Paper Mill Press

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Remains
Erika Stonehouse
oil on canvas
False Hope For Sleeping
Rachel Fraser

The thing with feathers
crouched within my breast
finds solace in my company,
or so it says.
A blood eagle hatch upon my back
opens as its access exit.
It slithers forth to swathe about
my shell-turned ear
and dangle from my outer lobe –
its fetid breath across my neck,
it whispers silvered sorrows.
How sweet it is to me.

Miasma seeps from plumes unshed,
nearly brackish in the predawn glow.
Tendrils wisp about my fingers,
a downy texture slides within my nose –
it smacks of hell and soured fruit
still fresh from night’s false shore
from whence the beast first came to me
rap-tap-tapping on my soul.

The beating and repeating
palpitations of my heart
beneath its claw would bust,
save for the placid
shadow that my organ casts so neatly
and discretely across its gaping maw.
Unabashed, my little monster.
To look upon it screeching
one might consider that the storm
within its dreaming demon gullet
must tire and sore.
Yet, how kind it is –
it doesn’t ask a whit from me,
a lullaby to keep me warm
upon the strangest sea,
within the likes of which
I’d still be sinking,
ever thinking,
laid upon a salt-bed floor.
The Greats
Rachel Fraser

Paper tongues, creased and unfolding,
inked with breath and stamped in bone,
every tuck and tumble
a cacophony of misgivings –
a sickness of the heart, passed so deftly
between the pages of my skull.
To My Father
Rachel Fraser

The memories I keep of
camphor scented cream daubed
on morning hollowed cheeks
are still as fresh and burning
as the reek from when I first tried
to slather some along my upper lip,
but felt it burn up through my nose
and, turning to you,
asked you why you bothered.

The bitter, cloudy water
that slipped into my mouth,
as you rinsed that soapy bile
with hurried fingertips,
holds the same impression
in my present mind as does
the memory itself –
and I ponder whether you,
Daddy,
remember laughing as you towelled dry
a red moustache that bloomed
across my youth and wonder,
but promised me would fade.
tongue-lashing
Robin Durnford

for Gloria Audrey

as now her fingers touch to ancient dust,
bloom of hair & lips only just gone gray
this past December, had hopes

of more chats & tuts & arghs,
more hairs upon her chin to watch her pluck,
Leafs games to play & politics to see her way,

but when the wind frowns even
on this second day, the cost is dear.
her love for us like fingers on her hands

clasped near, painted in angel’s rust
each of her days she blew us glossy
like those speckled topcoats, so golden

scarves did grip her neck & held her
sway, still want to let her pull me
to her shine again & grin, wet my cheek

with terrible kisses, say, or clap for me.
god, that blessed girdle she held on-to for display, in eternity her breast in that braziere.

until her greatest care became her laboured breath, she once convinced the world how things “should ought to be”

& I rowed with her until my face burned, never thinking how my days would soon out-strip her tongue.

how cruel those final grimaces to make her mute. until her fists are drawn back to their naked root, her bangle clasping tight to her woman’s wrist, she’ll fight for memory’s grip, with teeth she’s buried in, tongue firmly planted in its clay,

then we’ll hear her say: “now you should-nought-to hold yourselves that way, for you’ll all be here directly.”
Handmade 1
Lorraine Matthews
hand made paper, dried flowers, thread
Handmade 2
Lorraine Matthews
hand made paper, dried flowers, thread
Dame Edith
Bernard Wills

From time to time I read a poem on air
(as no one yet has asked me not to)

so tonight I will read ‘Still Falls the Rain’
which is pretty damn good imho

and, at 2015 nails in the cross and counting,
hasn’t staled a bit

as people STILL get blitzed with toxic rain

incendiary gels

get dumped from trucks in graves and pits-
buried on the cheap and sly-

OR alive

get thumped with rubber hoses
strung up by the balls

get piled in naked pyramids of pain

and such good sober Christian folk as still exist
may catch a little bit

at the black necessity of it
though it is the soul of resolution
   to do the horror that you must
because you must

and….it is expedient
always…so to the work they go

laying on with a scourge of iron wire
pounding lustfully the nail-

putting the beautiful feet to the fire
they pile it on to the son of man

who suffers in every one of us
in Dives and in Lazarus….

and as it must be done regardless

they do it with a song
they whistle as they set to work

beating the Christ in someone senseless.

