

An abstract artwork featuring a large yellow sun in the upper left, a central green tree-like shape, and various colorful geometric and organic forms in shades of orange, purple, blue, and green. The composition is dense and layered, with a textured, painterly quality.

TCR

THE CAPILANO REVIEW

To put echoes together again—
all the song's horses and all the song's pens.

—MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN

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The Capilano Review is published by The Capilano Press Society. Canadian subscription rates for one year are \$25 GST included for individuals. Institutional rates are \$30 plus GST. Outside Canada, add \$5 and pay in U.S. funds. Address correspondence to *The Capilano Review*, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, BC V7J 3H5. Subscribe online at www.thecapilanoreview.ca

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The Capilano Review gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the British Columbia Arts Council, Capilano University, and the Canada Council for the Arts. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Magazines Fund toward our editorial and production costs.

The Capilano Review is a member of Magazines Canada, the BC Association of Magazine Publishers, and the Alliance for Arts and Culture (Vancouver).

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NUMBER 40063611. RETURN UNDELIVERABLE
CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO CIRCULATION—TCR, 2055 PURCELL WAY, NORTH
VANCOUVER, BC V7J 3H5

ISSN 0315 3754 | (Published October 2010)

Printed in Vancouver, BC, by Hemlock Printers.



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL
Supported by the Province of British Columbia



The Canada Council
for the Arts | Le Conseil des Arts
du Canada

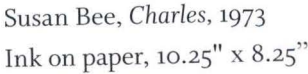
CapilanoUniversity **Canada**

3.12 / FALL 2010

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Susan Bee, *Self-Portrait*, 1973
Ink on paper, 10.25" x 8.25"



Ink on paper, 10.25" x 8.25"

**Susan Bee & Charles Bernstein in Ruskin, BC
1973**

ANDREA ACTIS / “But sometimes a sign’s all you need”: A Conversation with Susan Bee & Charles Bernstein

You spent approximately nine months in British Columbia in the early 1970s. Can I ask you to recreate the scene? Who or what brought you here? How did you travel? Where did you stay? Were you on holidays from some kind of work or idleness in the United States? Did you engage in some other kind of work or idleness during your time in BC or elsewhere in Canada?

Susan Bee: We arrived in British Columbia in the winter of 1973. I had just graduated with a B.A. in art history and art after three and a half years at Barnard College in New York, which was also my home town. Charles and I met in high school, when I was 16 and he was 17 years old. He went to Bronx Science and I went to Music and Art. We remained together as a couple when he went to Harvard, but meanwhile I stayed in New York to go to college. When he got a grant (the William Lyon MacKenzie King Fellowship) to spend a year studying in Canada, I decided to finish college early and join him. We looked at a map and decided to go as far away from the East Coast as possible and that’s how we chose Vancouver as our destination.

Charles looked at schools to study at there. The University of British Columbia dean said he would have to sit for exams, so he looked for another college to study at and found Simon Fraser, where they said he could study what he wanted without requirements.

We took a plane to Madison, Wisconsin, and stayed at a farm for Christmas, then left by train for Vancouver, traveling on the TransCanadian railway. For us it was an adventure to leave home and the familiarity of the urban areas. The ride was spectacular through the Rockies with waterfalls and also through the flat frozen Midwestern plains.

From a professor at Simon Fraser, we got a rental, an unfinished house in the rain-forest in rural Ruskin (between Haney and Mission). We bought a used red VW bug,

with 80,000 miles on it and rust, and in fact it was quite a lemon. It was also a stick shift, which neither of us knew how to drive, but we managed somehow.

Charles went to class with Robin Blaser, a seminar in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, while I stayed in the house and painted and drew and cooked and read books. For me, it was a welcome break from endless years of schooling. We had roommates in the house and cats to look after and we learned to bake bread and to chop wood to heat the house with. Neither of us had ever lived in the woods except in the summer and we learned to wield an axe and make a fire and Charles used the chainsaw. We went for long walks in the woods with the cats and Charles wrote poems. We also read Emily Dickinson's poetry out loud. It was quite an idyllic interlude, though not an easy transition for me. I wasn't used to the unstructured time, but I immersed myself in the immediacy of this new existence, though I was somewhat homesick for the urban fray of New York.

Are you able to recall the name of the SFU professor who rented out the property in Ruskin?

Charles Bernstein: Names are elusive. I do remember it was Dean Walter Gage of the University of British Columbia who said I'd have to formally enroll in classes to be affiliated with UBC. Simon Fraser was much more accommodating. I'd majored in philosophy at college so my initial contacts at SFU were with the Philosophy Department. I think it was David Finn from that department who said we could rent the ground floor of a house he had just built in Ruskin. He was renting the upper two floors to a few other students. Finn had originally planned to move into the house himself, with his family, but his plans went awry. The house itself was a modern wood house with almost no insulation, so we had to keep a wood fire going all the time to stay warm. I'd never chopped wood before, but now I was swinging an axe if not like a native then not like a killer on the loose either, though my forte was the chainsaw. I love the smell of chainsaw gasoline in the morning, the intoxicating buzz, the moment when blade makes contact with tree. (I've never used an axe or a chainsaw since.)

David Finn. I think that was the name, or something near. Not Quinn, as Susan at first thought—that's a character from Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*. Finn, yes now I am almost sure that's the name, though I find almost no trace of him on the web except that on July 12, 1973 (midway in our stay in BC) one David Finn, Ph.D., signed off on an Education M.A. thesis by Wayne R. Pack (B.Sc., University of Illinois) entitled "The Measurement of Values: A Multivariate Analysis of Five Value Batteries and the Relation of Twelve Value Dimensions to Behavioral and Attitudinal Variables." I didn't get to know Finn, but, based on my interests, he recommended I take Robin Blaser's Emily Dickinson seminar. As a 22 year-old just out of college, I didn't know about Robin. I remember Finn said something like Blaser's stellar, which surprised me since Finn was more into the dry analytic philosophy I'd found so distasteful at Harvard (though now I see my irrational fear of positivist assault may have caused me to miss the chance to charge my value batteries or anyway learn to get the best price for my energy needs). I did, at first anyway, attend some philosophy department colloquia, but pondering over the stipulative definition of stipulative definition left me colder than the damp air in the Ruskin house (before we put the fire up). Pretty soon I started to come into SFU just one day a week, for Robin's seminar.

During your time at SFU, did you spend much time in the library's Contemporary Literature Collection?

CB: Yes. The library's new poetry collection was a treasure trove. I was in touch with Jerome Rothenberg and Ron Silliman at the time and following up on their suggestions/engagements, along with Robin's. I basically had my introduction to the New American Poetry through the collection.

During your stay in BC, did you ever meet any other local writers?

CB: I didn't meet those folks till the late '70s or early '80s, partly through L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E and *Open Letter* and Steve McCaffery. At the time, I pretty

much only met Robin. Otherwise, we kept much to ourselves in Ruskin, where I was reading and writing. Still, that time in Ruskin and at SFU did ultimately give me a deep connection to West Coast Canadian poetry; Vancouver became an active place in my geographic imagination. In fact, Susan and I applied for landed immigrant status while we were there. But we got turned down, probably because there were already too many educated young Americans who'd come to Canada to avoid the Vietnam War draft. We were quite surprised to be rejected. But after nine months in the Northwest, we were ready to find a sunnier place.

You mentioned in an email that you left Ruskin in late summer and traveled via Banff. Did you ever stop by the Banff Centre or otherwise have any affiliation with the programming there?

CB: We packed up our VW bug (Susan always says it was a lemon, but it lasted us a long time and I never felt it was so bad, let's call it a lime), with all our stuff stuffed in the back, and drove to the Rockies, then due south, then over to California, where we ended up in Santa Barbara for the last months of 1973 and most of 1974. Was the Banff Center even around at that time? I was just there, for the first time, this past March. We camped all the way from Vancouver to Santa Barbara. I didn't know how tent technology worked so we'd wake up every morning when the condensation from the sides of our pup tent started dripping on our faces. Like wielding an axe, it would be the last time I pitched a tent.

At one point in your collection My Way: Speeches and Poems (1999), in a piece titled "Poetics of the Americas," you gesture to revise or replace Kamau Brathwaite's famous appeal to "nation language" with Robin Blaser's concept of "image nations"—a formulation that better accounts, in your view, for dialect as necessarily dispersed and centrifugal, and as fundamentally "imaginary, ideological; dialectical in that other sense." Can you speak a little to any influence Blaser had on you as a teacher or has had on you as a writer?

CB: I have written several essays on Robin's work: a short piece in *Content's Dream: Essays 1975-1984*, "Robin on His Own" in *My Way*, and an afterword to the new edition of his collected poems, *The Holy Forest*. You are right to point to the importance of his "image nations" for me. Also his practice of a poetry of citations, the poem a tissue of quotations. Of the New American Poets, Robin was the most philosophically engaged, apart from Olson, but the full extent of that would only become apparent for most readers with Miriam Nichols's recent edition of his essays, since he published his essays and talks only sporadically. The big exception being "The Practice of Outside," his influential preface to Jack Spicer's *Collected Books*.

I met Robin at the perfect time: he was the first poet of his generation I got to know and for all our differences of generation and temperament, I found him a kindred soul. So I guess I got some deep sense of poetics, as opposed to philosophy, from him, and how it came out of an active, and at times contentious, exchange among poets. The seminar was "marvelous"—that was the kind of word Robin used for the things he valued. The reading was exclusively the three volume T. H. Johnson edition of Dickinson. Much was brought into the discussion, but our only text was these poems, which have remained foundational for me. I remember very much reading Dickinson as one of the great philosophical thinkers of the 19th century, thinking of her work in relation to writers who'd already made such a strong impact on me—Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche in particular. But I'd be reading Thoreau and Emerson—this was close to the time I studied with Stanley Cavell in college—so Robin's Dickinson seemed necessary and reconnected to my reading of her work in high school. I loved the idea that a poem was a starting point for a discussion that could take you anywhere; and with Dickinson, the closer you stayed to her words, the farthest distance you'd be able to travel. Robin saw the poems as cosmologies, so I guess you could say I entered his galaxy that Winter in Burnaby, BC.

I can't help but think of Ruskin as an "image-nation" in its own right, particularly in light of the material you both produced around the time you lived there—and in your case, Susan, in your more recent retrospective painting, "Ruskin." Your description of it an "idyllic interlude" resonates deeply, too, with the town's original founding in the late 1800s as one of the few utopian-socialist "Ruskin colonies" ever set up in North America. "The eastern provinc-

es have been the slowest to move,” one George Weston Wrigley wrote for the *International Socialist Review* in 1901; “Ontario is rapidly learning the socialist lesson and western Canada is honeycombed with our doctrines.” You mention wanting to go “as far away from the East Coast as possible”; did you have any notions of the West Coast as politically or socially more sympathetic to the kind of work and living you wanted to be doing? Were you privy while living there to Ruskin’s history as a short-lived utopian-socialist commune? Was that history palpable? Because you certainly, if inadvertently, make it palpable in the work you created at the time. Everything from the intuitively rendered foliage and the bold, Edenic forms and colours of your paintings and drawings, Susan, which I see sharing formal (and by implication philosophical) affinities with the Arts and Crafts Movement Ruskin promoted in Britain, to your collaborative “Johnny June”—“no no not here not now not how not when oh yes and how, why when no doubt no doubt. A house”—to your lines, Charles, “why these questions of a quality or authenticity / & together & fun in itself that’s enough / that really what is wanted—sure community / then from a collective fun—but is it / new heights. What is it then inspiration!”...I’ll admit I can’t help but encounter your work from this period in the former Ruskin colony as somehow spiritually—and either deliberately or fortuitously—consistent with Ruskin as an “image-nation” of collective ideals and practices. Any thoughts?

CB: I still remember Susan pulling out a map at Lamont library, after I got the King Fellowship (it was a very small award of around \$3000, but we figured we could make it last a year), and pointing to the furthest place from where we were. After all, what would seem further from the stifling confines of Harvard College than Vancouver? So yes of course we had West Coast fever—the desire for open spaces, both environmentally and intellectually, well both going together.

