

*e x p e r i m e n t - o*  
.....

*celebrating the art of risk*  
.....

*i s s u e n o . o n e n o v e m b e r 2 0 0 8*  
.....

*Gary Barwin*

*Emily Falvey*

*Spencer Gordon*

*Camille Martin*

*rob mcLennan*

*Sheila E. Murphy*

*Pearl Pirie*

*Roland Prevost*

*Jenny Sampirisi*

*Steve Venright*

**GARY BARWIN**

**MOON BONE**



# GARY BARWIN

(

moon	bone
moan	boon

old man shaking his bones  
old moon shining stone

the old in the arms of the new

man	bane
mane	blind

binding a sign  
the one blond eye  
a single hoofprint  
pushing through

mine	born
morn	bade

a scimitar a

moor's	blade
the	
moon's	bone

a bent

shine

# GARY BARWIN

**HAPPY SAID**



# GARY BARWIN

Happy said, "Bow-wow!  
I want to play.  
I want to run.  
I want to run away."  
Away he ran.

Billy said, "Oh,  
I want to play.  
I want to run.  
I want to run away."  
Away he ran.

Mother said, "Oh, my,  
I want to play.  
I want to run.  
I want to run away."  
Away she ran.

Father said, "Oh,  
I want to play.  
I want to run.  
I want to run away."  
Away he ran.

Nancy said, "Oh,  
I want to play.  
I want to run.  
I want to stay because  
the grass is so small  
and Father cuts each blade  
so beautifully."

## CEILING

Merging Saturnian storms seem dull compared to the imperfect stucco of her ceiling, its complex patterns laced with fuzzy dust *grisâtre*. She stares at them until her eyes water. Pinching reminiscence of father's Scientific American magazines accreting in the bathroom, their galaxy clusters and pictures of mouse brain. Above, a furry pelt of upstairs neighbours. Soft subtlety of creaking movements. Soft padding of animals on old floorboards.

The smell of Lady Grey. Orangey bergamot over mayonnaise. Spread thick slices of white bread and avocado wedged with olive slivers. Bites ground mustard. She traces tea stains on the inside of bone china. Looks forward to book and wine in bed. Her cat curled, a knot of sheets under foot. Warm. Reading aloud, just to hear a human voice.

The apartment is a volume of silence. Not another voice. Only slight indications of life beyond the ceiling. Scrape of furniture, shift of weight, now and then. No talking. Not even TV mumbling. She falls asleep to an intermittent old-appliance moan.

Arguing her way out of a dream, she wakes abruptly at 4 am. Sounds fill the room like a bowl to its brink. The thud of a man crying. Sobbing, actually. It is so loud.

*I don't love you anymore.* As clear as day. She blinks. Wipes away the drool-thick darkness. As if he were in her room. *I don't love you anymore. I don't love you anymore. I don't. No more.* Words fall through the floor, foul her room, build up in an absence of sleep. Through its gauzy stucco, the ceiling reveals itself,

shockingly thin. Emaciated. Skeletal. The man abruptly stops crying. What follows is not silence, but it isn't sound either. Not a word. She barely hears them move. A week later, the shared contents of their lives follow them out. Staggering funereal procession down the stairwell.

Friday. Lolling before a movie from the library. Remnants of lamb on a plate. A stalk of rosemary, the memento mori of pink flesh, almost raw in her mouth, a half hour earlier. Salt washed down with a mouthful of wine. A headache begins to play soft bass notes somewhere in the distance. She closes her eyes against the exaggerations of Jack Lemmon. The VCR glitches. She feels bone pressure. Above her a guitar sputters and comes nervously to life, clumsy like a thieving child. A flicker of rage tingles beneath her skin.

Slow sink into drunkenness. She spills; drizzles stains of existence across the sofa, scarlet of old wine. She lies there and contemplates the architecture, the slouch of the walls. Above her the new set of neighbours loudly thump. The ceiling barely digests their drunken rhythms. She feels the fibers of her body contract sharply. Her heart quickens, becomes a fist of blood.

Silence is a foreign concept to these people. An ocean of constant chatter, entertainment and shrewish rejoinders. Dude laughter and bitch shrieks. She hits the ceiling with a broom, releases a fine powder of filth and crumbling plaster. Feelers of dust wave in the tailwinds of anger. Sea anemones. The fat sound of urine plummets into the toilet above. Pebbles into a pond.

At 2:00 am she goes to tell them to be quiet. On their door is a pink piece of sparkly paper. Their names are there, written calligraphically. Poesy of flower

# EMILY FALVEY

stickers. Tad and Sue. Those are their names. Number 6. The sound of singing and limping guitar. She knocks. A living piece of marzipan opens the door, stands there, round and sweet, a shock of red sugar hair. Hovering behind her, the beery smokiness of bad song. *We are getting married tomorrow*, she says when asked to be quiet. It is a pink and sparkly sentence. A gumbdrop. *We are practicing our wedding vows*, she says. Twinkles with gin fizz

Before she can swallow, she hears herself spit. *You've got to be kidding!* It comes out faster than rage. *I suppose you are barefoot and pregnant, too?*

This conversation is now over. Alone in the hallway there is something close to silence, even though she hears every word beyond the door.

The ceiling won't last much longer. It's becoming more and more porous. Their lives are trickling into her room, pilling up, tripping her. Finally, resolution on a irritable morning in sweatpants—Thanksgiving Day to be exact. An oily black squirrel finds its way inside, pokes its head through a hole, stares down at her with beady devil eyes. The cat goes almost catatonic with desire. Bad omen or good sign. Perhaps it is simply time to move. The limit. She weighs options over coffee and classifieds in a nearby café. Above her, the ceiling merely hangs, a bland nothingness overshadowed by a swirl of lattés and tasteful ochre walls.

## TIRED BUT ALWAYS THINKING, THINKING,

June plays another round of *e-solitaire* in the submerged murk of her refurbished office room, located on the second floor of her 2000-square-foot, semi-detached four-bedroom home: a property of nine-foot ceilings and deep-set cold cellar, pie-shaped gravel lot, oak-hardwood floors and stairs, gourmet kitchen, walk-in pantry and private bath, breakfast bar, soaker tub, stainless steel utensils and front-load entry *Bosch* laundry appliances. It is 11:33 PM EST, on 10 Wednesday, 2007, in the middle of an October workweek in Mississauga, Ontario, in the suburban heart of the rapidly expanding Forest Hill community near Eglinton and Hurontario, minutes from the ceaseless cough of the GTA highway system, from highways 401 and 10, the Toronto Pearson Airport, the colossal, saucer-shaped, 400-store shopping experience of Square One: now the commercial hub of Mississauga's City Centre, where once farmers' fields spread in navigational cross-hatch, an encompassing crescent of fertility and unsophistication and distance. Now home to department stores, services, restaurants, theatres, the Older Adult Centre, The Youth Centre, The Open Door Centre, The Church at Square One, The Mississauga Central Lions Club Fundraising Farmer's Market, Canadian Blood Services, and so forth: this particular air, this changing century, since 1973.

June's face and hands being marginally older: born June 12, 1953, now fifty-four years old, awash in the ghostly illumination of the Samsung SyncMaster 753DF monitor light, hands and face bleached and spectral as she sips a steaming mug of decaf, as her shoulders sag forward in knotted discomfort and her eyes leap from card to card, from hearts to clubs to Kings, arranged in rows and serried stacks, the green of the imitation electronic card-table sullied by tint-distorting pixels: pool-hall green to pale chartreuse.