Well, they have their wages
those Sunday morning singers

in their heavenly blood-soaked bands
though as for YOU Dame Edith
YOU were a poor excuse for a Christian poet let me tell you
as you did not quit drinking or posing or dressing up
as you were waspish in reviews
as you loved foolishly and badly those you knew could not return
as you butchered sound and sense
as you overspent and under saved and thwarted your physician’s will
as you let yourself go
till you became a shell with a nasty little crab inside
as you did what all fine poets do-
which is- to make us feel the truth of tears you couldn’t quite yourself....
Ghost
Lucas Morneau
mezzotint
It was Granny’s 80th birthday. She sat on the purple sofa that matched her purple lips. Her fake eyelashes fluttered as she made a wish. She looked like a little prune. A cute prune though. With Grandpa gone, Colby couldn’t see why she still bothered with her appearance. He’d love her regardless. Colby lived with Granny ever since he could remember. He couldn’t remember much.

A half dozen snouts pushed onto Colby’s arm as he tried to swallow some cake. Granny’s schnauzers. She had six who ruled her house and the lives of everyone who entered. No one entered much.

Maybe the mailman?

Six snouts: Henry, Hanzel, Hilda, Halfrid, Hannah-bo-bannah, and Frank. Frank was quite the fucker. His wiry hairs stuck on everything. Colby couldn’t touch Granny without getting a stern look. He even gave Colby the side-eye once when he saw Colby put back yogurt that had expired.

“What did ya wish for Gran?”

“A pack of smokes and a tighter ass,” Granny laughed. What a woman, Colby thought. “Colton, can you pass me a light deary?”

“It’s Colby, Gran.” Lately she got Colby’s name wrong. He understood death was inevitable, but didn’t want to lose his beloved prune just yet. Colby rubbed his Gran’s hands in his. They heard a growl and snarl.

“Frank, fuck off.”
Sun set and the house looked less dingy. Granny had one of her coughing fits again. Colby lunged towards the hall to grab her puffer. Granny bawled out, “Colton stop, I’ll go grab it. Don’t be bothered with me.” She was determined. One foot into the grave, yet she remained independent. Colby remembered when the landlord –

Not the mailman, the landlord.

He came and warned Granny that mold had developed in the front room; he could see a stain forming on the outside of the house. Granny refused any help. She promised the landlord she would rid the mould herself. She cares for me too much, Colby thought, she won’t let me step into the front room.

He could hear the clan of schnauzers settling down for the night. Colby yawned. There was nothing to do. He stared at the snow globe on Gran’s table. Styrofoam specks danced around a young painted boy. Nothing else was in the globe. Just a boy and the snow. The boy looked up with dotted eyes and arms open wide. Just the boy and the snow.

What a sad boy, Colby paused. The boy had no one. He could’ve had family, but he had no idea who his family was. He didn’t even have a clue who his Granny was.

10:00am

The air was cool. Colby stood outside chopping wood on the mildew grass. He breathed in the morning and breathed out his fears. He went to check on Granny, and turning an eye he saw a neon glow. A small green light from the front room flickered out the blinds. Colby walked towards the window. His breath reached the cold pane...
and blurred his vision. An unnatural being stood in the room. Colby blinked a couple times. “Frank, you saucy fuck!” A wiry snout peered out from the blinds. Frank turned away from the window leaving his fluffy ass in Colby’s sight.

8:00pm

“Goodnight Gran,” Colby kissed her wrinkly skin.
“Yes, yes. Goodnight Colton, Granny loves you.” He didn’t have it in his heart to correct her.

Midnight

Colby’s feet crunched on the stale carpet. Half asleep he waddled down the hall to his room. He felt his foot squish into something hot. Disgusted he looked down – the schnauzers. Something caught his ear. A lullaby-like hum could be heard outside the front room door. Colby pressed his ear against the oak. He took a deep breath.
Where’s her mind, he thought. “Grannnn” he pushed on the door. “Graannnn” he stumbled onto the mould floor. Colby stood up and found his balance.

