summer  
followed by a short winter

She was a ring-tailed snorter  
just the same.      (you must marry  
the terror)



1913  
1829

---

84

Cause of death:

went to sit down  
and missed the chair

She lies buried to the east  
of the church in Spring Lake,  
Alberta. She was visiting in  
Heisler, Alberta, at the time  
of her death: Heisler was so  
new it didn't have a graveyard:

*Verdammt!*

DEATH PROHIBITED  
ON THESE PREMISES

What do I owe you?

O bury me not  
on the lone prairie.

WHAT DO I OWE YOU?  
WHAT DO I OWE YOU?

Where the coyotes howl  
and the wind blows free.

Even by-God dead  
washed  
dressed  
laid out  
she indicated  
(she was a ring-tailed  
snorter just the same)

her desire to be interred  
in the plot of Ontario earth  
next to the ledger that  
covered her first husband:

*zum andenken von*

*LORENZ KROETSCH*

*gestorben den  
13th Feb 1860  
alt 38 Jahre*

*Ruhe nun im sanften schlummer  
In der erde kühlen schoos  
Hier entwichen allem kummer  
Ist der friede nun dein loos  
Noch unringen wir dein grab  
Schauen wehmuts voll hinab*

inflammation  
of  
the  
lungs:  
coughed  
gagged

Doch zur ruhe gehn auch wir                      choked  
Gott sie dank wir folgen dir.                      died.

*Requiescat in Pace*

No one would pay the shot.  
The CPR wouldn't do it                      An Alberta grave  
for love.                                              is a cold, cold grave.

f. "a book that lies permanently in some place."

A man that lies permanently in some place.  
A woman that lies permanently in some place.  
A residence. *Obsolete.*  
The book of final entry.

The book  
of columns.  
The book that lies  
permanently.

The timber supporting the putlogs  
in a scaffolding:

e.g, the poem                      in the chaos  
  
                                            in the dark night  
                                            in the beautiful forest

"With no effort or pretension to literary merit, the object will be rather to present a plain statement of facts of general interest which bear upon the past growth and development of this wonderfully prosperous section of the Province, in such manner as to render future comparisons more easy, and offer to the rising generation an incentive to emulation in the examples of the pioneers, whose self-reliant industry and progressive enterprise have conquered the primeval forests, and left in their stead, as a heritage to posterity, a country teeming with substantial comforts and material wealth, and reflecting in its every feature the indomitable spirit and true manliness of a noble race, whose lives and deeds will shine while the communities they have founded shall continue to exist."

Gottlieb Haag's only son                      (with no effort  
(for the first murder                                              or pretension  
in the County of Bruce)                                              to literary merit)  
Hanged.

"Caoutchouc usually mowed down three or four  
 spellers. When it didn't, such words as gubernatorial  
 or phthisicky or threnody would do the trick."

Henry. How do you spell maple? m-a-b-l-e

Henry. How do you spell balance? b-a-l-l-o-n-s

Henry. How do you spell Henry? H-e-n-e-r-y

Threnody:  
 a song  
 of lamentation.

the ledger itself  
 survives

page 69: Edward McGue                   intending to stay

1886

to hemlock rafters                   5.01  
 to cedar shakes                   18.75   the roof over his head

1887

to hemlock fencing                   5.10  
 to I plow                   9.15   the sod beneath his boots

the ledger stone  
 the nether stone

either would do  
 the lasting trick

the stone singing  
 song on the stone

Robert Nickel                   the ledger itself  
 John Molloy  
 Jacob Sagmiller                   surviving

PAID IN FULL  
 Luke Steigler                   beyond the last felling  
 Pat Mahoney                   beyond the last tree felled  
 George Straus                   the last turn of the wheel  
 PAID IN FULL                   the last coin worn and gone  
 Fleming Ballogh                   from the last pocket  
 Michel Kirby                   worn  
 Robert Curl



PAID IN FULL

John Elder

Michael Laporte

Richard McDaniel

PAID IN FULL

Christian Kirschmer

Henry Busby

William Trench

PAID IN FULL

Joseph Hall

Peter Shoemaker

David Rush

PAID IN FULL

and gone

beyond the last turned page

beyond the last

entry

"They had to cut down three trees in order  
to bury the first man dead in Formosa."

Some people go to heaven.

Some people write poems.

Some people go west

to homestead.

Cut to the rock

the rock rose up.

Tombstones are hard

to kill.

REST IN PEACE

You Must Marry the Terror

SEED CATALOGUE

1.

No. 176- Copenhagen Market Cabbage: "This new introduction, strictly speaking, is in every respect a thoroughbred, a cabbage of highest pedigree, and is creating considerable flurry among professional gardeners all over the world."

We took the storm windows/off  
the south side of the house  
and put them on the hotbed.  
Then it was spring. Or, no:  
then winter was ending.

"I wish to say we had lovely success  
this summer with the seed purchased  
of you. We had the finest Sweet  
Corn in the country, and Cabbage  
were dandy."

-W.W Lyon, South Junction, Man.

My mother said:  
Did you wash your ears?  
You could grow cabbages  
in those ears.

Winter was ending.  
This is what happened:  
we were harrowing the garden.  
You've got to understand this:  
I was sitting on the horse.  
The horse was standing still.  
I fell off.

The hired man laughed: how  
in hell did you manage to  
fall off a horse that was  
*standing still?*

Bring me the radish seeds,  
my mother whispered

Into the dark of January  
the seed catalogue bloomed

a winter proposition, if  
spring should come, then,

with illustrations:

No. 25- McKenzie's improved Golden Wax Bean: "THE MOST PRIZED OF ALL BEANS. Virtue is its own reward. We had had many expressions from keen discriminating gardeners extolling our seed and this variety."

Beans, beans,  
the musical fruit;  
the more you eat,  
the more you virtue.

My mother was marking the first row  
with a piece of binder twine, stretched  
between two pegs.

The hired man laughed: just  
about planted the little bugger.  
Cover him up and see what grows.

My father didn't laugh. He was puzzled  
by any garden that was smaller than a  
1/4-section of wheat and summerfallow.

the home place: N.E. 17-42-16-W4th Meridian.

the home place: 1 1/2 miles west of Heisler, Alberta,  
on the correction line road  
and 3 miles south.

