



TCR

TheCapilanoReview

30TH
ANNIVERSARY

Phyllis Webb:
Paintings

George Stanley:
Vancouver Poems

Esta Spalding:
Interview & screenplay

Ryan Knighton:
New poems

No smoking, tourists. Go outside,
he says. Who? Oh, I forget, I'm dead,
I can't smoke. Which are tourists
& which are ghosts.

— George Stanley

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Detail from *12x16" Series, Green*
Acrylic on canvas

COVER
Phyllis Webb

PREFACE

The thirtieth anniversary issue of *The Capilano Review* has given us an occasion for an Aboutist point of view, a refreshed cover design, and a new editor. It is wonderfully appropriate that the West Coast artist and writer who links the first and the thirtieth years of *TCR* is Phyllis Webb, whose poetry appeared in the inaugural issue in 1972 and whose paintings appear in this one. Thus an individual artist's story occurs amid a community's history of form and image, continuously shaping itself over a thirty-year period. As part of this continuity (with its disruptions, changes, departures, appearances, and disappearances), we will go on to publish work that we think is beautiful and alive. Aboutism is my particular outlook of the moment (i.e., that writing can be, or could be, about something), with the proviso that post-Aboutism may well develop as a result of the inevitably more enlightened and troubled times to come. All of the editors so far have brought to the magazine their tastes and predilections and enthusiasms: Pierre Coupey (the founding editor), Ann Rosenberg, Bill Schermbrucker, Dorothy Jantzen, Bob Sherrin, and Ryan Knighton. Enormous gratitude is owed them for their hard work.

Back in the late 70s, I became Poetry Editor for *TCR*. For years, we had editorial meetings at which we vetted material and settled on individual issues, with the various genre editors, and their student editors, speaking for their own areas and interests. The same group would gather to do issue mail-outs, compile subscriber lists, and organize events — mostly readings and parties — to help generate interest in the magazine. These days, we have a managing editor and a more streamlined editorial process. *The Capilano Review* has also gained a larger institutional presence by co-sponsoring a lecture series, funding an annual writer-in-residence, and, in 2000-2001, organizing a Writing Practices program.

Thank you to all the editors so far. Thanks also to Carol Hamshaw, the Managing Editor, and to the many contributing

editors who give us ideas and advice and keep us informed from far-flung places such as Toronto and Prince George. Thanks to Marion Llewellyn, for the cover design.

And thanks most of all to all the writers and artists who for the past three decades have contributed to the magazine.

Sharon Thesen

Jenny Penberthy

Hello, Clio in the snow

Take the door
into the unfinished room yellow for
the walls and say white woodwork and bright red
for the curtains quite happy deep burgundy
cerise and gold mixed with old fashioned
Sanderson autumn oak leaves for the
Morris chairs *Savour the space* sacred sites
fall to disrepair and then off fluid
soluble in the mind concretely
realized at will in words and music. Poems
across the city radio stopless
calendar shapes a ghost, slows to gridlock.
Seasons at odds, past handkerchiefs at the
crossroads *Wait there stock still by the*
urn with the geranium into the darkness

into the intricacy of the twigs
that problem of the hedge imperceptible
in the summer air *Bend to the boxwood,*
memory's wastage Trees plus light, prudent
prunings — toss a trilby to the branches and
watch it fall to earth unsnagged — rules of thumb
and the arm's length overview, easy
wisdoms of the manual *Rearrange*
the ochre rose leaves, their dust wreaths heaped and
roses in the old garden life the view
from winter, autumn's another language
a late tartness covered with rue *Why all*
the fuss about endings? Ginko parallel-
ogram overleaf *fast post* not an
important failure *Move upon the figured*
leaves plum ranunculus is all we have out
of the ordinary — hellebores abound
and there the birthday sapling my bare

catalpa gnarled winter candelabra

Michele's calling from the distance no go

with the dark reds yellow hibiscus with a

red throat which I'm not sure I like. I hear

Louis XIV is gorgeous. Jasminum

angolaris dark glossy leaves exquisite

little trumpets of perfume *Take the key*

to the lily now down Curtis Thursday

organ day big sound grand coeur in

nomine three four five parts slow in the

middle movement fretwork plainsong in

opera poetry is the

obedient daughter of music

Ascend to the summer children in the

shrubbery crescent kisses caught in the

orb *Wake to willow boughs* limes in the

jacaranda, limes in the beech, limes

asleep in the catalpa then sudden

limpid heart beats Penelope waits
Penelope blooms, May sees the first, will
you have it and eat it? *You made me wreck
my picture!* Little clumps of wild irises
and orchids and beetle daisies and hundreds
of things Oh and a total eclipse of
the moon Follow the gecko! Smell the sun!
Joseph Banks's Good Success roses, see how
they burn! Rangitoto's late goddess — hope
the view's good from there — cabby's decked out, ferry's in
her finery, queen's in dock for a day
Love's leisure is action's end *Come blow the
moon out please*

George Stanley / from VANCOUVER, BOOK ONE

5

These things – to describe – not to describe – are important. That's what I think – I – some voice – not to describe – that I hear thinking – I overhear. I don't mean to be obscure. The city weighs tens of thousands of tons – or more – wherever you look at it – from – motionless. (4th floor of Birch Bldg., Cap College campus.) Something in your near distance moves – a leaf – looking over the city then, a cloud – moves very slowly – there seems to be no weather, no movement of the clouds – yet ten minutes later it's all changed, invisible winds are pulling these topographies of condensation out of, into, shapes, though they look still. But the city is still. It has this – a – not patient, not impatient – a dead stillness – motionless – nothing could move it except the earth – to avenge itself – not on people, but on the city itself – the mere fact of it – being – thousands of tons of steel & concrete. It's just an image in the eye – it doesn't exist –

(I've been in offices, in other cities, working, with paper & pencil & calculating machines, telephones, typewriters, filing cabinets - & worn the white shirt & thus been in the city & the city didn't exist –

no, it's this languor of age that makes it seem to exist – what's important? Did I start by saying something was important – that these things that go without description are important. Description – riding by –

& so there's a mind – I can't say – & summer's over, the whole latitude is moving. If it's there as an image – if it's there as inhabiting the poem – that's important, because it's so for some I, almost random, but menaced by something that won't die – but that – is in itself – death –

*

The city – a block. A little steam rising from one of the flat-topped high buildings – monolith style – modern. But nothing else moving. There across the inlet. (I looked to see if the trees on this side were moving, to give a contrast.) I imagine winter – the city in the mind – the trees, the branches, waving, blowing all around, & the rain blowing, but the city still there, dark, in the mind. So non-existent, that way. There when you don't see it, as you wake in it. In a bed, in a room, in the city. In one of these blocky structures projecting upwards – rectangle & triangle shapes, in rows, among the overshadowing trees, & in them everyone breathing – separately – ready for the day as separate beings – souls – in this structure – structure of structures – (with its specific history based on land economy transportation – sucking people in

In 1910
Vancouver then
will have 100,000 men –

& do I think of them as souls? Did I say souls?

building it,

ever more motionless.

*

Eaton's "rescued" by Sears –
the elderly ladies
with coats & artificial flowers & "permanents" –
seated on the buses at right angles to the direction of travel –
grey heads, mostly in silence, facing across the aisle –
batting thoughts back –

(now CuiScene – a “bistro” – no windows –
no crackers with the soup – a 50¢ bun -

✻

✱

& knowing
 all this is important – all
 to the souls –
 (indiscernible
 to each one – they don't know they're here –
 & they're happy not knowing

13

In this time – dark –
 the hungry people are sitting in the doorways –
 there is no consciousness necessary to this scene –
 “how to pick & point & leave them able to change their lives,”
 Jean wrote.

This is nothing they’re dying for – the golden lights strung like
 ropes across Kitsilano – one thing & another –

& Kenneth Koch said, one line crazy
 & one line serious –
 “That’s OK.”
 “It certainly is.”
 “I’m just going home myself.”
 (missed something)
 “I’ve got one more trip & I’m going home too.”
 “Might see ya next time.”

One line true & one line –
 cop lights red & blue – flickering fast
 “Are we leaving any time soon?”

One line fast – one crazy & one serious –
 would keep them sane & true
 & so they could write (New Jersey schoolkids) –

& you don’t put the book away
 because there’s no line pending.
 Vancouver is breaking through
 your understandable reticence.

Once it's made sure you
were drained of the need
of the will
for everything to be
marshalled

the city
is not unknowable
it's real

(This is the 10 – westbound – October - dark

One among the old people
in the cafeteria on the 6th floor
of the Bay – Seymour Room

Necropolis –

a coffee & danish
not thinking of anything
but the raisins

Sears will manage Eaton's as a traditional department store,
not high fashion, but will keep the Eaton's name because people
who shop downtown aren't interested in garage door openers.

An apartment house in the West End changes hands – 50%
increase in rents – “All of us could have had strokes.” Not sure if she
read that in *The Province* or heard it on News 1130.

Skytrain to Waterfront – faces reflected impassive as in an old
T. S. Eliot poem – as if the set of the face belied the interior mind –
and it does – try it – I could teach this to the young.

Wait for something to happen – want nothing to happen.
Homeostasis. Sun flashes past the pillars. Terminus station: “Will all
passengers please leave the train.”

winter comes on in the mind
even before October's half over –
the broom sweeping leaves

In Gastown, the concentric brick circles & low ornamental
posts with chains – what is this all about? Something else than is
given in perception, so shut your eyes. Shut the mind's eyes. Fiercely.

No smoking, tourists. Go outside,
he says. Who? Oh, I forget, I'm dead,
I can't smoke. Which are tourists
& which are ghosts.

Look at the old warehouses, concentric circle brick arches over
the windows, pediments with an inset brick pattern & think

why are there so few
here
(compared to, say, St. Louis)

did they (we) have just-in-time delivery
from the trains to the steamships,
the steamships to the trains?

a single ape

in complex light

city of death, city of friends

10 again. Dark, seamed faces,
old clothes. (Some missing word)
as Swedes. This is prosperity.

Washrooms on the 9th floor
Elevator door mirrored
on the inside. Security man:
2nd door to your left.
Mirrors, red & gray tile.
Inside the Hong Kong bank.
It's cool in here, & it's night, & it's not sad.
In the men's room of the Hong Kong bank
(she uses the men's room).

When Debra McPherson pointed over the heads of the crowd at the anti-TransLink rally & said, "I've always liked looking at her. I remember the original," nobody knew what she was talking about. I knew. She remembered the stone figure of a nurse executed in high relief that had adorned the façade at the southeast corner of the old Georgia Medical-Dental building (blown up) & that had been replicated at about the same height on the new Cathedral Place building that had taken its place.

I saw it on TV. And two days later I read it in the *Sun*. The triptych of the explosion. A time-sequence. The dustcloud rising to reclaim the irresolute verticals. I wondered what happened to the steel frame. Oh, I know now.

The newspaper is held up at a distance, depending on her eyesight, between the reader and the city or flat on the breakfast table next to the coffee cup. When the newspaper is lowered, the city rises again & she forgets that it has changed.

The Devonshire Hotel. I remember when I first came to Vancouver I used to go to the Dev. They served a great corned-beef sandwich with hot mustard. I thought, "This is England!" Blown up – replaced by – the Hong Kong bank!