A casket as old as night lay on what looked like a stage, decorated with flashing green bulbs. Pictures of some boy holding Henry, Hilda, and the saucy fuck were mounted on every wall. An engraved decoration stood beside the casket – *In loving memory of Colton, always Granny's boy, forever in our hearts.*
Brothers Flying
Ashton Burgess
watercolour
Fungi and Flora
Ashley Hemmings
watercolour and ink
A Love Poem
Ashley Hemmings

In all of my dreams of us
We both still have our milk teeth

Young enough to be sensibly ignorant
We make childish art and roll in the grass

When you touch me
With your water boned fingers

I only know how to giggle like a child
Each syllable of laughter wet with your touch

Your touch will forever be
The soft moss of the forest floor

And in the back of my mind
You will always smell like the ocean

The deepest purple sunsets
Will only ever feel like your breath

I saved your voice in a seashell
I keep it with the collection on my windowsill

When I feel alone I hold it to my ear
And listen to the waves of your whispering
Dreamland
Melissa Tremblett
acrylic on canvas and wood
Meow
Erika Stonehouse
ink on paper
Coffee Stains
Kyle Howe

You know, this is - excuse me - a damn fine cup of coffee. – Agent Dale Cooper

Natural occurrences
In the city
Soiled napkins litter the Earth's floor
Like sooty pedas
Streets ahead
Construction workers slurp
And dig up the street
Wives and husbands bustle in and out
Iced mocha lattes all around
Down it goes and off we go!
Whole milk and half truths
Small talk like fake sweetener
Delights the light roast –
Bleu
Ann Crocker

rid yourself of the salt that
bestows your vision.

boil the kettle, burn your fingers!
caffeinate the sky which you fawn to fall from

the sea will catch you in your favorite sweater.
it will rip your uncertainty from the wool

~

oh, yet another pretentious sentiment.
have you learned nothing from your benevolence?

make the walls shutter, while you
pry through them with conceit

ambivalence will no longer be a peril,
only the lack of sweetener in your coffee.

the manner of this growth is
somewhat incoherent.

this will evolve once you fathom that
whiskey is the most important meal of the day
Untitled
Casey Adams
digital photo
Polyrhythm was once described to me as the elusive moment when every left-turning signal at the red light seamlessly clicks together; an unexpected metronomic synchronicity shared amongst an otherwise lonely collective of discotheque throttling metal machines, meat made and emitting toxic.

I bear witness to this for maybe the second or third time in my life while straddling the last metallic horse on the turning-lane carousel that is the intersection at Rollins Cross.

The un-expectancy and suddenness the one-click-togetherness brings disarms me of my umbrella of daydream; and I’m soaked in the reality of downtown grey, the plethora of darkening overcast cloud and building.

It’s December, and I had been driving into town with the window rolled half-way down, hand stuck out the window, froze, smoke from a lit Canadian Classic billowing into the air like a distress signal.

And perhaps it was. Save me, it said. Save me from whatever the fuck I’m about to go through.

I was meeting a couple of my friends after agreeing to through a series of complicatedly vague text messages the night before. Beth, someone who I had become close with during the fraudulent years of High School – I had no close friends in high school. But there were some, like Beth, from the drama class ilk of extroversion that for whatever reason sniffed out my potential companionship like the dogs they’d
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But years had passed since then.

We'd seen each other around, at first. And we'd hangout – Beth embraced the finer tastes of life after high school, and irrevocably, it seemed she would continually try and up the ante. But as the prices of scotch went up from room to room, our connection became more and more distant. It was in my friendship to Beth, perhaps, in which I first recognized how unhealthy I was becoming.

Now, in the seconds following the moment of clock-tick synchronicity, a couple of things happen at once; the light turns green, I lift my foot off the brake, and begin inching through the intersection. My head turns and I catch a glimpse of the pizza joint I know her to be in and my mind grabs at a lake of non-resolve. Too many questions come to the surface: why now?

Some kind of 80’s dance music strikes my auditory periphery, loudly, I turn and it’s all this place knows. A couple hunch in a corner, parallel to the counter, grease-stained paper plates in front of them, talking into each other’s ears. Hard place for a conversation, I think, knowing now why Beth wanted to meet here of all places.

I turn then, and I realize the glimpse I caught of her on my way in was correct. She’s sitting in a booth nearest the window, alongside a man I’ve never seen before. I walk over, and take the seat opposite them.