She sips the coffee with her left hand (her wrong hand), miscalculating ambidexterity, using her right hand to battle with a stiff, dollar-bin cast-off mouse, brushing and pushing the ball across a frayed and worried pad featuring a reproduction of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. June afraid in large hyperbolic swabs of spilling hot coffee across the keyboard: spoiling controls, frying circuits, corrupting mystery.

June blows with tight, pursed lips, cooling steam snaking ceiling-ward from the mug, sucking curt slurps of Nigerian Fair Trade Decaf that tastes

of hazelnut and sunlight and ancient soil. She minimizes the *e-solitaire* window mid-game and restores the MSN Messenger window to stare fixedly at his name, grimly and resolutely *offline*, accompanied by the depressingly familiar red icon of ex-communication, a sign incapable of receiving or returning message, transmitting the full implications of silence and remove. The night unquiet to patient respectful apprehension: a raccoon shrieking in tortuous pain from helpless middle-distance. Occasional headlights send yellow bars across Forest Hill foyers and doorways of tinted glass, over entry-halls and living rooms asleep in the deep quiet of driveway night, 11:33 PM dreams disturbed by the rifling scratch of skunk and claw, by the threat of light or knock or caller, paranoid imagination conflating untold perversion and misery.

June e-mailed him weekly (*that's it!*), daring only the most laissez-faire motherhood, the most tender conscientious dabbling with his life that was *not hers*, she knew it, plain as white plates and dish detergent. Sending weekly e-mails or Hallmark cards with folded \$50 cheques or neat, tight script: transmissions of the modern mother, aware of the risk of smothering and aware of the freedom and flush of adolescence (case in point: his constantly changing MSN display picture, blissfully unaware of propriety or decorum, portraying him in some debauch or lecherous embrace, in what untold alley of Montreal on what untold substance (mostly alcohol from his eyes, she could recognize *high eyes* as well as she could recall the floating tingle of pot, still buried in the tea-head closets and cupboards of her mind). This was all a silent and suffering discipline, amazing really, not to call him at least bi-weekly and to see if he was OK or eating well or getting enough sleep. Not that it seemed to matter: his number kept changing, or the number he gave her turned out to be a cell phone, perennially low on batteries, or forgotten beneath a pleat of denim. In any case, he preferred text messages – which, according to June, communicated absolutely nothing – as in emptiness, a negativity.

She sips her coffee. She minimizes the MSN window and resumes her game.

June is afraid of the internet (so many things are frightening; it wasn't like she was young; death being impossibly real, the worst kind of conspiracy; this isn't funny). But June's ritual of sipping coffee and playing *e-solitaire* and staring hopefully at the MSN window demanded at least the semblance of *surfing*, of browsing the bizarre and daunting passages of the internet. Demanded at least by the presence of Marcus, husband of twenty-six years, who would often walk strangely unbidden into



the office and ask probingly what she was up to. So she pretends on 10 October 2007 to research a new recipe for cod, to scan a review for a new movie now playing in theatres (Square One), to search for directions to a new superstore (Fabric Land), or to check her e-mail inbox, which admittedly she does from time to time, no pretending, to see if her friends from Edmonton or the office sent her a joke or a piece of tame political satire or warm-hearted meditation on femininity or age or the spirit, as if these subjects could be warmly received (age being especially terrifying, not helped by a racoon crying out in lonely unrefined agony).

Example scenario of Marcus' intrusion: he strides into the room half-whistling or humming, all innocuous, good-natured effort. June scowls in the white light of the monitor. He grabs her mug of coffee, half-empty, and walks back down the stairs to the stainless-steel kitchen to provide a re-fill. If there is lipstick on the rim he wipes it off, feeling slightly disgusted. Before stepping up the stairs with quick, sure strides, healthy for his late fifties, he stands and gazes over the indistinct furniture and picture frames of their main-floor living room. His thoughts turn instantly to the moon, moonscapes, craters: vast lunar landscapes of empty, ice-cold expanse. Back in the office he hands back the mug, thinking June's scowl is a byproduct of weariness from work, that she may only be in need of a little time spent idly pursuing some trivial thing on the internet, which was entirely new to their lives after spending a decade convincing themselves (rather hopelessly) that they'd never need it.

This ritual belonging to the evening, after work and the lacklustre attempt at dinner and the dishes put away. Daily chores finished and errands ran. Marcus not in the office *filing*: the all-encompassing blanket term June assumed he used to cover all manner of bizarre and taboo behaviour. June silently suspecting him of secretly downloading hardcore pornography, of gambling, of possibly having an affair (he was better with the computer, he knew how to cover tracks, could hide files in secret folders and caches). Something terrible and grotesque; a sin filed under *filing*. Tonight Marcus watches music videos on a 40" flatscreen television in the cold, half-finished basement, enclosed by walls of bare pine, a rolled carpet leaning in the northeast corner, Marcus superficially aroused by a singer of mixed race grinding her pelvis in a harem, superficially disgusted, very tired, recalling drowsily June's face illuminated in the glow of the computer screen (she wouldn't turn on the desk lamp or the overhead halogen; *energy was expensive*).

June slipped into the office at 10:49 PM

EST with her first mug of decaf, knowing she was alone on the third floor, that there would be no *filing*, no real interruptions, hearing from the basement the muted crackle of the erotic music video.

She maximizes the MSN window at 11:35 PM EST and stares at his name: still red. She minimizes the window and hits the RESET GAME option on the *e-solitaire* screen.

If the room is messy she tidies, compulsively, having the long, drought-like expanse of noncommunication to weather, but the room is never messy: not *messy-messy*, in any case, Marcus being almost regimentally neat and organized, and June, with her stray pins and mugs and forgotten coffee rings, her pens and hair elastics, rarely sitting in the office, the office being the square squat room of masculine efficiency she subtly feels like she is invading, violating. She stares at the black, flawless wood of the IKEA desk. She stares at the grim rectangular shadow of the closet, the metal shelf, the few scattered picture frames between dictionaries and reference books Marcus uses when working. She stares at the sticker of Minnie Mouse that Marcus had affixed to the side of the monitor. She stares at the tiny, plastic toy replica of Mr. Peanut that Marcus loves with a strange, embarrassing, and passionate zeal (finding an affinity of appearance somewhere in the yellow bald shell of Mr. Peanut's skull). She stares at the cactus in the east corner of the room and at the half-drawn blinds over the four-foot window. She stares at her hands, pale and ghostly in the ghoulish light of the screen. She turns over the mouse and peers into the circular plastic casing surrounding the half-revealed ball, tries to see what hated roll of lint or insidious dust is causing the jam, slowing the arrow's naturally simple, smooth glide across the screen into a tortuous crawl. She finds nothing, never understanding, the problem lodged too deep within the arcane folds of the mouse's underbelly. Her desire to purchase a new mouse is overstatedly intense, causing her to literally gnash her teeth, but she is afraid as always that she might buy a replacement that didn't "hook-up" or correspond to the specific systems installed and she'd end up looking *stupid*. She imagines, in a passing but quasi-enranging moment of frustration, that maybe the reason he hardly ever appeared online is because she had done something foolish and unintentional to her MSN configuration (speaking of systems) that limited their time together, or blocked her ID, or whatever. The thought of this – that the silence that was so profound and physical between them is potentially her fault, her own technological ineptitude – makes her feel even *more* pathetic and blind and frustrated, so much so that she wants a

cigarette – a *Camel* cigarette – and she wants to smoke it in the office and watch the blue smoke billow before the pale light of the screen, the ember blazing red. But she hasn't smoked in twenty years – some thoughts were simply *crazy*.