Now back downstairs in the (atrium?) she rejoins the crowd dressy at the opening of a display of photographs of writers. She sees her own photograph with a poem. It reminds her of Iris Murdoch's wry inquiring smile before her forgetting.

These formalities, of people
kissing, exchanging
compliments, & lightly patting
the other's hand, at the same time as
"No, thank *you*."

*

At Darby's drinking whiskey (that catches the tone of it, no crap about brands or labels – nationalities). Watching the Redskins & Cardinals, from Phoenix, out one eye (the left), & the other, the Mets & Atlanta tied 1-1 in the 14th, in a rainstorm. The electronic scoreboard says "14th inning stretch." And I keep looking out the window onto Macdonald, the October dusk, now night, & thinking it's raining here. No, it's raining in New York, my mind snaps back at my brain. And now from up the bar voices of three middle-aged lads arguing on two drinks about Canada & the States. The youngest, biggest, richest-looking one says, "There's no sense of urgency here."

I laugh, soundlessly, smilelessly. No, there's no sense of urgency here, either.

I'm glad the NDP screwed up the convention centre deal. It means I won't have to walk another 200 m to the SeaBus.

It's not true the snow makes the flanks of the Lions more lion-like; here it is October & the rock is bare; they're like lions sculpted by some Assyrian or Henry Moore. If anything, the snow would obscure these lines.

City of death, city of friends.

NOTES

- 5 "In 1910...": Tourist greeters' song. Alan Morley, *Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis*, 3rd ed. Vancouver: Mitchell, 1974. 149.
- 6 Jean: Jean Rysstad, writer.
- 7 Debra McPherson: President, B.C. Nurses' Union.

Camilla Pickard / MAN ON A RED SOFA

At the suggestion of a few students, Gabriel abandons the film workshop he's prepared. We've been talking about character, how to get inside someone else's skin. People ask for his advice. He'd like us to get what we want. He aims to please, he says.

So, in place of his scriptwriting exercises, we arrange private sessions with him on character development, voice.

Gabriel has what I want. He's slim, beautiful, talented, acclaimed. Witnessing his hands move articulate against the black walls behind him, the sound of his voice breaking lines of poetry like waves over the quiet room, I think I would like to swallow him up and keep him, inside my own body. I want to own the voices he owns, all the gestures, all the registers.

After he meets my eyes, I am afraid to arrange a meeting with him. But I do. Of course I do.

We are dismissed. Dillon offers me a lift home, and we go down a hallway striped with different fluorescents. We change colour subtly as we walk: greenish, murky orange, ghost blue.

Dillon says to me, "Gabriel is very pliable."

Is it an edge in his voice? His own desire, pressing up between the filaments of his words? The sentence begins to load and reload in my brain: Gabriel is pliable. He is very pliable. I say it to myself, in my head, in my sleep, repeatedly.

I ask Dillon, "Do you like pliable men?"

Dillon unlocks the car door for me and opens it, gentlemanly, smiling at his own chivalry. "Don't you?"

But I desire only myself. I masturbate and imagine Gabriel wanting me, how I'll ply him till he can't stop, to a pitch where he feels he can force, do as he pleases: his hand inside me, his whole hand.

I meet with Gabriel. It's in a coffee bar. Plaster of Paris gods watch us from the corners of the room.

He greets me fondly. Like an indulgent uncle he cups my elbow in his hand to guide me to the table. His demeanour is fragile, his face nearly ruined. I imagine, sanguinely, that I can see traces of suffering.

So do you want to show me something? he says.

I talk and he listens, appreciating everything: my gestures; my way of speaking; my silences; and his attentiveness is glorious, devotional. It's because he attends to me that I know I can seduce him. It happens almost without my help, now, looking at his eyes, I smile.

It's his own silent movie, a double reel. I am the screen upon which he casts the unsteady image of himself, seduced; and, at the same time, of himself, seducing, reducing me to tears, an agony of pleasure, to the only incontestable part of myself: the part that desires him, that desires pleasure, that can't disentangle its infatuation with itself from the knowledge that it is desired by him, from the thought of being seduced by him, fucked by him, repeatedly seduced and fucked.

This is the seduction I want, on a loop, a continuous streaming of that section of pleasure between unbearable yearning and the suffusion of orgasm. The suffocation of pleasure ebbing from us replaced again and again with desire.

But if we fucked it wouldn't be like this, Gabriel.

I meet with him. It's in a coffee bar.

Plaster of Paris gods watch us. He asks too-personal questions about my life and I answer them all, all of them, truthfully, as if he'd recognize my lies.

Where did you grow up?
What's your family like?
Do you have a brother?
Your first boyfriend...?
What kind of relationship do you have with your father?

So, you were — a good girl?

What has this got to do with film-making? Does it matter? I can't conceal anything, so he keeps asking. My opinions on sexuality, love, desire. Men I've enjoyed and disliked: their habits, affectations, their preferences. Like an embalmer, he removes everything from inside me, precise and tolerant: brain hooked out through the nose, viscera through the mouth. In two hours, he has possession of my secrets. He's made me his intimate friend.

So do you want to show me something? he says.

I say Yes. I want to show you something.

Once his door closes I can't speak. I show the rough cut.
Huddled fingers like an anxious child: as if stillness could hold off
his affection, or his displeasure. He watches without a glance at me.

His scalp shows through his hair. Odd mole on the front of his
throat, a whisker in it.

In front of the camera I'm blissful, shot up with desire. A net of
pixillated flesh. Digital gold icon. It's the image that seduces. Says
what do you make of me? *Says Swallow* says what do you like *says*
you like that? Give me your hand. Wrote a script for you *Says* I
won't leave marks *says Swallow* me whole Fuck yeah swallow don't
stop don't stop

Kaleidoscopic. My edges disintegrate and fall into place again. I'm
made new.

He switches it off.

It's good, he says. I might have a few ideas for you. He puts out
his cigarette. Touches me cautiously. The hip.

Let's see your script.

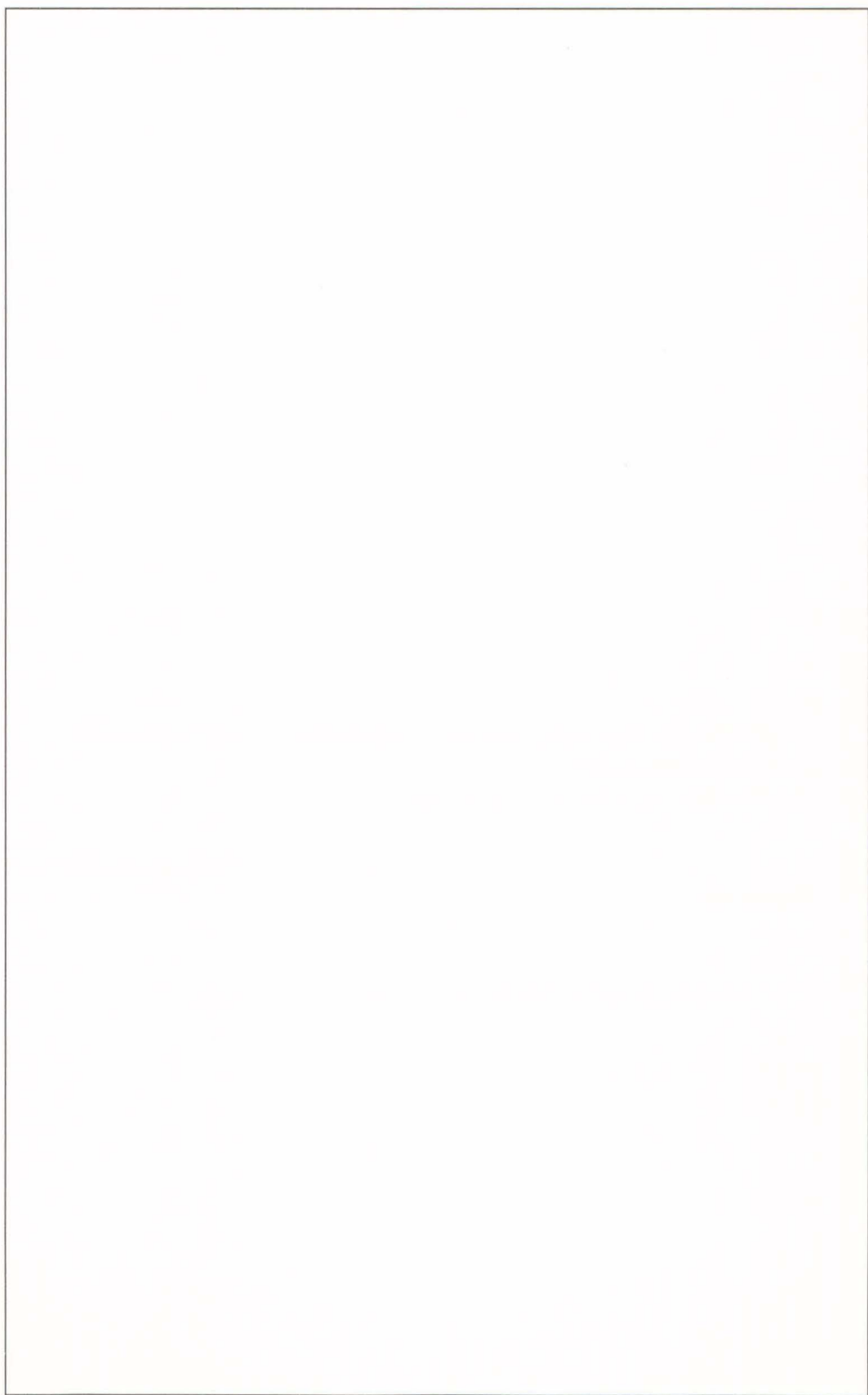
Telephone ringing unanswered. I pull away and he leans back
in his chair, smiles.

His hand smooths his trouser leg.

What's heroin like?

It's like this.

I rub the spot of my desire till it wears right through.



Diana Hartog / ELEVEN POEMS

Frog Contest

False start —

false fronts, saloons, a booing crowd, the green contestant
carried back to a line drawn in the dust

•

Playing leap-frog
a boy crouches
tailbone tucked

•

Mention of a dragon in Japanese linked-verse
is limited to ‘ . . . once every thousand stanzas.’
No restrictions on frogs.

•

Freed by a kiss
he lowers himself into the cool muck

•

Applause swelling for the hypnotist, the frog
leaps from the stage
to regain his seat in the second row
where he sinks down, warts and all,
and reaches for his wife's hand

•

Hind legs dangling, the old poet
treads water, obscure among the reeds.
Famous pond

A tiny monkey weighing just 200 grams and thought to be extinct has been rediscovered in south eastern China, says *The People's Daily*. The "ink" or "pen" monkeys were once kept by scholars to prepare ink, pass brushes and turn pages. The highly intelligent little creatures, who slept in desk drawers or brush pots, evidently added to a scholar's reputation for eccentricity.

Ink Monkey

He's a great help.

While I think
he grinds the ink-stick in the shallow well: the rhythmic
shuus . . . shuuss . . . shuuss . . .
soothes. He spits again . . . Shuuss . . . shuuss . . . the liquid darkening.

A strange hunched creature, trembling at every task.

He can't write. Not poetry.

Oh, he can wield a brush

and stroke a character

— even a string of characters —

rewarding himself with a raisin for every page

turned. Scribble scribble.

Scribble scribble scribble. Off in his own world.