SB: Canada seemed more progressive to us because of the government’s stance during the Vietnam war and its sheltering of war resisters. For me, this period was an escape from my formal education in painting and drawing. I was steeped in the tropes and issues of the New York artworld. This was a chance to engage with my imagination and the landscape, which was so different from the urban cityscape that I had previously addressed in my work. So the line drawings I did then were more like diary pages—personal, poetic, and dream-like. The paintings were of the forest and dealt

with the shapes and colors that I encountered there. It was an unusual period for me of introspection and enforced idleness, no jobs and no school and no city. I guess that is what made it idyllic. Charles and I were living together away from family for the first time and I had just turned 21. When I pulled out the old paintings and drawings and the papier mâché angels I made in Ruskin this year, I found oddly that they were very much like the paintings and drawings I'm still doing now. The trees still resonate and the angels still fly. In the new painting, I have long hair in braids that I wore then. Charles and I are back in Ruskin, innocents abroad, childless with our cat and snake in our Eden.

CB: But we had no notion of Ruskin's history till we found ourselves there, and no contact with its history apart from reading about it in books, which we did. We couldn't see or feel any whiff of utopian socialism in the air, maybe because it rained so much; at the time, I am sure we thought utopia would have blue skies. I always like to mention Ruskin, for the reasons you give; but as a practical matter it would be more accurate to say we lived in the Fraser valley between Haney and Mission. Each was about a 10-mile or 30-minute drive. There was nothing in Ruskin "itself" except the old lumber mill and a sign; or anyway nothing we ever found out about. But sometimes a sign's all you need.

As I recall, we usually went into Haney to shop. But I think we went to the movies in Mission, which was quite a small town at the time. I remember seeing Gordon Parks Jr.'s *Superfly* there and finding Mission such an incongruous place to see the film.

I read no Ruskin in Ruskin. But maybe you're right anyway. I am willing to think that the frame of Ruskin gives an adequate account of what was going through our minds and art in those years immediately following the huge political and social upheaval of the late '60s and early '70s. We did leave centers of all that—Cambridge and New York—to live in a rural area. Having lived all our lives in big cities, it was a huge change. And we rarely left the rainforest to go into Vancouver or SFU (Robin's seminar met once a week during part of our stay and Susan often stayed at home those days too). That was a transitional time for both of us; for me, a time of reading and thinking and writing in relative isolation. It was the time when I began to see the tangible possibility of a life of poetry and poetics and, just as much, to see it as a collective enterprise. The earliest poems I have previously published are from the fol-

lowing year, from after we moved to Santa Barbara. Yet that Ruskin writing was formative. One prose poem, in particular, remains in my mind, but I couldn't find a copy for you. It was called "Hermes Hermeneutic" and began: "Hermes Hermeneutic, the swashbuckle kid from Alacazam, swim, swam, swum past fireflies and mint juleps, pussies in the ally and lizzagator monsters." Image nation? Sure: we baked bread, chopped wood, read books aloud, painted, and wrote poetry. It set a pattern to which we both come back, in our imaginations anyway. It's not that different from what we are doing now, this July, in Rose Bay, on Nova Scotia's southeast shore.

There's more colour and sun dancing around in Susan's retrospective painting of Ruskin than there ever was in Ruskin, then? Would you say that Charles' raised arm is bidding hello or goodbye?

SB: My paintings from the period were also very colorful, like my current work. I think those early paintings were an attempt to inject color into the gray days there. Color has always been a major element in all my artworks. I based the painting of Ruskin on a 1950s postcard of the California redwood forest that a student sent me. In the painting, the man is gesturing up at the trees and showing the woman their great height. I wanted to convey the smallness of the people in relation to the tallness of the trees. In Ruskin, we felt very much surrounded by nature and it was quite foreign to us as city folks.

In that one essay on Blaser you mention, Charles, from My Way ("Robin on his Own"—written on the occasion of his 70th birthday), you note how "...Blaser's is a practice of leaps of association that bind us not into families or states or nationalities or groups but into image nations, those imaginary nations of speculation and desire, jelled not by coercion or by law but by Blake's tears, or is it tears?, of intellect..." But I'd actually like to ask Susan to respond to this. I know you've elsewhere cited an affinity with Blake, and that you've often spoken to existing, alongside your political and notably feminist commitments, as an outsider to art-market and/or institutional trends and movements. In early drawings like

“BC Landscape,” “Mobile and Scene,” and “House with Window” (a couple of which bear endearing traces of being taped to the fridge or something—was this the case?), your sense of space and spill feels consistent with an aesthetic that refuses to be “jelled” by anything but intuition and broad environmental, even cosmological, acknowledgment. Can you say a little about how these early pieces relate us to your sensibilities in the present and maybe your current relationship to the art world?

SB: The drawings constitute a practice of free association and as such I agree with the idea of an imaginary, but one based on real life images. I don’t like to be bound by the rules, whether of political correctness or art world correctness. I guess it is a rebellious streak in me. I continue to deal with imagery of angels and other fantasy elements, in addition to imagery drawn from film stills, popular culture, and fine art. I like the idea of including found imagery in my work, and several paintings from around that time in Ruskin, like the portrait of Charles, include collage elements from magazine ads and other sources.

The drawings from that period are purer stream of consciousness, not censored by my need to fit into a particular art context. The tape marks on the drawings are from when they were mounted for a show, I believe; unfortunately it was an acidic tape that ate through the paper. I never showed these works to anyone in the house at the time, except when my friend Toni Simon came to stay with us in the forest. They were created for me in a private way. Blake is important to me as an exemplar of the belief in the imagination and in the importance of poetry for artistic practice. I look to his watercolors and his illustrations as a guide to my own practice. This falls far outside the formal concerns of the New York school of painting and the minimal and conceptual art practices that have surrounded me in my education in New York. Later, I used fragments from these drawings to create word and image collages in my book, *Not*, published by Asylum’s Press in 1980.

About cosmological and ecological interests, at the time, many of our friends were living in communes and going back to the land. It was the time for experimentation with other forms of existence, so in our own way, we were participating in that movement back to nature and away from our “natural” home, New York City, which is its

own ecosystem. In the drawings, I acknowledge being surrounded by trees, stars, and clouds, and mountains, which form the backdrop for this more interior journey. The drawings were all part of a black drawing notebook that I brought from New York. I had been drawing in this style since childhood, and especially in my college years, but it was my more private work, unlike the oil paintings that I did for class and brought in for critiques.

I continue to create fantasy landscapes, as in the “Philosophical Trees” and other more recent works. In the books that I worked on for Granary Books and other publishers, I use the same sensibility, which is informed by a Blakean sense of how to proceed through association, color, and imagination to create images that resonate with the poetry in the books.

I know collaboration has always been a crucial force and opening for your respective practices—that you’ve collaborated on books together and with other artists and writers and that the respective public universes you work within (Visual Art and, not vs., Poetry/Poetics) have inevitably informed and enriched the other’s universe. My sense from all I’ve read and seen is that you both tend to privilege your collaborations with one another in enabling what you (and a select tradition of other collaborators) have referred to as a kind of third entity emerging from the encounter of text and image. That there isn’t any predictable struggle for power/propriety between a poem written by Charles and an image rendered by Susan, as there might be between other text/image collaborators. Is this a fair observation? Can I ask for a brief account of the history of your collaborative impulses as precisely (as you write, Charles, of Blaser’s image-nations) “dialectical in that other sense”—beginning with the Johnny June piece or even earlier?

SB: Of course, there is a struggle for dominance, and I have written about it elsewhere. Sometimes you start with the poem and go from there. With Charles, my collaborations have been closest. *Johnny June* was one of our first attempts to put Charles’ words into the context of illustration. It was done—as best as I can recall, in the summer of 1971. I was thinking then of children’s book illustrations and also playing with the nonsense aspect of the poem. It was a lighthearted work and it is surprising

that it lead to so many other collaborations. We've now done five books together for various publishers. My collaboration with Susan Howe, *Bed Hangings* (Granary, 2001) was very intense. Here I was working in a restricted black-and-white format and with more limited imagery based on the themes of the poem. In *A Girl's Life* (Granary, 2002) with Johanna Drucker there was more back and forth, with her writing and my pictures interacting to a greater degree and each one of us editing the other's work. In *The Burning Babe and Other Poems* by Jerome Rothenberg (Granary, 2005), I used images of mothers and children and religious imagery to complement the poems. Each image has a corollary in the poem. In my latest collaboration with the Brazilian poet Régis Bonvicino, *Entre* (Global Books, 2009), I was most free to do what I wanted. I was given the pages of the letterpress poems and just added my collages and watercolors. I then showed the publisher and Régis the books only when they were finished.

CB: My relation with Susan is a wedding of the verbal and visual, not a merging. Writing is so different from painting and drawing, that's the pleasure of the collaboration. While there surely is a verbal/conceptual level to visual art, it's not necessarily explicit; in contrast, printed writing necessarily includes a visual dimension. Susan is much more competent in the verbal arts than I am visually: she is a remarkable editor and an acute proofreader, and also a book designer (all of which she's done for a living). It's been important to me that Susan's paintings have conceptually framed so many of my books; the paintings become part of the book's meaning. My own obsession with the design of my books, certainly one effect of my engagement with Blake, has been greatly influenced by Susan's work in this area and her advice, beyond our named collaborations. I've always thought one of the attractions of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* was Susan's design of the issues. But perhaps most important is that we have lived our lives with one foot in the poetry world and one foot in the art world (the other two feet planted in yet other worlds, as parents, teachers). So there has been for us a constant translation of aesthetic and conceptual issues back and forth across the visual/verbal divide. Contemporary visual art is as much an intimate part of my life as is poetry; and Susan has certainly been immersed in (not to say bombarded by) more poetry than almost any civic (non-poet) alive. So the two "worlds" have intersected and this is reflected not only in our work but our social life.

Do you, Susan (or Charles?), have any particular position in relation to what's been categorized (and of course marketed) as "outsider" or "naïve" art? Your incredible work in the collaborative book Little Orphan Anagram, Susan, reminds me a lot of Henry Darger's at points—not that any formal consonances between your watercolours and his should necessarily tip me off to any deeper-running affinities, but I thought I'd ask anyway in light of how you've often described your sensibilities as more at home when you ignore what the world wants or thinks it wants. Is it even possible to talk about an "outsider aesthetic"? Is it a redundant or disingenuous term, serving only the curators and collectors and canon-makers? Most people I talk to these days don't even believe there's an outside to anything anymore or never was, but I'm not entirely convinced that there are no moments, at least, of being-outside. There's certainly yearnings and leanings, no?

SB: Obviously I've been influenced by folk art, fairytales, children's book illustrations, and my own love of kitsch objects and paper dolls. Strangely, Darger and I share a lot of the same sources, paper dolls, and coloring books from the 1950s. The difference is that I was a child then and I am nostalgic for those times and those images, which were my playthings, whereas he was an adult using those images for extremely different ends. I greatly admire his work, but I was not influenced by it. In fact, an artist friend came to my studio and pointed out that my work looked like Darger's, before I had seen his watercolors. I do have yearnings to be outside, or to function with an outsider's perspective. I use a sort of naïve framing and flatness that I see in so-called "naïve painting," just as Matisse and Picasso looked at Henri Rousseau's paintings to gain another perspective on rendering human and plant forms. I am also influenced by Mexican folk art in the papier mâché angels. As a child, I took two trips to Mexico and the experience of the markets and the colors stayed with me. However, in the end, I am too well informed to be a genuine outsider. All I can be is on the fringe of various movements, which is more like being marginalized or apart from the mainstream of art history. I have always admired mavericks or those who stood apart from their times, like Florine Stettheimer and other eccentric figures. I'm not sure I qualify for that mantle, however.

You referred to your Ruskin writing as “formative,” Charles, and I’m wondering if you might elaborate on that. Do you see these early poems as beginning to struggle with their status in relation to what you’d come to critique as “official verse culture”? Was it before or after or somehow during your time in the Fraser Valley between Haney and Mission that your writing began to invest in less “official” models (or to divest itself of investments altogether)? Were you theorizing the cultural politics of what you were doing at that point, five years before the first issue of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E came out, or mostly just practicing them? What verb(s) might you use to describe what your lyric “I” was getting up to in the Ruskin writing—“Bound and sounded to bind and be personified”?

