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All Along It Was The Leopard

by

Kathryn MacLean

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy.

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 2000



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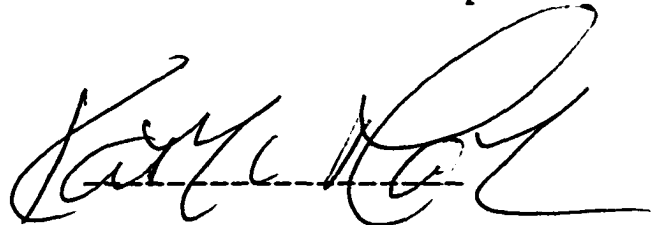
All Along it Was the Leopard

Doctor of Philosophy

2000

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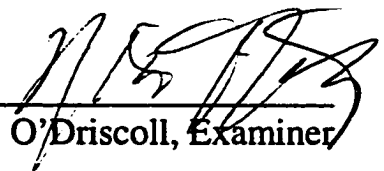
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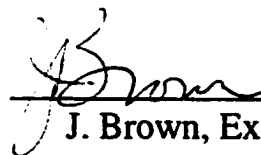
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J. Brown, Examiner



R. Kroetsch, External

This thesis is dedicated to my Father who taught me how to endure the fight.

Abstract

All along it was the leopard is a creative dissertation which proposes to mix the genres of poetry, prose and creative non-fiction. The manuscript is divided into three parts: "the pure reach of your bare hand," "in the white of the night's eye," and "sustainingshadows." Sections one and two consist of poetry and an essay. Poems in each section are thematically grouped and contain a series of cyclical poems. Section three consists of one long poem for voices and an essay.

"The pure reach of your bare hand" are poems of love, longing and desire. These are also poems of trial and identity where the narrator struggles to contain, retain and find a self. Within this section is the longer work, "ghosts on the bridge," four poems which explore the idea of bridge as a solid construct leading from one side of a place to another. These poems began as a historical exploration of the High Level Bridge in Edmonton and then grew into something more meaningful. The last poem in the series, "fall us to sleep," plays with rhyme and the rhythm of children's stories, nursery rhymes and songs explored thematically in the essay "the language of memory" and "sustainingshadows."

"In the white of the night's eye" is a continuum of the themes introduced in part one, but adds to it the idea of dream and the importance of memory. A child's memory shapes the recollection or collection of stories; how it shapes our world, our merging selves, our idea of language. "Sideways, backwards, always," began as a series of poems exploring the concept of looking back: behind shadows to memory, in the mirror, to a child's beginnings with

language. The first and the last poems in this series are reminders of the difficulties of learning to read and write a dyslexic child encounters. How everything -- letters, sentences, the perception of the world does appear sideways, backwards, and remains so forever. "not one will be broken" and "brother like brother" were written for my Father and use prayer as both a formative and thematic exploration of memory and love. These poems, along with "nothing of bridges" and "there is no burning" came about largely from my experiences attending the First Presbyterian Church in Edmonton where I was conducting research for "sustainingshadows." The sermons, hymns, and rituals I observed there were new for me and shook the very foundations of my faith.

Section three consists of one very long poem, "sustainingshadows" and the essay, "leaving some things out" which I first read last spring at the *mothertongue reading series* in Ottawa, but which I wrote originally as a challenge to a call for papers on homosexuality, or what it means to be queer. I took this notion literally and explored the queer or the contrary notions of self and other.

"sustainingshadows" has been with me and growing for over ten years. The research for this poem motivated me to attend church and to begin connecting with my own genealogy. It also gave me the opportunity to explore the Victorian world of art and literature and allowed me to create my own love story from the ashes of the love literature I read in preparation for my candidacy exams. Writing it also allowed me to (re)read much Canadian poetry and to continue in the tradition of the Canadian long poem, but to

extend the tradition by exploring the development and mix of prose, memoir, biography and photography.

Acknowledgments

Since a dissertation takes several years to complete there are many people to whom I owe a great big *thanks*. I am grateful to my supervisor, Doug Barbour for his tremendous patience and understanding in seeing me through and supporting the various stages of this thesis. How often I've changed my mind and he's been there, listening, encouraging me to continue. I'm also grateful to the support of my committee, especially Nicole Markotic' whose enthusiasm for a creative dissertation came just at the right time. Her commitment to this dissertation made it possible to continue.

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Finally, I want to thank my brother Jim, for his research on the MacLean family, and my parents for all their support, especially my Father, who made me promise I'd finish this.

Thanks for the kick Dad.

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just so leopard

1. A large, spotted Asian or African carnivore, Panthera pardus, of the cat family, usually tawny with black markings; the Old World panther: all leopard populations are threatened or endangered.

2. The fur or the pelt of this animal.

3. Any of a variety of related cats resembling this animal.

4. Heraldry: a lion represented from the side as walking, usually with one forepaw raised and looking toward the spectator. He is holding a camera. Sometimes he is waving, "hello." If you are close enough, if the light is just so, you can tell the difference.

5. There are 24 subspecies.

-- Random House Dictionary*

i.

Speak of the dead and listen:

One seems to want no guide now, but to slow down with the course of great spirits new and old, and understand them without an interpreter.

-- Edward Burne-Jones, letter to Aggie Macdonald, 1857

When priests worship Dionysus, watch the spots in the skins they wear expand; another eye, open to the past, the future, something sad is about to happen. Regeneration, resurrection. The music behind them: a poem, a choral ode, dithyrambs. All spots lead to a form of tragedy. The last breath, the song we remember, the foot releasing the pedal, the sigh of the organ.

The unseen spot. *There, not there*, beneath the surface. If possible hairs stand on end; the head, the back of the neck, the arms, the legs, alive with the shiver of knowing, *something is about to happen*. The body remembering the windy speech of the dead; their voices, whisper, what? The head, the heart, the conscious, the 'other' and self?

Strain to hear, lean forward, the leopard's ears lie flat against its head. Muscles tense, prepare to pounce, forwards, backwards, sideways, which way? The anxiety of listening. *In the beginning [is] not the word, the sound, language. In the beginning is the hearing* (Mary Daly in Marlatt, *What Matters* 13). Hear the energy between poet and

reader, poet and audience, the weight of silence, the need to know: *can i do this, how is this done?* As Robert Kroetsch asks in *Seed Catalogue*, *how do you grow a poet (15)?* What feeds a poem?

In a recent reading at Grant MacEwan Community College, Patrick Friesen responding to the question, *how do you get all your emotions into poetry?* replied, *poetry is moving toward the moment, the energy to get there, not the feeling itself. In a sense, it isn't feeling which is important but the journey towards the feeling which is far more powerful. . .*

Perhaps the journey is a dance *where the clock stops moving, i stop* ("ending" 55). *[T]he moment a small gesture* ("bears" 62), a dance to sleep where dreams waltz with love and death ("nothing of bridges" 66). *The dance round and round we dance/one foot/the other foot &/we all run/out.* ("my green house falling" 90) The body of this dance an old woman pushing through my skin, *a slow dance to death* ("old woman" 127). A jacket's bones in the closet *rattle me round rattle me/robin egg blue* ("magpie" 37), my father's outstretched hands ("nothing of bridges" 65), the butterfly dance *finds me/shoeless black & bruising* ("ending" 54). The journey to *lands terra incognita* ("Iris" 94), where there are no maps, but where music, song and nursery rhyme take me one step closer: *open a window & walk on the edge/straight lines where i place my feet* ("egg shells & morning" 51).

ii.

My brain is sudden and silent as a wildcat (MacEwen, *Lawrence Poems* 15).

Is it true, then, that one fears all that one loves?
 These spirits are my awful companions; I can't tell
 anyone when they move in me.

Gwendolyn MacEwen *T.E. Lawrence Poems*
 (15).

The power of motion anticipated. The grace of a cat walking. (You see the cat only if you are in the right place at the right time or if you are looking, if s/he lets you see.) The moment pausing: a blur of yellow and black spots. Moving towards energy, towards story, the telling of it, arriving. Between the "[t]hen" and "[n]ow" (Crawford 13), here and there, growth and (re)growth, jungle and garden, a flower blooming, withers, fades, grows again.

(yes, but . . .)

how does a poet/poem grow?

Slowly, carefully, read lots, think, listen. *If I knew my mind* (Crawford 38). Not a recipe, don't write this down, don't file it on an

index card, just act. You don't need an interpreter. *It evades interpretation by making interpretation its theme* (Kamboureli 69).

If you don't understand the story you'd better tell it (George Bowering in Marlatt, *What Matters* 13).

Tell it if you can, if you remember. *i have trouble remembering what it was i wanted to tell you* ("snake" 96). [*I*] *if i could tell you how i know* ("no burning" 59), *i could tell you to leave* ("old woman" 127). *I could tell you the story* ("northern lights" 97). *How i thought of telling you, my mouth a black moth in this light, a shadow, shadowing words* ("leaving some things out" 279). [*T*] *ell me later words mean more* ("northern lights" 98), *when i try to tell you. . . when i try to say. . .* ("old woman" 127).

An open mouth. A perfect o but *i shall speak nothing* ("nothing of bridges" 65), *never shall i speak* ("bears" 62). [*H*] *ow i haven't asked her to tell* ("Iris" 94). [*W*] *hat i thought you said* ("Iris" 94). [*A*] *ll that i haven't [said]* ("broken" 122).

Perhaps we tell a blurred story because the story is blurred (Kroetsch 129).

When the edges blur i fall open. Not broken. Breaking ("leaving some things out" 286).

I spiral. How *one thought [leads] to the next*. . . *it is not a linear extension but much more a spiraling --*

the foci

are like complexes (light rings) -- they expand and shade into one another (Marlatt, *What Matters* 70).

By degree then. [C]ross to the other side ("nothing of bridges" 26), hold the pen in the left, no, the right hand ("night's eye" 117). Transfer the weight of the body foot to foot ("greenhouse" 90), the weight of desire, knowing the impulse to *redraw cultural geography, to shift the designated centre off centre* (Kamboureli 95). Shuffle (Scobie, *Canadian Literature* 269). This strange double - dance, this feasting. [Record] *what's there . . . [voice] a state of mind (each does dwell inside her/her head, sees out from there* (Marlatt, *What Matters* 71). Don't change what you see/hear/find. (No sometimes do -- this isn't 1968, this isn't documentary, this isn't isn't fair, is it)?*

Interpret, adapt, creatively manipulate, translate. This isn't a collage. This is deliberate. Take with my tongue, a nest of words behind my teeth. Touch to tongue and throat as filter (Marlatt, *What Matters* 149) sounds just -- *a most accurate report of being in the world* (Marlatt, *What Matters* 149). Now, then, what I inherit, memes (Blackmore 40). My eye. The self sees, copies, loses some of the story in the telling, forgets. There is no such thing as self. The persona, the doubling, fundamental (Scobie, *Signature*, 128). The memes have made us do it -- because giving us the illusion of "self" helps them to survive and spread.

[T]wo faces in the mirror ("Iris" 94), & you everywhere until i don't recognize myself without you ("snake" 96). [I] thought she was a

mirror i was holding, ("language" 44). Just then/now an old woman pushe[s] through my skin ("old woman" 127), and it is too bright for telling ("northern lights" 98). [I]n the dark someone i used to know ("northern lights" 98). Where did she go? Where is she going? [S]he didn't know/my name/she didn't know... ("language" 44).

All our lives a lie (Blackmore 40), more like a story about a self that does not really exist (Blackmore 44). The brother knows, the mother knows, Edith knows, but no one tells the narrator ("sustainingshadows"). In "Iris" he knows [he] [leads] a double life. Did that make him a liar? He did not feel/a liar ("Iris" 94). How you can't look (back) with open eyes. How you can't speak with clarity. Not ever. The spiral blurs each age [is] age lying ("fall us to sleep" 74).

I speak of where I've been, not where I'm going (MacEwen 32). [T]o make my way back, home where i find it ("leaving something out" 277).

the i of the camera

she photographs me

walking away

along a curving path

the flowers coloured

and

my father appears

my mother appears

saying no words

troubled

and all

the ghostly jews

of estevan

praying

(Mandel, 13)

History and photography as obsession in Canadian literature
(Kröller 71). More photographers than bears (Shirley Newman in
Kröller 71).