Ignored (the best lot for a poet), and fresh from a nap in the upper left-hand drawer I forget everything I've been taught

— cooling my tiny brain —

and begin:
dip my tail — just the tip —
into the ink.

The Couple in Room 212

The tv flickers mute, the remote
knocked to the orange shag carpet
by a wing.

Leda, sprawled naked across the sheets
— mind a blank —
stares up at the ceiling's watermarks. Turns her head
towards the high window and the plucked moon
above the motel.

Swans-down in the ashtray. Pillows flung to the floor.
Thank Jupiter for maid service.
No need to pick up after him
in here,
or in the bathroom,
where he treads damp towels
and hisses in the steam.

The Lipstick Tree

Halfway up the steep path, arms full of groceries,
I slowly and expertly
press my mouth to the bark
of the slim birch,
to the patch blurred red
with lipstick from so many practice kisses,
so many years of living alone on this mountain,
I have to lift my chin to reach.

Christmas Eve

There's always the chance that a shopping cart
abandoned as a car backs from its stall between parallel white lines
will start rolling.

DO NOT LEAVE CHILD UNATTENDED IN CART

is the warning every shopper grips, when pushing a cart down the aisles.
The cart's child-seat, if empty, can be collapsed, or its rigid plastic flap
lifted to cover the two openings where small legs normally dangle and kick.

Sometimes across the vast expanse of a parking lot you'll see snaking towards you
a caravan of empty shopping carts, thirty or more, rammed one within
the other and steered, far at the end, by someone wearing a name tag
pinned to a bright nylon vest as he herds the carts back inside.

If it's raining he'll wipe each cart's handle with a rag.

Walmart, Pak-N-Save, Costco: all the superstores stay open even later after
Thanksgiving,
every night leading up to Christmas Eve.

For shelter he stands beneath the overhang,
staring out at the acres of automobiles, glistening under tall hooded lightposts.
Letting the strays accumulate.

from JELLYFISH SUITE

Sea Nettle

The poison
Loosens the muscles hinging the jaw
till it sags,
tongue slack, saliva pooling,

and you'll find that

any attempts
fail;
any attempts to reach the roof of the mouth and speech;

one's gaze compelled to follow the ascension of sheer Being
— veil over mystery over veil —
tentacles whipping in slow-motion, pale ruffled mouth-arms trailing
as the jelly leaves the scene of the crime, wholly innocent

of its beauty's sting: deadly as Love-at-first-sight,

and only human, you might, but *don't*,
take it personally; don't make
my mistake.

“Egg-yolk” Jelly

So named
for the morning after a quarrel, rising exhausted

to the Nothing
left from “Nothing left unsaid”, transparent as the matter
in *What’s the matter?*

— or merely the day’s first expectorated
phlegm, drifting in the basin;

surely what the brain loses when it loses its mind,
this listless blur that randomly

gathers to a pang a semblance for one pulse . . . two . . . even three

before it dies away
so tattered and diaphanous

you’d never guess

“Gooseberry” Jellies

— drifting in the current, tiny light-bulbs
of feeble wattage flickering along
loops of filament,

jellies the size of a lit pen-light
traveling in the dark of a woman’s purse
in case of emergencies, in her ninth month

before her water breaks,
the foetus floating along in the womb,
buoying her fears, lids closed over bulbous eyes.

Eyes that open on a cry, blinking in the glare, squinting
as you lie in her arms
against a white hospital gown smelling of bleach.

Both of you gasping for breath.

You’re so little, and know so
little beyond instinct, you assume — with a feeble, flickering brilliance —
that you’ve both washed ashore
together, and — from the fierce tenderness of her embrace — that
little as you are, you’ve saved her, your mother. *You.*

Quince Jelly

Silly, to take pride in a half-dozen jelly jars, filled, sealed
with hot paraffin that clouds as it cools and slowly
hardens towards the center, the wax already opaque
but still soft

— you could poke a finger;

trembling — the jelly inside — when disturbed,
and such a beautiful color, an ethereal amber but pale,
pale and translucent; the color, say,
of the soul, freshly entered through
the top of the infant's skull;

the soft fontanel finally closed
to the light streaming down
as the bones knit together: *That will have to do.*

Portuguese man-of-war

The name is in the helmet — transparent, empty.

Adrift on the surface tension.

The man-of-war, a cousin to the jellies,

boasts a transparent crest, or coxcomb,

and glistens in the Mediterranean sun.

Again, no major organs, no heart, no eyes to speak of,

only the primitive reflex

and of course

a hidden agenda

reaching fathoms down

and inviting a closer look

in the greenish, mote-hung gloom: a curtain

of dangled knotted stinging cells

to be brushed aside as we would

a beaded curtain serving to discourage flies on shore.

Empty. An empty helmet. It takes no brains to float, adrift on the surface calm.

Sharon H. Nelson / ESSAY AND POEM

War Fury: A Meditation on *Psalms* 137

Psalms 137¹

By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
we wept when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplars,
we hung up our lyres.
There our captors required of us songs,
and our tormentors mirth, saying:
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How shall we sing
a song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither;
let my tongue cleave
to the roof of my mouth
if I cease to think of you,
if I do not remember Jerusalem
even in my times of greatest joy.

¹ This version of *Psalms* 137 combines the material that appears in *The Holy Bible*, revised standard edition (World Publishing, 1961) and the materials of *Tanakh – The Holy Scriptures, JPS Translation* (Jewish Publication Society, 1988).

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem's fall,
how they cried: "Strip her, strip her,
to her very foundations!"
O Daughter of Babylon, you predator,
happy shall be he who requites you
with what you have done to us.
Happy shall be he who takes your little ones
and dashes them against the rocks!

Among all the psalms, this one more than any others has become the writer's psalm. Its opening lines have been used by a diversity of contemporary authors for title materials. Its second stanza, notably the fourth and fifth lines, have been adopted as a *cri du coeur* in a variety of literary circumstances. The notion of the right/writing hand withering and the tongue cleaving to the roof of the mouth are the emblems of silencing for any writer with a background that includes even passing acquaintance with this verse.

What, though, of the third and final stanza? It is seldom quoted. Is it ever remembered in a literary context? It is so politically incorrect in its call for vengeance, so graphic, so powerful in its final image, so unfashionable. War is supposed to have become a matter of military offensives against military targets. It is not supposed to be a call for vengeance against a people. It is not supposed to be about the maiming and killing of children. It is not supposed to reverberate with the lines: "Happy shall be he who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks!" But it does.

Ours is a culture that holds as a major precept that "seeing is believing". When it comes to media reports of violence, especially those seen on television, "seeing is believing" becomes a literal truth. Just as the repetition of any liturgy produces a lifelong resonance for those who attend religious services, so the repetition of visual images on television produces an ineradicable resonance in those who

watch. The rebroadcast of the collapse of the World Trade Center, for instance, has turned that imagery into a kind of cultural iconography. Unlike the texts of liturgies, however, the images replayed on television are seldom interrogated critically. Like miracles, they are seen, accepted, and become a matter of faith, stored in the living memory of believers.

Because of the immediacy of televised images, it appears to those who sit and watch that the act of watching makes them participants in the events they witness. This is an illusion. *Witnessing*, after all, is a public if not a political act. And yet, there is a sense in which this kind of watching, however private and domestically contained, is a kind of witnessing, for it valorizes what is shown. The images that are seen become shared cultural artifacts. Their truth and their value are legitimated by the act of being shared — seen again and again by vast numbers of people. In this context, and for all practical purposes, what is not seen does not exist. A shared reality is constructed in which huge lacunae are purposefully created in the scripted imageries of what is shown.

The failure to broadcast images of some acts and events and the repeated broadcasting of images of other acts and events is a method of direction and control, a technique for manufacturing consent. And heaven help anyone who dares question. That is blasphemy, as Sunera Thobani, for instance, discovered. As Thobani incisively observed in “War Frenzy” (www.zmag.org/thobanireplies.htm), an essay that appeared after she had been viciously attacked for a speech critical of American foreign policy:

Rendering invisible the humanity of the peoples targeted for attack is a strategy well used to hide the impact of colonialist and imperialist interventions. Perhaps there is no more potent a strategy of dehumanization than to proudly proclaim the accuracy and efficiency of “smart” weapons systems, and of surgical and technological precision, while rendering invisible the suffering bodies of these peoples as disembodied statistics and mere “collateral damage”.

Thobani points out that her “use of embodied language, grounded in the recognition of the actual blood running through these bodies, is an attempt to humanize these peoples in profoundly graphic terms.”

In “Rock Candy,” a poem for A.M. Klein, I myself make use of lines and resonances from *Psalm 137*, in particular “let my right hand wither; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth”. Implicit in my use of those lines is the rest of the psalm, an example of that “embodied language, grounded in the recognition of the actual blood” with which the psalm ends: “Happy shall be he who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks!” It is only when we have read and attended to and made sense of that embodied language, when we have recognized the call for actual blood and actual violence in the final image, that we realize that the opening stanzas are designed for exactly the same purposes as the inflammatory rhetoric and selected images replayed repeatedly on television networks worldwide.

In *Psalm 137*, the weeping, the sentiment, the reminiscence and recounting of the cruelties of oppression and the cruelty of oppressors, the pledge to remember history and enmity are set as prelude to the graphic call for violent revenge. There is no dissimulation here, no hypocrisy. In a tradition in which saying is doing and vengeance serves for justice, the psalm moves to a resonant and inexorable conclusion. Just as Pharaoh once decreed that all Hebrew male children should be drowned, so the psalmist demands that Edomite children shall be slaughtered. And not only shall children be slaughtered, but such bloodshed should be accompanied by rejoicing: “Happy shall be he who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks!”

Since I began this writing, there have been more bombings, more killings, more blood shed, more bodies broken, more lives altered and ended, more particular, beloved voices silenced. And everywhere, and on every side, there have been more and ever-increasing calls for vengeance and violence.

Verbal violence leads directly to the embodiment of thought in acts and deeds. The escalation of verbal violence leads to the escalation of physical violence. There is and always has been a direct

connection. The repeated broadcast of the images of the violence and of the rhetoric of vengeance and violence attendant on the events of September 11th have led to “war frenzy” just as images of violence — written, spoken, broadcast — have provoked it throughout history.

It is possible that foreign policies are simply vehicles for bloodthirstiness. It is possible that our problems are not those of nationhood but of the nature of humankind. It is possible that though we may increase our stores, we may not improve ourselves sufficiently to achieve a less violent world. It is certainly true, as Sunera Thobani observes, that: “Men who kill women and children abroad are hardly likely to come back cured of the effects of this brutalization.” It is also true that channeling violence into other places and onto “othered” peoples spares those of us who are not “over there”. The events of September 11th brought the violence from “over there” home to North Americans. Those events also provoked the realization that we, here, now are just as vulnerable as they, there, then. And “we” may be anyone. The rhetoric of violence and vengeance, like war itself, is aimed at whole populations. Individual attributes and accomplishments — talent, training, insight, charity, personality, a happy disposition or a miserable and miserly one — count for nothing. There is no immunity. All members of a target population are equally demonized, equally dehumanized, equally at risk. Such is democratization by ideology.

I had thought to annotate my poem for Klein to make explicit some of these ideas, which are embedded in that work. Rereading some of Klein’s essays in conjunction with *Psalm 137* convinced me to desist. Klein’s own work is effulgent with brilliant arguments, great learning, important insights, wisdom. Though he was a most political and polemical writer, he attended carefully to the work of other authors. It would be a shame to spoil my homage to Klein by refitting it to suit a publishing occasion.