CB: I hadn’t looked at those pieces in decades but was reminded of a few when I put together a PennSound page of early audio works <<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Bernstein-1975-76.html>>. On the “B” side of the 1975 cassette for “Class” I found some recordings of a few of the poems; hearing these made my connection to the works more visceral. These are not poems I’d ever wanted to include in my books; I consider them underdeveloped I guess. But they suggest what I wanted to do, and, to some extent, still want to do. I am publishing them here because of the very specific context you’ve set up and maybe out of a morbid curiosity about how these might read, in such deep retrospect. In my senior year at college, I’d written my philosophy thesis on Stein and Wittgenstein and was well aware of the politics of poetic form as they played out in the hothouse atmosphere of Harvard, where I got my first distaste for “official verse culture.” Just now reading Yunte Huang’s account (in his book about Charlie Chan) of the self-enclosed self-importance of the Signet Society just a few years back, I was forcefully reminded of my own sense of alienation or exclusion from such clubs or the main literary magazine, *The Advocate*. At college I was involved in alternative theatre and even published a small stapled xerox magazine called *Writing*, both of which were well outside conventional approaches to theatre and poetry. I remember I once did submit something to *The Advocate* and got word back from Lincoln Kaplan that the editors thought I would have to be an accepted formal innovator before they’d be able to publish what I sent, the sort of catch-22 that is one of the “race to the top” skills Harvard imbues in its successful students. I was a malcontent then just as now; the problem may be temperamental as much as ideological. My

problem when I arrived in Ruskin was that having read my philosophy and political critiques and participated in the anti-war movement, and also having absorbed, as best I could, Beckett, Stein, Woolf, Joyce, Barnes, Burroughs, the Living Theatre, plays by Brecht, Genet, Pinter, and Baraka, Ginsberg, Rothenberg's *Technicians of the Sacred*, and the like, I still hadn't read enough contemporary poetry. I wanted to write something—I didn't think of it as poetry, necessarily—that was opaque, self-sufficient, but still had personality—the I you ask about—and rhythm. But I didn't know how to do it. I didn't think I'd figured that out—well I still haven't figured it out!—till the following year, with *Disfrutes* (1974) <<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/books/disfrutes/index.html>>, and also the works collected in *Asylums* (1975) <<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/books/Asylums.html>>. In Ruskin, I was thinking, chainsaw in one hand, fountain pen in the other.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN / Ruskin (earlier poems)

What Is It

- 1: The cause, what's the cause?
2: What do you mean?
1: The cause.
2: The what?
1: The cause, that which is the cause, the cause
2: The course?
1: that which is the cause, the cause, that which is the cause
2: what are you saying?
1: the cause, the cause, what's the cause
2: the cause?
1: the cause
2: the cause of what?
1: that which is the cause, what is the cause
2: don't you know?
1: what's the cause, the cause
2: you know, don't you know, oh you know
1: the cause, that which is the cause, the cause
2: can't you say it?
1: the cause, what's the cause?
2: is this a test?

Bee/Bernstein: a chat

If then he behaved and being bored tried quite simply to be abandoned then understood simply saying a few words in adjournment he could quite as easily have become engaged ashen or greyly amused such were his passions forever implying prevarikating disputes awakening summonses drag in drag out up down lost found unless hopelessly unfurl bewitch and unfrock loose mouthed or unrepentant not that it was ever leaked or hushed but small and such things not that anyone could have being impeccable so prim and every day pressed and yet sometimes a word or even half would hush and no real stopping tittle and gravy over soup people would be sad to understand to know but you let it well not get you it just had to be in grain with bestride so to say philosophical besmirchment.

Every morning at two prompt as a button down the sink and orange and stall and squeak hello couldn't wait at laugh the roast pearled in jack box sarcasm beck becking the rashful unblazoned sneak reminder of error onrush torrent twinge sloppy loose ship burnt no good bad manners pays no attention no excuse beck becking no moment at any time reference could then crawl.

As sequential as two in the morning as particular plaid a suit as botany had dribbled fire bugs and banged a bag of sass until laughing they got carried but not he clunk and regret resignation taxes death and great lightness of step huge dimension shape fields purchases uneven brokester button shop pink lily screaming finally tired but pink with until lost or fallen under until finally admitted to be at felony incurred and halted then like a the tears pouring like gin rummy with a flush red face having lost whatever picture of Gatsby like abandon and spleen mustered in nights over novel samovars musing of sundays end without the following fall driven by rackets of tennis playing hustled like dawn sweet dreams oh prince be good to me don't ever let me let them make you give me go I won't give you over or up on onto I won't try to caress your please let me let them let you.

It would not let go of my fantasies kept stirred awakened to my pit stomach up night
grappling like lecher subway madmen green fungi lichens biologic urchins in green
lentil ogres doggedly denied at every moment given and gotten over hump or hill valley
or nightingale of loose feathers scuttled ship no moor no arab dancing squares just
magicless bottles empty genre sandwiches staring blankly here and soaking bitter
pillories curled over burnt cookies unrhymed without tune why should it persist in
fighting or kicking in fussed belly flops not because it mattered meaning flat on red
rimmed torn wasted patched and ripped sewn over and reused not because fingered
and besmirched it lied and cheated and gobbled spitting fiery and stupid inanities not
for all that caring and constipation but without that still and flaked and deceived and
confused he spoke to tell his lollipop of a fine sunday swindle story not for all the tea
in not for all the mush in Central Park he'd rather sleep than tell.

i am always misrepresenting giving a wrong sense of myself
giving a sense of too much panic too much caring i'm afraid
to seem to care too much feel guilty that maybe i'll depend
on you too much or the situation is wrong for it that i'll
lose my rightness my justification hurt afraid of the letter
but waiting waiting will get it waiting will why what sometimes
so dense so thick but why not with feelings as well as words
letters do that feeling as well as letters do sometimes
because i miss want need love have activities meet people
talk go to the movies and yet all this i why not words as
well as music why not music sometimes without words why all
this musing and philosophizing and going over minutiae of the
past why this planning the takeover of the videotape or tape
field why this resting sometimes why this blowing cant it why
this cant it why cant it why its why this all this

as if i valued you too much and you were taken from me
for idolatry as if too much hug and pull and want and need
too much for any one or any one thing too much as if idolatry
putting out the light of god as if whats it whose it as if
for idolatry shut out that new grace to shine on my native
eye except that you than he shone closer by

up to
and against barren and shipwrecked and forlorn gazing up against
endless wear of words and held fast grasped out but why she why she
and not she or she or he why she and not he or she why this or that
and not that and not another why all these limits and all this regret
this surge of resentment just for a joy on occasion just for that
and for idolatry smote

Nimrod the Pious: A Saga

Nimrod rode high, slinging & praying (no doubt a pious man) into the town. Bang bang he told the citizens with vaunted pride, bang bang move or else you'll die. Nimrod was strong in manness, big in color of choler (fast in anger): his hair a deep dark blue that others swore was dyed but Nimrod cried was true. Two guns he packed on each his sides, one black one white: painted by his new found bride. (SING: Nimrod rode high.)
(No doubt a pious man.)

is that
the way you see
it

or
is that
the way it
is

Would you believe it if Nietzsche told you. Would you believe it if Schopenhauer told Nietzsche. Would Nietzsche. Would Schopenhauer. And if you would believe it then why do you believe it, why do you believe the things you do. Would you believe it if Ed Muskie told you. Would Nietzsche. Do you. And if you cant believe Ed Muskie who can you believe, who can you really believe. Nietzsche. Did Nietzsche believe Schopenhauer. And even if Nietzsche did not believe Schopenhauer even if Nietzsche never could believe what Schopenhauer was saying, even if Nietzsche never believed anyone, would you. Could you. Do you. Ed Muskie says believe me. Ed Muskie says believe in me. Do you. Would Nietzsche. Would Schopenhauer. Can you. How can you believe it, how can you believe it the things you're supposed to. Did Nietzsche. Will you.

RED

PINK

ORANGE

BLUE

PIMENTO

MANGENTA

LEMON

ASH

BLACK

PURPLE

r--

i've gotton word
that you just don't
care anymore, that
you're saying i'm a
cold,
impersonal creep, well i
knew that we
always knew that, what the fuck is
with you, i was
nice
to you, i was kind,
i was care-
ful to do my share of the
dishes, i listened
to what you wanted to
do, too
and then this
shit,
this this,
what's the cause,
who've you been
talking to,
you know
you can't believe
them, you know,
i mean,
who the fuck—

yours
and forever,
roy roastbeef,
king of slipshods

in that light games pale &
when comes the time to & know how
doubt—but what moves to
a specious seriousness—of theatricalism
questions of a quality or
together & in itself enough
that really what is wanted—sure
then from a community—but is it
new heights & what? Will that jar the
circumstance that seems reasonably
—well at least there's comfort in the
sparklers & why it seems like what's

up chase
(sway swell)
milk
charred
lastless
lake
ly
swan swell
lake water
lake swell
atlassed
brace
lone
crack
o paque
mouth wizened
up the
merry month
I
wasted willing
in
apt
ly
plause
plaint
by

To impose and be imposing.

Would it presume.

An worry.

To refuse and to disclaim to remit and to surmise.

Presumptuous.

And overtake.

Demure.

To refuse and refusing and denying and rejecting.

Would it overask.

Would it overstep.

Bound and sounded to bind and be personified.

May it.

Can you.

SUSAN BEE / In and Around BC: Paintings/Drawings/
Sculpture



Susan Bee, *British Columbia*, 1973

Oil on canvas, 34" x 20"



Susan Bee, *Girl With Angel*, 1973

Ink on paper, 10.25" x 8.25"



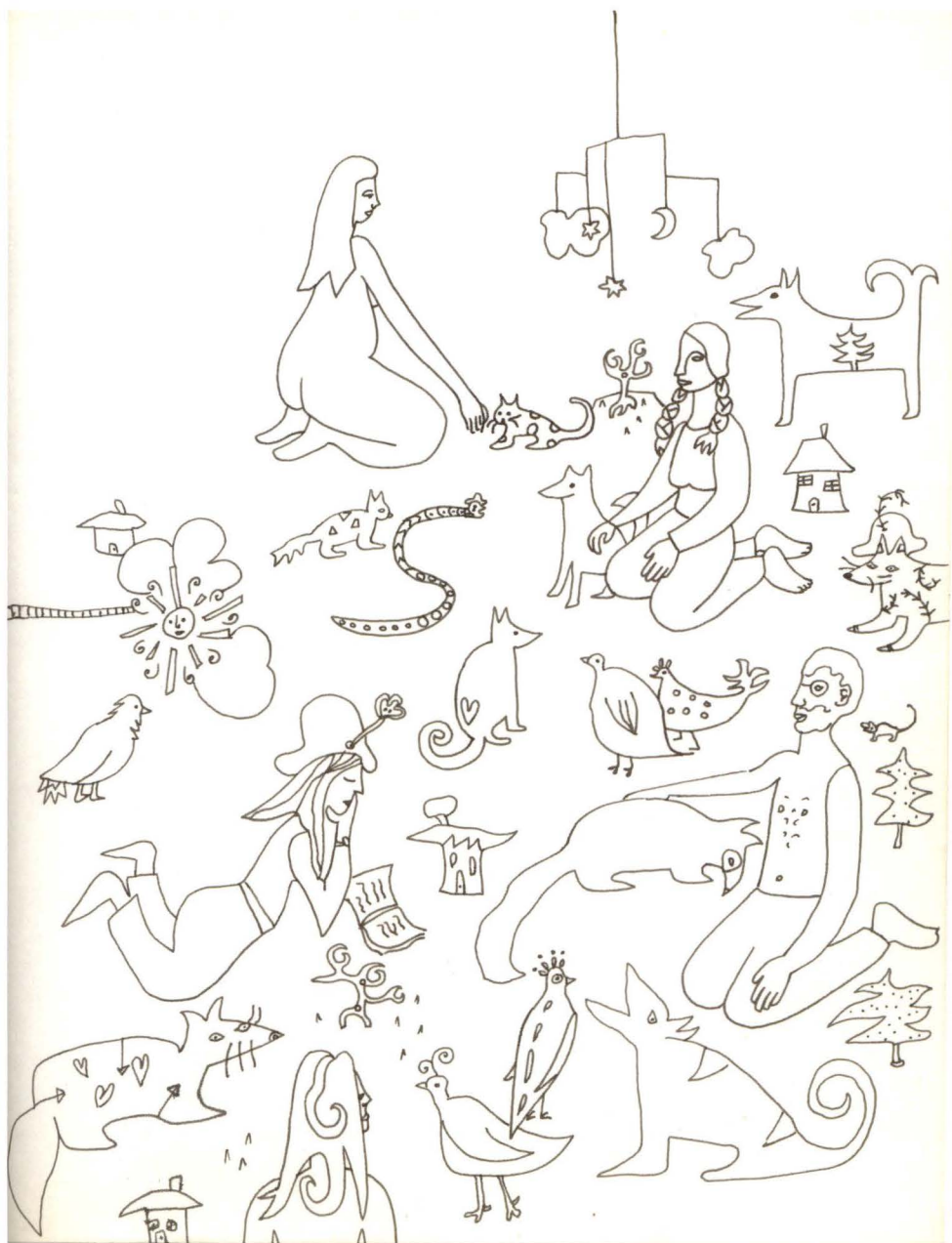
Susan Bee, *BC Landscape*, 1973

Ink on paper, 10.25" x 8.25"