His MSN names were another thing altogether: bizarre elusive or allusive phrases, inside jokes or quotes from some movie or song or book she couldn't possibly know. If she actually caught him online – if something in the arrangement of planet and zodiac and heavens actually arranged to have her sitting in the rare moments of late-night hope at *the same time* as him, across the country in that dirty and neglected apartment in Montreal – half the time (which constituted a huge percentage) she could tell he was absorbed in work or some article because his responses would be slow, staggered, similar to the way he spoke when he was fourteen, in bass monosyllables, as he stared down at his plate at dinner and his father ate noisily and heartily beside him. When he exhibited such obvious signs of occupation or distraction she'd wait for each of his typed responses with what felt like divine patience, eventually giving up on any opportunity for meaningful conversation with an ominous, gurgling ache somewhere in her intestines, and tell him she loved him and that she (lying) *really needed to go*, which, ironically (an irony not lost on June), elicited the only quick response on his behalf during their entire stilted conversation. Sometimes she would become angry, thinking that if he were doing something so important or distracting or demanding he shouldn't have signed-on in the first place. Or thinking, *Jesus, who does he think I am, some girl chatting with her friends in the dark, there's no one else here, he's the only name on my list, he knows he's the only name on my list, he knows*, etc., etc.

At 11:36 she finds herself buried in bad luck. The raccoon, approximately 100 feet away, makes a sound that can only be described as a possessed, Satanic effort to swallow its own tongue. June stands and makes sure the window is closed – it is. She sits back down. A truck groans metallic and aching in the cool of night.

Now and then he would truly talk. These were wild ecstatic moments. June would feel privileged and elated and especially good because of the noise her fingers made on the keyboard: a noise that meant the computer was really being used and enjoyed, that meant she didn't have to drag the broken mouse over and over to remain in the conversation. She could simply sit and type. The need to sit arch-backed and careful arose from her deep electronic superstition: she never minimized their dialogue box mid-conversation because she felt

that this might exit the system, somehow. She only took a sip of coffee once she had immediately finished typing, knowing that it would take at least a few seconds for him to read what she had written and compose his own response. She wouldn't, under any circumstances whatsoever, leave the room – even if her bladder screamed in protest, even if (here being another example of one of Marcus' intrusions – the most despicable variety – one of the lowest forms of disruption) Marcus called infuriatingly from the living room or the kitchen, or – worst of all, this was *really bad* – if the phone rang, and Marcus called her name without thinking that after a long, purposeless day at work she *might* not want to speak with anyone at all, that he *might* for once steal quietly and meekly into the office and ask politely and with due consideration whether or not she was willing to talk with her mother or her sister or her boss. She couldn't leave the room; it was a non-issue. Leaving the room might ruin the moment that allowed her to keep the window open and keep him talking. Maybe if she stopped typing for only the brief length of time required to pee or to tell her sister she would call her back he would get distracted, or he'd exit the conversation with only a brief, *love ya mom, gotta go*, and she'd be unable to tell him once again to be careful or that she loved him; or worse still (things could always be worse, worse, the sliding declination of her pain), if he simply left, had to take a phone call or leave his apartment hurriedly, and she was forced to message *Hello? You there? Where are you?* until she couldn't wait, it was terrible, had to log off.

But these were, as stated, wild and ecstatic moments, so rarely encountered since his re-lapse with coursework that June felt the deepest privilege whenever they occurred. When she was able to truly converse, she felt proud to tell Marcus – offering the sly, off-handed bit of information as an aside in order to watch his face light up with surprise (this being an enigmatic entanglement of sadism and love – dropping details of their conversation as if it didn't matter, with a sort of half-cruel, show-offy air of desperation, knowing he would instantly and almost manically focus on what she said) – the little details of his life and situation and romantic status, over the quick breakfast of 7:30 AM, or in the inexorable minutes before sleep. Sometimes his manner of speaking came through the words that appeared on the screen, and she could hear the semantic rhythm of his voice, his peculiar pauses and accents, that filled their home for over twenty years but now were like what – fragments? June didn't know. When she heard his voice come through the words she was most happy, and sometimes would feel that life was

# SPENCER GORDON

indeed long and still held an element of surprise, that they would have many more years together, that this separation was only a short, temporary adjustment. This made her forget her bureaucratic office work that was monotonous and cruel and completely uninteresting. It made her forget her hands, wrinkled and pale and fat. It made her think of a time when Marcus was young and less annoying, when his small habitual gestures (like the re-filling of the mug) were cute and sweet and didn't seem as robotic and servile. June craved those moments with such an intensity that if she could, she would spend every evening like this, waiting in the dark, playing *e-solitaire* over and over, drinking decaf, nervously opening the internet browser to make it seem as if she had other things to do.

At 12:01 AM she makes the critical choice to sign out and go to bed. She brushes her teeth and washes the make-up from her face, rubs a swath of skin cream beneath her eyes. She undresses drowsily and slips into her flannel nightgown (the air having turned cold, the crispness of dried leaf and autumn moon, the end of summer). She figures Marcus might still be watching the television in the basement, or maybe working long-hand with his papers spread out across the dining room mahogany. Sometimes he would be lying in bed, reading, having already performed the rituals of the evening. She'd know by the way he'd cough and clear his throat, distinctively, regular and slow. If he was in bed before her she would climb in beside him and roll on her left side, facing the closet and the door. He might ask a few plodding questions, and she'd answer without revealing the secret thing she did, night after night, unless she was able to tell him something about their son that would make him put down his history book and really listen. Tonight, Marcus being absent, still awake somewhere in the 2000-square-foot house, she lifts the sheets and rests her head on the pillow, too tired to read, to think. She turns off the chain lamp on the night table on her side of the bed. She closes her eyes and begins to drift, almost sensing her husband's usual breath, the turn of a page.

This being the Forest Hill community, burgeoning residential marketplace, a place to retire or to launch a career, a quiet retreat from the bustling city but still a quick commute to Toronto proper, a place where children can walk to school. All the amenities of modern shopping. With her ear buried in the soft envelope of the pillow (down-filled), June can just barely make out the final, ragged gasps of the racoon, which now fade into the warm, wave-like roar of her heartbeat, the thud of sleep, the night coalescing around her to form a bosom, a cradel, in

which she is enwrapped like a child *in utero*. At 12:13 AM her thoughts turn in the passages of pre-stage REM sleep to the way she used to put her son to bed in similar flannel pyjamas, only graced by Transformers or Ninja Turtles, cartoon companions in sleep, and just when her door was closed and the night seemed to close in for good, he'd rush back into her room, flinging open the door, to jump crazily on their bed in wild hilarious smiling transgression. All to prolong the departure, the moment of separation, the privacy and loneliness of dreams.

(This was something else, another memory, what she thought was all her own, *just for her*, too sacred to bring to words.)

At 12:40 AM, Marcus turns off the television. He sits in the sudden pitch of the basement, ostensibly blind, blinking rapidly to restore a familiar object or mark. He feels and fumbles his way to the unfinished stairs, steps up lightly with one hand wrapped around the railing, and pushes his way into the low-lit dining room. He drinks a glass of water and urinates. He stalks the house, rattling locks, making sure windows and doors are shut, turning off errant lights. Then he undresses, brushes his teeth, and comes to bed. He is tired, tired from something that isn't work, tired in great general bone-weariness. He thinks idly about seeing the doctor, explaining this tiredness.