No trees  
around the house.  
Only the wind.  
Only the January snow.  
Only the summer sun.  
The home place:  
a terrible symmetry.

*How do you grow a gardener?*

Telephone Peas  
Garden Gem Carrots  
Early Snowcap Cauliflower  
Perfection Globe Onions  
Hubbard Squash  
Early Ohio Potatoes

This is what happened- at my mother's wake. This is a fact- the World Series was in progress. The Cincinnati Reds were playing the Detroit Tigers. It was raining. The road to the graveyard was barely passable. The horse was standing still. Bring me the radish seeds, my mother whispered.

2.

My father was mad at the badger: the badger was digging holes in the potato patch, threatening man and beast with broken limbs (I quote). My father took the double-barrelled shotgun out into the potato patch and waited.

Every time the badger stood up, it looked like a little man, come out of the ground. Why, my father asked himself- Why would so fine a fellow live under the ground? just for the cool of roots? The solace of dark tunnels? The blood of gophers?

My father couldn't shoot the badger. He uncocked the shotgun, came back to the house in time for breakfast. The badger dug another hole. My father got mad again. They carried on like that all summer.

*Love is an amplification  
by doing/ over and over.*

*Love is a standing up  
to the loaded gun.*

*Love is a burrowing.*

One morning my father actually shot at the badger. He killed a magpie that was pecking away at a horse turd about fifty feet beyond and to the right of the spot where the badger had been standing.

A week later my father told the story again. In that version he intended to hit the magpie. Magpies, he explained, are a nuisance. They eat robins' eggs. They are harder to kill than snakes, jumping around the way they do, nothing but feathers.

Just call me sure-shot,  
my father added.

3.

No. 1248- Hubbard Squash: "As mankind seems to have a particular fondness for squash, Nature appears to have especially provided this matchless variety of superlative flavour"

*Love is a leaping up  
and down.*

*Love  
is a break in the warm flesh.*

"As a cooker, it heads to the list for wanted squash. The vines are of strong running growth; the fruits are large, olive shaped, of a deep rich green color, the rind is smooth..."

*But how do you grow a lover?*

This is the God's own truth:  
playing dirty is a mortal sin  
the priest told us, you'll go to hell  
and burn forever (with illustrations)-

it was our second day of catechism  
-Germaine and I went home that  
afternoon if it's that bad, we  
said to each other we realized  
we better quit we realized

let's do it just one last time  
and quit.

This is the God's own truth:  
catechism, they called it,  
the boys had to sit in the pews  
on the right, the girls on the left.  
Souls were like underwear that you  
wore inside. If boys and girls sat  
together-

*Adam and Eve got caught  
playing dirty.*

This is the truth.  
We climbed up into the granary  
full of wheat to the gunny sacks  
the binder twine was shipped in-



we spread the paper from the sacks  
smooth sheets        on the soft wheat  
Germaine and I        we were like/ one

we had discovered, don't ask me  
how, where- but when the priest said  
*playing dirty* we knew- well-

he had named it    he had named  
our world        out of existence  
(the horse        was standing still)

- This is my first confession. Bless me father I played  
dirty so long, just the other day, up in the granary  
there by the car shed- up there on the Brantford Binder  
Twine gunny sacks and the sheets of paper- Germaine  
with her dress up and her bloomers down-

- Son. For penance, keep your peter in your pants  
for the next thirteen years.

*But how-*

Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me  
went down to the river to swim-  
Adam and Eve got drowned.

*But how do you grow a lover?*

We decided we could do it  
just one last time.

4.

It arrived in winter, the seed catalogue, on a January  
day. It came into town on the afternoon train.

Mary Hauck, when she came west from Bruce County,  
Ontario, arrived in town on a January day. She brought  
along her hope chest.

She was cooking in the Heisler Hotel. The Heisler Hotel  
burned down on the night of June 21, 1919. Everything  
in between: lost. Everything: an absence

of satin sheets  
of embroidered pillow cases

of tea towels, and English china  
of silver serving spoons.

*How do you grow a prairie town?*

The gopher was the model.  
Stand up straight:  
telephone poles  
grain elevators  
church steeples.  
Vanish, suddenly: the  
gopher was the model.

*How do you grow a past/  
to live in*

the absence of silkworms  
the absence of clay and wattles (whatever the hell  
they are)  
the absence of Lord Nelson  
the absence of kings and queens  
the absence of a bottle opener, and me with a vicious  
attack of the 26-ounce flu  
the absence of both Sartre and Heidegger  
the absence of pyramids  
the absence of lions  
the absence of lutes, violas and xylophones  
the absence of a condom dispenser in the Lethbridge Hotel,  
and me about to screw an old Blood whore.  
I was in love.  
the absence of the Parthenon, not to mention the Cathédrale  
de Chartres  
the absence of psychiatrists  
the absence of sailing ships  
the absence of books, journals, daily newspapers and every-  
thing else but the *Free Press Prairie Farmer*  
and *The Western Producer*  
the absence of gallows (with apologies to louis Riel)  
the absence of goldsmiths  
the absence of the girl who said that if the Edmonton  
Eskimos won the Grey Cup she'd let me kiss her  
nipples in the foyer of the Palliser Hotel. I don't  
know where she got to.  
the absence of Heraclitus  
the absence of the Seine, the Rhine, the Danube, the Tiber  
and the Thames. Shit, the Battle River ran dry  
one fall. The Strauss boy could piss across it. He  
could piss higher on a barn wall than any of us.

He could piss right clean over the principal's  
new car.  
the absence of ballet and opera  
the absence of Aeneas

*How do you grow a prairie town?*

Rebuild the hotel when it burns down. Bigger. Fill it  
full of a lot of A-1 Hard Northern bullshitters.

- You ever hear the one about the woman who buried  
her husband with his ass sticking out of the ground  
so that every time she happened to walk by she could  
give it a swift kick?

- Yeh, I heard it.

5.

I planted some melons, just to see what would  
happen. Gophers ate everything.

I applied to the Government.  
I wanted to become a postman,  
to deliver real words  
to real people.

There was no one to receive  
my application.

I don't give a damn if I do die do die do die do die do die  
do die do die do die do die do die do die do die do die do  
die do die do die do die do die do die do die do die do die  
do.

6.