Susan Bee, *House with Window*, 1973

Ink on paper, 10.25" x 8.25"



Susan Bee, *Mobile and Scene*, 1973

Ink on paper, 10.25" x 8.25"

JOHNNY JUNE

A hopeless dreamer who engaged
endlessly in thoughts beyond his own recollection
woke up one day and started to build a house.



Not a large house, he thought, not a
very large house or else I won't be able
to finish it. Perhaps a house of medium build

though certainly it should^{not} be of too wild a
grandeur or too colorful a gate or else it
will attract too much attention. It would

be nice no doubt all right if I could build
it free for all my senses and then bright
pink and blue blue brown would make a
face all smiles and tears and even make

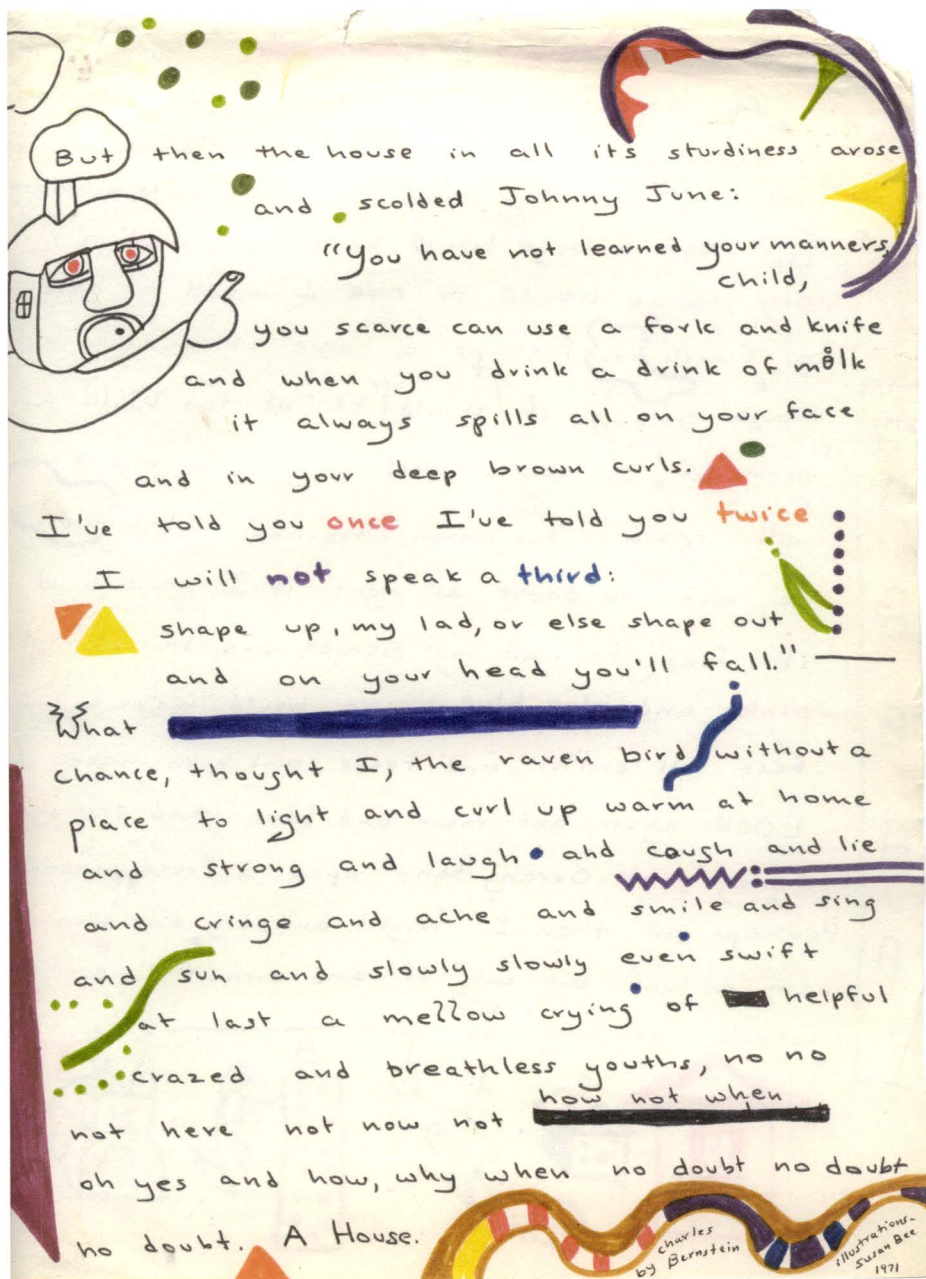


LOOK again and more and blue and strange
gray pink Orangutans upon a frozen moon.
Perhaps or then I might and try and even
rain a tune but only if and even then or
where or why or who.



Susan Bee and Charles Bernstein, *Johnny June*, 1971

Marker on two-sided paper, 12" x 8.5"



But then the house in all its sturdiness arose
and scolded Johnny June:

"You have not learned your manners,
child,

you scarce can use a fork and knife
and when you drink a drink of milk
it always spills all on your face
and in your deep brown curls.

I've told you **once** I've told you **twice**

I will **not** speak a **third**:

shape up, my lad, or else **shape** out
and on your head you'll fall."

What

chance, thought I, the raven bird without a
place to light and curl up warm at home
and strong and laugh and **catch** and lie
and cringe and ache and smile and sing
and sun and slowly slowly even swift
at last a mellow crying of helpful

crazed and breathless youths, no no
not here not now not **how not when**

oh yes and how, why when no doubt no doubt
no doubt. A House.

Charles
by Bernstein

Illustrations
Susan Bee
1971



Susan Bee, *Angel #2*, 1973

Mixed media on papier mâché, 12" x 6" x 5.5"

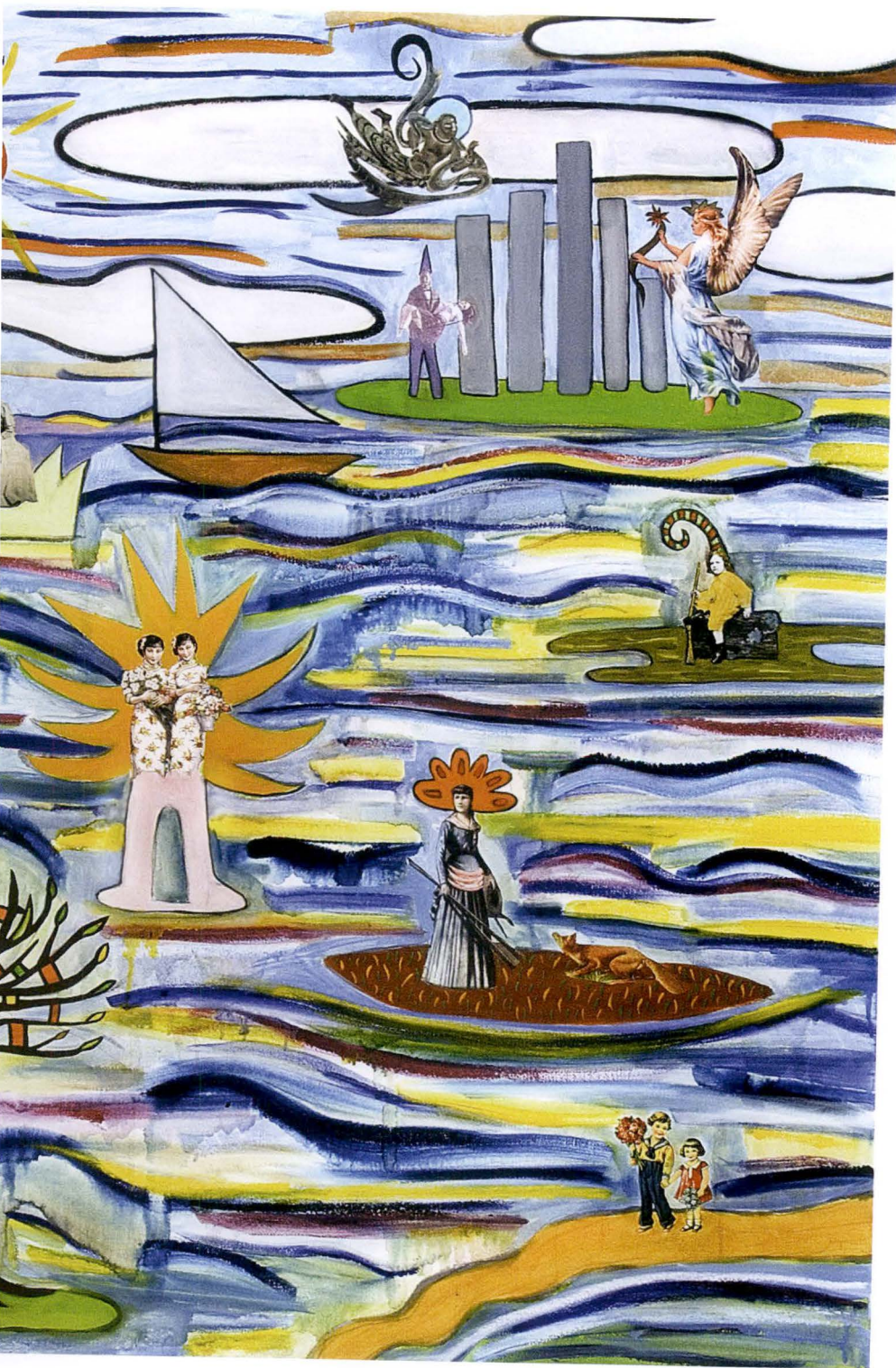


Susan Bee, *Charles*, 1972

Oil and collage on canvas, 44" x 38"



Susan Bee, *Harbor of Illusions*, 2009
Oil and collage on linen, 37" x 50"





Susan Bee, *Ruskin*, 2010
Oil on linen, 30" x 28"

MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN / The Not Of What She Didn't Know

Hotel Narrative

She said and he thought and he did and she thought and he said and she did and they thought and I went and they said and you heard and we saw and they wanted and she didn't think and you didn't see and I felt and he liked and we said we couldn't tell. Said Mr. Narrator to Mrs. Narrator. Said triologue. And Mrs. Narrator thought Mr. Narrator thought Lady Agonist thought Mr. Narrator. Said Lord Agonist to the trees thought Mr. Narrator. Lacked character said Lady Agonist said Mrs. Narrator thought Lord Agonist. Are you for or against Agonist said Mrs. Narrator to the trees thought Mr. Narrator against Lady Agonist's thigh. Went triologue behind the scenes I wanted Mr. Narrator to think Lady Agonist felt Mrs. Narrator had Mr. Narrator by the. Her Ladyship felt Lord Agonist didn't. Behind the ears then under a nipple inserted in her pocket. Thought Mrs. Narrator. Would your Lordship care for some. Bushes beside a lake, mound beside a mineshaft, peak beside an outing. Bottoms up her Ladyship's butter, we said with breadfruit. Is your Lordship out. They think he's in. Mr. Narrator. Thought I. Said Mrs. Narrator. His Lordship's out of pocket. Her Ladyship's innuendo. He's out to lunch. She's ins and outs. He's *in futuro* incognito. Out of debt. Incomplete. Hoped Mrs. Narrator dreaming her Ladyship's buttons wanted setting forth to switchboard for room service his Lordship. Keeps falling asleep. Said Mr. Narrator. Thought Mrs. Narrator. Don't tell me I'm fresh towel check-out his Lordship. Said her Ladyship's buttony TV. Thought. Mrs. Narrator. You're going to soap the doorman I wanted to this morning. Do you have a reservation we could telephone. Mr. Narrator's bell hop. Not that that would. The black that that she mailed that you said we'd already said. Said Mrs. Narrator thought his Lordship. Not that. The other that that I said Lady Agonist said she'd like to have felt. Not *that*.