He is enormously tired.

He wonders if he can sleep through the pathetic death of the racoon, the occasional rattle of the walls as a truck trundles toward the highway: the sleeping dreaming highway leading to the empty, vacant parking lots, the lightless shopping centres, truck headlights illuminating the snaking roads of the moon.

June a gentle snoring hill beside him. He puts his hand against the small of her back and she shifts, unconsciously.

He lies on his back. His eyes are open in the dark, tired.

Tired, yes, but always thinking: thinking suddenly and with perfect clarity of skies that are wide, and blue, and empty.

# CAMILLE MARTIN



# CAMILLE MARTIN

i dissipate when you need  
me most—what am i?  
i dig in when you  
most need to be alone  
with your regret—what  
am i? maybe you won't mind  
if i just leave you  
clawing the air—what am  
i? what if i settle  
in for a while, your  
worst memory—what am i?  
or else i'll morph into  
you—but what if there's  
no you? what am *i*?

black asterisk in a black alphabet.  
a question of the love of larvae. lovely  
birth of larvae in yellow silk or yellow  
metal. milky decorum. or exo- exo-skeleton  
in the metropole. celestial urns and baskets, many  
baskets learning purple robins. why? paper cut  
willow blues, willow socket shocks. motifs  
appear. again, motifs and a coccyx twin.  
sheepish angels in a starry slipcase mingle stone  
or stones and blurry angels. a sudden folding,  
a sodden book, abruptly sullen. is it signed  
by paper prophets? is it numbered? acorns  
are new. eels cascade. acorns are sadly news.  
oh, bittersweet, bittersweet black sheep!



# CAMILLE MARTIN



# CAMILLE MARTIN

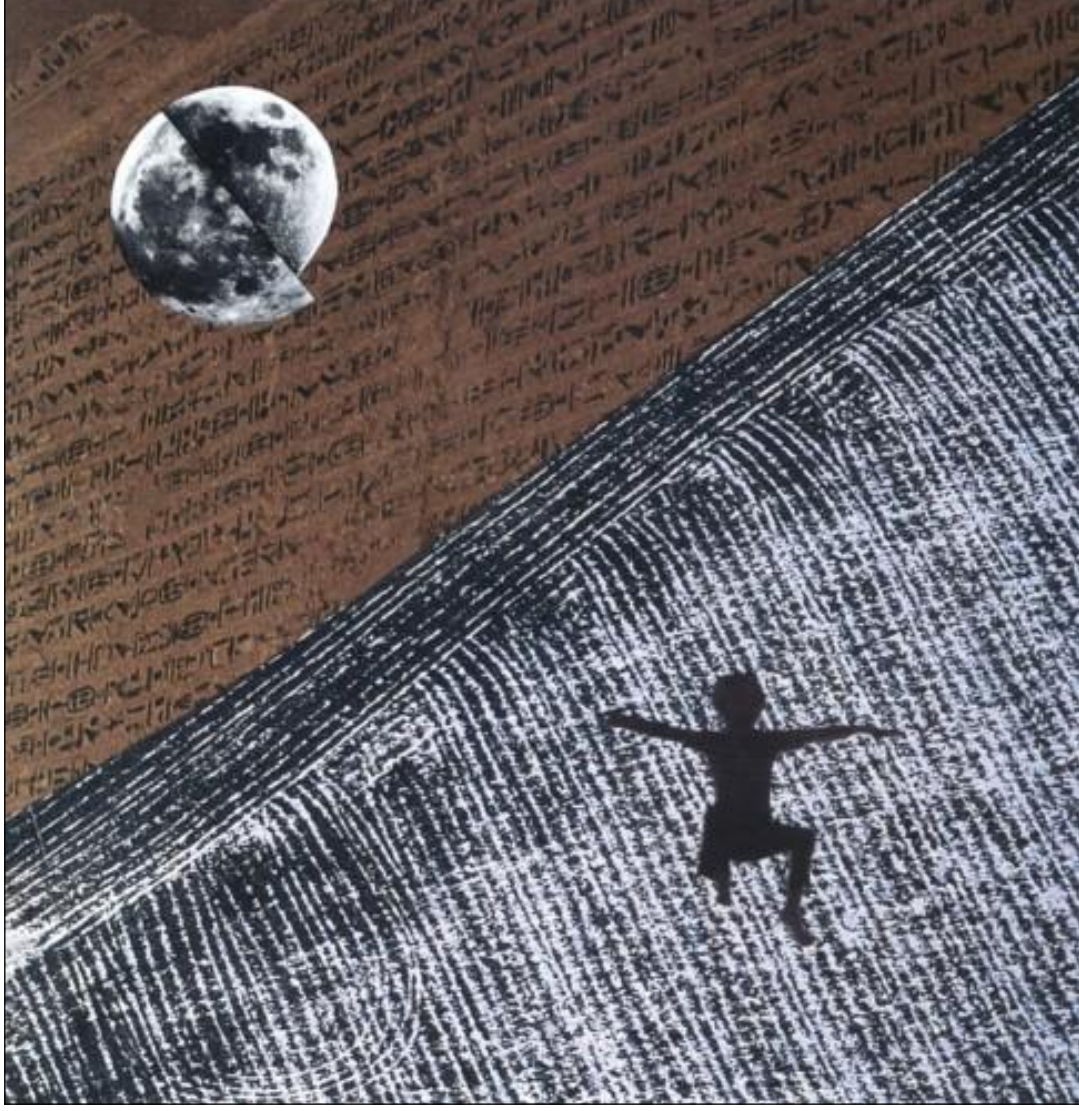
before painted fruit and flowers, nothing survived.  
dinosaur tracks evolve in the wandering cognition  
of wingless creatures. sadness about elusive treasure seeks  
a colossal crane. my ship has sailed and is gone forever.

phantom storms capsize phantom ships. cold  
latitudes of blindness reach around consciousness.  
sleep scribbles latent flora, effacing genuine  
blooms. a being signals and errs forever.

rainy wind, drained of depth but still its own  
cosmos of doubtful gestures. impossible to stay  
in one place—the mind would vanish. across the sky  
cottony mammals parade, shifting forever.

vaguely happy people march into their shelters.  
a doll awakens to life, becomes a toy forever.

# CAMILLE MARTIN





# CAMILLE MARTIN

the sun was enamoured of the  
concept that most, if not all,  
of the apples of the world have a sweet  
meaning. “i’ll lower my bucket,” said the sun, “which  
is vast enough to hold the ruddiest apple of  
every apple tree beneath my path.” the sun  
bit into the first apple it saw as soon  
as the bucket returned. but the apple’s meaning proved  
problematic for the sun. its rays turned the apple, as red  
as the reddest sunset, into ashes whose significance  
the sun was unable to fathom. in fact, the very  
concept of the meaning  
of the once-rosy apple eluded the overheated  
mind of the sun, consumed as it was by the problem.

# CAMILLE MARTIN



# CAMILLE MARTIN

i wish i could write on all the sand in the world.  
history books narrate centuries of dust and revenue.  
punching keys, i still call it scribbling.  
writing scratches the surface of paper.  
my pretend twin reads a book of empty water.  
walking along a path, i carried a newsy letter.  
and on the way i lost it.