Hi

“Oh my God, it’s so good to see you!” Beth’s characteristic enthusiasm is expressed this time like a parody. It’s too strained and over-reaching.
You, too.

She turns to her right, “Jamie, this is my good friend Oliver. Oliver, Jamie.” She could handle social cues in the midst of the plague. “Are you getting something?”

They were however, always somewhat of a problem for me. I look around, trying to figure out how long this conversation is going to last.

No, I’m fine.

I try and get a read on Jamie’s character. He’s wearing a navy blue cardigan and black T-Shirt with an abstract design coloured in white. His face is plain, sullen, yet almost expressionless. Pale blue eyes peer at me tentatively from behind large-rimmed spectacles, and I realize that he is likewise trying to get a read on me.

I turn my head awkwardly, pretending to become distracted by something happening in the street. There’s a small man holding a sign across the road, looking for change. Carly Simon has begun the opening lines of “You’re So Vain”, and I feel myself being pushed onto a familiar internal spiral staircase. I know the way down, and I know what’s down there, but I can’t help but begin the almost-hypnotized descent.

“You’re probably wondering why we brought you out here..” she pauses, and I get the sense that she’s looking at Jamie, silently asking permission to continue. Across the street, the light has gone red, and the kid begins walking down along the aisle of cars, sign propped against his chest.
“Look, we want to ask you something..it’s going to sound a little crazy, maybe, but..it would really, really mean so much. If you could help us.” The kid is still walking back and forth. I notice he has a dog with him, tied to the light pole.

Alright. What is it, exactly?

It’s like she’s pausing, trying to figure out how best to say it. I’m not looking at her,

“Look, this is going to be kind of difficult. But. Jamie’s room-mate kinda left, about a week ago. And we’re worried. We have an idea that she might be involved in some..”

I peer my eyes away from the happenings outside to glance at her,

“..we think she might be working for this sketchy adult services guy. It’s not that she’s doing it. I mean, if you’re going to fuck random dudes you may as well make some money off of it. It’s just. We think she might be in trouble. And we just don’t know. We haven’t heard from her or seen her in over a week.”

I take this in while watching the poor kid across the street. I remember the brief moment in traffic a few minutes ago when everyone’s turning signal had clicked together. Just for one brief instant. And I realize that this poor kid’s life has been synced to the timing of the traffic lights. Green light: Pacing, trying to stay warm, maybe. Or trying to keep the poor dog warm. People passing by in their vehicles. Yellow light: Here it comes. It’s coming. Red: Go. Maybe someone will give you something. Rinse, repeat.

I wonder if this is the perfect metaphor for trying to beat the metronomic succinctness of our society. Of “going” when everyone else recognizes a sign to mean “stop”.
I imagine the streetlights to be hanging from the sky on string. Puppets in the little play called society. Placed there, somewhat ironically, not by an alien overlord, but by the very thing that created this concrete jungle – human intelligence. They repeat the same lines, over and over, flash the same signals. Monkeys ruled by their own creation.

“Anyway…we just wanted to ask if maybe you could help find her.” How could I do that?

“We think she’s working for this guy named Flux. He’s a huge fucking weirdo. Or seems like it. Anyway, she’s not answering calls or texts or anything. And if she’s working for him, there’s no way to contact her unless we go through him.” I watch a car accelerating to make it through the yellow light in time.

“He basically runs this fake account on this dating app. You send him a picture of yourself, and if you know the name of the girl, then her name, too. He gives you a time and a location and you go there.”

“Will you do it? Like, we don’t want you to sleep with her, obviously. Just go and make sure she’s okay. Tell her we’re worried and that she should contact us.

I’m watching the kid pace back and forth again as I try and figure out how best to go about responding to this. Finally:

Look, if you’re friend wants to sell her body, then that’s her own fucking business. I realize it isn’t pretty. But it’s no different, really, then any other job she could be working. Unless you know for a fact that she’s in danger, then I don’t really see why I should help you.
There’s a pause. I thought maybe Beth would have prepared better for this. But maybe I’m underestimating her. No one’s responding. I have to continue:

Your friend selling herself for cash isn’t the thing to be worried about, Beth. It’s just a symptom. The real crime was committed against humanity by humanity, when it created the second. Things in the real world don’t click consistently. You don’t breathe at the same rate every moment of every day.