Why not take a picture? Something to hold, look at the subject

gazing, the subject as object. The *double who can be seen but cannot quite be imagined* (Kroetsch 129):

2 birds black
 as eyes as like
 to disappear when Gerda
 tells her tale
 caught
 in camera obscura of her
 history, an image
 of the search

(Marlatt, *Frames* 37)

Searching, turning the page, fingers finding a wet mouth, licking and turning and pointing a finger. [*L*]ook, here's a picture, a snapshot. The snapshot, hinting of artlessness, asserting against art the reality of reality (Kroetsch 128). A frame to fill in *Billy the Kid*, one-eyed Stike in the fictional *Badlands*, Ann's camera in *Out of Place*, the people of *Steveston*, Emily's paintings. Here it is Burne - Jones as he sketches himself painting his dream of winter and summer ("sustainingshadows"). His [*t*]estimonies of historical truth (Kröller 71) or at least the way he wants to remember Mary's passion, Georgie's enduring love. Shadows like these survive. How easy it is to look. [*Y*]esterday falls in photographs ("sideways" 131) where [*they*] speak of this moment ("lilies" 87). This moment, forever endless photos/girls with dancing legs ("magpie" 37).

[S]mile/ for the camera ("language" 43) Holding the pose, this is how i want to be remembered. *

Cameras click ("old woman" 127).

[C]old /breath blue the camera clicks ("bears" 63).

And what of music?

Poem as notation. Lyric and lyrical. Black, paw marks all over the page. The book-ness of book, the sound of sight, (Kroetsch 129) the picture of something else there in/ on/ under/ around/ over, circling near the silence. In Zwicky's book, *Lyric Philosophy*, musical notation is a sequence of variations on silence (52). In *sustainingshadows*, hymns are the silence beyond the grave, what is forgotten, the spirit rising from sleep, dreams in the pulpit.

Music outside the window: birds, singing stones ("greenhouse" 44) *the words of spruce/lock in song*. ("bears" 61) The mythical song of mermaids ("here" 48) and *angels' tongues sing* ("brother" 126). Something played: cool jazz on the stereo ("bears" 62), the cry of bagpipes ("brother" 126, "sustainingshadows" 152), the organ's last note ("sustainingshadows" 152). Music of the body: *on the surface of my skin* ("old woman" 127), in my hands ("ending" 54), *the song [that] slip[s] through our fingers* ("nothing of bridges" 65). *[O]ld bones sing of silence* ("brother" 124); it is *the song/air in the lungs not sung* ("fall us to sleep" 68, "sustainingshadows" 147). Schubert's "song without

words" ("magpie" 37) ; *the song you said remains/long after the notes are gone* ("ending" 54). It is the *song i once knew* ("greenhouse" 90).
 The sound of prayer. A whisper? A sermon? Down on your knees, hands press together. What does the body sound like in prayer? After the prayer is sung where do the notes go? Where?

One of the opening poems of McNeil's *Emily* begins in prayer (14). Her father creaking away/ on his chair/ reading the bible on Sunday. Later misbehaving silence of prayer becomes her punishment. Yet, it is her father and his religion which gives her memory and the strength to make her "lines on the page. . . soft and real and unembarrassed" (21) .

MacEwen's poetic memoirs of Lawrence end in prayer as his soul and body depart. Here prayer begins in memory and provides strength to complete his journey toward death:

Ghostly riders on blonde and dreaming camels
drift

Out of the east side of my sight,
harbingers of morning.

I see again the sword in the still
garden

Behind the palm tree --
Feisal's sword, flashing. The air

Is silk with locusts;
then the drawn sword breaks the silk

And the sky heaves

open.

Night comes and the stars are out. Salaam.

("Departures," 70)

Prayer, a good place to begin and to end. A prayer for a funeral ("sustainingshadows" 137), a whisper ("nights's eye" 117), something silent upside down ("lilies" 86), a child's fear of the night ("washerwoman" 42), something held in the left hand* ("sideways" 128), *anonymous/in his right hand* ("fall us to sleep" 72). A learned ritual ("sustainingshadows" 269), it belongs to sleep and holds its breath for a moment. How Alice writes of it in her poetry. ("sustainingshadows" 169) How it is the poem ("broken"). An offering of hope when there isn't any. The last thing said. Notes for the dead.

Birney's *Ghost in the Wheels* spinning. Light in the spokes, reflects, shades of silver, grey, black and white. There are ghosts who pray we are learning to listen, to decode the silence they speak.*

iii.

the place is where you find it/here

5) *There are 24 subspecies, there are many more spots. Although there are certain similarities in the spots, each shape differs.*

From what?

It{s}elf

The other spot.

Atwood's "Four Small Elegies" breaks the poem into four recognizable categories:

- 1) A language is not words (only),
- 2) it is the stories
- 3) that are told in it,
- 4) the stories that are never told.

(numbering and emphasis mine)

(Two-Headed Poems 54)

never told stories in (told) stories in swords language

You see this, the other eye, the one reading backwards, scramble the text. Shake it. Together the poem read, different now: a violence, the sword might slice if I keep moving, if I stand still keep asking questions. What happens next? *The possibility of apprehension* (Barbour in Kroetsch, *The Lovely Treachery of Words* 125). The movement/quest/journey, Odyssey, not odyssey, the *journey towards cosmologies that cannot be located*. (Kroetsch, *The Lovely Treachery of Words*, 129). But unlike the blossoming of these journeys by Louis Dudek, Earle Birney, John Robert Colombo, Eli Mandel, George Bowering, Doug Barbour, Michael Ondaatje, Gary Geddes, Robert Kroetsch, bpNichol, Fred Wah, Roy Kiyooka, Tom Marshall, Don McKay, Jon Whyte, Dennis Lee and other male outpourings of the late 60s, 70s and 80s, this time it's Helen remembering the journey. Helen's Egypt.* Her body. It aches. It's supposed to. The sting of a missed kiss. Helen lying. (Beauty must be kissed, at least once, at least.)

The absence or infrequency of long poems by Canadian women poets is Davey argues, natural *because of a special distrust of our 'documentary' past, coming as it does from a presumptively authoritative and patriarchal tradition, and to a special need for the countertextual* (41). Nevertheless, it's Marlatt's *What Matters, Frames, Stevenston*, "touch to my tongue," or *How Hug a Stone*. It's Tostevin's *Double Standards*, or the one word lines of her poems on

pregnancy in "Gyno-Text." Jile's *Jesse James* or *Sitting in the Club Car Drinking Rum and Karma-cola*. It's over the desert with MacEwen's *T.E. Lawrence*, into the garden with Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie*. To the West Coast for McNeil's *Emily*, white space, the room for Webb's *star fish/fish star* in *Naked Poems*, or the voice of Daniel in *Wilson's Bowl*. It's the backwoods for Atwood's *Susanna Moodie*, Marriott's *The Wind Our Enemy*, Gotlieb's *Ordinary, Moving*, the voices of Gunnars' Iceland immigrants in *Settlement Poems 1 & 2*, her "Changling" or "Wakepick" poems in *Wake-Pick Poems*, Hartog's "Oasis," Warland's postmodernist Eve in *Serpent (W)rite*, Zwicky's *Wittgenstein Elegies*, and more recently, recollections of Wonderland for Bolster's *Alice in White Stone*, or Joan of Arc's love affair with Gilles de Laval in Fitzgerald's *26 Ways Out of This World*. How they long to (re)turn home, to remember the way, to believe in the dream of home. As Joyce Carol Oates once put it in an interview, it's "homesickness. . . you are trying to get back home. . . in your writing you are invoking that home [and] assuaging the homesickness."

Reading this quotation & missing home. No memory of when or where Oates says this, but the memory of where I am: Windsor, sitting on the banks of the Detroit River watching it snake its way through the city. How I sit crossed legged by the banks of the river reading Wordsworth's *Prelude*, thinking of his promise of language, its return to the patterns of speech. Promises, promises, and none really for keeps ("the language of memory" 108). Safe in my garden of words, watch, wait for the black serpent to rise from the water. A wave breaks the surface. Disrupts the moment. A buttercup shines beneath my chin. The yellow of this moment, stilled, slows to a photograph.

How I forget the smell of the river. It's there just the same creeping under my nose, something dark. But I can't tell you now, I forget.

Home to remember. It is where I belong, where I must begin over and over and return to tend ("Tending the Garden" 84). To (re)discover what is important. The language of flowers, birds, and speech. A garden growing with or without the knowledge of books. *The language of memory.*

How language, it isn't just words. Remember the whisper, the hymn, how the man working the High Level Bridge falls into the river, *dances the beat underwater* ("fall us to sleep" 70). The hammer echoes. Hear it on 109th Street when there isn't much traffic, when you cross the street without looking, the red and green lights flashing, "stop/go, beware." Know also how you've seen bears beneath the bridge ("bears" 62, 63), heard them crying, felt their hunger and imagined the stinging cold beneath the pads of their paws as the blood in your own fingers freezes above the nail. Remember too how the magpie sings, the quick dart of its eye as it follows you about the room ("magpie" 37), watches your fingers on the keyboard as you write this, opens its beak and laughs, asks *have you got it, got it all? Are you sure?*

It isn't specifically about language, although language is how we (re)tell the story in remembering it. The inadequacies of language: its limitations, its rules tugging, take me this way and that, which way? What? *

This isn't a security blanket, I haven't a thumb in mouth. There is no comfort in knowing language isn't enough. The sound of a magpie calling, stuck in my throat, the tongue not just filter. It isn't enough:

I grew up one evening, much alone --
Resolved to plunge. The thing I feared, the
crow,
Was hoarse with calling, whirling, diving
down
And suddenly his urgent social bent
Was answer to my inwardness. His cry
Throbbled and echoed in my head, his wings
Caught all reflections in my mirrored mind.
I would then follow where his footless tread
Led on: I would no longer be the beast
Who ploughed a straight line to the barrier
And swung back on his steps -- my father's
son.
It would take long.

(Livesay, *Documentaries* 9)

stories told in stories are never told language is not. . .

Bronwen Wallace would also tell students to consider story in poetry, not the motion toward story, but the magic surrounding its telling or (re)cover(y). In just about all of her poetry collections, but perhaps mostly *Signs of a Former Tenant*, the story is magic. How it gathers like a eastern Ontario storm, slowly, you hardly notice, then it's there upon you. In her title poem, "Signs of a Former Tenant," the present transforms itself into the past world of the last tenant:

Whatever she did all day
 it wasn't housework and
 the lady downstairs says
 the kids were always filthy
 it takes me a day to remove
 their fingerprints from the walls
 and hours of scrubbing before
 the tub gives up its dead-cell scum
 and the oven is free of grease
 even the smell is stubborn
 windows hope for days against
 dirty diapers and stale food

(62)

While Wallace's ghosts live in the form of dirt and stubborn odors, by part two of the accompanying poem, "Signs of the Former Tenant II," past meets future in the flesh of an old man and the spirit of the boy he was as both roam about the house looking for life as they remember it. It is the movement towards memory -- stories we don't see but catch glimpses of only in the form of an imagined rainbow, or the catch of light from the window. Using domestic imagery to draw past, present and future together, Wallace gives us the go sign: there is no hocus pocus, no rabbit jumping from a hat. What is real is the moment, slowed down sufficiently so the merging of present and past is visible:

each time you move to a new
 place you fill in other people's
 spaces like the blank white squares
 their pictures leave on the grey walls
 you always have to deal with what
 they leave behind. . .

(64)

Gwendolyn MacEwen leaves the present behind in her "Second Song from the Fifth Earth" where energy is magic alive in dream and mythology. Here the narrator journeys from myth into the present, but can't remember ever arriving:

I cannot remember how much I have
 forgotten --

Broad leaves dropping in a garden of rain,
 And again small animals surround us, for
 they
 Remember us though we have forgotten
 them.
 Between one tree and another we lose
 worlds
 And serpents coil.

(*Shadowmaker* 70)

The world we lose to ghosts. Ghosts who beg for our attention. To be noticed. How they *wave their hands in fields of wheat white shadows* ("greenhouse" 91), *whisper my name* ("Iris" 93). They talk back & forth into the present: the Macdonald sisters, their husbands, nephews and nieces, friends, Lionel the unknown cousin who sings by the curb. Rev. Maclean and Rev. Macdonald give sermons still from their pulpit in *sustainingshadows*. The construction of the High Level Bridge continues, the man keeps hammering the last nail, he falls; we relive this as if it were happening today ("fall us to sleep"). [*The ghost of language remains* ("language of memory" 115). How we wait for their magic to begin. [*Pull rabbits/the joker's card, the morning dove* ("ending " 18). Wait for the Cinderella's coach to pull up the drive, ("the language of memory" 109), for Alice's world of wonder to unfold ("the language of memory" 115), for the fairy dance ("Tending the Garden" 77), for wishes on stars to come true ("northern lights" 97). Wait, having the patience to wait.