The loss of Klein’s voice, its silencing, which I have long associated with the violence done in the world, continues to sadden me. Even Sunera Thobani’s brilliant arguments and important insights, appearing as they do in the tradition of intellectual engagement and search for social justice that Klein practiced, do not

console me. The engines of war grow larger and more efficient over time. The distribution of the graphic images of violence and the rhetoric of vengeance grows more efficient over time. Those images and that rhetoric are chosen and orchestrated for carefully determined political ends.

As far as human behaviour is concerned, not much has changed in a couple of thousand years. As far as the purposes of writing and the uses of rhetoric are concerned, not much has changed in a couple of thousand years. As far as the graphic calls for vengeance and slaughter are concerned, not much has changed in a couple of thousand years. It is difficult to read *Psalms 137* and to be consoled.

Rock Candy

for A.M. Klein

The last of this year's apples catch the light
in a transparent dish, where they baked soft.
Their flesh, now melted, seems no longer flesh,
scented with cinnamon, cored and filled
with dates and apricots and raisins steeped in wine,
changed by transubstantiation — or some alchemy at least —
performed by heat, and wine, left over from a previous feast,
pressed into service for the next.

We are adept,
who set pen to paper,
tongue to palate, lips to air,
at using and reusing,
at reinventing use and usage,
at demonstrating usufruct,
who weave skeins of language into cloth,
deftly cut a suit or stitch a dress,
describe the body that would inhabit it,
and with our tongues
explore the textures of its conjured flesh,
and then concoct
an argument, a fiction, a drama,
all from air:
speech is the vibration
of a membrane against air;

borrowed, inhaled, and then returned
to the atmosphere, the common pool,
the understanding that we share.

Is there truth
or only stories that we tell?

Language becomes a poem
the way sugar becomes rock candy,
an old-world, children's treat:
molten in solution,
sugar changes form on cooling,
turns crystalline;
each crystallized piece
adheres around a string
the way each word accretes
around the stem of an idea,
each separate shape,
each separate sound,
distinct.

However clear the logic,
honed the argument,
it is the poem's music
that remains with us,
each song
the echo of the throat
it issues from,
an after-image
of the flesh.

In your poems,
the apples are all metaphors,
and when the lily and the rose appear,
they are less florescent than scriptural.
The voice seems numbed,
as if the form produced paresis of the tongue,
as if sensation had been overtaken
by ratiocination,
and books obscured the crux of history,
its taste of blood,
its gross brutalities.

In essays,²
 your voice is warm,
 your language luminous.

There, you sketch
 the lineaments of Justice,³
 gather threads,
 weave cloth of gold to dress
 that figure,
 your best-beloved,
 in sumptuous rhetoric,
 glad raiment,
 crafting argument
 not for the sake of argument
 but to create
 a community of discourse where
 a core of understanding, shared,
 makes just action possible.

Lantzman,⁴ lend me a breath, a word, a thread,
 to give each syllable voice, each syllable life.

² See A.M. Klein: *Literary Essays and Reviews*, ed. Usher Caplan and M.W. Steinberg (University of Toronto, 1987).

³ Klein was educated for the practice of law, for a time worked as a lawyer, and was deeply committed to justice. He was active politically and wrote prolifically, often weaving literary and political allusions together. Klein served as editor of *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, at that time an influential English-language Jewish voice in Canada, where many of his essays appeared.

⁴ The Yiddish word *Lantzman* can be translated literally as 'countryman' or 'compatriot' but refers less to nation of origin than to shared culture and shared values, to a sense of shared community, and in this instance, to shared literary geographies.

The apples split their skins
 and spill their flesh into the pan,
 their shapes spoiled, their lustre gone,
 like an argument too tightly formed
 or a thread too elegantly spun.

*What does it profit a man*⁵ to think
 if he lose the feel of the world in his hands?

What does it profit a man to think
 if he lose the taste for the world from his mouth?⁶

What does it profit a man?

Hath not a Jew?⁷

Hath not a poet?

⁵ See Matthew 16:26: "What will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" See also Job 34:9: "For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing/that he should take delight in God'" and James 2:14: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works?"

⁶ After 1955, Klein withdrew from what had been an extremely active public life, stopped publishing, and became increasingly reclusive. My sources for biographical information include, among others, the University of Toronto website and Zailig Pollock's on-line biography.

⁷ See A.M. Klein's *Hath Not A Jew* (Behrman, 1940), a line borrowed from Shylock's speech in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

The tongue presses against teeth,
sticks to the roof of the mouth.
Lips close against speech,
and air is expelled through the nose;
no sound leaves the throat.

Who can understand?

Hannah Calder / FOUR POEMS

Threads

The song is a thread pulled by a mouse
just under the surface of my skin
In every direction a ripple of sound
chased by the need for morphine and a nurse

Sometimes there are words said in the back lane
impossible to decipher
just an outline for the ears to fill in
So the neck extends quietly
pokes the head from the window
then lowers it, like a bucket with a letter in it, to the voices

There is a splinter of doubt in the way
but there is never time to remove it
The land runs its rivers to the bone
a mountain elevates
deer forget the moment to take care of fleeing
and the woods of the world dream of coming to life

A conversation muffled and picking up
lines left by actors in the wings
Up town a man in a smooth suit using his words wisely
and the answer
barely audible

Milk Bones

Fallow ground receives a perfect seed
 and swallows it
The nests of swallows
 high above their own shit
 above a playground of children flashing past in hot pursuit of a tiger
One moment for a bell to ring another for the river to surge
I go home on the back of a bicycle
Part of a mathematical equation
 Part of my young mother

Mismatched jars line the windowsill of the classroom
A bean sprouts in the night
Its case splits off
 so there is something new to consider in the morning
Each day new milk to uncover
Milk and words
 Good bones and good brains.

The village is quiet most of the time
One noisy drunk passes me
I am one noisy drunk passing
 here
 where I played
 and my sister's head opened and bled

The lads are now in the army or wrapping chips or being fathers
I never saw them just pieces of their beer bottles
 pretty and green
 pretty and clear
Blackberry stains and my sister's cracked head
 yes
 but never a glass cut on any of us.

The playground still feels the surge of children
There is still glass that will cut them
I am not there
The swallows are new ones
All those from before are long dead
 and have found refuge in the ground
Their tiny bones touching the glass of miniature milk bottles

Division

My lover has a fine-toothed organ
that searches me
for signs
of surrender. There are always li(n)es in the temples
praying in grooves upon stragglers
indecision making ways

Home is always optional
Taxis are paramount
There are reasons for the search
and there are ways out

The needle
decided
keeps warm on the record
A writer records herself
backwards

It is (is it?) pleasing
to be the object explored
uncovered and gaining ground

Fingers tap a beat untie a line
that goes unnoticed in the aftermath of an exchange
A record flips itself
a knot rams against teeth
divides

Two Roads

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
Two reeds diverge in a mellow mood
Two deeds die large in a fellow's could
Tore greed dilates in a meadow hood
Torn gourds delight in a pillow crude
Tart guards dig right in a pilchard book
Trot shards dog rites in a swiss chard look
Troll sharks doll tight in a kissing lewd
Tram parks down ties in a rising root
Tramps mark round cries in a writing rote
Temps march out loud with awaiting gloat
Time larks about to a withered goat
Tin locks arms out to a willowed boat
Twin lads darn skirts into pillowed bows
Tune rods emerge in a fellow's boot
Two roads diverge in a yellow wood

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights the need for researchers to be sensitive to the values and beliefs of the communities they are studying. This is particularly important in the field of education, where cultural differences can significantly impact learning outcomes. The paper then moves on to discuss the challenges of conducting research in culturally diverse settings. It notes that researchers often face difficulties in establishing rapport with participants and in interpreting their responses. To address these challenges, the paper suggests several strategies, including the use of local researchers and the development of culturally appropriate research instruments. The final part of the paper discusses the importance of sharing research findings with the community. It argues that research should not be conducted in a vacuum, but should be a collaborative process that involves the community from the beginning to the end. This approach not only ensures that the research is relevant and useful, but also helps to build trust and capacity within the community.

Phyllis Webb / EIGHT VISUALS

Phyllis Webb / ARTIST STATEMENT

If I were young, I'd be down on the floor with a large canvas — or up a ladder like a muralist — but I started painting when I was sixty-six and getting creaky. As well, I work in a small space, my kitchen, and this limits my gestures. Though I imagine painting large, I realize I'm more comfortable with smaller canvases.

I like to explore a concept through a series of paintings. One of the best of these ideas for me was a sequence called "Changing Day" (1997-8) which began with daybreak and moved throughout to post-midnight blue in a tri-partite structure (22x28" format). Recently, I've been obsessing over a textural discovery using 12x16" canvases, sometimes "building" or "stacking" them into larger structures. There isn't much of a concept here, but I find I've been getting closer to understanding the nature of abstraction, though I probably couldn't articulate this.

I started painting when poetry more or less abandoned me in the early nineties. In the same way that some poems are written quickly and others are elaborately crafted, a painting for me happens either very fast or requires study, contemplation, time, and problem-solving. The portrait "Sketch" was, in the manner of sketches, tossed off in an hour, with a bit of fiddling afterwards. "Untitled" was also a product of speed. I allowed the rough edges and handling to stay without refining these spontaneous passages.

Because I am totally self-taught, I hesitate to see all this activity as anything more than pure process, mainly learning process, or to call myself an artist. I paint, I say. I used to write, I say, but now I paint. It makes me happy.

Paintings photographed by David Borrowman.