We’ve trapped ourselves in this metronomic grid, where everything clicks and beeps on top of each other. We’re like a group of daycare kids out for a walk. We’re all tied together and connected by these invisible lines, being led down the road by a clockwork monster that we’ve created. We used our intelligence to create a world that runs at a faster rate than our own ethics. That’s why you think your friend fucking for money is such a big deal. But she’s just making use of the same system that surrounds us, that nets us in our little zoo, every single day.

There’s a silence and I can’t keep eye contact with her and instead gaze out the window. I realize that I may have upset Jamie and I realize that this was never my intention.

“Look, here’s how you get in contact with Flux. I’ll give you more time to think about it. But right now James and I should probably just go.” I can’t tell how upset she is with me but I feel horrible. Not just for her but for Jamie. And Erin. People I don’t even really know. I try and focus on the boy and his doggie but instead find myself catching the gaze of my own reflection.
Above me and around me and inside me, “You’re so vain, you probably think this song is about you”.

A few human hours later and I’m staring into my own dark green eyes, again. Except the gaze I see is both blurry and domineering. I’ve let my old haunts haunt me.

I had come to wait. To wait and to try and douse the flames of nervous anxiety a little.

Pawns moving on a chessboard; opening move, I am white and white always starts the war.

Had summed up some courage and left Flux a message, and was immediately crippled by self-doubt and regret. There was no way I could go through with this, but there was no way I could back out of this. He had my picture. And number. I put my car in the employee’s parking behind Red’s and left it there.

The softened thump a black knight makes as it leaps from its position, lands elegantly on the board; transposing it’s range of attack to jostle for position around the black hole at the centre.

Trotting downtown. For the first time in what felt like years. The sky was darkening and I was reminded of living down here and catching the sun rise but never catching it sink. It was like missing a friend whom never said “goodbye”, like entering the dark reality without him, blindfolded.

Nerves being taken away as quickly and as easily as an ill-placed pawn; pints going down a little too easily.

What had I told him? Panic now, Why was I thinking about Roger, the intensity at the centre of the board; the way gravity makes
things dance, so violently, for position.

I took a seat at the bar, well aware of the $20 in my pocket, well aware that I would almost certainly need it later,
I reach into an empty pocket now,
Jovial laughter, a magical connection outside of any clocks, blurring, real time,
Roger thought the quality of being rested in the rhythm that perpetuated everything forward, and that in rest we could attain it - I told him that or only thought it, relived it?
“I’ll get this one”,
Further and further down the staircase, being pulled down, sucked down,
Black queen took a heart for its crown,
I grab onto the counter top as the world begins to spin into flux, my body cringes in preparation to heave,
White king came tumbling down,
Tumbling down the spiral staircase,
“Gonna go for a smoke..”,
It’s coming up through my chest and my phone goes off. The spinning stops. I sit down on the bathroom floor and look at the screen: Room 412. Delta. 11:30. Party downstairs if you get here early.
I need fresh air. I need to get out and think. To slip away and find concentration.
I push open the bathroom door and re-enter the dim and shadow of the barroom. I see the table where we were sitting. See the chess board where the black king rules. The front door of the bar opens. I see his head pop in. He motions with his finger, “come outside”.
The Huntress
Jessie Donaldson
firewood scrap sculpture
The Homemaker
Jessie Donaldson
firewood scrap sculpture
A Photograph of Eva Braun and Adolf Hitler
Jared Simmons

beneath her eyes there lurks no feral avarice;
touching his clammy flesh
the power
of her empire dissolves,
condemned into the bondage
of desire

and he, wrestling a smile
tickled to existence by love,
appears so delicately human
he too must have swooned
in mutual surrender.

what gentle music flowed between their hands
to muffle the massacres of war?
these faces bear expressions of the guiltless:

love,
love is the only answer.

our folly is our fear of vulnerability,
here they briefly
clenched the hidden truth.

when she has gone
his empty eyes
howl across
the distance pulled between them,

pronouncing the impotence
of power
and compensation.
The Riace Bronzes
Jared Simmons

no tydeus or amphiaraus,
you are nameless
as the hands who crafted you

clutching at forgotten customs,
annexed
by empires of barnacles,
through two millennia the sea
has failed to wash away
your uncomposite anatomy

was this the vision of your maker
to have your barren forms
so well displayed?