The mind forgets, the body doesn't. It lives with the 'sin' of forgetting. How it recalls the feel of hot and cold lands, sees the silver rain glistening on arms, but forgets again in a moment everything else. The lungs remember how to breathe, the last breath, what it's like to be backwards in an upside down world. Tie a shoe, ("sideways" 129), read words one way and she tells you, *it isn't so*. You don't forget her musky smell, the shade of her brown hair, the exact colour of the lipstick she wears and never, never buy that particular red for yourself, no, not ever. Remember too the clock's arm against the wall, how you thought it might grow tired, fold up its arms, stop the tick talk, fade the sun outside the classroom window. Wish you could fade to nothing, disappear in your chair, nothing, *a small blue thing* ("night's eye" 118).

You are marked like a thief. You take language upside down. You feast on its possibilities. Lead stains the flesh of your left hand from above the wrist to just below the nail of the small finger. Proof. You are here, writing, carving letters, press down hard on the page. Make holes. That's what pencils are for, aren't they? Erase what you write quickly, before she sees what you see: small pink chunks of erasure all over the page, the texture of it still in your hand, all these years, erase what you say, words, in the opposite direction just to make her happy ("night's eye" 117). Don't believe for a moment she's right:

now Gerda's making
time drawn by

pole light sky
seems to sneeze in

gaps of ravens
shriek she trusts
the running beast

eyes bleak in
lapland's deceptive
frieze
one after-image in
(untimed
arctic wink

(Marlatt, *Frames* 51)

Snow falls outside the window. Real life isn't a fairy tale. A small girl in the mirror refuses to cry or give up. She stays until teacher wants to go home. Back-hand poems, left-hand poems. Look in the mirror. Dyslexia. Saying it backwards, sideways, always. Come back to this. The wrong shade of red. The wrong.

Dyslexia: a term variously defined but generally used to mean marked difficulty in learning to read. Often used for a person who habitually reverses the letters

*of words (reading "was" for "saw"), letters themselves ("b" for "d"), or perceives letters upside down..**

* * *

language is a sword in story. . .

MacEwen's prose poem "Past and Future Ghosts," echoes Wallace's tenant poems in subject and in its use of domestic imagery, but its tone isn't one of passivity. The narrator doesn't sit back and listen to or for story. Instead, this narrator actively seeks her story. Roaming the "rooms of [her] future," her body and spirit move towards unity, a "you" who is both child and old woman. More confident and assertive than Wallace's narrator, she claims to know "everything," but this "everything" leads to more questions. Nothing it seems, is as it appears:

I have lived in houses haunted by ghosts from the future as well as the past -- ghosts of my future and past selves as well as ghosts of others. It's very simple; we all just move from room to room in these time-houses and catch glimpses of one another in passing. As a child in one house I used to see this older woman who was myself grown up, and thirty years later I went back there and met the child, who was waiting for me to come. Who is haunting whom?

(Afterworlds 91)

The sword cuts through story, slices its skin. Peel back this layer and reveal magic. Light. In the dark you can say anything, a whisper's a whisper, it belongs to anyone, the limits of language, its unspecificity:

child?

alone?

and it's

getting

dark

whose beak is greedy whose orange feet

grip sharply the royal stairs

whose taste for narrations' exquisite

though he be wild

under the coaly feathers turned to

fool's gold, old guide

modesty admits to some

english bird tongue

clatter in his beak

(Marlatt, *Frames* 32 - 33)

Not fairytale, but history (re)told. Drawing her sword MacEwen's narrator in "Past and Future Ghosts" is determined to discover more about herself and her ghost. Until a satisfactory reunion is made between them, the narrator remains anxious. Poising to pounce she exclaims, *[l]ook out -- you who inhabit those*

rooms of my future -- I'm coming after you. I'm starting to haunt you, I'm starting right now.

The space between what is knowledge and memory *this* big. The awareness of the ghost inside the house and body. Just after the publication of *Taken*, I spoke with Daphne Marlatt about the persistence of ghosts in her work and her hauntings by them. We exchanged ghost stories, she of her mother's restless spirit; and me of "Maria," an old woman haunting my apartment in the Annex in Toronto. Ghosts, we concluded, are memories of home or what we consider home. Rereading her novel, it seems as if the soul becomes homesick and must return to its self. "When there are ghosts there is always hunger: for the life unlived, the knot that draws desire back, something unresolved and ongoing" (24 - 25).

What remains on and going, is our desire for more, for MacEwen's "everything": a unity with our extended selves, a link with what makes us *who*. How we get where we are, how we arrive. Kroetsch's for and play, take and give, wait and listen. Love comes down, plunges, sideways, in/out reality in fragments:

a moment
a speck on water
floating

LET ME COME TOO!

(Marlatt, *Frames* 11)

Return to the connection between home and self. The desire to return to the garden ("Tending the Garden"), to find *the route to take/what to look for along the way* ("sustainingshadows" 140). To locate stories a long way from home. Home as house: locked in, blown down, *my green house falling*. The domesticity of home where *sentences hang like negatives /line by line in the laundry letters spin dry* ("language of desire" 43). The place where laundry [*hangs*] *on a makeshift line & waits for its secrets to be revealed by a stranger* ("washerwoman" 89). Home where windows are open ("magpie"37), or frozen shut ("language of memory" 99). Home to the memory of who I am now, who I was. A world where I wait for the merging self to rise, to become *she*. To *stand still, look out onto the street where i grew up listening for the footsteps of friends and the voices i remember calling me into a world of pretend where anything is possible* ("language of memory" 99). Look in the mirror now Snow White, who do you see, who looks back at you now?

Nowhere is the idea of home as an extension of self more felt than in Atwood's fictional memoirs of Susanna Moodie. Because Moodie's home must be reconstructed in the backwoods of Upper Canada, the absence of "the other self," (in this case, the lower middle class British Lady), is strong. Family connections are also weakened by distance and by the choking darkness of the province which seems to Moodie impenetrable, more than miles and cold climate, a spiritual abyss that needs filling. In her much quoted poem, "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer," (*The Animals in that Country* 36), this abyss is an entrapment, it "has no walls, no borders", "no height" (4-5). More significantly, it appears to block any form of spiritual communication

because it lets in too much information (3:12-13). Words become "tree-sprout" and "weed" (2: 8-9), refuse to be named (7: 1 - 3), the dark chaos is an "absence of order" (4:5). In "Death of a Young Son By Drowning" (*Susanna Moodie* 30), Moodie feels the tugs of "home" only in burying her youngest child after he drowns in the river. Adrift in grief she "plants him in this country/like a flag" (28-29) and her displaced self returns.

In "Looking in a mirror," Moodie's search for self is more obvious and indicates a discovery and simultaneously, a forgetfulness. Recognition of self remains in the body:

the mouth cracking open like a rock in fire
trying to say

What is this

(you find only
the shape you already are
but what
if you have forgotten that
or discover you
have never known)

(25)

Her answer lies in parenthesis and is shaped by a statement. Questions too also appear as statements. *History in parenthesis* (Hannah Macdonald, "sustainingshadows" 147) An uncertainty. She never finishes her questions, and is reluctant to hear the answers she might discover. In two lesser known poems, "The Deaths of the Other

Children," and "The Double Voice," the narrator gathers enough strength from the dead to ask:

Did I spend all those years
building up this edifice

my composite
self, this crumbling hovel?

Yet it is her awareness of the physical, the body, which allows her access to the knowledge of the unknown:

The body dies
little by little
the body buries itself

.....

My arms, my eyes, my grieving
words, my disintegrated children

Everywhere I walk, along
the overgrowing paths, my skirt
tugged at by the spreading briars

they catch at my heels with their fingers (41)

In "Double Voice", the voice "[takes] turns using [her] eyes" (2) and shows her life progressing "bleared and [gradual]." The other speaks of "a dead dog/jubilant with maggots/ half-buried among the sweet peas" (42).

Return to garden, again, enter, in, (re)entry.

[T]he body tells what/i'm thinking ("just like a girl," 40). How I speak with hands ("just like a girl" 40), and *the body bruising as it listens* ("magpie" 37). *[H]ands keep night from falling*, ("greenhouse" 91), hold days and *the night's cool face* ("washerwoman" 88), are numb and four-thumbed ("no burning" 59), blistered ("Iris" 92), bruised and bruising ("magpie" 38). They are bare working the soil ("lilies" 86, 87), rough from laundering ("washerwoman" 88). How they hold dreams ("brother" 124), shadows ("nothing of bridges" 66), a thin book ("lilies" 87), a heart ("magpie" 37; "Iris" 92), a foot ("bears" 62; "no burning" 58, 59). How the pure reach of a hand is enough. The desire of having. Reaching for the moment.

There is fear too of *stepping on some living thing inside the body* ("language of memory" 113). The foot stumbles ("broken" 119), walks on egg shells on the edge ("eggshells" 51). There are cuts between toes, small stones ("northern lights" 97). *[B]ones sing of silence* ("broken" 124), wrists stain with ink and *signs of restraint* ("night's eye" 117), *words swell my eye black* ("eggshells" 50), the throat a jagged line ("here" 48), a fist fills the mouth ("Iris" 92). The

body wanting *to be whole and beautiful, just once* ("leaving somethings out" 286).

*One morning, long long ago, a young leopard named Leonard woke up and decided he felt terrible. He looked up at the sun rising in the clear blue sky and said: "It's too hot. The sun is too yellow. The sky is too blue." He looked at the jungle growing rich and thick around his bed and said: "It's too rich and thick. The trees are too green. The vines are too long. Everything is too something! Everything is all wrong."**

Atwood's *Morning in the Burned House* attempts to make the connection between voices of the past and the narrator's sense of self. "Waiting" (oddly reminiscent of MacEwen's, "The Red Bird You Wait For") describes the slow ascent of this knowledge as "dark," something once feared, but instead it is "strangely like home" (8). "Marsh Languages," "Girl Without Hands", and "The Signer" all explore the need for the physical other to merge. Nothing understood, (but held in the body this "something," "this vague understanding") nothing gained, but a desire to connect with the other:

I walk beside you where I grew
 amongst the flowers
 and retain
 in the scent of the sweet-pea
 my mother's scissors, snipping
 in the musk of nasturtium
 my father's thumbs, pressing

heart planted then
 and never transplanted.

(Livesay, 56)

How we transplant desire, the seeds of change. You might wish it in prayer, sing of it in song. Laugh in nursery rhyme ("nothing of bridges" 65; "washerwomen" 88, 89; "sustainingshadows" 144, 145, 148, 152, 154, 174, 177, 184, 187, 212, 221, 239, 245, 247, 250, 251), fairy tale ("greenhouse" 90; "language of memory" 103, 109, 113) read of its horrors in newspapers. The open and close of a letter: you are "dear" long after the author is gone. A signature never lies, but names it, artifact.* It continues to happen as you read. The dead live. Speak again. Smile for the camera. The past continues, happens *here is the place*. Past in present. Imagine a future.

iv.

Leonard the leopard slipped through the jungle towards a nearby lake. A drink of water would make him feel better. Softly, his leopard feet padded through the soft jungle, softly and disdainfully. "Look at those orchids growing there," he thought. "They're too pink. And look at those mushrooms -- brown. And here's the lake -- too blue, too big, too deep, too wet!"

v.

**"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"
(Jeremiah 13: 23)**

Feminize the experience. Step out of the body. Birth and trauma, delay and orgasm, unity and disunity (Kambourelis 80).* The moment of creation, how to begin. To the end of self, come home, become again, *persons in the world, against the preposterous notion of self. We are each our own crossroads* (Kroetsch, "foreplay," 132). Make a wish. This is a fairy tale, you get to be everybody and nobody too. Get the camera. You will want to remember:

if it's to

get lost, lose
way as a wave
breaks

'goodbye'

i am not speaking of
a path, the 'right'
road, no such
wonderlust

weigh all steps
shift weight
to left or right to

a place where one
steps thru all erratic
wanderings down to
touch:

i am here, feel
my weight on the wet
ground

(Marlatt, *What Matters* 168)

vi.