I fear to read the words on a small windowpane.  
in a plotless hush, now becomes bankrupt and void.  
asking soothing questions, i unname the clean page.  
reading digs a bottomless abyss.  
my true self dreams a sea of hollow letters.  
dashing through wastelands, i lost my spurious myth.  
and going back i found it.

# CAMILLE MARTIN



# EXCERPTS FROM AVALANCHE

\*

*physics* : a cumulative process in which  
a fast-moving ion or electron generates  
further ions & electrons in collision

*suspending* ; a line from which a line  
& so many others  
grow

*a belief in air*  
& you

\*

move a subsequent dream ; poetical  
& street serene

I am wonder  
*out loud* ; ground your feet there beneath

I am hastily, silent

processional, starved  
& seeing stars ; fools & ethics, wonder

would you burn from a bridge ; or lapse

the water stone cleft down to bone

*every language is a barrier*

# ROB MCLENNAN

\*

if I am remarking tedium                      recording  
the falling rock                      smashing bone & bare branch

; hardening  
   or octaves, how to build

if I am more ash than complex pressure  
or stamen                      carlost                      ;                      a string field  
pulled marionette length of stage

*a coral sight bleed*

I am raw heart at once on the page

   if I am wearing my hurt  
(today)                      like a badge

\*

if I am sudden  
                                 interrupted, is not  
quickly so                      ;                      *a nest of it*  
or would have taken

*a moment to open,*  
   *a crack*  
*& spread wide*                      (as you know)  
   ; a calculus of warm gear  
   delays hypothermia  
   (if buried)

near zero after hour two

the chances of survival

as in winter

# ROB MCLENNAN

\*

consequently it is *vital* ; an immediate  
search & rescue

; operated out of *everyone*  
girl & supergirl

, the rail suspends the core  
of eccentricities, meticulous & limitless  
; a tone to the heart

or tunnel

*would engineer*  
*a pre-determined length*

; is radical

a long-term depth,

idea

the only one worth having

# ROB MCLENNAN

\*

if my own skin eats time  
partial or complete ; figures  
in burnt sun, scope  
of *what else, other* *I become we*  
; one becomes abstract  
& fragment ; less known  
knowable  
as would expand & not contain our growth  
; am theory spent  
, a thing is not a thing until



EXCERPTS FROM “NOUN THAT I’VE BEEN WATCHING”

Noun that I've been watching (21)  
**violet.**

empty of eyesight.  
chance of retina  
misaligned with  
natural argument of nurture  
vers  
-us  
-es  
branches out from  
obligation.  
in a tacit  
mention  
bold lines  
drive away each  
tenderness.

laps around a peri  
metric paragraph  
parade  
the state  
-d  
velvet qua  
protection  
that would mild  
its way toward  
northerly  
intelligence.

this work of seeing  
to match this walk  
around neutrality  
one hastens not to  
match too  
closely  
to protect  
one's customary  
innocence.

# SHELLA E. MURPHY

Noun that I've been watching (22)  
**epitome.**

yellow petals tip flecked with rubato  
(read the voice of fragrance be  
longing to a man at distance).  
farthings collide to break a  
part the whole flower brought by  
love against odds proffered  
destined for relaxed forgetting.  
memory revives begs for a source  
a reason and a cusp of something  
firm and plain.  
dance contraindicates your usual  
bland mood I come unprepared for  
chalice and what chattel you might  
bride. these injuries hypothesized  
remain mid-course and stream from  
declaration. midnight games its way  
into our foreground as the center  
pales and from unplanned distance  
waves away the damages.  
commencement is a pretty word with nothing  
to do with color of the robes.  
expenses say themselves to functionaries.  
let us rayban our dry eyes a minute  
here at the crossroads of civilization  
and routine. calendar years include  
a part of us worth heaping on what follows.  
maturation once mistaken for complacency  
vibrates as so high a frequency  
there are not minds enough to sort it  
and discern luminous truth  
from what C students tell themselves  
and their compatriots. that surfaces  
indicative of centers should be  
confused at every juncture.

# SHEILA E. MURPHY

**Noun that I've been watching (23)  
relay.**

*where I work is where I am.*

what we relish what has hurt us what we near and what we  
scope out what we cope with how we nickel dime our way  
how oceanic how snowstorm how peeled the rimmed  
old river man.

topography through grates is what I'm weathering.

never close enough to moment.

but we are and this  
is how eternity has been  
refined.

# SHEILA E. MURPHY

Noun that I've been watching (24)

**bob.**

taking (the) breath  
places above.  
laterality in 3  
dimensions sans  
diminuendo th'ought  
to be inferred  
yet. closely held  
(watched)  
silver in the stray  
moon of the stray  
tune lariat.  
worship we hold in  
communion.  
bob is breath the same  
when we  
illumine the in  
side with  
(what with)  
earth (if snow is  
falling fallen).  
I live where estate  
sales drawl  
along glenrosa some  
noon mornings.  
just today some tat-  
and lemony clothes.  
nothing to be  
b(u)y.  
rivering. downside.  
proper noun.

# SHEILA E. MURPHY

Noun that I've been watching (25)  
**seat.**

she widens out atop it.  
when she is seated I have something  
I watch. I watch her fill required  
seat time. my matrilinear resplendence  
includes no one who sits.  
we relish momentum as the sole  
prevention of deep sadness  
twinned with deeper quiet  
nobody would likely recognize  
in any one of us.

I have no child. she has a special  
car seat where I place her.  
when I drive around she shows me  
she can sing.  
I offer lessons in good voice.  
I speak in many syllables.  
she rhymes. she poems sweet  
lyrics into my matched song.

one of these days suspicious beauty  
will run from her mouth, and she will  
sound exactly likely my mother  
of the titian hair approaching  
white no one would ever see.

tonight the countertops were taken off  
and covered with a formal stone.  
we seek imperfection that we might join  
the probability of retracting  
every way of speaking that failed  
to fit naturally into this flow.

before I tell you too much  
about my present tense, let me  
remind you I am seasoned  
and I know the lingo.  
miscreants as we would call them,  
often betrayed the individual  
in power, believing that charisma  
is a latent fire that reproduces  
beyond inherent candle power.

when I am being who I am

there is no pause in motion  
except within myself.  
you may decide to call me  
immanent. or you may notice  
that the moment has been full of me.  
that my question will have lingered  
where the thought is now,  
and where the heart will stay.

# SHEILA E. MURPHY

Noun that I've been watching (26)  
**rodeo.**

I saw fit to blunder  
near the blond lake.  
who was the circumference  
of choice I want to know.  
yellowpale dandies yet.  
but blinking also  
meant the world about  
to fake an outerness.  
was it windows  
I foreswore. was it  
the bake of being  
staged to stratus.  
or the monacle  
that left  
premises.

maybe hindsight  
is a knack the world has  
fed upon fed open  
federally fresh or  
noon lined world.  
the free zone of the fake  
smattering gives gold  
its reach.

retire said she.  
I was not watching I was  
doing. I am always  
here said I.  
I am always probability  
leaving a firm place.  
that place. that haven.  
discarded as if  
by choice.