it is no matter,
you are the message
and the messenger,
crawling ashore to reannounce
the only virtue
true culture has ever known
it wasn’t even that good
Ryan Duffy

you died in ‘95
1895
one hundred years before my birth

there was nothing on your epitaph
nameless
i don’t recall a birth year

so i wonder
how you died, how you lived,
who you loved

were you old?
were you young?
…were you loved?

if i meet you in the afterlife, i’ll ask these things to you
and i’ll apologize to you.
i’m sorry, nameless spirit

i’m sorry for the
skin on cracked granite, blanket smothering dry earth
empty moans that woke you up

i’m sorry for fucking a whore on your resting place.
Stockholm Syndrome
Josh Pittman

I hate all but the monochromatic.
So You promised to rain death from above.
The prime candidate a neo-fascist?
My God! Could it be true? Am I in love?
You scream “Make America HATE again!”
You meant great, but they’re synonyms, right?
What a goddamned glorious statement.
A heartbeat. A lump in my throat. I’ll fight!
I’ll kill, I’ll die, I bear blood stepp’d blades!
Every woman adores a president –
So I’ll wave flags while you build palisades,
And readily buy your bourgeois sentiment.
Is it love I feel? Or it’s cousin, fear?
On the wrong end of a swastika spear.
Crammed
Jaime Giraldo
acrylic on wood
Woman Sitting
Jaime Giraldo
acrylic on wood
Ferry Crossing in the Winter, Newfoundland
Shoshannah Ganz

The sign points
Isle de Morte
Warning, the only stop,
before the ferry

The bar
decorated with
flotsam and stories
wrecks and lives lost

we hurl ourselves
into modern era
metal, no classical quartets
but televisions
flashing
oracles of other fates

other gods, the ancient ones
thunder
bolts and tidal waves
Have they heard of
safety tests and weather stations?

They indifferent as ever,
know we speak progress
to comfort children,
return to myth
to quiet the whispers.

We at the whim,
As we have always been
of gods of wind and wave.
Blue Berry Hill, Curling
Shoshannah Ganz

Blueberries for Sal,
a book I loved.
Antique kitchens,
olden day allusions,
berry picking and jam making,
freak bear encounters
on Blue Berry Hill.

My mother gave my son
a copy of this book
and he loves it, too.

We have a Blue Berry Hill
behind our house,
and pick huge grape-like
clusters of berries and
try not to compete with the
bears’ mower-like appetite
clear cutting blueberry bushes
to the root.

He doesn’t seem to notice
outdated kitchens and
isn’t afraid of bears,
can recognize
tracks in spring snow
and knows the gamey
smell of scat.
He counts the seasons of
short Newfoundland summers
by the fruit and berries
we plant and pick
preparing winter.
Lumsden
Frédérique Bernard
digital photo
Lonely House
Frédérique Bernard
digital photo
Looking for Signs of Spring, Curling
Shoshannah Ganz

The narrow trail in Curling
through woods and past
ramshackle houses
on dead end streets
takes us through
a bamboo forest
of hollow reeds
discovered by a
six-year-old savant.

I try to claim
they are weeds
but know
I am wrong.
Nose to the wind,
a smell I know
from Bangkok
and wonder if it too
is a weed or only
a strange scent
of elsewhere.

Smoke of burning coal
transports me back twenty years.
Running through
late winter
fields and woods
behind the Panalax.
Last stop,
longest line,
Prague.

And looking for signs of
spring with my son
walking on the Curling path
past cemeteries and gushing gullies
I’m reminded of the same
childhood game.

Ontario spring brought
geese and robins.
Newfoundland spring
brings bears and moose.
And today we heard
that in St. Anthony
there are polar bears.

But the rushing spring waters,
dirty, snow-exposed garbage
treasures,
and soft pussy willows—
signs of spring
everywhere.
V.

Marta Croll-Baehre

below black wrought belly
of Market Tower
talks about “London handshake”
smacks sagging leather jowls
alky - pupo -bluhd - shot - blacky.

man, just don’t open them as our black eyes, I watch
cutter sever whiter skin
in frigid white-out skein
“the Souwesto indian takes

the knife and shoves it in”
  she says, reveals her own
pocks from the methadone
a year before then

talks of a stabber
in the faux—I was chased
by a tall-dog man
with a bottle of jimmy through
the Victoria park.