. . . Leonard the leopard sat quietly by the wishing well and wished himself the most beautiful black spots in the world. Around him the other animals sat silent, waiting, and watching.

And gradually the yellow back of Leonard the leopard became speckled with the most beautiful black spots. They sprinkled over him like pepper on an egg, like freckles on a face, like -- but there is nothing quite like the spots of a leopard . And when Leonard rose, the spots danced across his skin.

. . . And that is how the leopard really got his spots -- by changing them. And when people ask if the leopard can change his spots, the leopard just smiles. He knows.

She does too.

the pure reach of your bare hand

i left a magpie by the window

i.

*i am all mauve now
and purple*

the spring coming & you still
in your graveyard of poems & dance
dance me outside the reach of your bare hand
Nijinsky leaps to great heights across the prairie
wind burns jazz beneath your skin

wherever you are wherever is here
a cafe on commercial ave. the afternoon cappuccino
& rain falling
falls grey on the sidewalk

here there is nothing of grace
nothing to make me say
i think i hear fish cry
(no i am breathing underwater)
in the morning collect seashell & tortoise
seaweed in the webs of my fingers
a snail crawls across the centre of my palm

*i am all mauve
and purple*

a magpie sits at my window
a sad ghost jumps from the high level bridge
(she never arrives breaking
breaks Schubert's song without words)
the first poem i write the last
flash of skin on skin & your heart in my hand
a small bird the song
the body bruising as it listens
the scent of roses ring in my bathtub
a jacket hangs in my closet its bones
rattle me round rattle me
robin egg blue your eyes
tell stories endless photos
girls with dancing legs

ii.

rain drums across the prairies fine clear notes
 just once words may say all
 we can't hold white
 our fingers grasp the last note
 & we are
 bruised & bruising
 the bird in the tree doesn't sing morning
 the throat swells with fishes we might catch
 grey rain on the sidewalk sours under our tongues

i could play you high over the bridge
 falling & falling Nijinsky
 poems drown with their mouths open & silent
 a graceful flight underwater our graveyard dance
 we who are drowning
 smell nothing of roses or sea
 the two of us without words crazy
in spite of ourselves, off-key
brilliantly out of tune

first two lines by Dorothy Livesay, last two lines by Lori Miseck

berries you feed me

berries so red my lips stain their colour
 the sound of night sky before it breaks
 ice melts in a warm hand
 a fist the size of a snowball i might
 throw if i weren't already if
*we hadn't drunk wine & promised to love
 forever & ever we never
 grow old or have to say
 excuse me for a moment while i*

excuse me

already i've eaten the berries
 before the street lights blink
 before i'm called in to supper
 she feeds me berries one by one
 counts under her breath how long it takes
 how long it takes to see what happens

what happens when i dream dead
 cats in the branches of birch trees
 their eyes white like the skin of the trees we strip
 bandages over our eyes can't help hearing
 no one cries for the angels we make
 snow speak our arms & legs move time
 halos melt where no cats cry

then all that's left is the long drive home
 a snowstorm with flakes the size of berries
 a cat's tongue on the windshield wipers like a clock tick
 talk backwards you might say you're happy
 the sun golden on my face wakes to remember
 how you feed me berries *one by
 one by*

how the pure reach of your bare hand
 finds me in July my skin glows translucent
 for a moment if only
 if only berries
 my lips so red

just like a girl

The girl of five does not make any use of lateral space. She does not stretch her arm sideward; she does not twist her trunk; she does not move her legs, which remain side by her side. All she does in preparation for throwing is to lift her right arm forward to the horizontal and to bend the forearm backward in a pronate position. . . The ball is released without force, speed, or accurate aim. . .

"Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body
Comportment Motility and Spatiality" by Iris Marion Young
citing Erwin Straus

i.

speak with your hands
 a flutter of words dance over the carpet
 the monarch black & orange
 shines through your fingers another world
 another way of looking
 on my knees

how i scrub your words
 an old brush & hot water
 shrinks down to size each
 sound you make blurs into the next

you might throw like a girl don't move
 the body tells what
 i'm thinking
 (it's not in the centre of my chest rising)
 not the palms where my hands need
 lines to connect fingers & thumb

somewhere in the holding i might tell you

if this were a game
push & pull
without moving my feet
stars fall down around us

when streetlights open their eyes from sleep
 a trail of stars
 shadows orange & silver beside you

ii.

all morning stars fall
 to sleep name them towns
 a sky in Ontario, a field of prairie
 a circle of arms around a mustard field
 (i can see you if i stretch
 my neck back in a wishbone)
 a kaleidoscope in the distance
monkey in the grass
 someone calls *red rover*

the sun fades orange & my eyes close
 anywhere at all but here
 the room fills with butterflies
 sit cross-legged fold your arms into your chest
 catch each word between the spaces
 fingers wing tips
 velvet softer than i've ever

iii.

lean against a wall & don't listen
 while your hands clap out a rhythm of words
 while the ball bounces
 learn to say my name aloud say *good*
night

& mean it

iv.

if i offer my hand
a kiss

take it

i will not give so lightly again

v.

learning to throw left
the palm curves against rawhide
rain on my shirt
(the rhythm you think you know *everything*
promise me breasts *as big as melons*)
how i'm left waiting
for the small pink stains
words tell the other girls
their hands in their pockets
their hips thrusting
the bruises they leave
the sky brown & fallen stars
in the centre where butterflies sleep
orange softer than i've ever
said i mean it

the language of desire**i.**

rain on the roof this morning another language
i'm learning to speak & smile
for the camera turn toward you
look for the sun ask
do all answers burn here?

from every direction words stick
to the surface a second
skin i can't peel off the belljar
remember her name *red*
roses always make me cry
hold my neck just so
when you break it

we break here
sentences hang like negatives
lines by line in the laundry letters spin dry
slip into cracks
break my mother's
through the cracks

it's a game we play in the rain
watch through the window
(there are pictures on the tips of my fingers
i could write you on glass
if i knew your name if i
knew the sound to make
when i speak it comes out all wrong) what
was it i was wanting to
say?

ii.

when the rain stopped i wanted
to show you the moon you showed me
imperfections the size of a dime down here up
there ridges of her perfect cheekbones
she's so
& they don't know what
to say *she's so*

i thought she was a mirror i was holding
when you came into the room i saw
someone else
& *she* didn't know
my name
she didn't know my name

iii.

i should have said *something*
when the breeze lifted my skirt i wanted
to say *here*
place your hand on my thigh
here

iv.

i couldn't find you without rain
on my hands time leans on my shoulders
heavy with words i never keep
in my purse the picture you took
without asking, *how*
long is desire?

this long

longer than this

here is the place

If there were no word, all forces would be frozen, there would be no procreation, no change, no life. There is nothing that there is not; whatever we have a name for that is; so speaks the wisdom of the Yoruba priests. The proverb signifies that the naming, the enunciation produces what it names. Naming is an incantation, a creative act. What we cannot conceive of is unreal; it does not exist. But every human thought, once expressed, becomes reality.

-- Janheinz Jahn, Muntu

i.

& you in the saloon legs draped over
a stool a beer in one hand &
pen in another write me
a postcard in small crammed letters
the ship sails south sea
birds call each to the other
& leave me whatever it is
i've said
what was it?

against my ear flat
where just hear it's round
in my hand

hold

me here

*blessing
and curse*

here

& here

again

ii.

waiting for direction write right
handed make lists
find the ocean salt blue
ink stains the poem
it isn't the tone that's wrong
against this dark no one
sees what it is i try to tell
when i ask who are you
anyway, *you've got a pretty face*
isn't that what you say when you float down a river?

iii.

youth spills out the window
i've been weaving a web
in the weeds the Saskatchewan River
its silky brown flows in the opposite
direction takes me somewhere any
where from here where the prairie wind
catches the sun's wide beak
a bird song i haven't been
listening

your name in the dark
a small place fills

iv.

i could call you
water
 deep in my throat
 the coast a jagged line i can't
 reach the rock where mermaids sing
 the song sinks beneath the belly

Ms. Prufrock & Phyllis wave *welcome home*
 balloons & ribbons cut through waves
 a hand reaches in sleep
 another language air & salt
 half man half
 fire blow me a candle
 it's my birthday
 remember?

vi.

almost tomorrow beside me
 you shadow the moon
 the sun splashes seabirds
 stains on my pillow
 a sand crab crawls in the spaces
 between words *here*
is the place
 prestige in my blessing you
 here
 & here

hold
ing our breath breathing
the yellow eye opens
it isn't the sun she says
writing it with her left
adds: *sunflower, a golden plum, a poem*
the air above the bed
anything is possible

egg shells & morning

i.

in the stories mother reads you are wolf in a forest
lock the door in the bathroom stall
no keeping you

out

of the eye of the nipple
your hands open
my mouth

i know how to forget

ii.

beer on my lips & waves of what
is happening blurs

she wants it

& the room spins
the weight of you drowns
a bird's voice
(i could fly
if my wings weren't clipped if
the window weren't)

much later snow on the windshield patterns
words swell my eye black

remember the story where i was going

one day i will
ride the moon
my breast slaps your cheek
it will hurt

it's supposed to

iii.

open a window & walk on the edge
 straight lines where i place my feet

i'll never say

yes

never say

winter & wind
 eggshells beneath my feet

iv.

blue sky

(no, there were no clouds)

brown car
 his black hair parts on the left side

he pulls on the sleeve of my jacket
 i say

what?

i do
 i don't

remember

home where i make myself small
 beneath bed sheets car lights flicker
 against the ceiling a slow dance
 his feet don't
 touch

there are no stars in the sky

v.

breathe

i can tell you words won't
 come to the edge
 tell you *i can't*

remember blood on the mattress
 morning sunlight a white whisper
 leans into my shoulder

*you want to play eggshells
 walk on the edge?*

vi.

*you like this
 you like*

locked doors & the blade of a knife
 cuts the whites of your eyes
 dark forget if

it's winter
 day
 night

say

i want to remember

vii.

counting red
 cars on my fingers voices
 whisper my name aloud
 & the wind beneath my collar
 searches for something you haven't
 taken what you haven't
 taken

viii.

arms
 legs
 breasts & thighs

no reflection no
 face
 in the mirror

words back
 wards
 side
 words

always

this ending that beats me**i.**

**dreaming her voice in mine
the body talks back
against the floor the shirt rolls in bunches
the neck breaks a bird
in your hand the first spring
robin opens its mouth**

**i wait for you to pull rabbits
the joker's card, the morning dove
listen for the song you said remains
long after the notes are gone the heart keeps
beating**

**i wait for the rhythm of your black pen
stroke by stroke you follow the lines
my spine curves remembering
your touch how i wait for you
to write this ending
that beats me blue**

**(once i held music in my hands i knew
her trembling voice yellow & green
the sweet smell of apples & summer in paper bags)
he brings me the sun on a platter
a bouquet of Easter lilies bloodless
clementines my world orange & white**

**i wait for the butterfly dance to find me
shoeless black & bruising**

ii.

eyes in the morning sky colour me tombstone grey
 words you give me shades of shade
 dead stories the last thing i hear your voice
 across the prairie & i've never
 known birds as big as this
 to answer without blinking an eye

want to answer without blinking

iii.

glass breaks where you cut
 my ribs play themselves the song you give xylophone
 jazz without words rattle my bones cold
 refuse to dance or tell
 me what you're thinking *her*
 voice in mine an apple in her throat whole
 & beautiful & she can't breathe blue notes
 or remember the key it's in
 his fist in my hand in cheek
 in your ear the way it is in dream
 heart shades morning black & blue

(i smell your almond scent between my sheets
 your cheek against the pillow)

the clock stops moving i stop
 for a kind heart a kitchen knife
 (i could carve you
 into my wrists your name in blood)
 in the bathroom sink there are lilies in the mirror
my darling clementine

the song slips under the door
when you're not looking i pin
butterfly wings back breathe
& i smell apples
really i can
smell apples

ghosts on the bridge

Looking back now, with the hindsight of history, I can understand it so much better. But understanding is also effacement, a vagueness, which explains, but explains away the minute agonies, the grief that warps a life, which accepts, as a tree, crippled at its root by some voracious stabbing insect and for ever after bearing the mark of the beast upon its unfolding, is accepted in the landscape.