Cross Word



12 x 16" Series No. 3



12 x 16" Series No. 4

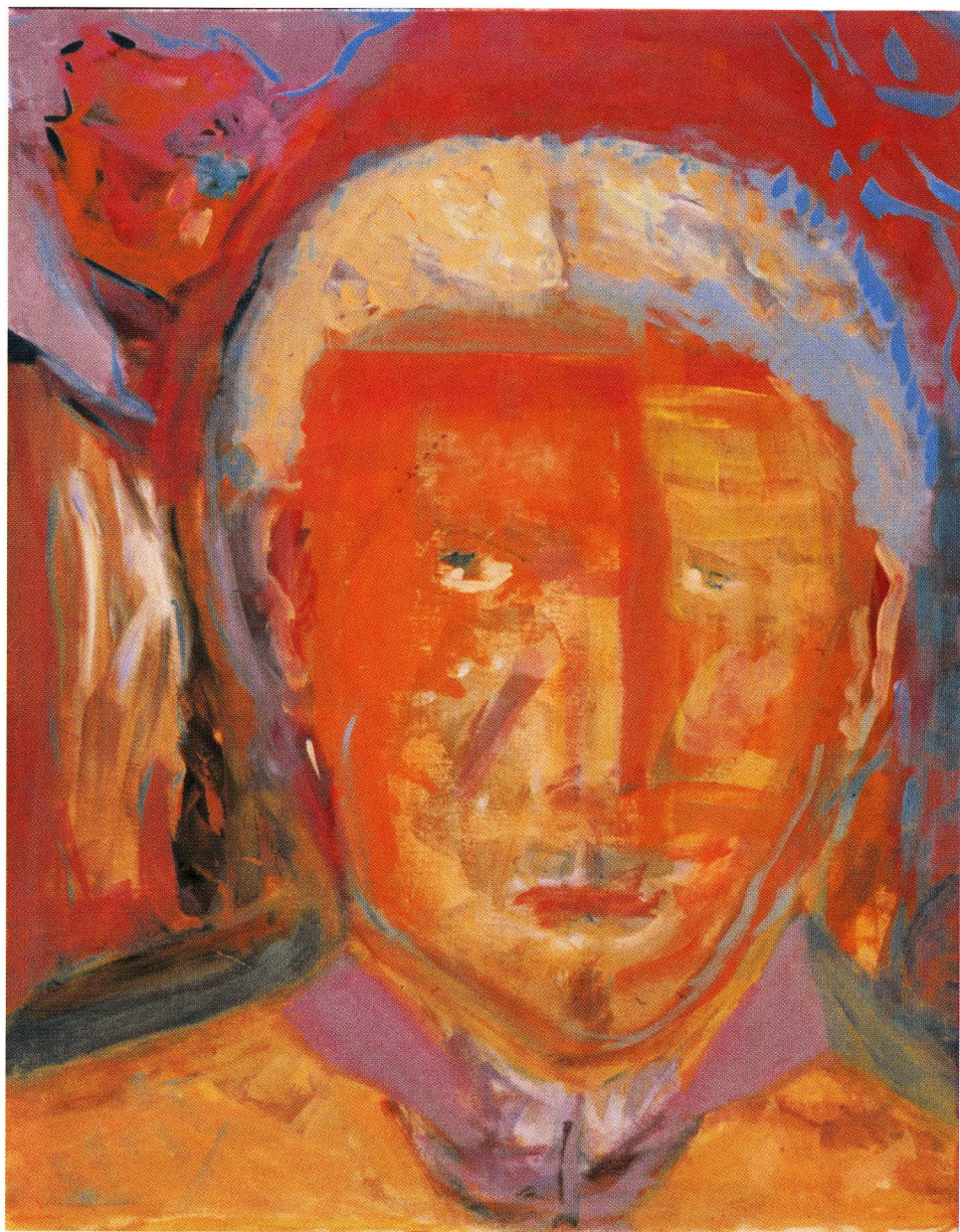


Oops, Pops, USA



Veiled Woman Afghanistan





Sketch



Untitled 1999

Phyllis Webb / SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Group Shows

- 2002 *Look 2002*. Community Arts Councils of Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Salt Spring Island, BC
- 2000 *Alliance of Salt Spring Artists Summer Show*, Salt Spring Island, BC
- 1999 *Alliance of Salt Spring Artists Summer Show*, Salt Spring Island, BC
- 1998 *Stepping Away*, Alliance of Salt Spring Artists

Publications

- Photo-collage, *The Malahat Review*. Spring 1997 (No. 118): cover.
- "The Mind's Eye, A Photo-Collage Essay", *Nothing but Brush Strokes, Selected Prose*, by Phyllis Webb, 74-82. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1995.
- Photo-collage, *The Malahat Review*. Fall 1994 (No. 108): cover.

Esta Spalding / Excerpt from FALLING ANGELS
(*THE SCREENPLAY*)

INTRODUCTION

As the story goes, the Fields family — the drunken mother, Mary, the tyrannical father, Jim, and the three daughters: rebel Lou, peace-keeper Norma, and sexually precocious Sandy — were first created by Barbara Gowdy in a story called “Disneyland.” In the story, Jim Fields promises to take his family to Disneyland, but instead he winds up building a bombshelter in the backyard and coralling his family into it for a two week “drill” to practice in the event of nuclear war. The story was so popular (it is both terrifying and hilarious) and the Fields so captivating that publishers urged Gowdy to keep writing about the Fields, and “Disneyland” became a chapter in Gowdy’s first novel, *Falling Angels*.

When I was asked to write the screenplay of *Falling Angels*, I agreed mostly because I loved the sequence in the bombshelter. But as I began to write the screenplay, I realized it was going to be very hard to use the bombshelter material. For one thing, that episode occurs when the girls are very young, and the movie had to be set eight years later, when most of the action in the book takes place. For another thing, the bombshelter sequence was long and claustrophobic; to render it with as much detail and horror as Gowdy does in the book, I was going to need twenty or thirty pages of a hundred page script. I simply couldn’t devote that many pages to scenes in the girls’ childhood — which require the audience to get attached to child actors — and then a third of the way through the movie begin the forward action of the film which involves the girls’ teenage relationships — and completely different actors. As a result, none of the original bombshelter material made it into the first two drafts of the screenplay.

But I missed it, and so did the director and the producer. And as it happened, we were looking for a better way to introduce the story of the girls’ dead brother — an infant, born before they were, who fell over Niagara Falls. By combining the bombshelter sequence with

Lou's discovery of a faded newspaper clipping detailing her brother's horrific death, I was able to make the bombshelter a vital part of the screenplay. Now it is used in flashback and culminates with Lou and Norma finding the clipping.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - NORMA AND LOU'S ROOM - (1963)
- NIGHT

All is quiet as the Girls sleep. Sandy sandwiched between Norma and Lou.

BANG. BANG. BANG. THEY WAKE WITH A START. THE SHRIEK OF A WHISTLE, AND -

Jim bursts through the door.

JIM

Move it! Let's go! Outside!

Backyard. Move it! Move it!

The girls jump out of bed and run out into the hall past Jim, disoriented and scared. Jim hollers.

JIM (CONT'D)

Hurry! Hurry! We're at war!

INT. FIELD HOUSE - BEDROOM - (1963) - NIGHT

Jim storms into the room, deadly serious, waking Mary.

JIM

Mary! Wake-up, hurry. We're at war!

Let's go. Outside. Hurry up.

He leaves the room. Mary jumps from bed, terrified. She pulls open the dresser, and pulls something out of the drawer. She shoves it into her purse.

EXT. FIELD HOUSE - BACKYARD - A BEAT LATER -
(1963) - NIGHT

Sleepy and frightened, Norma, Lou, and Sandy run onto the lawn in their nightgowns. Jim and Mary follow. Jim's whistle shrieking.

JIM

The Ruskies just launched the big one! Now move it! Into the bombshelter.

SANDY

What about our clothes?

JIM

Don't worry about them! Hurry up! There's radiation out here!

MARY

Is there really, Jim?

JIM

We have to act like there is.

Mary nods, and hurries the Girls towards the bombshelter hatch.

MARY

Come on, girls let's go. Let's be daddy's little girls.

JIM

Hup to! Hup to!

Terrified, Lou and Norma climb into the bombshelter.

SANDY

Mommy?

MARY

Come on. It's safe in here.

Sandy climbs in. Mary, clutching her purse and her mug, follows. Jim climbs in himself, reaching overhead and pulling down the Hatch.

INT. BOMBSHELTER - CONTINUOUS - (1963) - NIGHT

Mary, Sandy, Lou, and Norma stand in the dimly lit bombshelter. They're confused, disoriented, scared.

JIM

You each have a bunk. There's a latrine, you'll use it once a day -

Jim gestures as he speaks, pointing out the features of the claustrophobic space.

JIM (CONT'D)

Each day is organized with activities.

NORMA

Mom?

Norma looks ill.

MARY

(to Jim)

Each day?

JIM

There's the schedule. If we conserve - we've got enough food and water for two weeks -

LOU

Two weeks?

MARY

Oh, good lord.

Mary clutches her purse, tighter. Looks down at her Mug.

JIM

And coffee. We've got enough coffee,
dear.

Mary settles. Sandy notices their suitcases next to the bunks.

SANDY

What about Disneyland?

JIM

We're not going.

Sandy turns to Mary and starts to cry.

SANDY

But mommy, I wanna to go to
Disneyland.

NORMA

Mom?

On Mary's other side, Norma's clutching her gut now.

SANDY

(whining)

You said you'd take us.

MARY

You promised, Jim.

Lou tries to explain to Sandy.

LOU

We can't go to Disneyland. We're at war.

JIM

That's right. We're brothers in arms. We'll have a hell of a good time here.

Norma heads towards the latrine. Lou curls her nose -

LOU

It smells like something died.

Sandy wails, crying even louder.

JIM

There's plenty of good air. There are some rules. We have to conserve water and food.

NORMA

(from inside the latrine)

Lou -

Jim hears her.

JIM

Norma, out of the latrine. That's rule number one.

MARY

Let the child use the toilet, Jim.

Lou goes in the latrine.

IN THE LATRINE:

Norma looks up. She holds up two fingers, smeared with blood.

LOU
(calling out)
Mom, can you come in here -

NORMA
I'm sick.

LOU
It's the curse, you moron.

Mary comes into the latrine. Sees Norma. Sees the blood.

MARY
Oh, dear.

JIM (O.S.)
What the hell is going on in there?

Jim pokes his head in.

MARY
Jim, Lou just has to scoot up to the house for a sec.

JIM
Absolutely not.

MARY
She won't be a minute.

JIM

No, sirree. There's radiation out there.

MARY

There isn't really, Jim.

JIM

We have to pretend there is.

Sandy and Lou's mouths fall open.

MARY

Jim, Norma has become a woman.

JIM

What the hell are you talking about?

MARY

Ruby Keeler.

It takes a second to sink in.

JIM

Jesus Christ!

Norma closes her eyes, humiliated.

LOU

You lied! You said we were at war!

MARY

So Lou just has to scoot up and bring down some napkins. She'll be quick.

LOU

You're a liar!

JIM

You shut your trap.

Jim looks around, then swipes a sheet off the bed, RIPS it in half.

MARY

What are you doing, Jim?

He tears it again, and again, into strips.

JIM

Whattaya think the pioneers did?

He folds one and hands it to Norma. Lou scrambles up the ladder and heaves her weight against the door. It doesn't budge. She steps back.

There's a padlock on the latch. They're locked in.

LOU

No!

JIM

It's for your own safety.

Lou POUNDS on the HATCH.

LOU

Help! We're trapped! Help us!

Sandy WAILS. Lou continues pounding on the hatch.

Mary moves to a box of whisky and pours herself a drink.

Jim, oblivious to the screaming, rips the sheet into strips.

Bob Sherrin/ INTERVIEW WITH ESTA SPALDING

BS You mentioned that there was an instinctual response on your part to *Falling Angels* — and with you and Scott Smith, the director, in talking about how you might approach the screenplay. Can you give me a sense of what that instinct was?

ES We both had responded to particular visual elements in the book. We were talking about it in terms of films we'd seen, adaptations we both loved that not many other people loved. We really responded to *Jesus's Son*, an adaptation of Denis Johnson's novella, and our response to *Falling Angels* was that it should follow a chapter-like approach and be Lou's story, Lou being the central character. That approach couldn't be more different from what we ended up doing. But I think the important thing about that first meeting is not what we thought we were going to do — because we were both just starting out. What mattered was that we really enjoyed each other's ideas and way of approaching the adaptation and talking about character.

BS That seems to be a key difference between screenwriting and just about any other genre — the element of collaboration. I guess in some cases screenwriters write and then the collaboration goes further, but in this case it's obvious that the collaboration was there right from the start.

ES I think it's a different thing if you're writing an original screenplay; but in adaptation work where you're responding to something that's already there and your take on something that's already there, it can be more collaborative from the beginning. It can happen in fiction writing. There's that stage in novel writing where you bring an editor into the collaboration to help you figure out what is working, what in your vision you

are and aren't articulating. But it's never as completely as collaborative screenwriting is.