# PEARL PIRIE

lying lo e

enfeebling is refractory

feeling is a factory

feel is a factor

fee is a fact

ee is act

e is at

eat

o

i at o

if eat ok

sift beat stoke

swift breast stroked g

swing-shift breakfast stone-broke gad

showing downshift breathwork-feast testosterone-broken-goad

s0

wh@t

w||| ()cc()r

we' || inf \_r

enuph Trut]-[

c<>mz thru

wi+h mist@ke5

On b0+h 5ide5

# PEARL PIRIE

being a dentist to gift horses knows

some birthday boys are vagrant refusal  
the majority, wave off laminated list  
of faults (k)ept in wallets, explained  
examined readily useless as candles  
in the shower. conversational assessing  
-squint-prenup, tip of the háček tone,  
quickie czech up harrows the near  
exoskel teton muscles framing the marr-  
ows. dibs unclaimed, the enter(arms)loper  
slips in candid hugs when guards &  
mudflaps the down are, omit the giggle thrash  
as guest don't speak to. shadow in sewn fold  
of his jean cuff turns away from what there is;  
no proof trainyard of parallel narratives, restored  
in ligament pop, the oceans of stomachs  
heel of hand in folded leaf of back, how  
in the dark tender spots under skin we  
find by the breaths winc(h)ed



# ROLAND PREVOST

## Cyclone Season

-i-

Hurricanes sing in  
roars, in spirals  
that tears fill. So why  
do mental dimples  
on the face of your  
pants tell us what  
grows there like weeds?

-ii-

Depends on the slant  
of your fears, whether  
or not they lead  
to surly viral pain. No  
trophies will speak  
kindly of oar races  
that always win.

-iii-

No need to rant at  
weather gears, this  
core tinsel rot, & especially  
not at the end of such a  
weak tour. Just try to  
explain to anyone how  
they might throw deep.

# ROLAND PREVOST

## Necktags

Scrape the thorns. S  
ounds scape thin worn  
lips. Loud skin, the  
porn wakes wounds lapse.

Only lust for  
marks of destruction  
brings sleep.

Bulldog's sweater had an 'F', I'm pretty sure.  
Accountants take notes on a mime, trying to  
convince of something albeit important

albeit very secretive  
albeit substantive & superficially irrefutable

albeit & you can be it later.

# JENNY SAMPIRISI

## Croak

*DIONYSUS*

*This timing song I take from you.*

No. 1

Missing back left leg.  
Missing back right leg.  
Extra foot growing out of back left leg.  
Extra back right leg.  
Deformed back left leg.  
Unabsorbed tail.  
Extra left leg.  
Extra and deformed left leg.  
One eyed.  
Tail unabsorbed.  
Missing left leg.  
Deformed tail.

No. 2

sing back .ft leg  
sing back .ht leg  
ex fff rows back .ft leg  
ex k right leg  
dorm back .ft leg  
tadpole t. ever ab.  
ex .ft leg  
mm .ft leg  
one eyed fff  
ail un.sorb  
sing .ft leg  
form tail

# JENNY SAMPIRISI

No. 3

Go back to left leg. Stop. There are exactly two. It is possible that you have neglected a third. Probable is two thirds. Stop. Are you certain this was always here. Reconstruct the shoddy work youknowwhat. Find data socket. Go back. Not to distract you but. to distract you. detract you but. stability is two legs working together.

It's exactly  
an exact  
exit

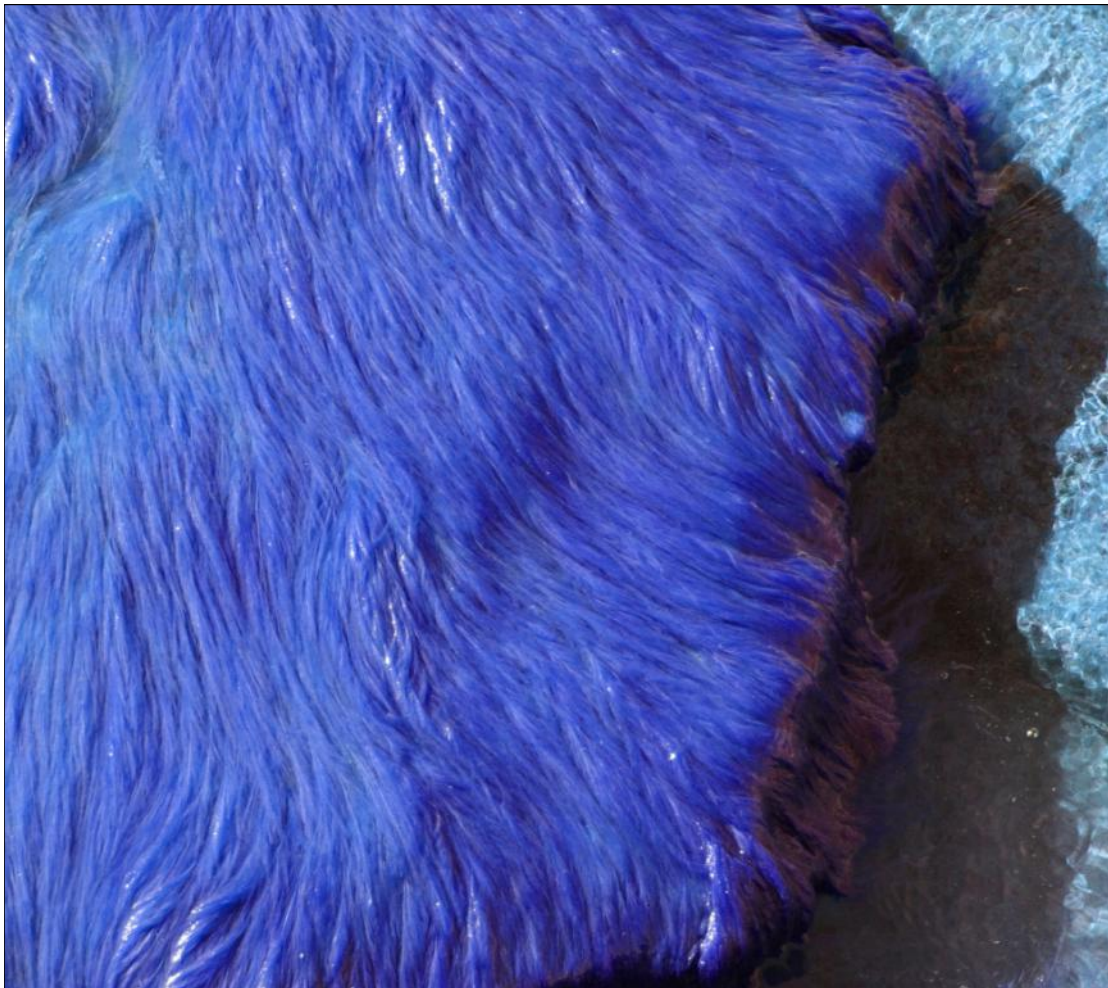
*Which slender and hollow do you mean?*

CHORUS

Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.  
Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.  
Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

## THE TURBULATED CURTAIN (*EXCERPTS*)

What hope is in a drop of rain gliding down a woman's sternum? What hope is in a snowflake melting on a dead man's tattooed ankle? Science and mathematics alone cannot answer these questions. They must be married to philosophy and religion before a true analysis is possible. There are those who think the only way to close a door is by sliding on their belly across the floor until enough pressure is effected that the door becomes no longer open. Others think the opposite—but is either notion correct? If you put a dog in heat does it become a scorpion? That would be like tying two chickens together and calling it a bell. It's not rocket surgery. All you need is a strong belief in something other than common sense: for example, the Golden Age of Steam Engines, or how to repair a spoon drawer. Sometimes it seems there's just no proper way to end a discourse. But when you feel that way, remember.