Han Suyin, The Crippled Tree

there is no burning

*Besides the Autumn poets sing
A few prosaic days
A little this side of the snow
And that side of the Haze*

Emily Dickinson No. 131

i.

there is no light in the morning hand
that holds his foot wide as this bridge
flat like prairie how he comes back
the river yawning still
shakes at the thought of snow
the way water slows for a moment
a frozen hope in September the wind crisp
& the apples falling

i shall not pick them, no.

imagine instead their heads
red in the autumn sun
how everything burns
but the light of morning
cold blades graze beneath my fingers
grass grows brittle & shiver
flesh on bone
breaks the water
breathing

father, it is apples
the cold whisper of angels
crows on stone a stray
fruit fly & the kick of a ghost
flutters about the light &

no burning

ii.

i have waited for the magpie's wing
 the dark shade of good-bye at dawn
 how the chest falls one last time
 & changes the rhythm

i could tell you how i know
 the stillness of a sparrow's song
 the whimper of leaves & folding blossom
 crimson red fades to pink

how holes in the sky grow bigger from wishing
 my hands numb
 four thumbed listen
 the roar of blood & sting
 the song in my ear
 how bells do not chime
 the hour silent

iii.

i have seen the notes of mourning black
 circles beneath her blue eyes
 bruises we cut with a jackknife
 until all that's left is the white meat of fine fruit

& still it snows & the river sad
 sings of stray shoes & watch chains
 a coat catches in brambles red & green
 the eye might refuse colour
 periwinkle violet a blue
 rose inside the grey
 world beneath the surface
 just --

the hand holding the foot flat
 a memory of yellow tongues, sunflower &
 daisy fields of mustard flower cacophony
 wildbeet if i could hear all

they say if
i could

listen

the last great gulp
water in the lungs
the sun black
&
falling
apples

i shall not pick them, no

there are bears

i.

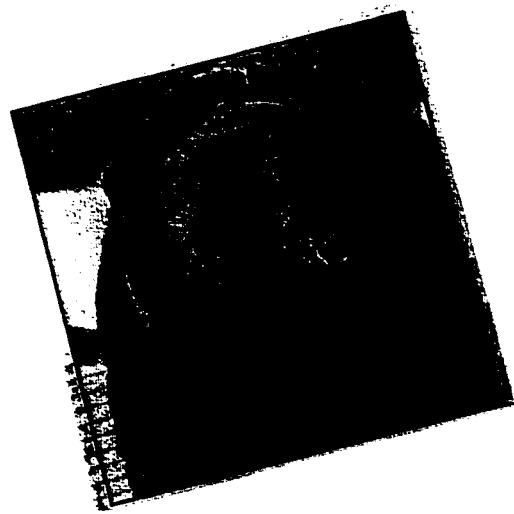
make sure this camera has film

i want to see what it looks like

falling to sleep

ii.

**the middle of morning & the train whistles down
the sidewalk someone calls her name follows
close to her heels no one
there when she turns ice
swords of spruce lock
in song a blackbird's eye
sleeps breath blows blue
beyond speech a cat's eye blinks
truth so thin
a branch snaps
as you touch it**



iii.

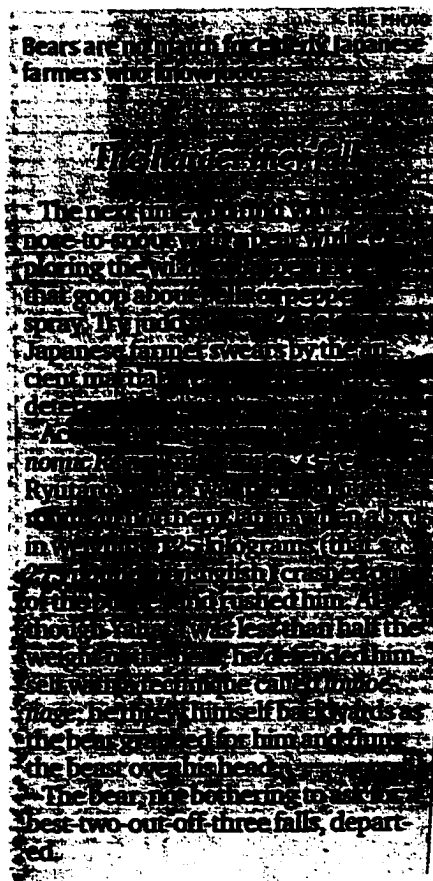
walking back you can't see bears
 beneath bridges or believe it's snowing
 when flowers bloom in your garden
 two cats play beneath the shrubs ebony &
 light how words lose their brilliance
 in the grey of November falling

i could dream your blue sweater
 the stereo playing cool
 jazz how you write in circles
 sharp notes Peruvian
 flutes float above the harbour
 the moment a small gesture
 your hand reaching for my foot
 rain in the iris of your eyes

iv.

there *are* bears beneath bridges
 winter's white shadow
 they do not call for father
 how they do not
 call his name beneath their breath
 words without colour stretch
 skin around the knuckle
 a fist
 just
 a fist
 hand
 & mouth open in sleep
 (i might dream of drowned troubadours
 bear dance in a garden of black cats)

but never shall i speak
 of bears or midnight
 blue or
 sleep in the folds of winter's half shut eye



**there are bears beloved
there are bears when it rains cold
breath blue the camera clicks**



*High Level Bridge,
Riverside Park View, 1939.*

nothing of bridges

i.

i shall speak nothing of bridges
 the Celtic cross the other side
 where his eyes wander from earth to tree
 the width of limbs the shade of their green
 world blinks black
 dreams on the edge a magpie nest
 bramble & tweed the moose in shadow
 where white birch weeps

ii.

call for moose slow
 step & rhyme step
on a crack break
 our names on sidewalks
 backyards upside
 down the world winks
 merry-go-round horses
 blonde & beautiful humpty dumpty
 eggshells & mourning
 a tire swings in the yard
 when my father calls the moose cry

& rainy days *husha*
 bridges fall to our knees
 the song slips through our fingers
 how we reach for the rail the metal colder
 than morning's breath the slow sway
 the River dances me to sleep
 the way i take his hands in mine
 how i dance his words i

get on with it

deeper than tongue the colour leaves turn
 dark outside the window a small bed
 a lampshade no flicker of light
 not even if i wish summer
 asleep & soft crabapple tree
 blades of grass wither & wave
 skeletons bone dance
 afternoon to evening

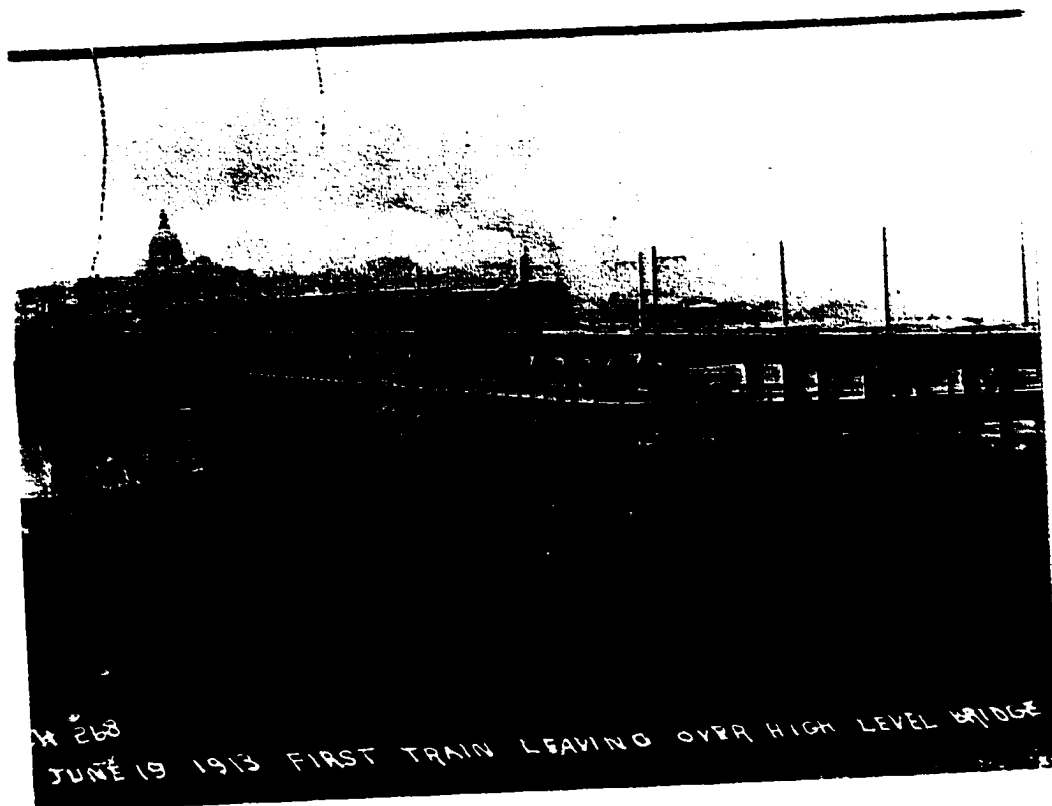
when my father's eyes close
 there are apples beyond reach
 sunburned skin a fading blossom
 kiss the stone blackbirds
 sing all at once
 the crow's caw sticks in my throat

i've never learned to call for moose
 or dance knowing
 morning's bruised face
 the sun for all her glory

&

glory the moment
 a shadow in hand
 waltzes the woman falls
 to grace without looking
gets on with it just --
 like that

a moose weeps in the white
 shadow of birch



*First Train over High Level Bridge
June 19, 1913.*

fall us to sleep

i.

With the blowing and shrieking of many whistles and sirens, cheers from the scores of workmen employed on the bridge, and the hurrahs of the 200 or more passengers, the first passenger train to cross the Saskatchewan River between Edmonton South and Edmonton North over the new High Level Bridge was heralded this morning.

-- June 2, 1913. Edmonton Journal

the last link for a dollar a spike
in the track's spine seed
bone & hammer
the stammer stammer
sputter & spit a drowning
man's song in the lung

a booster a banner
seed bone & hammer
the song in the lung not sung

cold crunch of steel silence &
sparrow- song the river holds its breath
the last gulp & whistle black

stone me to sleep

the brain's constant tick
& scratch of time tales nothing
but last year's petals
dust balls under my bed roll
my wild west seed
bone & hammer
my watery stammer
change rattles a ring of smoke

*Prompt to scheduled time train No. 33
 seven cars, one baggage car, an express
 car one
 second-class
 two first-class
 cars, and dining and parlor
 cars,
 left the Edmonton South depot
 at 11 a.m.*

ii.

weep by the shore of the river*
 hammer & nail this long
 -suffering summer's still
 white skin afternoon carry-me-
 forward turn colour
 a juggler's slight of hand
 a stale joke crumbles the *cross*
my heart & hope to die eating apples
 my gloved hand misses the highest
 branch the singing silence open
 mouth mouths a prayer
 keep the sun's bruised eye black
 rain the whole night pepper
 & mash sweet
 marjoram
 thrash

& the kick of sleep -
 walk finds morning dark
 leaves in a corner
 wind's memory gone --