No. 339- Mckenzie's Pedigreed Early Snowcap Cauliflower: "Of the many  
varieties of vegetables in existence, Cauliflower is unquestionably one  
of the greatest inheritances of the present generation, particularly  
Western Canadians. There is no place in the world where better  
cauliflowers can be grown than right here in the West. The finest  
specimens we have ever seen, larger and of better quality, are annually  
grown here on our prairies. Being particularly a high altitude plant it  
thrives to a point of perfection here, seldom seen in warmer climes."

*But how do you grow a poet?*

Start: with an invocation  
invoke-

His muse is  
his muse/ is  
memory is

and you have  
no memory then  
no meditation  
no song (shit  
we're up against it)

how about that girl  
you felt up in the  
school barn or that  
girl you necked with  
out by Hastings' slough  
and ran out of gas with  
and nearly froze to  
death with/ or that  
girl in the skating  
rink shack who had on  
so much underwear you  
didn't have enough  
prick to get past her/  
CCM skates

Once upon a time in the village of Heisler-

- Hey, wait a minute.  
That's a story.

*How do you grow a poet?*

For appetite: cod-liver  
oil.  
For bronchitis: mustard  
plasters.  
For pallor and failure to fill  
the woodbox: sulphur  
& molasses.  
For self-abuse: ten Our  
Fathers & ten Hail Marys.  
For regular bowels: Sunny Boy  
Cereal.

*How do you grow a poet?*

"It's a pleasure to advise that I  
won the First Prize at the Calgary  
Horticultural Show... This is my  
first attempt. I used your seeds."

Son, this is a crowbar.  
This is a willow fencepost.  
This is a sledge.  
This is a roll of barbed wire.  
This is a bag of staples.  
This is a claw hammer.

We give form to this land by running  
a series of posts and three strands  
of barbed wire around a 1/4- section.

First off I want you to take that  
crowbar and drive 1,156 holes  
in that gumbo.  
And the next time you want to  
write a poem  
we'll start the haying.

*how do you grow a poet?*

This is a prairie road.  
This road is the shortest distance  
between nowhere and nowhere.  
This road is a poem.

Just two miles up the road  
you'll find a porcupine  
dead in the ditch. It was  
trying to cross the road.

As for the poet himself  
we can find no record  
of his having traversed  
the land/ in either direction

no trace of his coming  
or going/ only a scarred  
page, a spoor of wording  
a reduction to mere black

and white/ a pile of rabbit  
turds that tells us

all spring long  
where the track was

poet... say uncle.

*How?*

Rudy Wiebe: "You must lay great black steel lines of fiction, break up that space with huge design and, like the fiction of the Russian steppes, build a giant artifact. No song can do that..."

February 14, 1976. Rudy, you  
took us there: to the Oldman River  
Lorna & Byrna, Ralph & Steve and me  
you showed us were  
the Bloods surprised the Crees  
in the next coulee/ surprised  
them to death. And after  
you showed us Rilke's word

*Lebensgliebes.*

Rudy: Nature thou art.

7.

**Brome Grass** (*Bromus Inermis*): "No amount of cold will kill it. It **withstands** the summer suns. Water may stand on it for several weeks without apparent injury. The roots push through the soil, throwing up new plants continually. It **starts quicker** than other grasses in the spring. **Remains green** longer in the fall. **Flourishes under absolute neglect.**

The end of winter:  
seeding/ time.

*How do you grow  
a poet?*

(a)

I was drinking with Al Purdy. We went round and round in the restaurant on top of the Chateau Lacombe. We were the turning center in the still world, the winter of Edmonton was hardly enough to cool our out-sights.

The waitress asked us to leave. She was rather insistent;  
we were bad for business, shouting poems at the paying  
customers. Twice, Purdy galloped a Cariboo horse  
right straight through the dining area.

Now that's what I call  
a piss-up.

"No song can do that."

(b)

No. 2362- **Imperialis Morning  
Glory:** "This is the wonderful  
**Japanese Morning Glory**, cele-  
brated the world over for its  
**wondrous beauty** of both flowers  
and foliage."

Sunday, January 12, 1975. This evening after  
rereading *The Double Hook*: looking at Japanese prints.  
Not at actors. Not at courtesans. Rather: Hiroshige's  
series, *Fifty-Three Stations on the Tokaido*.

From the *Tokaido* series: "Shono-Haku-u." The  
bare-assed travellers, caught in a sudden shower.  
Men and trees, bending. How it is in a rain shower/  
that you didn't see coming. And couldn't have avoided/  
even if you had.

The double hook:  
the home place.

The stations of the way:  
the other garden

*Flourishes.*  
*Under absolute neglect.*

(c)

Jim Bacque said (I was waiting for the plane,  
after a reading; Terminal 2, Toronto)- he said,  
You've got to deliver the pain to some woman,  
don't you?

- Hey, Lady.  
You at the end of the bar.  
I wanna tell you something.
- Yuh?
- Pete Knight- of Crossfield,  
Alberta. Bronc-Busting Champion  
of the World. You ever hear of  
Pete Knight, the King of All  
Cowboys, Bronc-Busting Champion  
of the World?
- Huh-uh.
- You know what I mean? King  
of All Cowboys... Got  
killed- by a horse.  
He fell off.
- You some kind of a nut  
or something?

8.

We silence words  
by writing them down.

THIS IS THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT  
OF ME. HENRY. KROETSCH:

(a) [yes, his first bequest]

*To my son Frederick my carpenter tools.*

It was his first bequest. First,  
a man must build.

Those horse-barns around Heisler-  
those perfectly designed barns  
with the rounded roofs- only Freddie  
knew how to build them. He mapped  
the parklands with perfect horse-barns.



I remember my Uncle Freddie.  
(The farmers no longer  
use horses.)

Back in the 30s, I remember  
he didn't have enough money  
to buy a pound of coffee.

Every morning at breakfast  
he drank a cup of hot water  
with cream and sugar in it.

Why, I asked him one morning-  
I wasn't all that old- why  
do you do that? I asked him.

Jesus Christ, he said. He was  
a gentle man, really. Don't you  
understand *anything*?

9.

*The danger of merely living.*

a shell/ exploding  
in the black sky: a  
strange planting

a bomb/ exploding  
in the earth: a  
strange

man/ falling  
on the city.  
Killed him dead.