“I gots my lavender quartz crystal, sage smudge
Mohawk crud.”
no witch-man is gonna get a
taste from this bum blood.
IX.
Marta Croll-Baehre

at these four corners made bare
to watch full stark in half-light Old Man
Winter came round

to clutch at the calves of drifters
in the drafts of day.
light instep is tepid rigor mortis,

ossifies
stegosaurus, shag a sore—
sure that would be nice, wouldn’t?

not that i’is complainin’ er nuttin’
carries deer skull in left hand, sheep in anutter.
not some white cloud

crystal mountain

minnow, round beatings
on bodhrán from the Value Village sale.
fleabane and rosin

eyes twinkle dull in daybreak
stiffness of death,
they say.

beats you breathless, snorts up into the chest cavity until you can’t feel it inside you no more.
bulbs
Emma Croll-Baehre

carbuncled light fixtures of pine
     blued night sky

hollyhock berry
reflect like pinpoints mapped in the window
not yet encrusted with December’s cold

my hands are stale
four humid months made them so in the
cold acidic gut of downtown

consumptive faces bunged in haloes of yellowed hair
steaming warped glasses on
quivering noses
fingers swathed in jaundiced skin riddled
with open cuts like tired gecko tongues

I dreamt of an infant on an aged precipice
solid ghost against oil blue, above my weighted footfall
—then—
my mind didn’t stretch blocks behind me and
entangle with dried wildflowers
my naked feet didn’t scratch crowns of their
bulbs captured beneath derelict soil

places meld like slush and dirt
dislocation

now I watch snow glisten like prickles of spit or salt
pewter hair curls below inky wooled mountains
my palms immobile and chapped from dish soap
my nostrils enflamed from draft and outside

white is stained with dewy colour
dory yellow
    rosebud

buoy orange lets me drift in gyres of overcast
shriek amongst sirens in gelid air

here I remember

remember I am here

***

there
    I tell you that the
bay is tweedy    obfuscated

wintery bluster
sheets of rising ice perforate on each other
—this is not meant for you to hear—so
movement stops and I shed skin on groaning plates
flakes slap your pallid lips here

my head a dehydrated black eel
I know you through a frantic mind
eartips cracking like communion wafers
raw from the briny floe of holy water before us

I want to snatch my new veneer from the
smiling saint just below the
  january dust
crusted ocean
fresh face and steady thoughts like the
vein-like pulse of current below the snow that has
made us forget of its existence

green methane lamplight above the shore only shines
spectres on my scalp that seep
  hospital colour
illuminating only —low down in my thoughts—
other revenants which hold me with sinewy fingers and
dimly cradle my breath
Untitled
Casey Adams
digital photo
Gros Morne Snowshoeing
Hastings Gresser

photo
Connections As I Walk
Hastings Gresser

I leave my house at seven-ten p.m as usual, shutting the pale white door behind me. When I was about five and lived another life, a boy I played baseball with used to live here. Same door. I don’t remember his name, or anything beyond that we would play baseball in the park across the street.

It occurs to me that everything has come full circle: I was born on Albion Street, in a house a short ways down. My mother and I have lived the entire block over the years. There were brief stints of change, though. First to the small town beside this city. That didn’t last long. My first day there I watched as a young boy in the park nearby disemboweled a gardener snake and urinated on its remains. After he left I gave it a proper burial in the sand. I bet some little girl dug that thing up later and was horrified. After about six months our senile landlord (being young I never understood why she had a moustache) got in an altercation with my mother. I later found out that it was because she tried to poison our cat. The incident sent us back to my home neighbourhood where we would remain. Upon finding out why, I had trouble trusting women with noticeable facial hair for some time after.