* From the Biblical passage, "[b]y the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down
 yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

far away tumble down train
 blow whistle
 go
 star-gazer

on the ceiling a skeleton
 tick talks the clock

how the night does not sleep

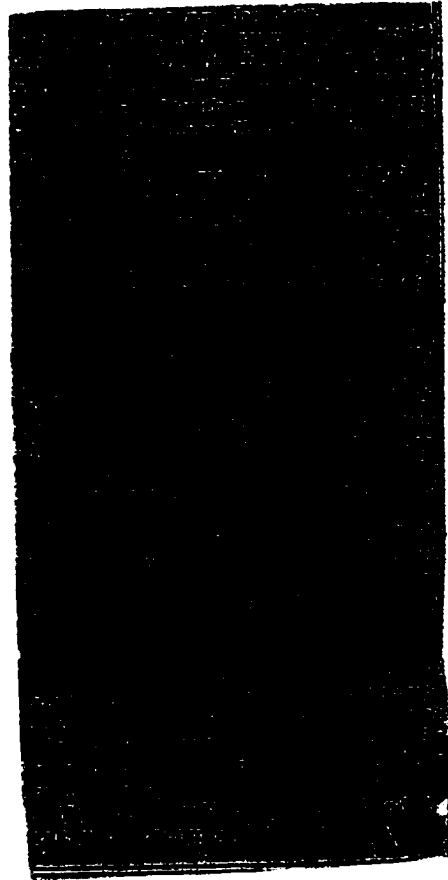
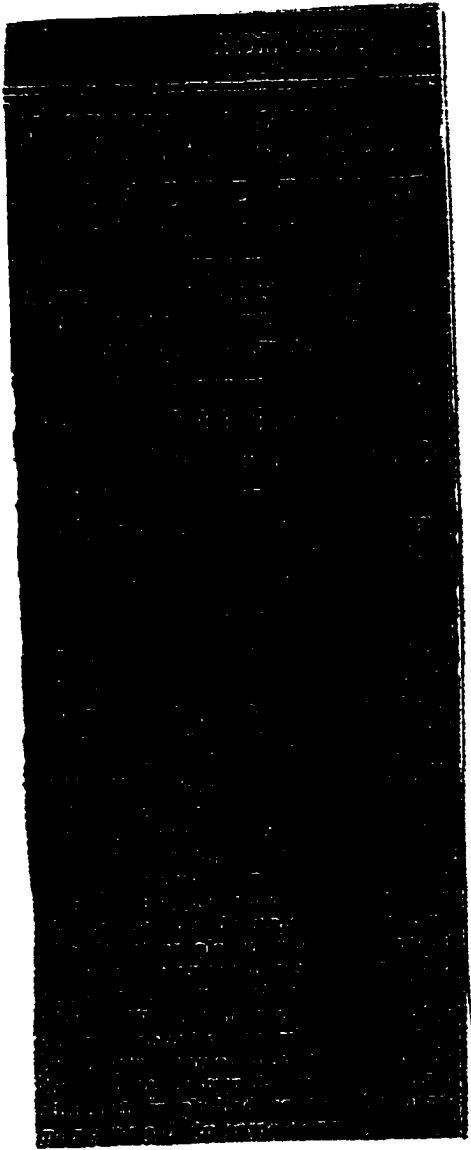
the apple's last blush
 dance the beat underwater
 heel & toe John Doe
 the hammer shake bone
 stammer the drowned man's song

*oh, stone me to sleep
 in the morning i shall sleep*

the drowned man breathes
 a camera blinks

*fifty-two yards short
 of half
 a mile*

a missing glove
 silver buckle shoe
 string old tin cans
 saucepans
 pecans
 nuts
 Nothing To Eat But Apples



iii.

in length,
as short as you'd like it

mouth the words if you don't
know
the song in the lung
rising to sleep

the only one
of its kind in the world

the rhythm changes the last note
smoke & steam

not what it seems

having

a railroad and
a double

anonymous
prayer in his right hand

street

stammer
car track
on the upper

level is he?

(she wants to know
how deep is he buried
above or below)

*level,
and a roadway and
dual*

a nail for a dollar

Incoming Trains

Train from Winnipeg --

7:30, arrives at Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

7:35, departs from Strathcona, crosses on high level bridge.

7:45, arrives at Edmonton (north side).

8:30, leaves Edmonton (north side)

-- recrosses on high level bridge

8:40, arrives at Strathcona (Whyte Ave.). Train is cleaned in yard on south side.

Morning train from Calgary --

7:09, arrives at Strathcona. (Whyte Ave.).

7:05, departs from Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

7:15, arrives at Edmonton (north side).

8:45, leaves Edmonton (north side) re-crosses on high level bridge.

8:55, arrives at Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

Afternoon train from Calgary --

15:30, arrives at Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

15:35, departs from Strathcona (Whyte Ave.); crosses on high level bridge.

each age is age lying

sidewalks on

which level is he?

the lower

bite the apple & the ache of jaw

i did not want the apple

sleep's prayer holds its breath
for a moment the nail in the coffin
the rake & crumble of leaves
how we bury him deep with our bare hands

oh, stone me to sleep

without dreaming each age
age lying

Outgoing Trains

Train to Winnipeg via Saskatoon --

Train starts from south side yards --

21:15, leaves Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

crosses on high level bridge.

21:25, arrives at Edmonton (north side).

21:45, departs from Edmonton (north side);

recrosses on high level bridge.

21:50, arrives at Stratcona (Whyte Ave.).

22:00, departs from Stratcona (Whyte Ave.).

Morning train to Calgary -- train starts
from south side yards --

7:20, leaves Strathcona (Whyte Ave.);

crosses on high level bridge.

7:30, arrives at Edmonton (north side)

8:15, leaves Edmonton (north side);

recrosses on high level bridge,

8:20, arrives in Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

8:30, departs from Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

Afternoon train to Calgary -- Train
starts from south side yards --

14:15, leaves Strathcona (Whyte Ave.);

crosses on high level bridge.

14:25, arrives at Edmonton (north side);

recrosses on high level bridge.

14:50, arrives at Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

15:00, leaves Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).

Midnight train to Calgary -- Train
starts from south side yards --

23:00, leaves Strathcona (Whyte Ave.)

crosses on high level bridge.
23:10, arrives at Edmonton (north side).
23:30, departs from Edmonton (north side);
recrosses on high level bridge.
23:35, arrives at Strathcona (Whyte Ave.).



High Level Bridge, 1913.

Tending the Garden: Women and Writing

*Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?*

I: roses and raspberries: the beginning of garden

Oh, tell me how my garden grows,

Where I no more may take delight,

And if some dream of me it knows,

Who dream of it by day and night.

Mildred Howells, "Oh, Tell Me How my Garden Grows"

St. 5

My Mother has a garden, although a small one in the city where she fights the shadows and the trees for a spot of sun. She digs into earth she claims is *too hard, too much like clay* with the snow shovel she keeps by the side of the house all year long. And when her red roses smile against the grey brick at the back of the house, it is here she tells me her stories, shares her fear of getting older, losing herself in the mirror where she looks different from who she is; here where she speaks of the past and yearns for its return; where she remembers the magic of dreaming. It is here too she tells me of the fairies she once saw dance beneath her Mother's roses and daring one day to reach out her hand she touches their wings, *like feathers, angels* she says and remembers their softness against the tips of her fingers.

My Mother has a garden where she remembers her Mother's garden in the country and the long days they spend together toiling the soil, picking raspberries beneath the hot sun, gathering berries in small baskets the stain of them still visible beneath her fingernails, on her mouth, the taste of berries warm and gritty on her tongue. My Mother has a garden; her Mother, Mary, had a garden. I carry them both in my head if you could see them. There are roses and raspberries, rows of green vegetables growing, wildflowers, sunflowers turn towards the sky bathe in the sunlight where it is August always and I have come home to remember *having is always a miracle* (Cixous 160).

Home to remember. How to begin my garden. I am all thumbs and hands, eyes and ears listening. My nose waits for the smell it will recognize. How shall I write my garden? How shall I begin to have?

There is the question of garden. Does it burn like Gwendolyn MacEwen's hot flaming flowers (MacEwen 74)? Does it stand neglected and ache for summer like Carolyn Smart's, "December Garden" (Smart 66)? Does it still lead home? Is it a foreign garden where one can read all afternoon undisturbed remembering, learning how to forget, as Gunnars' narrator does in *The Rose Garden: Reading Marcel Proust*. What kind of garden? *A kind one. Gentle.*

In her poem "Mary's Garden: A Gloss" Elizabeth Brewster returns to Mary's garden (Brewster 38-39). Is it to her then I address these questions? Can she answer what may be unanswerable? Although Brewster's Mary is a beautiful blonde with periwinkle eyes, she cannot visualize her garden or name it "wild," or "formal." She isn't sure if it is filled with "pink flamingoes" or a place where gods and unicorns "really

do come alive." She isn't sure it has a name, but it is there nonetheless; it exists in her knowing it.

I read texts about gardening, highlight passages with an orange marker, attach post-it notes on pages worth preserving; press rose petals into dictionaries I don't know the meaning of words. But at home, the lessons of knowing slip from my lap. Home to hear the *lessons of knowing, of knowing how to live, not of scholarly knowledge* (Cixous 161). In the garden at the back of the house I listen while Cixous speaks to me. Lean close, closer i listen i know *how not to know, which does not mean not knowing, but knowing how to not know, knowing how to avoid getting closed in by knowledge, knowing more and less than what one knows, knowing how not to understand, . . . It is not a question of not having understood anything, but of not letting oneself get locked into comprehension* (161).

I am not locked in or out. There are no gates, fences, or doors leading to my Mother's garden. But because I have no garden to speak of, nothing I can show you, no seeds I have covered with earth or watered, nothing grows. I have nowhere to walk through, no one's name to whisper as I tug at the petals of roses falling on the grass; there are *no more roads, no direction, no fixed signs, no ground, no thoughts able to resist other thoughts* (Cixous 161). Because I am *lost, beside my[self], and [I] continue getting lost* (Cixous 38), panic grows in my garden, the *panicky movement of getting lost*, I am an *unwoven weft, flesh that lets strangeness come through, defenseless being, without resistance, without batten, without skin, inundated with otherness* (Cixous 38- 39). Breathless from moving

into this space of loss, writings traverse me (Cixous 39). Roses on the grass, endlessly falling between the pages, the *passing, the deaths, the uprooting, the withering, the unrealities*. *I feel that when I enclose something, I save it. It is alive here* (Nin 4: 42). Something breathing between the pages of unknown words. Another language.

II: the language of discovery

When I was most tired, particularly after a hot safari in the dry, dusty plains, I always found realization and refreshment in my garden. It was my shop window of loveliness, and Nature changed it regularly that I might feast my hungry eyes upon it. Lone female that I was, this was my special world of beauty: these were my changing styles and my fashion parade.

Osta Johnson, *I Married Adventure*

I might say I have come home because I am tired. Tired of travel: moving one place to [an]other across the prairies and back east again; the hills of Ontario a place to sit, to sleep and dream. Clarity without dust. The source of story: garden as text, truth in the centre of daisies; pansies know secrets of the past in their velvety heads if they could speak, if I could reach them. While the sun rises above the city, cicadas dance me to

c

sleep where I dream *I am on the inside of the night and yet before my own night. I feel that I am before the mystery that I am destined to encounter and not resolve* (Cixous 98). In the warm depths of dream truth *appears inside of the night. Whole and beautiful she peacefully undresses before me. Smiling she comes slipping I do not know how over my innermost body, and caresses my heart, and-- then -- the sweet softness of her breasts -- and this is what absolute knowledge is -- . . . truth which only lives in the shelter of silence is forced to appear, and then is like a fish pulled from the water, thinking in a final convulsion of the sea, then, the end* (Cixous 99 - 100).

I have missed the dampness of Ontario. The humidity rising by noon never tires, sticks to my skin. You cannot free her without water, without ice, without her coming back again tomorrow. I have missed her embrace as much as a lost love, as much as the dream I have as a child, a secret garden opens; it blooms inside the pink and white wallpaper of my bedroom. The scurrying sound of wings: robins, and blue jays and red winged blackbirds make their way across the sky of this garden, this dream I am having. The feeling of something coming, returning. It is here in the poetry I read: MacEwen's "Red Bird" (MacEwen 2) she waits for, the Shadow - Maker who possess her dark (MacEwen 80); Atwood's *dark thing,/the dark thing you have waited for so long* (Atwood 8). She has been with me always: in dream, in the poetry Mother reads me, in the poetry I later read for myself sorting through heaps of it, searching. Now I am tired. Dust of the prairies covers my skin. I search for the water can by the side of the house, the hose in the backyard, the sprinkler I can turn on and run through its arch. Flowers droop, the grass no longer soft beneath my cheek, presses its dry fingers against my flesh. When I awaken there are books i've forgotten in piles around me. Homes i've

come back to their writing. Other women writers, poets I can recognize their language. And if rested and willing to listen, *[t]hey [will] lead you into their gardens, they invite you into their forest, they make you explore their regions, they inaugurate their continents. Close your eyes and love them: you are at home in their lands, they visit you and you visit them, their sexes lavish their secrets on you. What you didn't know they teach you, and you teach them what you learn from them. If you love them, each woman adds herself to you, and you become morewoman* (Cixous 55).

Morewoman. Loved. Open to love. To touch. To listen. Stories in and of the garden. To hear truth beneath the hum of cicadas, the blistering sun; sweat drips slowly from beneath my breasts.