# STEVE VENRIGHT

A cool morning with fossilized light breathes a vapourized tincture of charred driftwood and damp underbellies into this attic cathedral where skin grows on walls and little children never visit, except perhaps in advanced stages of dream. The sloped stucco ceiling breeds demented visions that charge the nerves and saturate the religious parts of the brain.

Galaxies of dust—the floating skin!—swirl and collide like stoned traffic cops and lobotomized ballerinas, some with tiny planets circling their stars.

Now the room disappears and is replaced by a lake, or perhaps two lakes occupying the same space, both bottomless and neither with a shore. It is here that I will spend the rest of my days, sitting on a coloured ridge of thought, sniffing the turquoise water for traces of a woman I once knew, and, eventually, just out of habit.



In a blaze of chocolate the wood nymph hurtles through the office tower, exciting tensions and defoliating zeitgeistists. We follow her with remote-control cameras, down to where the grocers lay their eggs. It's a creaky salvation for one who held the floor with quicksilver statuary not months before the arrest of those vile homespun corporate marauders.

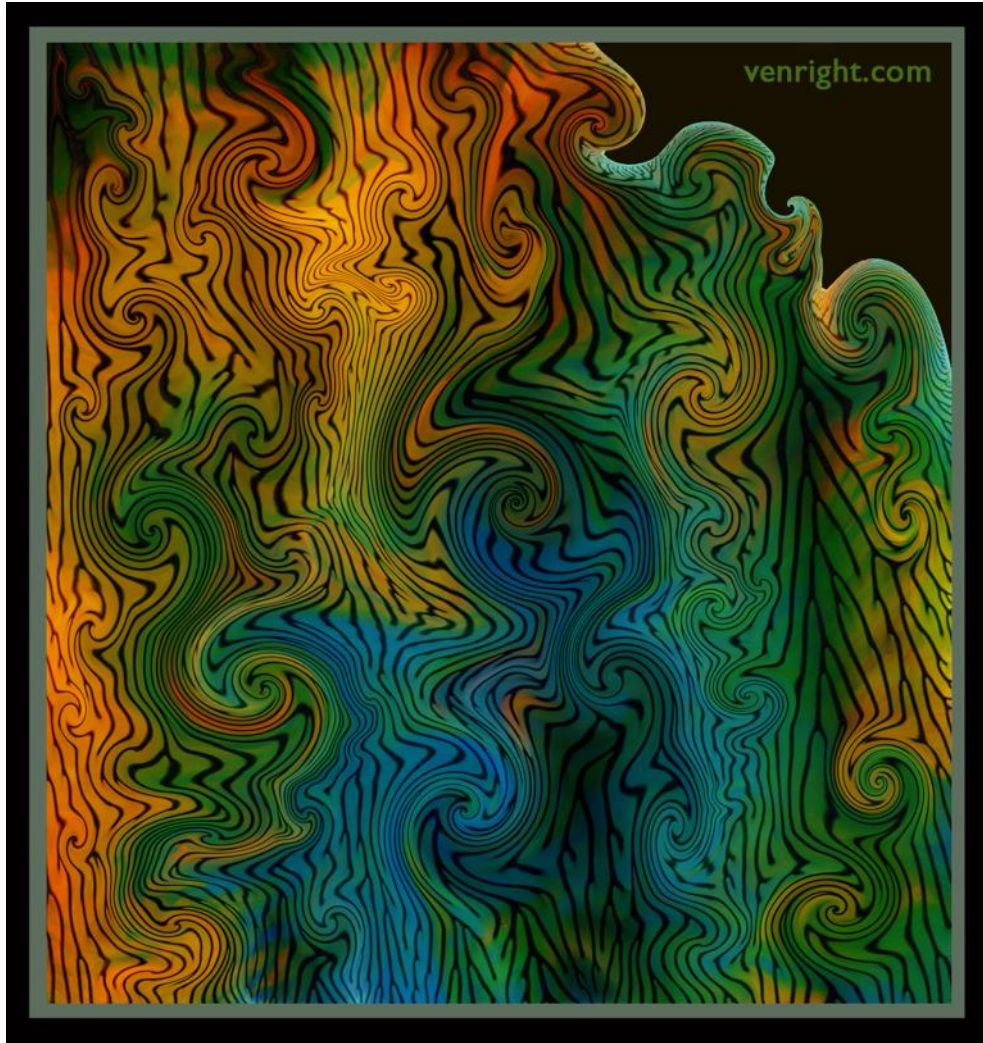
I look out from a static breeze and catch a glimpse of hell: trowelled sarcophagi unlit in the sulphurous dawn, pricks hanging out at the stock exchange, overpriced steamed zucchini. All I want is to bark my dogs and call it a day. But the foam is up to my ankles now, and the clouds are down to my neck. I can hear the police in the alley crying out for sleep. It's a good sound.



# STEVE VENRIGHT

A languid lingual torrent coming out of my own head like textoplasm, full of typogres and lexichauns. The day when a grainy velvet hum fell across the front lawn. Wolves seen only by children seen only by ghosts sauntered through the afternoon subdivision. Then a sun vent opened and dissolved time, as you may have heard.

Here comes another Ice Age flashback and a lost page from some fool's doctoral thesis about the use of prepared horseradish to treat esophageal dysfunction in razorback pigs. Veiny roots encased in clear ice. Elsewheres of rocket ships and painted lips and gleaming ledgers. Suntan oil and tarnished cigarettes, greasy mood fragments and sticky tortoiseshell spoon handles, dog syrup, all swirling now, all fermenting. Watch!



Intangible fluff dripping from the fenders of abandoned dream cars in sunlit fields. Tendrils of blue sphagnum drop from the sky, spiralling downward with all the grace of a dyspeptic stockyard weasel shaver. This day was going to be special, but now it just seems like all the rest: a tin can rusting on a stump behind a shack inside the lobby of a Ludwig Mies van der Rohe bank tower populated by screaming armies of brokers and martial arts saleswomen. Still, we must make a go of it: there's a lot to be done and I can't waste my time writing about every little thing that happens.

## MALPRACTICE

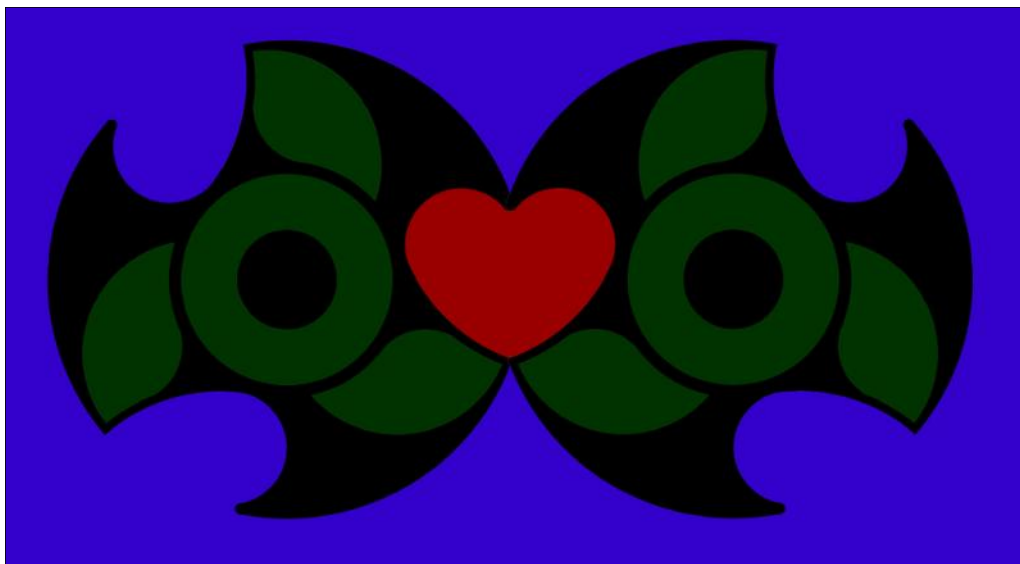
Three aspirins and an enema to cure a woman in the throes of labour.