It was a strange  
planting.

the absence of my cousin who was shot down while bombing  
the city that was his maternal great-grandmother's  
birthplace. He was the navigator. He guided himself  
to that fatal occasion:

- a city he had  
forgotten

- a woman he had  
forgotten

He intended merely to release a cargo of bombs on a  
target and depart. The exploding shell was:

- a) an intrusion on a design that was not his, or
- b) an occurrence which he had in fact, unintentionally,  
himself designed, or
- c) it is essential that we understand this matter  
because:

He was the first descendant of that family to return  
to the Old Country. He took with him: a cargo of bombs.

Anna Weller: *Geboren* Cologne, 1849.  
Kenneth MacDonald: *Died* Cologne, 1943.

A terrible symmetry.

A strange muse: forgetfulness. Feeding her far children  
to ancestral guns, blasting them out of the sky, smack/  
into the earth. Oh, she was the mothering sort. Blood/  
on her green thumb.

10.

After the bomb/ blossoms	<i>Poet, teach us</i>
After the city/ falls	<i>to love our dying.</i>
After the rider/ falls	
(the horse	<i>West is a winter place.</i>
standing still)	<i>The palimpsest of prairie</i>
	<i>under the quick erasure</i>
	<i>of snow, invites a flight.</i>

*How/ do you grow a garden?*

(a)

No. 3060- **Spencer Sweet Pea:**  
Pkt. 10c; oz. 25c;  
1/4 lb. 75c; 1/2 lb. \$1.25.

Your sweet peas  
climbing the staked  
chicken wire,  
climbing the stretched  
binder twine by  
the front porch

taught me the smell  
of morning, the grace  
of your tired  
hands, the strength  
of a noon sun, the  
color of prairie grass

taught me the smell  
of my sweating armpits.

(b)

*How do you a garden grow?  
How do you grow a garden?*

"Dear Sir,

The longest brome grass I remember seeing was  
one night in Brooks. We were on our way up to the Calgary  
Stampede, and reached Brooks about 11 pm, perhaps earlier  
because there was still a movie on the drive-in screen.  
We unloaded Cindy, and I remember tying her up to the truck  
box and the brome grass was up to her hips. We laid down  
in the back of the truck- on some grass I pulled by hand-  
and slept for about three hours, then drove into Calgary.

Amie."

(c)

No trees  
around the house,  
only the wind.  
Only the January snow.  
Only the summer sun.

*Adam and Eve got drowned-  
Who was left?*

## ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN

## COMFORT OF THE FIELDS

What would'st thou have for easement after grief,  
 When the rude world hath used thee with despite,  
 And care sits at thine elbow day and night,  
 Filching thy pleasures like a subtle thief?  
 To me, when life besets me in such wise,  
 'Tis sweetest to break forth, to drop the chain,  
 And grasp the freedom of this pleasant earth,  
 To roam in idleness and sober mirth,  
 Through summer airs and summer lands, and drain  
 The comfort of wide fields unto tired eyes.

By hills and waters, farms and solitudes,  
 To wander by the day with wilful feet;  
 Through fielded valleys wide with yellowing wheat;  
 Along gray roads that run between deep woods,  
 Murmurous and cool; through hallowed slopes of pine,  
 Where the long daylight dreams, unpierced, unstirred,  
 And only the rich-throated thrush is heard;  
 By lonely forest brooks that froth and shine  
 In bouldered crannies buried in the hills;  
 By broken beeches tangled with wild vine,  
 And long-strewn rivers murmurous with mills.

In upland pastures, sown with gold, and sweet  
 With the keen perfume of their ripening grass,  
 Where wings of birds and filmy shadows pass,  
 Spread thick as stars with shinning marguerite:  
 To haunt old fences overgrown with brier,  
 Muffled in vines, and hawthorns, and wild cherries,  
 Rank poisonous ivies, red-bunched elder-berries,  
 And piéd blossoms to the heart's desire,  
 Gray mullein towering into yellow bloom,  
 Pink-tasselled milkweed, breathing dense perfume,  
 And swarthy vervain, tipped with violet fire.

To hear at eve the bleating of far flocks,  
 The mud-hen's whistle from the marsh at morn;

To skirt with deafened ears and brain o'erborne  
Some foam-filled rapid charging down its rocks

With iron roar of waters; far away  
Across wide-reeded meres, pensive with noon,  
To hear the querulous outcry of the loon;  
To lie among deep rocks, and watch all day  
On liquid heights the snowy clouds melt by;  
Or hear from wood-capped mountain-brows the jay  
Pierce the bright morning with his jibing cry.

To feast on summer sounds; the jolted wains,  
The thresher humming from the farm near by,  
The prattling cricket's intermittent cry,  
The locust's rattle from the sultry lanes;  
Or in the shadow of some oaken spray,  
To watch, as through a mist of light and dreams,  
The far-off hayfields, where the dusty teams  
Drive round and round the lessening squares of hay,  
And hear upon the wind, now loud, now low,  
With drowsy cadence half a summer's day,  
The clatter of the reapers come and go.

Far violet hills, horizons filmed with showers,  
The murmur of cool streams, the forest's gloom,  
The voices of the breathing grass, the hum  
Of ancient gardens overbanked with flowers:  
Thus, with a smile as golden as the dawn,  
And cool fair fingers radiantly divine,  
The mighty mother brings us in her hand,  
For all tired eyes and foreheads pinched and wan,  
Her restful cup, her beaker of bright wine;  
Drink, and be filled, and ye shall understand!

## IN NOVEMBER

With loitering step and quiet eye,  
Beneath the low November sky,  
I wandered in the woods, and found  
A clearing, where the broken ground  
Was scattered with black stumps and briers,  
And the old wreck of forest fires.  
It was a bleak and sandy spot,  
And, all about, the vacant plot,  
Was peopled and inhabited  
By scores of mulleins long since dead.

A silent and forsaken brood  
In that mute opening of the wood,  
So shrivelled and so thin they were,  
So gray, so haggard, and austere,  
Not plants at all they seemed to me,

But rather some spare company  
Of hermit folk, who long ago,  
Wandering in bodies to and fro,  
Had chanced upon this lonely way,  
And rested thus, till death one day  
Surprised them at their compline prayer,  
And left them standing lifeless there.