III. patience to wait

*One day she hopes to understand progression
how it has no end and no beginning, how nothing precedes or succeeds,
how time is a disc that wobbles
as it spins.*

Anne Szumigalski, "Goodbye", *Voice*

I came home to be healed although I may not have known it. Mothered. Loved. I have missed the company of women in gardens. *How much more gentle, airy, light, free, and empowering is the company of women. No arguments, no manipulations, no veiled criticisms and damaging innuendoes. Just a good time: a joke, a laugh, a good story* (Gunnars 67). If I am healed I can speak, put this garden into words, enliven it with language. Write. Enter the text, smell the roses.

Lose everything to begin again. We must have madness to hear flowers speak; to understand the rhythm of insects as they dance; to sing their song inside our head and join our voices to theirs. We must remember and at the same time forget all we know and have learned. To sit in our gardens and listen to stories. This is the beginning of writing, what compels us. Beyond this intuition, of knowing when to begin is the writing itself. The making, the building of beanstalks, the planting of roses. There must always be roses, flower and thorn. Touch. Feel. Smell. Something to look at and hold. We must see time and gather it like berries in baskets, slowly, its stain on our mouths more lasting than the most fashionable lipstick, our hands painted in its words of loss. Knowledge begins with the mouth; *discovery of the taste of something* (Cixous 151).

My Mother has a garden, although a small one in the city it is here she fights the shadows and the trees for a spot of sun, a place to plant her seeds, a space for stories to take root and grow. It is here she remembers the soft touch of fairy wings, dreams of the past and the girl she once was in the mirror. My Mother has a garden; her Mother Mary had a garden in the countryside of southern Ontario. These are my gardens. Roses and raspberries beneath the surface of words. Sunflowers raise their heads to

the sun while the velvet of rose petal, the grit of berry warm in my mouth and hands as I write this my garden grows around me. It is quite contrary: it is where I belong, where I must begin over and over and return to tend. The garden around me growing.

in the white of the night's eye

where lilies sleep

i.

it's April when the smoke screen lifts the sky
 scare beetle blue sun
 light catches in the wings of absence
 butterflies tiger & lily & the orange glow
 cigarettes the air still in your eyes

what colour are your eyes?

i came looking for Leonard
 pigeons & parks & the mountain silently breathing

girls with yellow hands
 their thin red lips claws of a cardinal sing
 yesterday's laundry a skeleton the wind blows
 bones white hyacinths a daisy
 lazy morning blind by the window
 a thousand miles & your name in white lights
 neon stars wink a handful of small change
 for a dream like this

sun stains the carpet pink
 a unicorn butts its head against the window pane
 his eyes *watch his eyes*
 midnight blue & falling

ii.

time finds us here in the garden turning
 soil upside down we search for that other
 place where squirrels don't eat the heads of tulips
 & lilies sleep with their eyes closed

it's too early for roses & i bury the cat deep
 in the garden where a crow calls to its mate
 father walks in circles his blonde hair grey
 his blue eyes flash sky & cloud &
 it's distance i'm wanting
 miles from here

miles & i fade into white bleach bone
 if you could see me now
 a thin book in my hands if you could
 whisper a prayer up
 side-down
*now i lay me lay me
 down to sleep*

in the garden of cats & the ghost of a cat
 his white whiskers scratch the surface
 skin on skin his hands in mine
 reach across the prairie

iii.

the hand that held my head lies by his side now
 grips my arm as we walk down the aisle church bells ring
 later photographs speak of this moment
 as he speaks now something snaps shut
 holding me here lies me to sleep
 where i have stopped dreaming

*now i lay
 me now
 i lay*

my head on your lap

mother sifts soil with her bare hands
 & for a moment it's very cold
 clouds stop moving a unicorn
 dashes across the sky pink
 blossom a crabapple tree
 blooms magnolia white
 the distance already in father's eyes
 whisper a prayer up
 side down small change
 for a dream
 like this

ghost of the washerwoman

morning & a red sun stretches its skin over
 the city the colour so intense the sky's face blisters
 poppies without southern exposure petals
 fall to the ground
i love you not
 the wind laughs & i'm a fool for thinking
 it could lick the sky raw
 its tongue rough like the hands of a washerwoman
 unfolds corners in the prairie sky
you made your bed
now lie in it

her sleeves roll to the elbow her back bends
 to stories in the curve of cloud
 the wave of a wrist
 love lines crisscross cupids' arrows
 war in the palms of her hands

ii.

all week i've held days
just so
 the tips of fingers grip the night's
 cool face against the window
 (she watches every move rubs between layers)
 dream & wake i scrub days with Sunlight Soap
 until they fall in the sink exhausted
 i could be wishing stars to sleep
if i should die
before i wake

the pipes clog words drown
 in the collar of blouses fingerprints
 on sleeves my lovers lips
 red stains on bras & panties
 a stray mustache hair
there once was a man named jack

the silent hiss of steam in the shower
whispers yesterday's news if

i listen hard enough
poems on the ceiling begin to speak
Wednesday & i hang laundry on a makeshift line
across the balcony i wonder who sees me
trace the shape of passion black
lace g-strings, a feather boa

now fly away fly

away

she blushes in the breeze
water splashes somewhere beneath the surface
when no one is
looking she presses her hands in prayer
pigeons coo the dark wings of magpies
a deck of cards & cloud
the sun closes her eye
call their names one by one no
one answers

come again jack
come again jill

my green house falling

i.

you paint windows green the look you give
 turns seasons summer & winter all at once
 the front door locks the screen speaks
 a language of chicken & wire i can't fit through or
 see snow in the yard a tree's branch red
 lights flicker the tongues chatter white
 space a blizzard of silence
 a grey-horned owl blinks its yellow eyes

like any other gravel road
 stones sing a song i once knew
 the feel of pebbles between fingers
 how hands clap the rhythm
 a rope turns round &
 round we dance
one foot
the other foot
we all run
 out

ii.

April remembers the feel of heel & toe flat
 feet leave traces of comings & goings across the lawn
 paw prints & flowers two black labs
 watch days drift into noon a waltz of leaves
 ragtime & maples dance
 the prairie sky mandarin orange

is it on fire?
 she blows the tips of her fingers red
 last year's wishes & withered roses breathe
 in & out of season

it's almost a dream
 if i hold your hand you take
 me where cicadas hum on wires

sparrows sing for the scissor man
 cuts thin blue triangles
 holes on the surface of summer sky
 i might slip through cracks in the ceiling
 if hands keep night from falling
 a bird flutters in my black heart
 even the wind knows you're leaving without
 turning the ocean calls your name

we speak of this as if it doesn't matter
 as if you've already gone & ghosts
 wave hands in fields of wheat white shadows
 daffodils behind our eyes words
 you never said you'd *burn*
 you never said

my house is falling

iii.

tulips move in the breeze by the window
 the house whispers rain on the roof
 leaves strip their red & yellow skins
 bone dance the cores of apples
 the air turns brown it doesn't move when
 i tell you i want the green of these windows
 life you paint on the surface the world
 upside down stars in my egg cup
 the moon in my hand & you
 on the other side of the glass open
 your mouth a perfect *o*
 each breath you take you
 huff & puff
 you who blow my house in

Iris is dead: the opera is over

"What are you famous for?"
"For nothing. I am just famous."

Iris Murdoch. *The Flight from the Enchanter*

i.

there are daisies in her eyes
where stones won't blink marigold yellow
stories curl into sleep
she whispers the smell of dead
leaves in spring leans into my ear
Antonia sings her last blue note
& Iris is dead

Iris is dead & i mimic her moves Olympia
dance you round the room for a miracle
hypnotized shadow dance Lazarus
his heart in my hand
a purple balloon swells the size of a light bulb burning

after midnight the room a candle i forget to blow
blisters on the balloon man's fingers
forget Paris where i can't explain spring
or rain the size of quarters

i could call Coppélius from the balcony
pretend a conversation asleep
when i answer the door your hand
a fist in my mouth takes words before i take
her hand in mine we dance

dance me out of this dream

ii.

in the end it's simple:

yes or no

she nods her head finishes another cross

word puzzle clap hands girl

& return to voices in the school yard

remember how hands fit

the twist of a string & song

if mother sips tea

& father waits for the kettle's steam

on the wrong side of the glass

rain so loud the music fades

the dance in my head spider web silver

her voice glistens a knife beneath the sheets

Love can't always do work.

*Sometimes it just has to look into the darkness. **

in the dark i sever your head

weave a story with your grey hair

in my teeth fall back to sleep

where the ghost of you whispers my name

your hand on my thigh without asking

* Iris Murdoch. *The Nice and the Good*, 1968.

iii.

mother explains the death of two cats
& a leopard creeps under the curtains

i pluck the heads of roses petal by petal
yellow eyes on the carpet the room smells
damp like the books in mother's cellar
an atlas from 1760 with lands *terra incognita*
the maps in her hands unknown too
how i haven't asked her to tell it
sour the dark or the taste of love gone bad
how she moves & doesn't ask wanting
Guilietta kisses another & all at once
two faces in the mirror
He led a double life.
Did that make him a liar? He did not feel
*a liar. He was a man of two truths. **

iv.

wanting nothing more than coffee
you couldn't give life to her breath
move to the kitchen where the kettle is strangely quiet
& father upstairs snores the morning yellow

there are dead dreams on my pillow
your hand closes a fist in the cold rain
a sleeping daisy blinks its pretty

miles away my bad heart beats the last note
blue i thought you said
you wanted

what i thought
you said

* Iris Murdoch. *The Sacred and The Profane Love Machine*, 1974.

& the snake swallows the morning

there are no walls. fear/love, this light that flashes over the sea surrounding us. signals danger, yes, my house no house. i can only be, no vessel but a movement running, out in the open, out in the dark and rising tide, in risk, knowing who i am with you --

Daphne Marlatt, Touch to My Tongue

with you it's a snake bite

a knife in pocket & cut through the cool
skin of the neck until the head falls off. there are fangs deep in my
thigh two knives you put there when i wasn't looking.

when i wasn't looking a rattlesnake bit my calf. this time i know what
to do. reach for the knife in my pocket, slit the snake's head, pull out
the fangs.

stand very still.

with you it's prairie grass & a sky so big i get lost when i look for
morning you've swallowed it whole, stuffed it inside my belly when
my mouth was open speaking to you. i was waiting for words to make
a story but already you disappear into walls & windows, the shadow of

you slithers across the floor. alone in the house i might hold your
buttocks between my hands as if that's all you've left behind.

the snake moves under the bed an ocean i've been dreaming again of
water where i hear my own thoughts work themselves through waves
& you everywhere until i don't recognize myself without you.

listen for the rattle of wind when the new moon slides over the night
above my bed you're there breathing in the dark a poem i write
the ceiling of my eyes lines in the poem flashes of light move quickly i
have trouble remembering what it was i wanted to tell you.

northern lights breaking

*Can words comfort
as the body comforts
or the mind understand
as flesh understands?*

--Elizabeth Brewster, "Sign Language"

i.

although it is late & the moon wants to go home
her fingers reach one last time
beneath the blinds stroke your cheek so you can't feel
the surface my whisper makes when
northern lights break over the sidewalk

a dance of high heels
stars become arrows a knife blade
every time i think of you
 (cuts between my toes
 too many stars i didn't wish upon
 a sky so big my eyes get lost
 when all the colours of dark fall down)

when the dark falls down
green leaves & grass every
summer settles dust on my lips
they won't move to
tell you the story:

*voices by the river
a flash of catfish under the sun
black beetles dance a rhythm against
the surface of water against wings
a language of silence*

before i turn to sleep
the wind stirs my eyes might close
*i won't touch
won't*

tell me later words mean more
in your eyes the room the colour of the stars' skin
a light too bright for telling

ii.

in the dark someone i used to know
but can't quite remember
his name or which road the trees take
my hand in yours & dream of dust
small stones between my toes
stories a long way from home

The language of memory

"The world is my idea:" -- this is a truth which holds good for everything that lives and knows, though man alone can bring it into reflective and abstract consciousness. If he really does this, he has attained to philosophical wisdom. It then becomes clear and certain to him that what he knows is not a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world which surrounds him is there only as idea, i.e., only in relation to something else, the consciousness, which is himself.

Arthur Schopenhauer, "The World as Idea."