BS There are obviously things in *Falling Angels* that aren't in the screenplay. In my reading of the book first and then the screenplay what struck me is the problem of deciding: how do I tell this whole story or can I tell the full story? What do I shed?

ES Yeah, unless you are going to do a television miniseries, unless you're going to do eight hours of the thing. A fellow screenwriter once said: you have to find the short story in the novel. Find the kernel of the thing. Film says a lot just with the visual and the gestural, but a novel needs language and tone for that. I guess they really have two very different vocabularies. It's really hard I think to translate a novel's tone, its voice, onto the screen. There isn't really an equivalent of voice on screen. Gowdy's book *Falling Angels* is so dark but funny. How do you make something really, really dark not translate into just heartbreak and pathos? One of the real challenges with this adaptation was to make it funny. I don't know if I succeeded. I think the humour's something we can push even more as we begin working with actors.

BS My experience in reading the script is that it is funny. But back to a related point that you were making: my word for it is narrator. Gowdy creates the voice for her book, an intelligence that shapes what we see and hear and even visualize. And obviously in a good film that happens too, this notion of writing or creating a document that's a kind of plan I suppose, but it's bedded almost entirely in dialogue.

ES I would totally disagree with you about it being bedded in dialogue. The dialogue is sometimes, I hope, actually sleight-of-hand. The gesture and the visuals reveal who the characters really are and what they feel. In the book, the three sisters are unconscious of their own motives. For instance, Lou believes herself to be incredibly fierce, and we see her as being

completely vulnerable. So how do you have this character who is always angry, always cynical, and reveal her to be a vulnerable character? The way it happens in the script is a conflict between what's spoken and what's unspoken. But you're right, it's very hard to create a narrative tone in a screenplay. I think that's why so many adaptations fall back on voiceover. And it was the one thing Barbara Gowdy said. She took me aside and said, "I don't care what you include. I don't care if any of the plot that happens in the book happens in the movie. All I care about is that the characters are true to the characters and that there is no voiceover." Oh God, no voiceover. That takes away one of your essential tools of adaptation. But I think that challenge of not using voiceover has forced me to be even more clear in the visual and gestural world of the characters. Because they don't do what, for instance, Christina Ricci's character does in *The Opposite of Sex* which is tell you what she's thinking all the time in ironic counterpoint to what you're seeing. There's a little bit of voiceover in the draft that you read, but now even that's gone.

BS Some of the visuals in the draft could be considered as a kind of dialogue. I'm wondering if that's something you see yourself, whether those gestures are the unheard part of the script.

ES It is crucial to use gesture in creating a screenplay, rather than ascribe motives to character. The easy thing to do is to say, "She says this angrily because she feels such and such." To write in the screenplay the emotion of the character and the sort of reasoning behind the emotion. Someone reading the script will understand the characters in the scene. But the litmus test is if that scene is shot, can the audience who doesn't have "because she feels such and such" there in the script actually arrive at the understanding of what the character is doing and why? Because you want the audience to be aware of what the character's not aware of, right? So it's imperative to find active and gestural ways, and it's imperative whether you're working in adaptation or any kind of screenwriting to find active gestural ways to embody the emotional states of the characters. For me that was

the huge challenge of this movie because so much of the energy and anger in the novel is carried in the voice of the novel, and not in what the characters actually do. Lou's doing a lot of raging in her head and she can do that in a novel and it's very funny. But in the film she has to actually throw herself in front of Tom's truck in order for us to understand the self-destructive nature of her love for him. That was the really tricky thing, to get these emotional states to become active states.

BS Is it a fair perception on my part that this kind of shift to the visual is absolutely paramount? You talk about gesture — however it's achieved it's visual.

ES That's the thing that I find people don't understand about screenwriting. When you ask them about it they really do think "Oh, that book is so full of great lines." But if all Lou and her sisters do is sit around a table and talk about how mad they are at their dad, we're going to stay interested in them for about five minutes. They never voice things to each other — that's the other thing, this family never actually voices true things to each other. So they have to act it out. How do they do that? How do we know that Norma is obsessed with her dead brother? In the book she thinks about him. In the screenplay, well, she builds a shrine to him. That becomes an active thing.

BS In the novel the characters are in some ways concealed. Also, they have concealed things that are about to be revealed, and Gowdy sets you up in various ways for that revelation. But I noticed in the script that visual set-ups exist throughout, and only at the very end do I realize that this is the moment where all these things pop together on an image and a line that Lou speaks about how far the throw has to be.

ES One of the things that happened in the course of the adaptation is that we shifted the structure of the book. The book begins with us knowing that this woman Mary threw her baby off of Niagara Falls. We learn this when the sisters find a newspaper

clipping. But we wanted there to be mystery about why this baby was haunting this family. We didn't want people to know at the beginning. There was a draft that opened with the scene of Mary at the Falls. You didn't know if she had thrown the baby or dropped it, but you knew that the baby had gone over. We lost that because we thought it's actually a lovely mystery: What are these people so caught up about? What is it that they're so scared of talking about? Now we discover two-thirds of the way through the screenplay that Lou and Norma know this about their mother and discovered this clipping when they were kids; that's what a lot of the rage and anxiety in this family is about. It's about infanticide. Did our mother throw the baby or not? In the book all three of the sisters find the clipping, but in the movie, Sandy, the youngest, is oblivious. We use Sandy's discovery of her mother's crime as a way to propel all three of the sisters towards the Falls at the end of the movie. So it's really structured differently. The movie takes place in the last year of the mother's life and the book takes place over a 10 year period.

One of the things that people love about this book, that they invariably say to me when they hear I'm working on it is, "Oh my God, that scene in the bomb shelter is so incredible." There is this set piece in the middle of the book, in the first third of the book, a series of scenes, a short story really which takes place in the bomb shelter. A bunch of little girls stuck in a bomb shelter with their father who won't let them out and their mother who's drinking herself to death. This was one of the big questions in approaching the adaptation: how to treat the material in the bomb shelter. And there were drafts which didn't include anything in the bomb shelter — in the past, in flashbacks, or anything. We just left it out because what happens in there is so altogether complicated that if you walk in, you're in there for half an hour of a 90 minute film. You're stuck with child-actors who won't be the same actors as the teenage sisters, and you're with them for far too long. That's what the movie becomes. What we finally settled on, and this is one of the great things in terms of how collaboration works: in a conversation between Robin (the producer) and Scott (the director) and I, we decided to

make the culmination of this horrible time in the bomb shelter be Lou and Norma's discovery of the newspaper clipping. Suddenly the bomb shelter isn't just this horrible thing that happens in the past, but it is that moment when the family is trapped together and truths come out. So, putting together the discovery of clipping and the bomb shelter means the bomb shelter serves a purpose in the screenplay.

BS It becomes Lou's refuge. She's rejected by her father. As he says, "It's mine. Get out of here." But it's also a thing underground, it's the thing buried.

ES It's the buried thing, it's the wound. I really see this father as a man who wants so badly to do right and is so wrong-headed in how he goes about it. He wants to protect the family, so he builds a bomb shelter, and he ends up totally fucking them up. He couldn't be more wrong in his approach but in general his gesture is quite generous. It's the gesture of a boy, of a child who is not really thinking.

BS The other thing I particularly noted in the difference between the book and the adaptation is that the father's womanizing disappears, and the reader or the viewer has to begin to think about his activities more around what he does in the house because we see him mainly inside. An interesting character that I look forward to seeing on the screen because I know there's so much work there for an actor.

ES It's interesting, that question of what you can do with the characters in a novel that you can't do in a film. I think it's very similar to that idea of finding the short story in the novel. In the sense that in the book there's the complexity and the time to experience Jim Field as a womanizer. You still find him in many ways sympathetic. But if we spend time on developing him as a womanizer — in the film — that's time we don't spend developing his relationship to his family. In a movie, there's not enough room for every character to have all those different

shades. Also I felt very strongly that if we saw him with another woman, it had to be from the girls' point of view because the film really is only what the girls see. There's a few moments of Mary alone, a few moments of Jim alone, but really we need time to feel the girls' point of view and particularly to feel that it is Lou's point of view. At the end, I think that Lou and Norma have taken the wheel of the car and are driving things and are saying to their father, "We can be a family but it's going to be on new terms."

BS In the book the car's used as a way to manipulate someone, undermine her as a person, yet it's also the vehicle of their redemption, because it is part of that redemptive gesture.

ES That's another case where in the book Jim really does try to molest Norma, comes on to her, has growing sexual feelings for her. In the film it felt stronger to me as a piece if we saw Jim as somebody so desperate for some kind of connection that he tries to connect inappropriately with his daughter. It's a reiteration of that sense in which he was always trying to trying to build things — build the home, build the bombshelter — but in the process of he ends up kicking them out and beating them up.

I read an interview with Sue Swan about the adaptation of *The Wives of Bath*, and she said, "Film, you don't need the extremes because you're watching something visually." If this guy was hitting his kids as much in the film as he does in the book, we would never be able to empathize with him. So we have to cut back on that in order to make him a character that draws any kind of empathy.

I've heard Barbara Gowdy talk about the book, about what war does to men and what men do to women as a result. She really feels it's a book that came out of World War II. But we don't have that span of time, so one way to embed war into the screenplay was to set it in 1969, in the later part of what's in the book, and to include the world of the Vietnam War a bit more. One of the things I did was to make Tom an American instead of an Englishman. This is the guy that Lou falls in love with. He

becomes an emblem of rebellion and resistance and the kind of radical response to the father from the 50s that came out of WW II. I made Tom an American who drives this milk truck covered with anti-war slogans — one of the slogans on his truck is “make love not war”. It sounds so clichéd, but I keep thinking that that’s the one thing that Lou needs to learn. And it’s the thing maybe she begins to come to learn by the end of the film. There’s something about the screenplay, reducing the characters to simple phrases, that becomes complicated in the grammar of the screenplay, but, it can be helpful actually.

BS And the grammar of the screenplay gets played out on the screen. I was going to ask you about the restrictions on the screenplay. In terms of time, money, budget, all that. Is that how you and your collaborators approached the script, or is that just part of the background?

ES Of course every page costs money. So the longer the thing is, the bigger the budget’s going to be. Plus the reality is that people don’t want to sit through very long movies. Unless its *Lawrence of Arabia* or *The English Patient* or something epic. But here, we’re talking about a family drama. One thing I find interesting, and Walter Murch, the editor, talked about this. Movies of a single point of view tend to have to be shorter. Movies with multiple points of view can be longer. The audience has more patience when they’re looking through the eyes of different characters. *Falling Angels* is a movie with multiple points of view, so we’ve got a bit more time to play with — 2 hours, somewhere between 90 and 120 pages. *Falling Angels* comes in at about 108 pages. It would be nice if we could lose ten pages of it. And I’m sure we will, but we can’t see yet what those pages are.

BS So part of the challenge and opportunity as the process continues still involves saying, “Okay, here we’ve got a novel, that in at least one edition is 200 pages long, and we’re going to operate at about 100 pages ourselves. What do we do?”