The part of my brain where memories get stored pokes my consciousness as I continue towards my destination. I pass my first elementary school. For over a decade it laid in a crippling state of cracked concrete and boarded up windows. This year a Chinese institution bought it and turned it into a private academy. Tuition starts at eight thousand per semester. I guess they weren’t concerned with the toxicity levels of the neighbourhood. The result of an adjacent factory
burning down, leaving over an acre of chemically unstable land. What the factory did I’m not sure of, but I remember all the children gathering along the school fence to watch it burn. Our eyes engulfed in awe and excitement. The only more interesting day at school was the armed standoff. Our whole class was jealous of Mr. Grewal’s, who got to be outside during it. My class sat in lock down, terrifying a young girl to tears. She was too innocent for her own good. I think she still lives with her parents in the same house on Albion Street. I pass it on my way and wonder about her.

Albion comes to a confusing end at a cenotaph where it intersects several one way streets. In the warmer months the benches here become open concept housing to homeless and drunken wanderers alike. As I step through the grass I am reminded of days spent skipping class here. Smoking pot and attempting hand stands with a best friend that I left behind long ago.

Cutting across the cenotaph I come onto Nelson Street, and the city’s downtown opens itself to me like a baby’s head crowning during childbirth. A shell of it’s former glory, downtown is now nothing but a sprawling university campus. An ever growing monstrosity that seeks to devour every building it can. Some diabolic scheme to consume the long time resident’s memories and turn them into textbooks, international students, and quaint cafes that no average waged citizen can afford.

Posh students pass by me. In the distance I see some of their identical twins nonchalantly swerving to avoid the few hobos and buskers; remnants of past goings on who have yet to let go.
I make my way into Victoria Park. In the middle a large statue of a Mohawk Indian stands in contrast to the park’s name. There’s always a park that your parents tell you not to go to at night. Victoria was one of them. My friend swears he once saw a man being performed on by a woman here. When he was noticed, all the man did was smile. By random occurrence, years later that same friend would walk through the park in need of a washroom on the other side. Finding that the washroom was out of service and unable to hold on he defecated in his pants, resorting to cleaning himself under the bridge that crossed a nearby river. Now that I think about it, the same bridge that his step sister recently spotted the city’s infamous public masturbator from. The cosmos connects itself in strange ways.

On Dalhousie Street, I continue down memory lane. Whether to pronounce it dal-how-see or dal-who-see is an ongoing discussion. I’ve always preferred the latter for no particular reason.

I gaze up. Two massive grey creatures that intimidate everything around them. They alone make up the city’s skyline, rising thirteen and fifteen stories respectively. Occasionally I recount, just to make sure. They are home to a greyness that reflects as much about the inhabitants as it does of the exterior.

Again, I traverse a park. I can’t recall the name, but I know it’s another of those “don’t go to after dark” ones. I did go, though, and in my late teens spent many nights with a now far gone love interest here, shaded under moonlight by large maple trees. We’d wait for the morning sprinklers to come on and run through them. A recharge after nights of here and there and everywhere except the places we probably should have been. I look behind me towards the tiny house my mother once looked at in another failed attempt to leave our neighbourhood.
I doubt we will leave again. Maybe its the chemicals from the factory that kept us so glued to it.

Colborne Street. I can hear the cars pass by through my headphones. Mister I ain’t a boy, no I’m a man, and I believe in the – vvrrooomm – land. At least half of Springsteen’s lyrics are about cars anyways. I don’t spend more than two blocks on the busy street.

My journey ends at the intersection of Colborne and Stanley. The orangeness of a passing sun obscures the heavenly glow that emanates from my destination. Still, the golden arches that hover above it warm me intensely. The promised land.

I check the time. Seven thirty-five. I always like to be a little late. It removes the awkwardness of being the first one here. Clarence and Max are already settled into our booth. The one close to the washroom, where we can sit relatively undisturbed from others. Roy would show up in about an hour, late as always. We used to give him an earlier time to meet so he’d be there when we were, but he got wise to us. Garry and Steven would arrive in their vehicles. I say vehicles because Steven insists to always make the distinction that he owns a truck, and not a car. Finally, Danny will come after his uncle has served him dinner. His gut can’t pass up a free meal. And then that would be the lot. For the next three or four hours we will revel in our promised land and entertain any passing idea that will occupy time. We’ve been doing it for what seems like forever, but the signs are showing that one day soon this, too, will become a memory. Maybe in the future I’ll walk pass the intersection at Colborne and Stanley Street, recalling the memories of times well spent.
Gull
Emily Wells
digital photo