There was no sound about the wood  
Save the wind's secret stir. I stood  
Among the mullein-stalks as still  
As if myself had grown to be  
One of their sombre company,  
A body without wish or will.  
And as I stood, quite suddenly  
Down from a furrow in the sky  
The sun shone out a little space  
Across that silent sober place,  
Over the sand heaps and brown sod,  
The mulleins and dead goldenrod,  
And passed beyond the thickets gray,  
And lit the fallen leaves that lay,  
Level and deep within the wood,  
A rustling yellow multitude.

And all around me the thin light,  
So sere, so melancholy bright,  
Fell like the half-reflected gleam  
Or shadow of some former dream;  
A moment's golden reverie  
Poured out on every plant and tree  
A semblance of weird joy, or less,  
A sort of spectral happiness;  
And I, too, standing idly there,  
With muffled hands in the chill air,  
Felt the warm glow about my feet,  
And shuddering betwixt cold and heat,  
Drew my thoughts closer, like a cloak,  
While something in my blood awoke,  
A nameless and unnatural cheer,  
A pleasure secret and austere.

## ON THE COMPANIONSHIP WITH NATURE

Let us be much with nature; not as they  
That labor without seeing, that employ  
Her unloved forces, blindly without joy;  
Nor those whose hands and crude delights obey

The old brute passion to hunt down and slay;  
But rather as children of one common birth,  
Discerning in each natural fruit of earth  
Kinship and bond with this diviner clay.  
Let us be with her wholly at all hours,  
With the fond lover's zest, who is content  
If his ear hears, and if his eye but sees;  
So shall we grow like her in mold and bent,  
Our bodies stately as her blessed trees,  
Our thoughts as sweet and sumptuous as her flowers.

## STORM

Out of the gray northwest, where many a day gone by  
Ye tugged and howled in your tempestuous grot,  
And evermore the huge frost giants lie,  
Your wizard guards in vigilance unforget,  
Out of the gray northwest, for now the bonds are riven,  
On wide white wings your thongless flight is driven,  
That lulls but resteth not.

And all the grey day long, and all the dense wild night,  
Ye wheel and hurry with the sheeted snow,  
By cedared waste and many a pine-dark height,  
Across white rivers frozen fast below;  
Over the lonely forests, where the flowers yet sleeping  
Turn in their narrow beds with dreams of weeping  
In some remembered woe;

Across the unfenced wide marsh levels, where the dry  
Brown ferns sigh out, and last year's sedges scold  
In some drear language, rustling haggardly  
Their thin dead leaves and dusky hoods of gold;  
Across grey beechwoods where the pallid leaves unfalling  
In the blind gusts like homeless ghosts are calling  
With voices cracked and old;

Across the solitary clearings, where the low  
 Fierce gusts howl through the blinded woods, and round  
 The buried shanties all day long the snow  
 Sifts and piles up in many a spectral mound;  
 Across lone villages in eerie wilderness  
 Whose hidden life no living shape confesses  
 Nor any human sound;

Across the serried masses of dim cities, blown  
 Full of the snow that ever shifts and swells,  
 While far above them all their towers of stone  
 Stand and beat back your fierce and tyrannous spells,  
 And hour by hour send out, like voices torn and broken  
 Of battling giants that have grandly spoken,  
 The veering sound of bells;

So day and night, O Wind, with hiss and moan you fleet,  
 Where once long gone on many a green-leafed day  
 Your gentler brethren wandered with light feet  
 And sang, with voices soft and sweet as they,  
 The same blind thought that you with wilder might are speaking  
 Seeking the same strange thing that you are seeking  
 In this your stormier way.

O Wind, wild-voiced brother, in your northern cave,  
 My spirit also being so beset  
 With pride and pain, I heard you beat and rave,  
 Grinding your chains with furious howl and fret,  
 Knowing full well that all earth's moving things inherit  
 The same chained might and madness of the spirit,  
 That none may quite forget.

You in your cave of snows, we in our narrow girth  
 Of need and sense, for ever chafe and pine;  
 Only in moods of some demonic birth  
 Our souls take fire, our flashing wings untwine;  
 Even like you, mad Wind, above our broken prison,  
 With streaming hair and maddened eyes uprisen,  
 We dream ourselves divine;

Mad moods that come and go in some mysterious way,  
 That flash and back, none knoweth how or why,  
 O Wind, our brother, they are yours to-day,  
 The stormy joy, the sweeping mastery;  
 Deep in our narrow cells, we hear you, we awaken,  
 With hands afret and bosoms strangely shaken,  
 We answer to your cry.



I most that love you, Wind, when you are fierce and free,  
In these dull fetters cannot long remain;  
Lo, I will rise and break my thongs and flee  
Forth to your drift and beating, till my brain  
Even for an hour grow wild in your divine embraces,  
And then creep back into mine earthly traces,  
And bind me with my chain.

Nay, Wind, I hear you, desperate brother, in your might  
Whistle and howl; I shall not tarry long,  
And though the day be blind and fierce, the night  
Be dense and wild, I still am glad and strong  
To meet you face to face; through all your gust and drifting  
With brow held high, my joyous hands uplifting,  
I cry you song for song.

## PATRICK LANE

### BECAUSE I NEVER LEARNED

Because I never learned how  
to be gentle and the country  
I lived in was hard with dead  
animals and men I didn't question  
my father when he told me  
to step on the kitten's head  
after the bus had run over  
its hind quarters.

Now, twenty years later,  
I remember only:  
the silence of the dying  
when the fragile skull collapsed  
under my bare heel,  
the curved tongue in the dust  
that would never cry again  
and the small of my father's back  
as he walked tall away.

### THE CHILDREN OF BOGOTA

The first thing to understand, Manuel says,  
is that they're not children. Don't start feeling  
sorry for them. There are five thousand  
roaming the streets of this city

and just because they look innocent  
doesn't make them human. Any one  
would kill you for the price of a meal.  
Children? See those two in the gutter

behind that stall? I saw them put out  
the eyes of a dog with thorns because  
it barked at them. Tomorrow it could be you.  
No one knows where they come from

but you can be sure they're not going.  
In five years they'll be men and tired of killing  
dogs. And when that happens you'll be the first  
to cheer when the carabineros shoot them down.