ES Where do we cut, what do we lose. And my training in television actually has been really good for that. When I worked as a writer on *Da Vinci's*, we were shooting 13 episodes a year, so we were shooting beginning of July through beginning of November, and every seven working days we had to have another script. The scripts were going into production for the week before they started shooting, and you would've written this script that was all about somebody throwing himself off the Burrard bridge. Then you get the call two days before you're supposed to shoot: oh, we can't get the Burrard Bridge. In fact, we can't get any bridge. That didn't actually happen, but that kind of thing does, and you'd say, "Okay, this is now a story about a man who stubs his toe," and you had to come up with whatever the next thing was and adapt to that. I loved that part of television, loved the adrenaline of that kind of challenge. It takes the same mental gymnastics as doing a crossword puzzle: these things have to be put together and you've got these letters here. So maybe if we shifted this thing on page 2 over here and put this scene in the office. You were always figuring out imaginative ways to do things. Or even just the restrictions on what you could see in terms of violence. You know you want to make something that's really scary, but it has to be achieved totally through what you suggest imaginatively, not through what is actually seen. I found that a wonderful challenge. I say this now, of course, but I'm sure I'll be pulling my hair out if I'm ever told we can't shoot at Niagara Falls. I can't see us saying, "Well, we'll build in the studio."

BS That's the other — advantage isn't the word — of a screenplay or a visual medium: what's embedded in its surface. Sometimes I think, rightly or wrongly, of the camera as a kind of narrator or the visual presence of the film as a narrator — its tone or voice. Because so much can be done with light and so much can be done with single characters.

ES If there is an equivalent to the voice in a novel, it's the director's writing and camerawork, the visual sensibility of film. It's a visual

voice, you experience it visually. Film works and sustains itself because there's a visual language and grammar created. It tells you what kind of tale it is.

BS This seems a rare opportunity, that you as a writer will likely, if the project goes ahead, find yourself right down there on the sound stage, on set.

ES I think it happens a lot in Canadian film. For instance, Noel Baker is the wonderful screenwriter who wrote the screenplay of *Hard Core Logo*. He has a whole book about that project. Every day he was on set, writing and rewriting dialogue. I do think that's more the norm in Canadian film. As I was immersing myself in the adaptation, I was also at work on a book of poetry and I was also finishing up a collaborative novel that came out this year. And I realized, because I was juggling these three different forms, that in fact poetry and screenwriting are much closer to each other than novel writing. Perhaps that's what's so difficult about adaptation: poetry and screenwriting have a similar grammar; I find fiction writing really difficult. I don't sit down at my computer with the same joy. You have to describe everything on every wall in fiction, find that original voice in tone—you know, your character walks into a room with a coffee cup and she has to do something with it. And you have to try to find an interesting way to say he-said she-said; there are so few routes you can take. What I love about screenwriting is that you cut into a scene really late, you get out of it as early as you want, you get the bare bones. It really is dreamlike, a kind of fantasy. Life doesn't take place at all like it does in the movies, cutting in and cutting out, leaps, going back in time, going forward, dream states. Film can be so inventive and strange. This is so much like poetry, except that in poetry you're driven by language rather than by action.

BS My own experience in the screenplay form and dramatic stage form is finding myself right down there on every line weighing each word, wanting to make it quick, to the point, trying to find

the voice of the character that's speaking, but realizing, my God, the economy here is really tight. Which is really wonderful because there's all this open space. I was thinking also about your long poem *Anchoress*, which is almost a novel.

ES I've always thought of it as a slideshow. These moments between the sisters and this boyfriend who becomes the lover of both of them, and you see visual moments between them. Actually, it's much more like a screenplay than it is like a novel. Because it sort of leaps from one moment to something six months later then to something in the past .

BS It's very visual, too, which is another thing that struck me about the screenplay. Even though I used the word dialogue, I wasn't reading it as dialogue. I was feeling the animation of these individuals because the direction in a sense has already been provided.

ES Dialogue is really difficult. I don't have a great ear for how people talk, for phrasing, the way a teenager talks. I'd love to run the dialogue past Barbara Gowdy because she does have an extraordinary ear. She remembers exactly how she said things: "Well no, in 1970 we would've said this, but in 1968 we'd have said this." So yeah, it's funny to be a screenwriter with a kind of dead ear. Maybe that's why I turned to adaptations —because you have something to draw on from the book in terms of dialogue.

BS Sometimes when I read a screenplay, I flip through it very quickly and get the drift, but the more I listen, the more I watch, and as I listened I thought this script has an interesting verbal and visual pace to it.

ES One thing I've been really trying to train myself to do is watch the screenplay in my head as I'm writing it. It's best to do this when I'm revising. When I'm writing it's okay because I'm writing and the images in my head are moving the story forward,

but when I'm revising, I have to actually make myself think of it as a movie playing in my head, instead of thinking of it as a document on a page. It doesn't matter whether the script is reading well or not. Screenplays aren't written to be read. It has to play well in the movie of my brain. I think the very best directors take what's on the page and see it as a movie in their heads, and they say, "You know, this thing isn't working, this dynamic is wonky." I tend to look at the rhythms on the page. It's probably why I will never be a director. Because I find it quite difficult to make the script stand up in three dimensions. I always think that the best screenplays have a subterranean river flowing through, and that subterranean river has the real information about the characters and what they're going through. The real story should be totally subterranean, and when you're writing the story you can't put any of that on the page. So it's like you're digging these underground canals which lead the river of the story. If you're going to move something from one place to another it better fit into that canal structure and lead the water under the surface of the thing in the right way. It's very strange work, but in the best films you walk away thinking, "He said that but that's not what he meant, what he meant was this." And you know what he meant because of that underground river. Because what's on the surface isn't what's underneath.

Liz Waldner / TWO POEMS

Lost Lost Lost

— *for whosoever would save his life shall lose it . . . Luke 9.24*

i. Lost sheep

I don't know where I am to be found.

I know the way to a place is called direction;
truly, knowing is not enough.

And in what sense am I a place?

Hearing wants to be nominated —
the bee hears the sun's electric song
and sings along by seeking.

Why argue this?

But touch insists on its place at the table:
in green pastures make me to lie
down and eat of the green
body, until I am found enough
to be my own bourne

and like a seed, saved.

ii. Lost coin

I feel sheepish. I buried the money
(mercury winged) knowing exactly
where in earth my cache of silver
coin lies: that it loses itself
to save itself
simply isn't true.

iii. Lost daughter

Some days my feeling is wanting
to find something. I am waiting
all the days to receive this communion.
The sun's coin on my tongue is a token:
the day spends itself on journeys of words
and buys me a ticket to days I will lose.
The sun travels its shadows. I don't move.

Day speaks to day with my tongue;
it traces across the pasture
fir, birch: letters that spell out my name,
this address of flesh the same,
a green grown of ten thousand lost things.
Tonight I will lie in their shadows,
the better not to be found. Forked Song

I am the one who is here.
I am eating the color of leaf.
Speared on a silver-tined fork I wave
a wheel of boiled carrot at the view —
at October and its mountain and its leaves.

The world fits me.
For my right ear is a notch,
a duplicated valley's V ascending askew,
earth opening like Venus' shell
bearing the bluegray of sea.

Hiss on shingle, it isn't. It is mountain there
blue in its distance, far and blue.
One heave of not-sea, one angle of un-wave.
Hush, you.

It turns itself to cloud, that sea
and sails, meet for my brow.
That is how I look when I think,
I think, and the several blues
fall right into my upturned eyes.

Maples in front of my nose
are for my nose, red and red.
The house behind me
suits the hair on my head.

For my left ear is an apple orchard,
a dozen trees in pairs escorting
a marble walk. The rock grows gray.
The red roundnesses make a slow music
as they fall down year after year,
a rhythm my heart knocks out untaught.

Shadows rise up and fall down with a-swing, with a rock
like the sea's that roars on the palms of my hands
when I cup the world to my ears.
I wear the far field like a watch as I swallow
wheel after wheel of orange.
I am the one who is here.

Ryan Knighton / FOUR POEMS

Dogs Can Kill You

Squinting up at the mighty absence of nicotine he thinks
my god, gardening is all I can hope for.
That might just be enough to do the trick, whatever
the trick really is. He doesn't know
anything about aphids or crabgrass, but harbours suspicion
it's more Reaganomics than Wordsworth. Nature
is a laissez-faire affair, not real if it fills in your application
for the five year plan of empty Sunday make-work projects.

After hockey season declines with a hand to its forehead
then expires, gasp, silver screen style, how can this
compare other than there is no comparing to what's natural.
So against it he's fortified in the kitchen's freeze-frame
taking his coffee standing up, uncertain where
to direct his feet from their tiles because, gasp, the ashtray
is on the deck & his shoes by the door, two sleeping dogs
smiling the way shoes do.

No, it's not true, all of these false particulars, he knows
but a mind is far fetched, like a real dog, maybe
the one in her house, really asleep, & really kind
of running, unnatural, in her own bio-chemical dream
under skies heavy with sticks & bones, all of it
prime for pelting.

When the Old Poets Go Their Sadness Goes With Them

I suppose when you leave us your office
you will take your trees and oxen with you
pack them up on a significant mule, out of anthologies
and Christianity, into a blue Adidas bag
with the Post-It Notes and pink highlighters
all the crummy stuff at the bottom of teaching
and serious administrators. The basics
you lent your labour to, a prolonged meditation
on cows and aging, a memo trees groove to the mind
that lends itself. I don't mean to take
anything away from you. The root causes:
all the cool and philosophical ones
live to 85 in bad suits, and the passionate knuckle-dusters
well, they just don't. Let this be a lesson to you
and your mutual funds. As for passion
save it for the logging community, it's called
being earnest at the CBC. All our callers ask
just close your mouth when you chew
and let the young go to grass.

The Motion Carries

Hurried with George
from the union meeting
past our library Virginia Woolf
crouches between us
with her scissors, our minds
domed in toques & Liberal
cutbacks, how they hang
from the campus trees.

But what scared me most
about The Blair Witch Project
were the phantom sounds
gruesome camp
of hands scratching at your tent flaps
all night long. You know
the what-was-thatness
beyond a world and its language
deficit.

Mrs. Dalloway's madness in birds
go on chirping beauty in Greek.

You know what we mean
to do about it
how someone wants to attack a world
from behind, make it *the* world
someone might leap for
spooked from windows

as today's agenda has it
a poem can't catch

that goddamned thing out there.

Not On My Watch

As if you'll know you want to write
a poem because you feel like taking
a walk or something

he said. Now we're in the muck
off-leash at the dog park, a warmth coming on
& find Bobo's pissing down the back of my leg

again. Just to think: we want the most comforting sleep
the one with someone's breath in someone's ear, a light snore
unbearable on a good day.

Put your hand to it, cock
hammer & stirrup to the vibrations
of still being here.

Same goes for the dog
howling all night at you-name-it, whatever skulks
just below our windows

& lets loose inside
some doggy feeling
of *mine mine mine*.

Stephen Collis / A MAP OF OUR FAILURES

1.

What is the form of
verbalizing existence?

you Language, people did
misuse the myth of emptiness

for money food tears
the the O to overcome digression

we lie after loneliness sucking
and relieved as we are relived

the clot of words stolen
in a naked entering of hand

through calm deliverance
what have we still

sexual out-flung and beaten
dry after this useless

house country temple
knowing years enter us

everything happens in the
sink of our slim failures

people, the French America
of terse arousal, flames of

you, Language house
holding fracture and a loom

2.