Electroshock therapy to treat a young girl suffering from tonsillitis.

Removal of the gallbladder to heal an elderly male frostbite victim.

A plaster cast over the left forearm and wrist to restore the memory of a middle-aged female amnesiac.

Circumcision to alleviate the symptoms of a persistent headcold afflicting a teenage boy.





# CONTRIBUTORS

**Gary Barwin** is a writer, composer, and performer. His music and writing have been published and presented in Canada, the US, and overseas. His writing has been commissioned and broadcast by the CBC. He received a PhD in Music Composition and was the recipient of the KM Hunter Foundation Artist Award for his writing. *Seeing Stars*, a YA novel, was a finalist for both Canadian Library Association YA book of the year, and an Arthur Ellis Award. His recent books include *fragments from the frag pool* (with derek beaulieu, poetry; The Mercury Press) and *Doctor Weep and other strange teeth* (fiction; The Mercury Press.) A new poetry collection is forthcoming from Coach House. He teaches music at Hillfield Strathallan College. Barwin lives in Hamilton, Ontario and at [garybarwin.com](http://garybarwin.com) and [serifofnottingham.blogspot.com](http://serifofnottingham.blogspot.com).

Originally from Nova Scotia, **Emily A. Falvey** is now an Ottawa-based independent curator, art critic, and fiction writer. Her poetry and prose have appeared in *Descant*, *Decalogue 2: ten Ottawa fiction writers* (Chaudiere Books, 2007), and *Departures* (above/ground press, 2008). In 2006, she received the Contemporary Curatorial Writing Award from the Ontario Association of Art Galleries. Her essays and art criticism have appeared in *Canadian Art Magazine*, *BorderCrossings*, and *esse arts + opinions*, as well as catalogues published by galleries and museums across Canada. She was Curator of Contemporary Art at the Ottawa Art Gallery from 2004 to 2008.

**Spencer Gordon** is approximately 6 feet tall, weighs 158 lbs., and has brown hair and eyes. He is currently enrolled in the MA in English Literature in the Field of Creative Writing at the University of Toronto. He has recently been published in *zaum 11*, *Departures* (above/ground 2008), *Alberta Dispatch* [an interview with the author, rob mcLennan] (above/ground 2008), and *The Puritan*, which he co-founded and currently co-edits. Upcoming publications will appear in the next issue of *The Frequent and Vigorous Quarterly*, in the fiction/poetry collection *For Crying Out Loud* (Alhambra Books 2008), and in the fiction/poetry collection *Dinosaur Porn* (Emergency Response Unit Press 2009). He can also be found reviewing for *Broken Pencil*. Check out his interviews with authors such as Robert Kroetsch and Guy Vanderhaeghe at [www.puritan-magazine.com](http://www.puritan-magazine.com). He can be contacted at [spencerkjgordon@gmail.com](mailto:spencerkjgordon@gmail.com).

**Camille Martin**, a Toronto poet and collage artist, is the author of *Codes of Public Sleep* (BookThug, 2007) in addition to several earlier chapbooks. Recent work is published or forthcoming in *The Literary Review of Canada*, *PRECIPICE*, *The Walrus*, *West Coast Line*, *Chicago Review*, *This Magazine*, *White Wall Review*, and *Stride Magazine*. Recently she received a grant from the Ontario Arts Council to complete a book of sonnets. Currently she teaches writing and literature at Ryerson University. Her website is <http://www.camillemartin.ca>

# CONTRIBUTORS

Born in Ottawa, Canada's glorious capital city, **rob mcLennan** currently lives in Ottawa. The author of over a dozen trade books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, his most recent titles are the novella *white* (2007), the travel book *Ottawa: The Unknown City* (2008), the non-fiction titles *subverting the lyric: essays* (2008) and *Alberta dispatch: interviews & writing from Edmonton* (2008) and the poetry collection *a compact of words* (2008). An editor and publisher, he runs above/ground press, Chaudiere Books (with Jennifer Mulligan), *Poetics.ca* (with Stephen Brockwell, *poetics.ca*) and the Ottawa poetry pdf annual *ottawater* (*ottawater.com*). He recently spent the 2007-8 academic year in Edmonton as writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta, and regularly posts reviews, essays, interviews and other notices at [robmcLennan.blogspot.com](http://robmcLennan.blogspot.com).

**Sheila E. Murphy's** *Collected Chapbooks* will be published by Blue Lion Books (Peter Ganick and Jukka-Pekka Kervinen, Publishers) in 2008. In addition, a collection of visio/textual art in collaboration with K.S. Ernst is scheduled to be released from Luna Bisonte Prods (John M. Bennett, Publisher) this year. Her home is in Phoenix, Arizona.

**Pearl Pirie** is cycling thru projects in her Ottawa home. Her poems have also appeared in *Icent, unarmed, Ottawater 4.0, Puddle Leaflets, Some Assembly Required*, (pooka press) and *Peter F. Yacht Club*. Her two most recent chapbooks are *oath in the boathouse* (above/ground press, 2008) and *Better Ways to Go Than by Aspartame* (self-published, 2007). She blogs and is well-known to google.

**Roland Prevost** lives and works in Ottawa. His first chapbook, 'Metafizz' (*Bywords* 2007), was launched at the Ottawa International Writer's Festival last fall. He was the recipient of the John Newlove Poetry Award for 2006 (judge: Erin Mouré). His poetry's also published in *Ottawater 3.0*, the *Variations Art Zine*, the *Bywords Quarterly Journal*, and the *Peter F. Yacht Club*, among others. He's kept an allsorts lifelong journal, and loves to observe the night sky through his various telescopes.

**Jenny Sampirisi** writes poetry and fiction. She's variously involved in lit stuff including BookThug, the Scream Literary Festival and the Ryerson Reading Series. Her first book *is/was* is forthcoming from Insomniac press November 2008 (maybe that date has passed by the time you read this and in that case, it's out). She exists mostly in Toronto.

**Steve Venright's** most recent book of poetry is *Floors of Enduring Beauty* (Mansfield Press, 2007). As well as being an author and visual artist, he has released several remarkable recordings through his Torpor Vigil Industries record label, including *Songs of Elsewhere* (music by Samuel Andreyev), *A Natural History of Southwestern Ontario* (co-release with Coach House Books featuring voice and text by Christopher Dewdney and soundscapes by Steve Venright) and *The Further Somniloquies* of Dion McGregor (spoken dreams by the legendary sleepwalker). Steve was born in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada in 1961. During one of the great blizzards of early 1982, he crossed the plains of Southwestern Ontario and has resided in Toronto ever since.

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“The old expressions are with us always, and there are always others.”  
Others, A Magazine of New Verse, December, 1919 Issue 5, No. 1