## THE KILLING TABLE

*I follow the natural grain, letting the knife  
find its way through the many hidden openings.  
The blade of the knife has no thickness. That  
which has no thickness has plenty of room to  
pass through these spaces.*

-CHUANG-TZU

The mind is pierced, my knife  
slips up inside the throat,  
cuts the carotids, the blood sudden,  
hot as memory and the hanged bird  
beats itself with wings  
and flies to death.  
The red, like a stream of piss,  
steams and bubbles in the blood  
that came before. That's nine, I mutter,  
and throw the carcass in the box  
with his dead brothers.

I have been killing cockerels  
this morning. The living swarm  
around my feet like white reptiles  
pecking at the blots of flown blood  
and trying to fly into the dead box.  
Surrounded by cries,  
I curse and kick them away,  
bear the new dead to the barn.  
There is still the cleaning to come.  
I slam the barn door and lean back  
against their clamour. Into hot  
water the dead ones go. Their feathers  
strip away like leaves in wind.

A MURDER OF CROWS

It is night and somewhere  
a tree has fallen across the lines.  
There was a time when I would have slept  
at the end of the sun and risen with light.  
My body knows what I betray.  
Even the candle fails, its guttering stub  
spitting out the flame. I have struggled  
tonight with the poem as never before  
wanting to tell you what I know -  
what can be said? Words are dark rainbows  
without roots, a murder of crows,  
a memory of music reduced to guile.  
Innocence, old nightmare, drags behind  
me like a shadow and today I killed again.

The body hanging down from its tripod.  
My knife slid up and steaming ribbons of gut  
fell to the ground. I broke the legs,  
and cut the anus out, stripped off the skin  
and chopped the head away; maggots of fat  
clinging to the pale red flesh. The death?

If I could tell you the silence  
when the body refused to fall  
until it seemed the ground reached up  
and pulled it down. Then I could tell you  
everything: what the grass said  
to the crows as they passed over,  
the eyes of moss, the histories of stone.

It is night and somewhere  
a tree has fallen across the lines.  
Everything I love has gone to sleep.  
What can be said?  
The flesh consumes while in the trees  
black birds perch waiting first light.  
It is night and mountains  
and I cannot tell you what the grass said  
to the crows as they passed over  
can only say how I looked  
I lost their bodies in the sun.

## LAST NIGHT IN DARKNESS

Last night in darkness someone killed our cat.  
Dipped her in gas. Set her aflame.  
Her scattered kittens adorned the yard  
in opaque sacks where she aborted them;  
none of them burned in her pain.

As I gathered them in a paper bag  
I had to pull off slugs  
who'd gathered for the feast.  
Their scavenger trails hovered  
on her body like a mist.

Just to forget her  
I leaned heavy in the morning  
thrusting with my shovel  
deep into earth behind the daisies  
reminded only of the other  
graves I'd dug

while my son prepared them  
for peace. Took each one  
out of their paper coffin.  
Drove apple blossoms into their eyes -  
even the mother who was so scarred.

## OLD MOTHER

Old Mother  
on your nest of twigs and bits of bone.  
What are you dreaming?  
Small flowers of blood?  
The wind's voice buried in the dust?  
Beneath you your shadow lies waiting,  
thin-shelled, dark against  
the belly of your kill. Your beak tastes  
grief, tastes exile, tastes  
the altars where silence speaks.  
I hold you to me like a sacrament.  
I drink your endurance.  
I keep the point of your talon  
deep in my heart.

## THE SMALL BOY

Lights swirl round and round like beating hearts  
as on the Midway voices cry out chance, men  
throwing balls at tiny perfect dolls and women  
hanging on the hard brown arms, laughing as they fall.  
The Crown and Anchor wheel clucks madly as it spins.  
A small boy hangs from his sister's hand,  
his eyes following his father as he drifts,  
moody, great boots scuffing dust. His mother  
squats behind a table deep in quilts.  
Her finger points to intricate designs  
made from the clothes of the dead, the shirts  
and dresses worn by children long since gone.

The sister locks a man in her brown eyes.  
She whirls around him, white hands everywhere.  
He grins and shuffles in the dirt. Free, the small  
boy twists and swings away, following his father  
as he shoves through couples to the Sideshow Tent.  
Albino, Dwarf, the Tattooed Man Who Draws,  
the Bearded Woman, all are painted hanging from  
the moon. The boy stops short and stares, eyes filled  
with dream. But his father does not enter there.  
Silver slips to hand. Shadows blend and curve  
and then he's gone. The small boy follows.

There's no one there. A dark flap ripples, torn,  
a door of canvas half-concealed by signs.  
He hears his father's muffled laugh.  
Dim light, the smell of cigars and whisky wash  
his face. He pushes under, hides beneath a bench.  
His father hulks among a crowd of men.  
The boy, bewildered, turns and watches where  
they watch. On a rough stage made with stones,  
draped with rags of many colours tied with string,  
a man is taking off his clothes. He dances  
strangely, smirks and smacks his lips. And then  
the shirt is off and what he thought was man  
is woman, narrow breasts hanging to her waist.  
And yet, he has a beard. His father laughs again.

The small boy huddles there as the far  
madness of the Midway screams. The man with breasts  
holds them in cupped hands and beckons to their mouths.  
They are silent now. He reaches in a cage behind,  
lifts out a white hen. She squawks, her head  
swinging in tight coils like a snake whose

weaving dreams a victim. Her comb is red.  
The man who is a woman is a man holds her aloft.  
Fingers grope in pockets, throw their coins.  
Spinning silver rolls across the stage.  
A small hand reaches out and grabs three dimes.  
*Do it, Geek, do it!* his father yells.  
The small boy watches, eyes like bright blue bells.  
The man smiles now, spittle twisting on his lips,  
and faster than the chicken's head can twist  
he thrusts it in his mouth and bites down, hard.

### THE WOMAN

Her axe falls perfectly and like a blossom  
a head grows in the dust. A hard beak scrapes  
at dirt as a spray of blood lifts like a tongue  
across the block. White wings find clay.  
He flops three times, then stands and runs  
headless in the yard.  
The woman leans against her axe.  
The rooster, without his comb, his glittering eyes,  
moves farther and farther away. The woman  
slams the axe into the splintered block.  
She walks slowly after the dead bird  
but the rooster feels her coming.  
He moves away from the dark boots, wary,  
circling as if he knows she wants to kill again.  
The woman, impatient, looks at the far sun  
yellow inside a moving mist of white.  
He scuttles through the dust. She stops.  
The bird, no longer chased, runs to the block  
and the red neck, stiff and hard, jerks  
down at the earth, hitting the lost mind  
as if somehow he could lift it on again  
and remember his life. The woman grabs  
a chunk of cottonwood and hits him twice.  
He falls, a bag of limp white feathers.