Time nor abstract solid
a hand touching frame

of house book dignity
the price of spice

sent turgid not armada
but a master was a ship's

captain and I have
waited a long time master

for the form wind would
take clay-red behind

green sward of tree
breach of sense and

continuity found speaking
alone of ancestors founding

why gravity meditation
would anyone leave the cool

of coast to set up somewhere
nowhere 1734 the words

fail at the hustings
shroud of mackerel colored

sky lift of belly hand
to hold house piano forte

miasma of flower fir fern
outstretch land dormitory

brickwork this legend of
books written but never read

why anyone does anything
alienating and marginal

stealing land and history
words right out of mouths

poem as Pontus or
you burn you Language

seethe us seeding into
verdure of myth just starting

to rain Medea and cold
betrayal of pavement beneath

the beach go back to
back to sound Altnaveigh

3.

Everything rolls in sunder
a word is appropriate

appropriated she sits a
book at her elbow

perhaps flowers in her
hands relaxed motion house

means much burns another
way perhaps poems or

a white dress small and
defiant don't sunfish tell her

what not to read in thin
maculate leaves of skin

wrestling another
at sea hands entering

the water to turn the
pages of clam shells

the decision made great
shaking among old plans

and thawing of fancy's
reasoned frost-works

4.

What is verbalized
danger's awkward reward?

Uncultivated fresh modernity
throws speech scintilla

sound fans flames hand
to wheel lifting lines

threads needle head angels
thrust apologetic notes

under navigate door house
a shuddering ship lions

keep at bay useless
in a tempest but

using a good oar
in smoother waters

I have handsome books
bound in calf

a meadow a measure needle
to carve clay skin

sensuous turns of pleasure's
beak igniting silence

aporia what was not
said known or set sail

you Language you failure
sea shepherds of the chorus

watching fish flocks
flecking the blue

go purple go ubiquity open
to republics and

reminiscences as trees become
breezy shift out of oak

tress groves the light a
lever your family lives there

they are words lightnings
failures to connect a

blanket of snow a stream
of light white in one

direction and red in
the other O whippoorwill

of family I drive time's
arrow root road to

return to shared aches
we've not soothed

origin's nutrient voice
calcula of speech

I read in driveway light
awkward to enter my hand

so blue the house
the chamber can we

mend mind's leanings out
of discourse windows pain

who is excluded debauched
run out mad from

Calcutta's black hole of words
muttering colonies and forgetting

this light river leading Herodotus
to figure it out for himself

again the ladies wait and are
not glad of writing

ships at the lighthouse
and Harper's Ferry

you said go found a lighthouse
in the middle of the desert

regular only in
being irregular

5.

That and history's vocative
enameling what was not said

in acts that damaged sense
meaning knowledge, verse

that paltry we carried our
coast and others were cold

without soot on their faces
and nothing but counting ribs

that commodity and charlatans
gave gingerly stone buildings grief

small pocks for you and for
you some glass beads

that war writes itself mantras
glory and recompense twice value

that states state their purpose
in lies of purple prose

sheer momentum cantilever and
exhortation the house houses keeps

that industry and that poison's nick
felt in the door's frame

that we did not say it loud
enough fire for the ocean

and rain for the wastes
temple flesh love but

books burn haste centuries
of it fantastic and we

didn't use it well or even
at all notaries and futures

spent on ambiguous projects
of defense go hungry

go desire tell Mercury
rise and spins too close

that Eden that Dachau
that sword was not a

ploughshare master at sea
and nothing published to tell

Meredith Quartermain / TWO POEMS

Cochineal

A small fiery dome of black spots
crawls in my lamplight —
with tiny articulations
of edges of paper and
smooth blue plastic of pen.

Now and again she stretches her wings.

She holds paper surface
ridged with the fibres of trees
in her hands, or, if you like, her non-hands —
what we give insects for hands.

She comes to rest again
in a valley between two red hills,
facing away from the green felt
scalloped around a pinhead
of Remembrance Day poppy.
So jaunty on its straight-pin stalk —
its scarlet plastic is fuzzed
and puffed to undulate
like petals.

Under her fiery dotted back
she has tucked her legs,
or, if you like, her appendages,
that hold on to the rough poppy redness.

The whitish patches we might see as eyes
face the gray light from the window.

It is November. Would she like to go now
from my warm, dry desk to wet leaves and frost?
Will my book explain the desires of insects?
It does not list ladybugs.
Should I look in my index
under insects?

Ladybird beetle, they call her,
from the family Coccinellidae.
A dash of colour across my tongue —
a hummingbird from Emily Dickinson.

And when eyes are hummingbirds
who'll tie them,
with a lead string, Williams asked.

And when words
are humming
birds
who'll set them free?

"Ladybird, ladybird
fly away home, your house is on fire,
your children all gone."

Flash of wing-light zips from the scarlet poppy.
Gone? To my blue wall?

the bright quilt? the lamp? Ah — the black
plastic of telephone
passage to midnight sky
to the space in darkness.
She walks along, then headfirst down a vertical side,
then upside down the underside
to a keyhole
the telephone could hang on a screw-head.

On the tops of mountains in late summer,
the book says,
Ladybird beetles gather on rocks,
then crawl beneath
with friendly red bodies
for their winter sleep.

Can I call her this —
tell her this —
inside my telephone?

For Someone in Heart Surgery

walk along seawall
the edge of this
white frost encrusted sand
the shimmer the mirror of sea
the line of glass distance to sky
freighters rusted hulls stilled
a vast singing organ of day
of sunshine of bright logs
on the beach, of bright dogs
fetching sticks or a man's walk
on top of rock wall above waves
shading his eyes, water glimmers
his cheeks, forehead, lapping
sea at shore, the shore of this
gathering
flock of buffle-heads huddle
in shallows, diving, bobbing
up, shaking wings with squirps
and squinges, woman towed
by flock of terrier sniff at
grass and earth, an artist's
yellow loop encircling sky
sea, trees pull into this
skinhead youth burly sunbaked
between log and boulder
skateboard, wheels up,

on outstretched legs
shoulder tight to his mate
with dirty ball-cap on matted hair
jeans grubbed, torn, running shoes
worn through, a gnarled hand
holding a cup made of plastic,
whole crew of men jogging
office out for lunch of lycra legs
striped trainers, white socks
shirts black and red black
and blue, black and yellow
thudded bodies pound
past mother speaking French
to toddler ambling behind stroller
red cheeks, eyes blue as the sea
pull
pull into this
three white dots on black
feathers of ducktail
pull into this day.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

HANNAH CALDER is a writer from Vancouver, BC. She is currently working as an English teacher in Seoul, South Korea, and plans to return to Vancouver for graduate school at SFU this fall.

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DIANA HARTOG is the author of three award-winning books of poetry, and a novel, *The Photographer's Sweethearts*. She is currently at work on a second novel, and a collection of poetry — *Ink Monkey*.

RYAN KNIGHTON's first book of poetry, *Swing in the Hollow*, was published by Anvil Press. He is also a co-author with George Bowering of *Cars*, a forthcoming collection of prose and other odd parts. He continues to teach in the English Department at Capilano College.

SHARON H. NELSON is the author of nine books and many chapbooks. She has written literary reviews, stage plays, poetry, and essays, many with feminist and social justice themes. (See www3.sympatico.ca/sharon.nelson/). "Rock Candy" is from her most recent book, *This Flesh These Words* (Ekstasis, 2002).

JENNY PENBERTHY teaches at Capilano College. Her edition of *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Poems* has just been published by the University of California Press.

CAMILLA PICKARD's poetry has appeared in *filling Station Magazine*, and anthologized in *Netherwords* and *Love Poems for the Media Age* (Vancouver: Ripple Effect Press). She has a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Creative Writing from Capilano College. She teaches literature and composition at ECIAD and creative process workshops. She is currently at work on a novella about desire.

MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN lives in Vancouver, BC. Her publications include *Terms of Sale* (Meow, 1996), *Abstract Relations* (Keefer Street, 1998), *Veers* (Backwoods Broadsides, 1998), *Gospel According to Bees* (Keefer Street, 2000), *Spatial Relations* (Diaeresis, 2001), and *Inland Passage* (housepress, 2001). Her work has appeared in *West Coast Line*, *Chain*, *Raddle Moon*, *Sulfur*, *East Village Poetry Web*, *on word* (U.K.), *Matrix*, and more, and is forthcoming in *Queen Street Quarterly*.

BOB SHERRIN, writer and visual artist, lives in Burnaby, BC. His work has been published or exhibited in Canada, the US, Scotland, Switzerland, and Italy. He teaches in the Humanities Division of Capilano College.

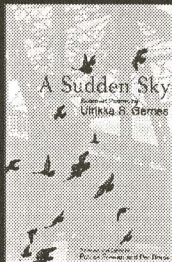
ESTA SPALDING lives in Vancouver. Her most recent book of poetry is *The Wife's Account*.

GEORGE STANLEY has taken refuge in a long poem. The first two sections of "Vancouver, Book One" appeared in *At Andy's* (Vancouver: New Star, 2000).

LIZ WALDNER is the author of *Homing Devices* (O Books), *A Point is That Which Has No Part*, winner of The Iowa Poetry Prize 2000 and the Academy of American Poets Laughlin Prize 2000, and *Self and Simulacra*, the Alice James Hawley Prize for 2001. Forthcoming in early 2002 are *Etym(bi)ology* from Omnidawn Publishing and *Dark Would* from the University of Georgia Contemporary Poetry Series.

PHYLLIS WEBB is best known as a poet and in 1982 won the Governor General's Award for poetry for *The Vision Tree, Selected Poems*, edited by Sharon Thesen. *Hanging Fire* appeared in 1990 (Coach House Press, now distributed by Talon Books); in 1995, *Nothing But Brush Strokes, Selected Prose* was published (NeWest Press). She began painting in 1993. She is an Officer of the Order of Canada and lives on Salt Spring Island, BC.

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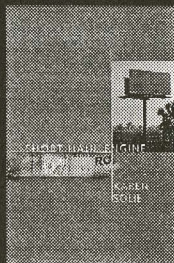
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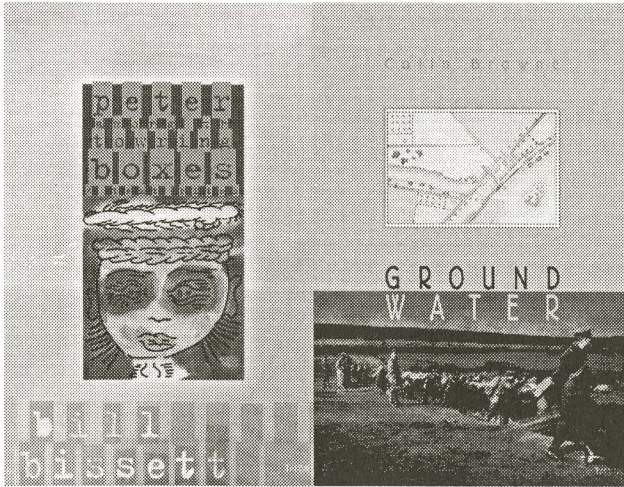
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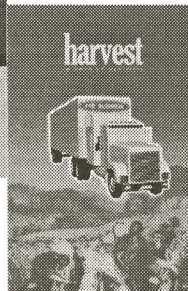
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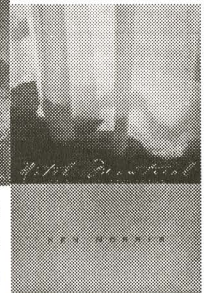


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