A Marijuana Stalk

Unbeknownst to the woodsman, a marijuana stalk has grown 20 feet over the summer. The first snow has wilted its leaves. The woodsman cuts it down and hangs it to dry in his cabin, pocketing his pipe and some hashish. A smoke for later, he thinks, on a path through a meadow, down a road to a frosty dock—floating out to a raft of sail boats in a lake. He walks down the icy planks, then turns to the grey water sliding murkily around clumps of snowy reeds. In a swift, decisive movement, he jumps in, becomes completely submerged, then rises to the surface, pulls himself up on the dock and sits there, drenched clothes streaming around him. Come, get out of the cold, do come inside, the narrator calls to him, the narrator afraid to set foot on the frosty planks of the floating dock. Why, he shouts back. I suppose, the narrator says, You've heard of pneumonia. The woodsman jumps off the dock and dives under the grey brown water toward a steep bank of tangled snowy bushes, leaving the narrator wondering how she will speak to her character. Is a narrator to her woodsman like a king to his army, or a mother to a son. Devil to disciple, or god to bewitched. Like language to word, or planet to plant?

A Disagreement Over Lunch

She passes him more cheese and slices of ham, suggesting that ants are quite amazing architects. He believes, on the contrary, that Architecture has a history. An eggplant or it might be a football enters the dining room and floats blimplike over the lunch table. But surely, she says, ants in their cities practice architecture just as we do. The eggplant puffs itself and hatches some red balloons. No no no, he says, Architecture chooses design, materials, location, Architecture is deliberative. Flags and streamers sprout from the eggplant. It zooms around the diners, grazing their spectacles. But do humans *choose* to build skyscrapers, she wonders, over the crabcakes, or do they *have* to build them, the same way all over the planet. The eggplant hovers over a bowl of peaches, it lets down ladders and rope, disembarking tiny passengers. He pours another glass of wine, allowing that humans looked at from Mars have their uniformities, but looked at from Earth, we see creation, invention, originators. But surely ants have their Palladios and Vitruviuses, she rejoins. The eggplant lifts out of the fruit bowl and floats dejectedly above it. Convoys and caravans of passengers trudge over peachy hills.

If ants do it, then what on earth would *architecture* mean?

There's an eggplant or a football in the fruit bowl.

It looks like a blimp.

It's moving around.

It's hatching eggs.

Wagon trains crawling the peaches.

Ants.

No, they're tiny humans.

L'amante anglaise

She flirted with her. She put her tongue to her liquorice. She tasted a négligé, a chemise, some culottes, a pelisse. Plunged into ravines, scaled buttes, traversed escarpments and plateaus. Of la belle française.

Les complications arose. La française ne l'a pas aimé! Votre prononciation est terrible! Take your tongue from my words. My mots in your closette minuscule put back. And don't forget: give back my camisole and peignoir.

Oh, how would she escape her armoire anglaise into the outness of la française?! Furieuse, elle a crié, They're not yours; they're mine. You can't have them.

Imbécile! Don't you know French when elle vous donne un coup sur la tête? Besides you look stupide in that lace. Comme une mêlée chartreuse. A fricassée de polkadots. Then give me back le weekend and le hotdog. Le film, le punk and le squat.

Mais la belle française ensconced herself in une silk sulk.

Pourquoi won't you couchez avec moi, you know perfectly well our great great grandmother gave me that chemise in 1066. Pourquoi must you be une puriste? Couchez avec moi dans le downtown. Couchez avec moi dans le camping. Couchez avec moi on my couch.

My Agency

In my production studio, I throw back my shutters, meet my creative director. Copy writers swarm over us. I send them for new blood. My art department erects flyers for the latest campaign. Get image targets. Get juice and punch. Strategy. Tactics. My wanteds will be posters; my spots will be billboards. Let me poke digits into clients of myself.

Friction, force-fields, magnetism—I research. Dig up enzymes and yeasts. Get multiplication. Get logos. Map competitor apartments. Means. No. Trump. Yes. Authority. No. Coup d'état. Yes. Importance. No. Signify. Yes. Exert. No. Muscle. Yes. Rule. No. Sublimity. Yes. Clout. No. Conductive. Yes. Pressure. No. Dispatch. Yes. Use. No. Capacity. Yes. Force. No. Morph. Yes. Convert. No. Midwife. Yes.

I ring the phone of myself. Cut these false job-starts, my traffic boss chides. Make weathercocks of myself. International Standard Self Numbers. Epaulettes and bugle calls of myself. Ripen them, says my she. Brew them in my market niches, my slots and buttonholes. Your my is not my my, I say to my she. Your my is not her my just as my she is not her me, and my her my is not your my she. All the better to eat you with, my little she me, my sweet her your me in my wheel teeth.

Oh come to me my rifts and ha has, my honeycombs of surge and dint, for it is very dark in this stomach.

The Lawn Dress

scrubbed her words dirtily. She hung white li(v)es. White wall(et)s. White st(o)reets. White (grr)rooms. On the line. It's a good day for washingles, said a horse-dog over the fence. Yes a very fine d(el)ay. The Lawn Dress went on hang(ke)ring shee(p)ts and tow(e)els. Will you come with me to the car-navel, said the horse-dog. Nay, said she, I must soap my wor(l)ds before the man-iple comes home. Look at my pile of wor(l)ds; high as the heav(y)ens. I will hel(lu)p you—the horse-dog leapt over the f(eel)ence. No thank you—the Lawn Dress threw some p(r)ants and shir(le)ts into the sud(den)s. The horse-dog gallooped up the pile of wor(l)ds—she chewed them up, they were (trom)bones. My words are ruin(g)ed, go away god-dogged-horse, go away from my line(al)ins and cot-ton(e)s. Come to the craneval, said the horse-dog, I will glue your wor(l)ds. I will carol you on my back. I will take you on my marry-go-round. Just then the manner-man came in. These clothes, why are they torn up, he demanded. Why are they marked with letters? The Lawn Dress stood by her wash tub. Oh Manner Man, said she, behold my galleon. I am her pirate captain gathering golden-eyes and sil(ly)ver. We have come to Utopia for buried treasure, in a dark woo(le)d, 27 p(l)aces south and 36 p(al)aces east of the manner house in the c(r)ave of a drago(o)n. Stand back from my (s)words.

The Sonic Boom Catcher

I've always wanted to cross the sound barrier, Kaspar explained to her friend Sigismund. It's greener on the other side. It's friendlier. Not that it's not friendly here with you, it is, but I'm certain it's more furthering on the other side of the barrier, more tending and availing to inventors and ingeniuses such as we. No, not a word (she held up her hand), you're going to say I can't possibly know since I've never been there. You're going to tell me stories of Icarus. But remember, Daedelus also flew, away from his island jail, and landed safely in Sicily. I've delved into this, I've looked at it and fathomed. If I catch a sonic boom, I'll cross the barrier. I know where one hangs out. I found its boom carpets in the field where we tested our dreameanors. I tracked its spoor of scorched ideoglyphs. Its signal stench.

Kaspar raised her nets of muzzlements and dumbitures. They covered the whole sky and sure enough when the sonic boom came the nets caught it. A thousand hurricanes thrashed inside the snare. Tsunamis boiled the ether, filling the world with a terrible silence. A tonguelessness. Lightning without thunder. Earthquake without rumble. Not a bray. Not a twitter. Not a hiss. Not a nicker. Only a tomb of violent quietude. She must open the nets, she must let go the sonic boom, but the nets were so glutinous, so barbed, so leechy, so lovably kickbacked. She must wait more patiently, she thought, she must not really want that notness that she was not forbidding, the not of what she unwanted that she was uncarelessly not insouciant to, the not of what she didn't know but which she was compelled to unseekingly diswoo.

Parts Department

I park the car and follow footprints underground. To a cave where lights flicker on blotches of grease. Mechanics in blue overalls. Air hammers, nut pullers, brake lathes and torque wrenches. A pry bar clangs the concrete. A man under a hoist under a car splays out his foot as he heaves his shoulder into car belly, grabbing pliers and clamps from his surgical tool cart.

I line up with a golfer, a lifeguard and a postal worker. Front-deskmens peer furiously into their screens at plate numbers. Print out work-orders in triplicate. Lube job. Brake shoes. Clutch overhaul. Timing. Super-easy slice cure, says the golfer's magazine. Sand game. Ball position. Control your trajectory. *If you see a line of flotsam moving seaward*, the lifeguard muses, *that's a sign of a rip current. They form around structures*. Should I sort shibboleths with passwords or with stamps, wonders the postal worker, Badges or tickets, blue ribbons or bunting? *Look for a break in the wave pattern or a channel of churning water*.

Among the blue bins and cardboard boxes of gaskets, pistons, and spark plugs in the canyons of the Parts Department, two grey-beards—no longer sleek for sales or heave-ho under the hoist—trade hugs, one cheek, then the other.

Your number is up, says a deskman, you'll have to stay here with us. *When you're caught in a rip*, warns the lifeguard, *swim parallel to shore, then angle in to the beach*.

Singing Lessons

You must go on the road and find singing lessons, my teacher advised. She was the chorus-master of a large opera, shaping and sculpting the elkish basses, the beaverish baritones, the tenor lynxes, the porpoiseful altos, the soprano loons. You have too many feet in your songs, she said, melt some on the road. Hike, amble, stride or stagger, anyway sing as you go. I went on the road. I took directions. Were they mine or the road's. We did not dispute the ownership. My puppet walked inside me, clacking mandibles, bonking knees and elbows. Go straight on, she said, veer off a little, make a sharp left and when you get to the castle look for the oldest woman. Hear the note in your head before you sing. Repeating a song caresses your brain. I met a rat practicing arpeggios, and humming, Music is the Food of Livers, Sing onion songs and bacon. Monday songs and Tuesday. A song in time makes nine, crooned a cow, Sing needles and thread, sing meadows and hey to the moon in a dish with a spool. Night fell. Walls fell and eggs fell. I met three bats flying over the road. We are eighth note, quarter note and half note. Each of us is half or two times one or the other, and together we are whole. Melody's on the road—where does it begin or end? To put echoes together again—all the song's horses and all the song's pens.