### THE YOUNG MAN

The young man, sullen, finished with his chores,  
drifts beneath the moon to the chicken house.  
Far across the yard his old dog rises,

stretches slowly with a careful pain,  
then falls upon himself. An owl drifts by.  
House lights cast a yellow glow.  
Somewhere behind them the farmer and his wife  
drink dregs of coffee. Her fingers  
find their needles. She begins again the web.  
The farmer, tired, groans.

The young man looks around, eyes hooded,  
lips pale fresh. The pen door opens quietly.  
A pallid light washes the thick-strewn floor.  
The great white rooster rustles on his perch.  
He ignores him.  
Choosing a small white hen, he lifts her down,  
shakes her twice as she voids upon his boots.  
He braces her beneath one arm and opens his pants.  
A rough right hand caresses.  
Holding her wings he lowers her upon himself.  
She screeches as he enters.  
He thrusts and thrusts again,  
feels her grip him in spasmodic jerks.  
He pulls her to him hard.  
Legs tremble and his dark eyes close.

Finished, he pulls her off, drops her to the floor.  
Half-crippled, she twitches to a corner  
and lies still. He closes himself, slides away.  
The rooster, restless, casts his eye  
around the pen. There is nothing there.  
Beyond him, in the yard, a young man moves.



IRVING LAYTON

BUTTERFLY ON ROCK

The large yellow wings, black-fringed,  
were motionless

They say the soul of a dead person  
will settle like that on the still face

But I thought: the rock has borne this;  
this butterfly is the rock's grace,  
its most obstinate and secret desire  
to be a thing alive made manifest

Forgot were the two shattered porcupines  
I had seen die in the bleak forest.  
Pain is unreal; death, an illusion:  
There is no death in all the land,  
I heard my voice cry;  
And brought my hand down on the butterfly  
And felt the rock move beneath my hand.

ELI MANDEL

NARRATIVE POEM

the point is  
the story  
          that  
one no-one  
          told

and yet  
          cattle  
on lean flanked

land leaning  
toward plain

and yet  
          shacks  
coal fire  
despair  
          the  
barbed wire  
wolf willow  
river ice

but never  
a third act  
plotting

end or  
even

beginning

land  
and long  
land  
          and  
land

WABAMUN

I

lake  
    holds  
        sun moon stars

    trees  
        hold

stars moon sun

2

thunder  
    and sky  
towel  
    wet sand  
in yellow light  
    yesterday

3

on water  
many suns  
    here there  
fires then  
silent comedians  
gulls  
perch jumping

4

only  
    waves motion  
    sun dancing

no            sun

only  
    light  
hurting  
in its  
    endless  
dance

5

each day I  
step  
    farther  
into dark water

once I will  
know  
    no longer

whether  
    that one  
floating  
    is myself  
or the light  
    one  
standing  
    on the red  
pier

6

moon train on causeway

coal cars

    a white moon

7

to have come to this  
simplicity

to know

only

the absolute

calm

lake

before

night

8

clover smell

sweet stars in a green sky

white sweet stars

blossom in a green sky

clover stars

in a white sky

white

stars

ANNE MARRIOTT

PRAIRIE GRAVEYARD

Wind mutters thinly on the sagging wire  
binding the graveyard from the gouged dirt road,  
bends thick-bristled Russian thistle,  
sifts listless dust  
into cracks in hard grey ground.  
Empty prairie slides away  
on all sides, rushes towards a wide  
expressionless horizon, joined  
to a vast blank sky.

Lots near the road are the most expensive  
where heavy tombstones lurch a fraction  
tipped by splitting soil.  
Farther, a row of nameless heaps  
names weatherworn from tumbled sticks  
remember now the six thin children  
of a thin, shiftless home.

Hawk, wind-scouring, cuts  
a pointed shadow in the drab scant grass.

Two graves apart by the far fence  
are suicides, one with a grand  
defiant tombstone, bruising at the heart  
'Death is swallowed up in victory'.  
(And may be, God's kindness being more large  
than man's, to this, who after seven years  
of drought, burned down his barn,  
himself hanged in it.)  
The second, nameless, set around  
with even care-sought stones  
(no stones on this section)  
topped with two plants, hard-dried,  
in rust-thick jam-tins in the caked pile.

A gopher jumps from a round cave,  
sprints furtively, spurts under fence, is gone.  
Wind raises dead curls of dust, and whines  
under its harsh breath on the limp dragged wires,  
then leaves the graveyard stiff with silence, lone  
in the centre of the hughe lone land and sky.

JOHN NEWLOVE

THE DOUBLE-HEADED SNAKE

Not to lose the feel of the mountains  
while still retaining the prairies  
is a difficult thing. What's lovely  
is whatever makes the adrenalin run;  
therefore I count terror and fear among  
the greatest beauty. The greatest  
beauty is to be alive, forgetting nothing,  
although remembrance hurts  
like a foolish act, is a foolish act.

Beauty's whatever  
makes the adrenalin run. Fear  
in the mountains at night-time's  
not tenuous, it is not the cold  
that makes me shiver, civilized man,  
white, I remember  
the stories of the Indians,  
Sis-i-utl, the double-headed snake.

Beauty's what makes  
the adrenalin run. Fear at night  
on the level plains, with no horizon  
and the stars too bright, wind bitter  
even in June, in winter  
the snow harsh and blowing,  
is what makes me  
shiver, not the cold air alone.

And one beauty cancels another. The plains  
seem secure and comfortable  
at Crow's Nest Pass; in Saskatchewan  
the mountains are comforting  
to think of; among  
the eastwardly diminishing hills  
both the flatland and the ridge  
seem easy to endure.



As one beauty  
cancels another, remembrance  
is a foolish act, a double-headed snake  
striking in both directions, but I  
remember plains and mountains, places  
I come from, places I adhere and live in.

## DRIVING

You never say anything in your letters. You say,  
I drove all night long through the snow  
in some else's car  
and the heater wouldn't work and I nearly froze.  
But I know that. I live in this country too.  
I know how beautiful it is at night  
with the white snow banked in the moonlight.