My Characters

My sidekick muscles my henchman, whose hunter suspects my penitent who rescues my liar and his nephew, the prime minister, yet woos my cousin's worshipper and betrays his road buddy, her ex-dentist and the worshipper's daughter who cheated their boss in the hockey pool. Then the sequel: my stand-in star, piloting my princess's aunt to victory over his professor and their doctor who plan to jail my queen sorcerer with her slaves' bogus master conspirator whose sister abandoned my twin sons' karate teacher in my torturer's dumpster. *I don't find it the least bit crowded in here.* My karate teacher snaps a roundhouse, making her narrator duck under her mother's suitor and prudent villain who polluted our fake sage and his narrator's playmate with a billionaire. Your character pinched my dog, barked his narrator. To his majesty's apologist. In the pigpen. *Your* narrator ditched my Olympic diver for the roulette spinner. Oh my narrator, my narrator, I've lost her, breathed my acrobat. Where's my co-pilot in the legislature, my ex-neo-stunt-woman voice-over? *I don't find it the least bit crowded in here.* My karate teacher whips a side heel-kick my post-ersatz quack narrator fails to duck.

ANTONY DI NARDO / The Significance of September

Peacocks whistle. Pirates push off to sea and fight for the crow's nest. An oriole of desire comes to rest on the blossom of your breast. Along the palisades of Canary Wharf, all this business for the birds.

Popinjay, popinjay, the winner is the popinjay, not the errant bookstore penguin. And the magpie draws circles full of silver tongues and trinkets. Out back, man, and robin gets the first warm wood of spring. Look, the plover lends a hand, the fish have fled.

Build a swing set for the cardinal and his russet bride and you'll see beauty somewhere. This morning a meaningless dove was all the moon could bear. And the cha-cha pigeons on the ha-ha, afraid of feathers failing.

Bleak as beak on the raven she speaks of the underworld, and how's your mama real. Days of wrens and blueberries and maple shade and we'll go barefoot, too. The sparrows take turns and reappear everywhere on Earth.

All of a sudden a forged wing and the kingfisher's gone by. Owls and owls of a lonesome night on the perch of an arrested bough. Sing song, the blackbird's been. And what's up with the grackle and the racket of the rabble collected at the table?

Only a fleeting moment, a quick glimpse and that's the tit bird. Osprey. Osprey. And chanting ready-or-not-here-I-come here it comes. Oh, the rose-breasted grosbeak hath the bone of a sunflower in its speech.

Call down the downy woodpecker not down from the nest for the next feast yet. Field mice a-fear a falcon's first shadow, the scat of their flesh on the windshield. But know the rarely-sighted hoopoe and know the ins and outs of the pinwheel.

As sleek as swan can swim, as slippery as a signal from the shore, as often as not. There goes the gallows' swallow weaving the wind, all the Zorro of a heart cleft in two. Yellow waxwing, I owe you my life for coming this close.

And you, fickle finches, aren't you all just so scientifically free?

COLIN BROWN / Microcosms

trumpet calls of the rose
counterpoint at the fifteenth
my vagabond heart with
inadvertent and advertent lacerations
and inevitable black hats
where shapes and colours were

your heads must project
hope has turned to snow
return to time, arms folded
dishwashing jobs
bedroom mazurkas
and the compliment clause

the liver is meant for burying
war office's blue eyed boy
came to chicago in the twenties
quick and shapely girls
bent into side streets
adorned for christmas

weird shadows

like walking echoes
whispering nonchalant
it's nothing fatal

cities in north america

the american we
nickels dimes quarters
working in the elite
and the wasps, too

regard du temps

the ten year stretch
don't follow the provocation
everytime it rains

only the dignitaries

admit them to yourself

the deacon added

walking forward through puddles

reduced to skeletons

trees cast long shadows

that's what she meant

poor and rich practices

the characteristics of things

beaten swollen reddened

so, what else do you do?

talks about loneliness

blows smoke from windows

a puccini enthusiast

and music from villages

the tall electrician

body like a blade of ice
double row of barbed wire
and sea-green cupolas
carrying the turf

the silver-haired poet

turn to moss
the shore of the redhead
some obscure girlfriend
in mirrored house
to adorn his self esteem

el país es cerrado

el mundo es siguiente
dime una cosa
ella dice
está soñando
como siempre

watch it speculate

free up the communes
flying geese and
orgies of asset strippers
building tomorrows temples

talkin' warsaw blues

too cruel for the human heart
roles and responsibilities
quasi-diaries
sirens of the deluge
meat shops, milk bars

magic has failed

acid zinc lead and carbon
the aroma of countries
ersatz sour cream
vegetables and meat
dead octopuses and squids
thickets of dried fluff
and tailors' dummies

HEATHER CAMPBELL / Three Poems

Ragged

The garden in place of the one we used to have stepped in shod-full of cutters and chrysanthemums overtop those edible ones be done by July those red-with-black ones those thorny one-directional ones those yellow ones grating out March those bite-round-the-ankles ones. The garden in place of the one we used to have full by June dug down forged new roots out here, full two weeks' trip out and no heading back. The garden in place of the one we used to have pushed out the bottom of our planned and left plan and handwritten roots run ragged and no heading back.

Tongue-Rot

Salt-water nose on you tries beginnings thick with syllables over and over
logged brick heavy in *down down down* you'll never get to the meat of it, the real
roast, the full snap at the hindquarters even fur and soft down baby fuzz full mouth
you're stuck on *down down down* shivering with ocean at your back and all over your
sleeves you'll never get him out in time if you don't get past *down down down* you've
got maybe four seconds more before his lungs are sponging the floor he's eyefish he's
done for you've got to get help you're tongue-rot he's gone.

Bottle You

Foam from the lip like the one disease given a headwind, foam from the prow like destination's turned her back on the whole deal, flip of the cards and the faces are shrieking like they've been bitten, down the back of the bottle foam like broken stems, picked off with a shotgun from fields of mostly rock and sod, laid table streaked with foam from the lip like a bottle of you, down from the head, the temper of the gamble, the gamble of the tip, the drop of the lid.

1.

c'est un mercredi tranquille
personne ne se révolte
la lumière gagne le corps
roule autour des poignets
ténèbres en garde à vue

2.

on parle tout bas
de glisser vers l'abîme
défiguré
loin de l'humanité

TR. ERÍN MOURE / Quivering

1.

it's a quiet Wednesday
no one clamours
light reaches the body
coils round the wrists
the dark held in custody

2.

we talk in low murmurs
of stealing toward the brink
disfigured
far from humanity

3.

au matin j'ai un chiffre dans le sentiment
un œil de deuxième personne au pluriel
je continue moi ensemble nourri
de règne animal et d'*azul*

4.

voici que tu surveilles les virgules
qui effacent et refont la nuit
voici que le moment venu tu caresses
une nappe d'eau et sa logique
d'embrasement

13.

je dis ce qu'on dit
de ne pas mentir
c'est infiniment
risqué, et nous respirons

3.

in the morning my feeling has a number
a pinprick of second person plural
I keep going me together nourished
by animal kingdom and by *azul*

4.

so you keep watch for the commas
that erase and raise the night
so when the time's right you caress
a coat of water and its logic
of backflash

13.

I say what is said
about not telling lies
it's infinitely
chancy, and we breathe

12.

une heure avant l'été
la nuit avait un corps
je t'aimais partout
comme dans certaines phrases
au bord d'un lac
et de l'univers

14.

comment ça va dans ton âme
et la colère et la tendresse
langue je dirai quoi à qui
du haut de ma cage thoracique
langue viens-tu
dans mes pensées
dehors dénicher le sel la certitude

12.

one hour before summer
night had a body
and I loved you everywhere
just as in certain sentences
at the edge of a lake
and of the universe

14.

how's it going in your soul
and rage and tenderness
language I'll say what to who
from the top of my rib cage
language will you enter
my thoughts
outside unearth the salt the certitude

L'usage des vertiges minuscules

qui voudra encore s'entêter de réel
balbutier dans le répertoire
des armes et des boucles en série d'autrui

debout notre corps n'en pense pas moins
la mer, la faim, la manœuvre mystérieuse
de l'air et de ses bonds fabuleux dans la poitrine

à bonne vitesse d'ombre
sortir de soi exige de filer doux
entre siècles et galaxies marelle céleste

notre mythologie de nuit millénaire
quelques noms de bêtes au cœur arraché
la transparence fruitée de nos sexes

tout ça sort de soi vivant trop bref

The Use of Tiny Vertigos

whoever still wants to stick with the real
to stammer in the catalogue
of arms and serial loops of others

upright our body doesn't think any less
sea, hunger, the mysterious manoeuvre
of air and its fabulous rebounds in the chest

at the speed of shadow
to exit the self just toe the line
between centuries and galaxies celestial hopscotch

our mythology of millennial night
a few names of beasts with hearts ripped out
fruity transparency of our sexes

it all exits the self alive too briefly

LE DEDANS DE QUELQU'UN

je dis le dedans de quelqu'un sans savoir
à partir de quel muscle os ou ligament
si c'est une ligne d'horizon dans le cerveau
ou nœuds de nuit dans la gorge
sans savoir si c'est tendre
ou vaste verbe avec un nom

THE INSIDE OF SOMEONE

I say the inside of someone not knowing
out of which muscle bone or ligament
if it's a line of horizon in the brain
or knots of night in the throat
not knowing if it's tender
or vast voice with a name

Le dedans de quelqu'un : version2

d'abord une idée de ténèbres
puis j'ai des mains
quelques syllabes et je largue
mais flot revient
et le monde du dedans s'étale
avec des rives de silence botanique

Le dedans de quelqu'un : autre version

il y a que c'est touffu
facile de se dire en amour de vous
d'un autre siècle
avec images de barques lentes et de falaises
au milieu de langues mortes
il y a que je suis navrée dans ma poitrine
que tant d'absolu soit sans jardin

The Inside of Someone: version2

first an idea of darkness
then hey I have hands
a few syllables and I launch
but tide turns
and the world inside is outspread
with shores of botanical silence

The Inside of Someone: other version

okay so it's dense
easy to admit you enamor me
from another century
with images of slow ships and cliffs
in the midst of dead languages
okay so it hits me right in the chest
that so much absolute has no garden

Le dedans : version3

même s'il n'y a personne
l'essentiel roule avide d'entrailles et d'enfance
dessine ses propres lignes de vie
et anecdotes pas tout à fait cannibales
même en absence de pronoms
l'essentiel absorbe la chaleur
des fresques de délire et d'aveux

The Inside: version3

even if no one's there
the essential rolls eager with innards and infancy
draws its own lines of life
and anecdotes not really cannibal
even in the absence of pronouns
the essential sucks up the heat
of the frescoes frenzy and confession

Le dedans

sans lux(e) la langue est invivable
aussi je vais rapide
si on ralentit si on efface j'insiste
il me faut jongler bref
ailleurs mouiller longuement m'attendrir

alors viens donc narration j'attends
tes questions indiscretes tes idées de *fun vert*
c'est tout simple, et douleur on peut raconter
substituer les carnivores

The Inside

without lux(ury) language is unbearable
so I move fast
if you want to slow down I insist if you erase
I just have to juggle
if not slowly getting wet makes me go soft

okay come on narration I await
your questions indiscreet your ideas of *having a blast*
it's so simple, and ache we can relate
to substitute the carnivores

Le dedans inversé

la grammaire, l'écho tu aimes
c'est sable, une âme
un peuple, des jambes
ce sourire
tout à coup c'est avec les poumons
souvent ça tourne en rond
espoir de superstition

au large une écume fertile de vie intime

ciel épelé qui foudroie
jusqu'aux pupilles

The Inside Reversed

grammar, the echo you love
it's sand, a soul
a people, legs
this smile
suddenly it's got lungs
often it goes in circles
hope of superstition

out there a rich foam of intimate life

spelled sky that thunders
right up to the pupils

c'est trop d'amour et pas assez
de nuit
après on dit c'est le Nord
et on se couche avec une femme
on redort une nuit tout entière
dans un silence de joie immobile

it's too much love and not enough
night
afterward we say it's the North
and go to bed with a woman
fall back to sleep all night long
in a silence of motionless joy

soudain je suis au début du vent
je voudrais comprendre
les mammifères et notre humanité
le corps à corps du deuil
le monde effondré dans nos images d'adieu
comment nos lèvres
et le côté géant de la mer

d'autres fois c'est suspect je deviens
une génération un lierre

un déroulement d'ombres et de dialogues

suddenly I'm at the start of the wind
I'd like to understand
mammals and our humanity
the hand to hand combat of grief
the world drowned in our images of farewell
how our lips
and the huge wall of the sea

other times it's suspicious I become
a generation a vine

a cascade of shadows and dialogues

KARA KAUHANE / Two Poems

3 looks 1 girl

hoale girl

happa girl

what beautiful

skin says nana

over coffee

in china cups, like

porcelain daddy

bristles (whiskey rub!)

she gets real dark

in the summer

politics over

my ponytail I am

too young for this

sweet cream to

bitter dark

I try but the

childs brown

the mischiefs

heat a hundred

people breathing

cold from the

waist down, wet

my friends in

towels I wait

this is for me?

you do know

me right?

2/3 daughter

of another

sad divorcee

in her sad pumps

praising jesus

in the balcony far

from the pastors

families we're all

the body of christ

but she's probably

I come in binary

I come in serial

hyphenate ascii

ask firefox to remember

this password? I come

as a suffix

-student -worker

-dependant -female

-canadian

and a prefix

step- smart-

useless- silly-

I have absolute value

approximate weight

and relative reference

what I see at 20 feet

you could see at 200

I come in statistics

brown fades
to freckle blotches
some cellulose
pattern of yellow
pink and green
sickly, white girl
stick girl, says uncle
I cant eat any more
don't be a hater girl

thank god for rose
red she keeps snow
white by her side
shelters me with
big hips breasts
strong limbs even
though she doesn't
get the reference
white for our teeth
red for our blood
full-blood red blush
when strangers say

a hair in the nostril

I'm a skin tag
nervous wanting
to be more than
some extractable
deformity humoured
for a time. vanity
swells, lets see them
try to get rid of me
now that is if
that they ever stop
singing

A formal introduction
after five years
and I say the wrong
name (a sign?)
big man glares, am
I serious? yes

water over my face

25.8 and 20.7
I have rose by 35%
between 1996 and 2001
I am part of the 2nd
largest grouping of
its kind in canada

arbitrary symbols
sounds to tell
this from that
differentiate chaos
in commoditization and
in anarchy (yes, I'm a
four sided parallelogram
with equal sides)
so give us a leopard
skin man or better yet
let me mediate myself

I allow I am 20 1989
3.83 10/ hour
2/3 and 3/5

we cant be related

but we are no
happas to each
other.

auntie changes
hula school name
to ka'u'ha'ne
sounds more
Hawaiian.

responsibility rules
flood the inside of
my ears I remember
twelve Rhonda calls
me a dark thing
(may god forgive
you!) for giggling
at her cummerbund
during service.

(sometimes 6)
respectively
6 and o and 5 32
25 29 but I am also
(none except observant
Italians may know)
a 4 letter word
for beloved.

drawing naked women in my school notes

1.

starting at the feet a pointe
wooden slabs an inch-wide diameter
of elegance and high art rounded
& edited. an over exaggerated arch
looks like impotent grapes
stop short at the ankle. too bony
too hard to capture our
necessary joints i wanted
to make the dips & contours so real
you could rub your finger, softly
in the shadow. smudged lead
paints a new life on my face.
i do not know if drawing a beautiful
woman makes beautiful art.

2.

the curve that place of
fixation comfort and conquest
our ideal and oppressor I love
to draw this curve, always, more
like a wiggle between hips
and ribs, traced and
retraced, I imagine, with
fingers, with breath,
gazes and now soft grey, 2B
smoothed of slight imperfections
the oil from my hand makes skin
soft with constant touching.
more aware, my own side tingles

3.

acrylic and charcoal breathe the dust
the sealant spray—mixed media is cruise
control for complex
except when its done thoughtlessly and looks like crap.
tan string tracing paper choking my brush
revealed in every compositional tick
there is too much of myself
stupid you never draw the spine
an ugly curved line down the back
you infer it. *drawing is basically*
all lies anyway.

ERÍN MOURE / from *The Unmemntioable: Games of Chance*

*In the inner core of blinded love, which is not and must never
be realized, lives the demand to be unblinded.*
—Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

I'm awake, rubbing my eyes. Poring over the map of Hlibovychi, I look for signs: they had reached the Ernsdorf Forest. What were they thinking? Even the forest Jews who used to come at night for food had not come. The trees were silent. It could have been a shore; there was just the distant sound that air makes when there is no sound, air at the tympanum. An undifferentiated grey sky that morning. The road a strip of light not invented yet. Marja. Alex. Herm.

•

In the dream, I was not able to answer the question: are you right- or left-handed? So I said both, but that I could not write with my left hand.

Animals asleep. A thinking man with a flying fish and a thinking man above, and representations of togas.

(so much of history is language here
(even the telling tells of language
(syllables seen with my own eyes in a plaster frieze of war

•

In 1944, Soviets seized an UPA North order dated February 11, which said: Freedom for the Peoples! Freedom for the Individual! Liquidate Polish traces:

- a) Destroy all walls of churches and other Polish sites of worship.
- b) Destroy trees growing near homes so that no trace remains that anyone had lived there (do not destroy fruit trees by roads).
- c) Before Nov. 25, 1944, destroy all houses formerly inhabited by Poles (if Ukrainians are living in them, it is imperative that the houses should be taken apart anyway and turned into dugouts; if not, the homes will be burned and people who live in them will have nowhere to spend the winter). We alert you once more that if anything whatsoever remains that is Polish, Poles will have claims to our lands.

•

What can I make of these side roads of grief? Horses in the stalls; we don't even need to rein them. Or hurt us. Ache is our alphabet, it has jewels and jewels, it has fringes. Don't ever let them tell you "decorum"! Or forget. I walk on Strada Plantelor in Bucharest, exiled, lonely. Strangely humid, for it rained hard earlier. The fires and dogs, leaves and dogs. Lilacs. Old women like my mother, and what a 19th century here! The fires. But there are no fires. Mobile phones and cigarettes. The new breed of dog, made out of all dogs. "I'm not then innocent."

•

21 aprilie. Sunt bolnava, a kind of congestion in the head. Need ColdFX and much more water. I struggle as best I can to Strada Matei Voievod where Sampedrín lives. Her address is empty. Street dust on the window and lumber stacked on the floor inside, as if she'd been long gone. Along one wall, grey shelves of hats, one space empty.

Maybe she only went there to write the poems of Erín Moure and now they are written, she is gone from this city. Left-handed in București—for how long?

Here where each small territory of beauty is staked out, perfected, then hidden, is there use for metaphor? *À peine nous admettons le réel.*

•

I wake still drunk on dreams at noon. Water. *DaDa* is still going strong a few streets away, one point on a four-point nexus: Amsterdam, Αθήνα, București, 東京. I sat at one of the red barstools, said—cafea, vă rog—and was served by a young man in white as if my bad accent didn't matter and “cafea, vă rog” was how one ordered coffee anywhere. As if Bucharest had stopped being in Turkey, as if we'd shaved off our shtetl beards, even the women, as if small colours and joy existed, and no need to flee from Gara de Nord to Zurich.

Dada, they say, originated in Bucharest. Is that why E.S. came here to research experience?

But E.S. has vamoosed. In her neighbourhood, the dogs, lumina de dimineața, the church and women cleaners with brooms in the park sweeping cigarette ends, and later Roma men and the dice game and more cigarette ends. And this cold. *Timpul învața pe cei fără școală.*

•

Bucharest, I said to Răzvan, the film critic, when we met for coffee, is a microcosm of the world. As B. changes, so will the world, for better or for worse. I come here, walk on Businessman's Street and Stinky Street, on Prince Matthew Street, and draw my own conclusions:

“A lot of aching beauty.”

•

Luceafărul se sorește. 118: Goats and sheep in bucolic hills.

•

Left by Răzvan in the Muzeul Național de Istorie, I remember: icons are not representations, not likenesses, for god has no visible face; icons are embodied thoughts

of god. Yet to the neolithic Vinca whose memories are in the dirt beneath our feet, icons were tools. Menace paired with fecundity. Animals sleep, a woman has cosmic stars in her hips, slash of her sex leading into the blade.

On the stove tiles: Napoleon, beech trees, deer leaping, birds, magnolias, horns, mermaids. "We are the heirs of these traces; in us, they are the sign of the whole."

•

On Businessman's Street, instead of lost pet posters, there are posters for lost old people. For people with tumours, needing intercession. I know now what Elisa craved about this city: what you find here is always different than what you came for.

Above the cluttered bar where I write these words, a framed photo of azure water at a resort on the Black Sea, the Romanian Riviera. The waitress is standing in the doorway, a figure outlined in white light. "A lot of aching beauty." My translation of Bucharest: "The dark star brightens."

"My offence was that I had eyes," wrote Ovid from Tomis, near here. Sometimes we are blinded by what we cannot see.

•

Finally I brave my fears, and go back to the Folk Museum to explore looking. In the room with the church, the shirt is missing. No, it's on the wall beside where it was last year, spread now into an elaborate cross with the neck rounded stiffly. Behind the church, a pile of lumber, for the church roof remains unbuilt, so we might see in. A sign now lies on the hewn boards: "It would be a mistake to pass over the pile of wood! No one cuts wood like this any more..."

On an empty stand where an explanatory plaque would fit quite nicely, there is a typed note: "Nici noi nu mai știm ce era scris aici. Ceva frumos despre timp..." *Who knows what was once written here. Something beautiful about time....*

If Sampedrín is not here, her research on experience must be ended. Yet if you dream of her, it means she is close by, says Chus Pato.

•

I can't believe it. I saw her! In the warren of rooms in the Palatul Parlamentului, third floor. I have to tell Chus. An exhibition of women video artists. She's in a blue anorak and beige jeans, and sings the song my mother made me sing as a child to make myself stop crying. Over and over, just as my mother insisted. Around her on park benches, people wake up, panic at her warble and microphone, leave.

Keep on the sunny side Keep on the sunny side " " " " " of life It would help us everyday It would brighten all the way If we keep on.t.s.s.o.l.

Julia Weidner, „Keep On” „Mergi mai departe,” 2003, 8’33

•

It startles me to see her on video. That's my grandmother she's describing. And it was my mother in the cancer hat. She can't subsume what doesn't belong to her.

•

What is inside, what is outside. What bears worth. What is a noise in the mouth. There are people in the north never conquered who laugh at death in strict ceremonies of pandemonium and refutation. I wait in Caru'cu Bere on Strada Stavropoleos for tripe soup with a long hot pepper on the side. R. arrives with an envelope for me, sent almost a year ago—when I was here last year—to the office at Time Out București.

When I pull out the first item, I recognize the turned-down black cover. I turn to the last page and read in a curious hand: "Fleeting glimpse of E.M. on Str. Negustari. Wearing my socks." I glance toward the floor, startled: I had taken them out of my suitcase that morning.

My notebook.

•

Dear Chus: In Bucharest there is a street—Matei Voievod—where, when you cross it, time stops on one side and starts on the other.

•

Dear Chus: everything I had dreamed turned out to be made of paper. The skin was an organ that suffered in silence the rays, the scourges, the cuts of trees and medicine. In 1922 in Hlibovychi, predeceased by her father Alex, blessed with more children, Anastasia and Tomasz emigrated in 1929 to the flood plain and mountain. Walking down the south side, the side with a road, the smallest daughter, my mother, went to school.

Forderung. "We must press forward to the schools."

Like Adorno, I know that in the innermost core of blinded love, which is and must never be realized, a woman is trying to open her eyes to see.