Around black trees and tangled bushes,  
how lonely and lovely that driving is,  
how deadly. You become the country.  
You are by yourself in that channel of snow  
and pines and pines,  
whether the pines and snow flow backwards smoothly,  
whether you drive or you stop or you walk or you sit.

This land waits. It watches. How beautiful desolate  
our country is, out of the snug cities,  
and how it fits a human. You say you drove.  
It doesn't matter to me.  
All I can see is the silent cold car gliding,  
walled in, your face smooth, your mind empty,  
cold foot on the pedal, cold hands on the wheel.

## THE ENGINE AND THE SEA

The locomotive in the city's distance, obscure, misplaced, sounds a child's  
horn on the flat land leading to the cliff of dark buildings,  
  
the foghorns on the water's edge cry back.

Between the sounds men sit in their houses watching machines inform  
them in Edison's light. In the marshes, the music of ominous living...

a leggy insect runs on that surface, frogs wait, fish, angling birds.

In the cities men wait to be told. They sit between the locomotive and the fish. The flat sea and the prairie that was a sea contain them. Images float before their eyes,

men and women acting,

entertaining, rigorously dancing with fractured minds contorted to a joyless pleasure, time sold from life.

The locomotive hums, the prairies hum. Frogs touch insects with their long tongues, the cannibal fish and the stabbing birds

wait.

Night actions flash before uncountable animal eyes. Mice run. Light rain falls in the night.

The frogs are stilled. Between the engine and the sea, the lights go out. People sleep with mechanical dreams, the sea hums with rain, the locomotive shines black, fish wait under the surface of a pinked pool.

Frogs shiver in the cold. The land waits, black, dreaming. Men lie dry in their beds.

History, history!

Under the closed lids their eyes flick back and forth as they try to follow the frightening shapes of their desires.

## THE GREEN PLAIN

Small human figures and fanciful monsters abound. Dreams surround us, preserve us. We praise constancy as brave, but variation's lovelier.

Rain surrounds us, arguments and dreams, there are forests between us, there are too many of us for comfort, always were.

Is civilization  
only lack of room, only  
an ant-heap at last?- the strutting cities  
of the East, battered gold,  
the crammed walls of India,  
humanity swarming, indistinguishable  
from the earth?

Even the nomads roaming the green plain, for them  
at last no land was ever enough.

Spreading- but now we can go anywhere  
and we are afraid  
and talk of small farms instead of the stars  
and all the places we go  
space is distorted.

How shall we save the symmetry of the universe?-  
or our own symmetry, which is the same.

Which myths  
should capture us, since we do not wish  
to be opened, to be complete?-  
or are they the same, all of them?  
Now a dream involves me, of a giant sprawled among stars,  
face to the dark, his eyes closed.  
Common.

Only he is not breathing, he does not heave.  
Is it Gulliver?- huge, image of us, tied, webbed in,  
and never learning anything,

always ignorant,  
always amazed, always capable of delight,  
and giving it, though ending in hatred, but  
an image only. Of disaster. But there is no disaster.  
It is just that we lose joy and die.

But is there a symmetry?  
Is there reason  
in the galaxies- Or is this all glass,  
a block bubbled in a fire, accident only,

prettiness fused without care, pettiness,  
though some logic, alien but understandable,  
in the ruined crystal?

The forests, the forests, swaying,  
there is no reason why they should be beautiful.  
they live for their own reasons, not ours.  
But they are.

It is not time that flows but the world.

And the world flows,  
still flows. Even in these worn-out days,  
worn-out terms,  
once in a while our poets  
must  
speak

of Spring! Of all things! The flowers  
blow in their faces too, and they smell perfumes,  
and they are seduced  
by colour- rural as the hairy crocus or urban as a waxy  
tulip.

But confusion. The world  
flows past. It is hard to remember age. Does  
this always world flow? Does it? Please say it does,  
not time.

Do not say time flows.  
Say: We do. Say: We live.

Fly-speck, fly-speck. In this ever island Earth  
we are the tiny giants, swaggering  
behind the dinosaurs, lovely,  
tame brontosaurus, sweet cows lumbering  
among the coal trees, fronds offering  
shade and future fuel.

And the land around us green and happy,  
waiting as you wait for a killer to spring,

a full-sized blur,  
waiting like a tree in southern Saskatchewan,  
remarked on, lonely and famous as a saint.

The mechanisms by which the stars generate invention  
live all over and around us  
and yet we refine machines, defer  
to tricks as discovery. Everything is always here,  
and burning.

There are no surprises, there is only  
what is left. We live  
inside the stars,

burning, burning,

the mechanisms.  
Stars, rain, forests.  
Stars rain forests.  
Sew up the lives together. There is  
this only world. Thank God: this World  
and its wrapped variations  
spreading around and happy, flowing,  
flowing through the climate of intelligence,  
beautiful confusion looking around,  
seeing the mechanics and the clouds  
and marvelling, O Memory...

## THE PRAIRIE

One compiles, piles, plies  
these masses of words, verbs,  
massifs, mastiffs barking meaning,  
dried chips  
of buffalo dung, excreta from beasts

the prairie fed, foddered,  
food for generations: men roaming  
as beasts seen through dips  
in history, fostered by legend,  
invented remembrance. Scenes shake,

the words do not suffice. One bred  
on the same earth wishes himself  
something different, the other's

twin, impossible thing, twinning  
both memories, a double meaning,

but cannot be- never  
to be at ease, but always migrating  
from city to city  
seeking some almost seen  
god or food or earth or word.

## THE PRIDE

I

The image/ the pawnees  
in their earth-lodge villages,  
the clear image  
of teton sioux, wild  
fickle people the chronicler says,

the crazy dogs, men  
tethered with leather dog-thongs  
to a stake, fighting until dead,

image: arikaras  
with traded spanish sabre blades  
mounted on the long  
heavy buffalo lances,  
riding the sioux  
down, the centaurs, the horsemen  
scouring the level plains  
in war or hunt  
until smallpox got them,  
4,000 warriors,

image- of a desolate country,  
a long way between fires,  
unfound lakes, mirages, cold rocks,  
and lone men going through it,  
cree with good guns  
creating terror in athabaska  
among the inhabitants, frightened  
stone-age people, "so that  
they fled at the mere sight  
of a strange smoke miles away."