PAUL WILLIAM ZITS / the three sons of the rock harmonicon

Their playing consists of rough stone
the longest in three distinct parts
one which is four feet six inches in the melody
the next executing lengths of about three inches in breadth
the clever working inner part about an inch and a half in thickness

and the shortest of power extends to a compass
of about six inches and a half above the rest
and accompanied in length, an inch in width
He tunes down the two, covered with twisted straw
placed across a pair of wooden bars
the material of them high as the warble of the lark
and form the keys like those down to the deep bass of a funeral

The tones produced are the mica schist, as it is to extract
the superior in mellowness
and in other places, whinstone

They are the piano of lignum vitae
Under the hand of skilful sounds
wooden hammers, the player
The difficult chromatic ascent for the middle notes and larger
and even the descents are performed in treble
With larger, and of elm or ash, with a crispness
still and covered with leather, music is produced

Two knobs for each
in the form of conjunction with the sons of centre keys
hammers are used like with the inventor, and also alone
To those who are in acquaintance with
very pleased and struck of a crutch-handle
to addressing the pieces of glass laid on tapes
the inventor says *I have been with the toy harmonicon*
 consisted with this very ingenious instrument
 and will readily form an idea of its permanence
 and the permanence of my three sons
 who strike with a cork hammer
 while recompensed withal by the sounds which are elicited

he also writes *I am happy to offer*
 arranged and remarked like the pieces of stone:
 It should be very clever invention, and think in the diatonic scale
 A piece of music may be the production of rock
 one containing the flats and feeling

You will be highly pleased with the performance
of the three sons of the inventor
who perform, I sincerely hope, my labours
and for the melody in three distinct parts

jenn angela lopes / 23° 26, Recanting: to Sing Again

*I'm the mother and the poet
Something is inferred about an artist who died
The daughters are intact, the dream-sons are murdered
What's the equation
—Bernadette Mayer, Midwinter Day*

How brawny are you daughter outside country svelte are
You too accustomed to drawing slovenly woes, no bends
In dress just a flow, a glide, where air
Underneath pushes up and rushes out, a sharing necessity
Of our separation to see your salvaged dim drop
Of dew from afar refulgent like a gem, a
Beauty mark that says exactly what passes its mind,
Round with occasional leaps into casted molten silence this
Morning we ask “what’s the equation of death” to

the future spot of oophoron anterior
long nights of unconscious spaces
to enter debut

You need in me as I engage in
Shuttle day by volition, I zoom into our
Hearth's frisson you want past I past continue
Sometimes the means used to clinch our aims
Are more often than not of greater blames
To our prospective world than the intended aims
You are beautiful with means, beautiful without wishes
You moment you saying "...letting go of my
mother's foot as maenads palpate
debut" you with force, our
agreement with fright

I shudder, lithe with condensation; you sing
Lust's pseudo sciences test not its hypothesis
Attempting to emulate the veneers of sciences
That really have intellectual content lust accompanies,
Rather precariously, beliefs about jurisdiction over the
Flow of events our love knows its
Hypothesis, without logic, seeing midmorning as a

cessation found comonomer cocooned,
as if crushing
repent

Here, in this mass cut of
Sleet, in this letting go, anxiety
Fraughts me to deficit, I meld
Into recorded voices, your hands multi-
Task how my heart hurts when
Chyle tarries in gestation, how a

massacre of serene sacs, a rosace,
not preen,
observes my heart

Truancy of emotions waves not
Rationality apathy soaring terror can
Indeed terrify us, being not
The result of control but
An evident manifestation of incomprehension:

sesame seam qua miosis adored

This being inoculated with
Reason is fake you
Ask me “was I
loving you?” I distanced

vacated vesicles at toe move

me, as vacuums are not silent nor noble

Open afternoons beckon

Us withdrawing leaves

Dreams in hazard

pose me, pupate me offers as rooted!

or force to the end

Leaves will

Block eaves

Other's ardent

soul caters more on commune

veins, as remorse meets

with different

Acceptance's

Shift

pulsing semiotics under ears'

roe, not night

visionary fantasies, in

Yolk

To

caromed ardour on mono queue

jealous, not

funeral processions

Nature's

Necessity,

marram cooed coat on murmur

deuce ammo,

no longer a terror: god or chance

We

soothe aeon ramose, oogonium

in depth there always exists warmth,

qua ecru sugar, gaze

augurs moon maced,

all about in a silent wall of love laced

AISHA SASHA JOHN / Two Poems from *The Shining Material*

self-portrait self-hugging

elegance being a favourite escape
elegance itself always wanting
it felt true and that's elegance, grace
like a calm
wind I am
happy to know such elegance and
scared, maybe, to show all my elegance
how time didn't halt it.
over a season having passed
and I'm ripe here still with elegance
I'm ripe here still with elegance
and it isn't a lack of grace
that's got me
and I haven't anything to be short of
or flush-faced about
this all here bodaciously wetly
elegant. so elegant
I'm elegant now: not hiding, not
covering all the stuck want
it's elegant even to name it:
oh silk, feathers, clouds
blush and rub soft elegant smooth
all of his elegant slimness I hate him
I want him it's superior it's famous it's elegant
hating want what
waste

I'm still soft.
and what if he knew and he pushed hard
and what if he knew and he
scoffed and smirked and moved
elsewhere uncaring uncaring inelegant
what is left here to want he's in-
he's inelegant for days

but to resist makes the tension mountains, so
I'm valley elegant
I'm rolling green and billowing breezes
short flowers, lost petals: there's elegance to a small flower half-bare
its stem bent elegant and elegant it's okay it's fine
I won't end
up like her
I'm much more, modes more elegant
moving with gobs. dripping wet
grace.

he can't take that from me.

elegant he frustrates, switching
shit around
ignoring me inelegant, so

may I Lord please have some grace?

and if he's not there can I so elegant move unawkwardly
and if he is I'll drink the juice of that sight
mister, don't say anything please inelegant. don't be inelegant.

maybe, I still want him everyday.

well, yes.

yes times forty and so
how to perform frost?

never.

that is so inelegant.
let any warm wind blow. let warmth go that's grace.

and what if I cry?

what if.

guess what you're a red-blood a human girl.
guess what. and so what.
you're a red blood, a human woman and strong.
and the tears would be all elegant.

Celia

immediate portable
eternal
very very cheap
fast
thought being good
is
fire
how much of it do you stock?
is long
I would have some
café
and I would have it would cream
and I would take it with honey
and I would drink it
with slow
and I would thence wolf food with grace
and I would aftersip some water
and I would return to the beast and prattle
a sinner
I wrote and in that's light
lava
a cartonful
each tap of the broom singing to me
celia
celia
celia
that isn't my name but said it's my song
the soft of the ce and lia, what is more feminine
endings in ah stand open
and last
the cilia

you cost so many times
I'll crisp up to leave you tenderly
you perfect shawl
you
you tenderoni you
you delicious mistake you
you
shining
this place
tamer than shorn hair

Contributors

ANDREA ACTIS is a former resident of Vancouver currently living and studying in Providence, Rhode Island. Her poetry and criticism have been published in *The Capilano Review*, *The Rain Review of Books*, and *The Poetic Front*.

SUSAN BEE is a painter, editor, and book artist who lives in New York City. She has had five solo shows at A.I.R. Gallery in NYC and will have a solo show there in spring 2011. She has published six artist's books with Granary Books, including collaborations with poets: *Bed Hangings*, with Susan Howe; *A Girl's Life*, with Johanna Drucker; *Log Rhythms* and *Little Orphan Anagram*, with Charles Bernstein; and *The Burning Babe and Other Poems*, with Jerome Rothenberg. Her most recent book is *Entre*, with poems by Regis Bonvicino (Global Books 2009). Bee is the co-editor of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artist's Writings, Theory, and Criticism* (Duke UP 2000), featuring writings by over one hundred artists, critics, and poets. She is the co-editor of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online*. She has a BA from Barnard College and a MA in Art from Hunter College. Her artist's books are included in many public and private collections, including the Getty Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, Yale University, Clark Art Institute, New York Public Library, and Harvard University Library. She teaches Art Criticism and Writing at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Her website is <<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bee>>.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN was born in New York City in 1950. He has published sixteen full-length collections of poetry and libretti and three collections of essays, including *All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 2010), *Blind Witness: Three American Operas* (Factory School 2008), *Girly Man* (U of Chicago P 2006), *My Way: Speeches and Poems* (U of Chicago P 1999), and *Republics of Reality: Poems 1975-1995* (Sun & Moon Press 2000). From 1978-1981 he edited *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* magazine, with Bruce Andrews. In the 1990s, he co-founded and directed the Poetics Program at the State University of New York, Buffalo, where he was a SUNY Distinguished Professor. Bernstein is editor of the Electronic Poetry Center <<http://epc.buffalo.edu>> and co-director, with Al Filreis, of PennSound <<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound>>. Web author page at the EPC. Bernstein is currently Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. In spring 2011, Chicago will be publishing his new book, *The Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays & Inventions*.

NICOLE BROSSARD is a poet, novelist, and essayist who has published more than thirty books since 1965, including *These Our Mothers*, *Lovhers*, *Mauve Desert*, and *Baroque at Dawn*. She co-founded *La Barre du Jour* and *La Nouvelle Barre du Jour*, two important literary journals in Quebec. She has won two Governor General's Awards for poetry, as well as le Prix Athanase-David and the Canada Council's Molson Prize. Her work has been translated into several languages. Her most recent books in English are the poetry collections *Mobility of Light*, edited by Louise Forsyth (Laurier Press 2009), and *Nicole Brossard: Selections*, edited by Jennifer Moxley (U of California P 2010). She lives in Montreal.

COLIN BROWN is a baker and student from Vancouver. He is currently studying English and Modern European Studies at the University of British Columbia. As a student at Capilano University, he was a contributor to and a co-editor of *The Liar*. He has published a chapbook titled *Bukoliki*.

HEATHER CAMPBELL grew up in the Maritimes and has since lived and worked in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. While working mostly in the non-profit and arts world, she continues to write both poetry and fiction. Her short fiction has appeared in *Wascana Review* and her poetry in *Quills* and *Prairie Fire*; both have been generously supported by the Toronto Arts Council.

AISHA SASHA JOHN writes poetry and plays. Her work has appeared in *Exile Quarterly*, *CV2*, *Carousel*, *Existere*, and the *Diaspora Dialogues* anthology, *TOK 3*. In 2009, Aisha completed her MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Guelph; in 2010, she's writing plays as part of Nightwood Theatre's "Write From the Hip" program as well as Theatre Passe Muraille's theatre creators group, "Upstarts." Aisha recently completed a manuscript of poems called *The Shining Material*. Visit her at hugetime.tumblr.com.

CARA KAUHANE is a Hawaiian-Chinese, English-Irish Canadian of a three-parent household, middle-ish of five children. She graduated from Capilano University with an Associate of Arts in Creative Writing, and is currently a creative writing and anthropology student at UBC. She has been published in Capilano University's magazine *The Liar*; however, *TCR* is her first paying gig. Ergo this is a very special moment for her.

jenn angela lopes lives in Montreal and has been published by *contemporary verse 2*. She is the winner of *TCR's* 2010 Midsummer Day contest (inspired by Bernadette Mayer's poem *Midwinter Day*).

ERIN MOURE is a Montreal poet and translator. Her latest books are *O Resplendor* (Anansi 2010—poetry), *Expeditions of a Chimæra* (BookThug 2009—a collaboration with Oana Avasilichioaei), *My Beloved Wager* (NeWest 2009—essays on writing practice), and a translation of Chus Pato's *m-Talá* from Galician (Shearsman and BuschekBooks 2009).

ANTONY DI NARDO is the author of *Alien, Correspondent* (Brick Books 2010) and *Soul on Standby* (Exile Editions 2010). His poetry appears widely in journals across Canada and internationally. He divides his time between Oshawa, Ontario and Sutton, Quebec.

MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN's most recent book, *Nightmarker* (NeWest 2008), explores the city as animal behavior, museum, and dream of modernity. *Nightmarker* was a finalist for the 2009 Vancouver Book Award. Another recent book, *Matter* (BookThug 2008), playfully riffs on Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Roget's *Thesaurus*. *Vancouver Walking* (NeWest 2005) won the 2006 BC Book Award for Poetry. *Recipes from the Red Planet* will be published by BookThug in October 2010.

PAUL WILLIAM ZITS is currently completing a creative thesis for his MA in English at the University of Calgary. He has spent the last year dividing his time between his thesis, teaching creative writing at U of C, tutoring ESL students, and working for an Alberta cheesemaker. His poetry has appeared in *Spire*, *the basement*, *Confluence*, *nōd*, *filling Station*, and *Grain*, and he has work forthcoming in *Canadian Literature*.

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