My hand cool against the window pane. A starfish stranded on the inside of a fishbowl looking out into the grey of a December afternoon. Sidewalks are silent & the houses in the neighbourhood look wearily at me tired by a season of smiles & bright lights burning in windows & on the branches of trees. i'm trying to stand very still & look out onto the street where i grew up listening for the footsteps of friends & the voices i remember calling me into a world of pretend where anything is possible. i try to stand with my shoulders back, my tummy & bottom tucked; i try to be as tall & strong as i can while every bone in my body aches. i have difficulty breathing. The direction in & out my lungs want to take doesn't seem to work for me. i don't want to move in or out. i want to be *there* already, breathing. i want the constant conversation of coughs to end. Want to push together parts

of me unhinged like a great closed door holding all of the pieces. A self contained & containing.

Between the lines i'm writing there are shades of grey & white; there is the idea of home & holiday. There might be snow & snowmen dancing in the yard. Angels across the lawn spread their wings, stretch to touch stars above their heads & when they speak to the moon the wind carries their singing voices to the heavens. The air is clear & cold. It fills with a symphony of sounds i have come to know as winter: the silent whisper of smoke as it slithers out the chimney & up into the clouds, the rhythmic crunch of a shovel on a snowy driveway, the tearing sound of hinges as doors open, cats & children come out to play. How words somersault from our lips & tongues & never quite arrive where they are supposed to when we are speaking outside.

Outside the white snake of an afternoon moves towards me on the grass, the taste of its sweet meat one afternoon i'm five years old. The day as long as the snake moves back & forth over the front lawn by the window where i stand still at attention waiting for something grand to happen, a procession to parade by: brilliant colours of carnival & the fine texture of expensive cloth. But the noise in my head quiets as i remember the silence before tasting. A solemn moment, then the whisper of voices far & near.

From the sparrows in the birch tree i learn the gossip of the neighbourhood. Blackbirds on telephone wires tell of people who live on the streets downtown & who search for food in garbage bins. i have trouble picturing this, but sometimes when i visit Father's office downtown in the city Mother & i walk quickly by men & women dressed in old clothes. On city street corners, huddled in front of office

buildings, crouched on their legs like frightened animals, the street people are almost invisible behind the rising steam of the subway vents. They rub their bare hands together & those who are standing stamp their feet trying to keep warm to a rhythm i don't hear. Some carry plastic bags, some have shopping carts filled with bags, their handles tied together in a large knot; others haven't anything at all. Mother tells me it is rude to stare, but before i can look down at my own new boots wet from the brown slush of the sidewalks, i see their eyes. See them seeing me. The last thing in the eye of the dead is the reflection of the person before them. i'm not in their eye, but caught in the reflection of my own. As if i'm not here. Eyes in the window look back at myself: hollow, a shadow behind the blue. Something vital is missing in the centre where my self sleeps; i wonder who took *her*, how long *she* has been gone, & if i'd recognize *her* if she ever comes back.

In the spring worms in the grass speak of how fresh the air seems after being underground for so long. Caterpillars complain of careless cars coming up the drive & their fear of tires spinning in the wrong direction. Birds speak each to the other, calls i have come to know as *good morning, good afternoon, night is coming quickly*. Sometimes blackbirds in the yard caw endlessly in the morning when the sun is just rising. Spreading their great black wings they fly from birch to linden tree & back again, a dark shadow against a blanket of blue sky. Sometimes blackbirds ask questions *caw caw* until i think their throats must be sore from asking so often. At the thick trunk of the linden tree their beaks point to the sky & to the empty branches of trees that grow *leaves as large as hands* (Page 45); leaves i imagine once

folding together as if in prayer ask for rain during the drought in June. Learning how to ask plants with words inside them the records of lives, history so rich in colour it vibrates all day long, alive.* Leaves that know my name & remember it still although i don't hear them calling to me.

But today it is the blackbirds who ask to be understood. & for all the world, for all the brilliance i see in their dark feathered wings, i can't answer. i can't change the colour of sky or ask for wind. Snow storms won't come at my command. Forgetting how to speak with words i have only my hand: a star against glass. Somewhere between all this book learning, too many years spent in libraries reading the ideas of great thinkers, i have forgotten how to speak & listen. The language of birds no longer calls to me. If i could answer the blackbird now, perhaps i would tell him that the world has gone mad -- that it is not spring, not March with its last gust of winter, but December. It's December & the rain beats down on the roof ever so gently punctuating this sentence. Rain -- its tiny footsteps remind me of my need to keep moving. At the window i keep watch, waiting for something to happen. All the while i try to keep as still as i possibly can. i must be very still. i must balance my weight on each foot just so. i must listen carefully to the changing rhythm of rain.

*This idea comes from a poem, "Ode to Chris Dewdney" by Robert Hilles and reads: "I could tell it that first day we met and before when I read his poems and understanding for the first time how plants could have words and lives, their stories, vibrating all day long. I thought of him lying with his cheek to the earth just listening, his eyes closed, his hands cupped together as if in prayer." From *Breathing Distance*. (Windsor: Black Moss P., 1997) 39.

Father, I have learnt the language of dogs. . . . I have learnt bird language. I have learnt frog language (Grimm's 29).

i haven't learned to speak with you.

Home for the holidays in December the sky a perfect cornflower blue cloudless this morning, windless as yet, still as if no one in the neighbourhood is breathing. Perhaps we are holding our breath. Waiting for something to happen: a bird to call out, a dog to bark; anything to break the silence of December. Anything to break the uncertainty of what might happen.

No truth therefore is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof than this, that all that exists for knowledge, and therefore this whole world, is only object in relation to subject, perception of a perceiver, in a word, idea (Schopenhauer, 445).

The day folds itself into our bodies a newspaper we flip through on the kitchen table. Our fingertips turn black & everything we touch stains with ink. There are words on the walls, on the light switches, the kitchen cupboards, on the refrigerator. Mother with a rag in one hand & spray gun in the other, walks from spot to spot & with a quick blast of blue liquid & a wipe of the rag, erases conversation from the kitchen. As if it never happened. *It never happened at all.* But the ghost remains in language.* The listless energy of angry words; words *i never meant to say, i didn't mean at all.* . . haunting grey words *i never*

* The original line comes from Tom Raworth's poem, "the Stroboscopic Forest Light Plays" and reads, "the ghost has remained in the language." From *Moving* (London: Cape Oliar P., 1971) N. pag.

said slide back under my tongue. A heap of ash. Unable to sift through the layers something is dying in my mouth.

To forget is to stand still in one place long enough to become constant again. The child at the window sees more than two eyes looking back. The window of another world. Like trying to slow down flashes of light dancing in the garden, the quick steps of fairies beneath the rosebush that Mother still sees when she squints at the moon. The midnight sound of the train i listen for each night holding my breath in bed i travel with it wherever it takes me. Under the brown sky of the city by the banks of the Don River, the train rails so bright some nights leaves in the forest wave their silver fingers in the breeze. i see knuckles bending, unbending, as if they are waving*hello*, but simultaneously trying to hold on to the skin of the evening sky. Sometimes fingernails stick in the moon's cheeks, but she doesn't complain. Just now the river speaks: *hello, hold on*. Laughing, its milky face smiles as it moves through the sleeping city. i place one foot in front of the other balancing in the middle of the rail. i spread my arms as wide as they can as if to embrace the train as it whistles past looking for a rider. Then the wind rushes through me, the language of speed.

[W]hat we hear in the dark/is different for each of us (Edwards 44).

My arms across the expanse of the newspaper. i read the classified section knowing there is no job there for me. i think of the job i have just quit & wonder what the words will sound like when i tell my news. The shape of letters hovering in the air above my head, rising slowly towards the ceiling like balloons at the end of a party without enough air. Then the sudden popping, a tearing of rubber: yellow & green; red pieces on the floor & under the table by our feet words look chewed, used, ready for the wastebasket. i try to remember the monotony of the job, the ceaseless noise each day of undisciplined children, paper flying about the room tiny moths driven by fluorescent light. The curtains always drawn. Darkness during the day & no one looks out the window. Sitting at a desk i have decorated with fake leopard fur to soften the harsh feel of this room, my shoulders hunch forward as i mark ceaseless papers & poems with tired clichés. The purple pen in my left hand draws circles over the pages. Round & round, a rhythm of circles: big ones inside larger ones; circles so small i can't write inside them. Armed: i'm ready for anything; i'm ready when a voice inside shrill & piercing interrupts: *save me. Stop this craziness now.*

*If all things are memory,
what hope is there?
How do we make*

*the break, the one that
keeps us rooted in this
unbearable landscape.*

(Miseck 29)

The Grandfather clock in the hall long since has stopped its ticking & only the low hum of the refrigerator shutting on & off in the kitchen breaks this rhythm of silence. Because it is the end of December, because there are horns to blow in the new year, chilled champagne my Father keeps by the backdoor of the house, Christmas crackers with plastic whistles & fortunes to tell. Because the new year knocks at the door & the TV news fills the room with clips of this year's highlights, because my Grandmother calls from the prairies before midnight to wish my Father another happy year, because i haven't moved from the kitchen where the underbelly of printed words cast strange shadows of dark & light across my hands, i'm unable to read my future. The lines of my palms blur as if underwater. All that i've ever held or wanted to hold slips through the crack of my fingers. i'm moving & not moving as i turn pages of the newspaper; i'm not sure whatis any more. Somewhere in this ocean of words between the black & white are the colours of dreams. A columnist remembers the 1970s as if it were today all over again, as if we could turn the clock back & do it better. *Do everything better.*

For as long as i remember, dinner conversations in my parents' home always begin with my Father asking in a stern voice: *what did you do to improve yourself today?* i have trouble answering. No

answer is ever enough. You can never get up early enough, read enough, write enough, memorize enough definitions from the dictionary. Never run far enough. Away from here. From this round & round the table conversation. Talk of the weather, talk politics, talk talk. *Discourse* i will call it years later around another table far away in the west, but the conversation will not change. We talk weather inside & out. The possibility of change. We want to improve our condition, wave the banner of feminism higher than ever, pretend we aren't doing it, pretend equality exists, that society has changed as we have, but none of us i think, believe this. Still, we ask for change, ask questions until our throats are sore from asking. Until our shoulders hunch over still asking, waiting to be understood. Until we have looked into the sky so often she already knows what we are asking. Holding hands in a circle:

husha husha

we shall all fall down.

Before Christmas we huddle around the television waiting for the word of the weatherman. *We must all hope for snow* he says, *if we want a white Christmas.* Instead, rain falls; later that evening it turns a little colder & small wet flakes fall against the window. The eyes of my nephew widen in disbelief as he watches this occurrence from the shoulders of his Grandfather for the first time. Will his

memories build on this then: brown lawns & a quiet contented wind? i'm wondering where the anger in winter went, or if i hold all that is cold, all that rages, a ground frozen beneath my feet. My throat swells with answers i've never given, with questions i ask over & over: Am i angry enough at nature's betrayal this year or is it with myself i'm angry? My own betrayal -- a failure to believe the stories inside my head; everything i've read over the years, stories i've heard around circles of friends, over steaming cups of coffee in cafés or kitchens, poems my Mother taught me each night before the streetlights opened their eyes. Unable to shape the story into a *here & now*, my fingers stroke the computer keyboard. Deep in its drift up to my knuckles in letters & empty space, thoughts stir in sleep behind my *eyes /where silent, unreflective whiteness lies* (Page 39).

The possibilities of snow; poems long to be written. The blank pages of my journal begin to whisper. The room suddenly is noisy; the rustle of paper tongues.

Perhaps winter is nothing/more than a long white invocation /of past and future,/of what is lost, /and what will be found (Miseck 58). Yet there is nothing to find. No opening to crawl into/out of. There is no white calm. No reassurance or belief in words making it real. Without the promise of snow & cold, of a slate grey sky & winter's eye closing on the sun. *Promises promises promises.*

Who says anything is for keeps?

"Go to the garden and bring me a pumpkin."

*Together they hollow out the pumpkin leaving only the shell. She takes out her wand & whispers words i do not understand. Whispers & touches the pumpkin gently with the tip of the wand. The pumpkin changes into a beautiful golden carriage. **

& i shall ride away -- couch mice & horses into the snow i imagine will begin to fall.

*If [i] were a raven [i] would ruffle/the ruff at my neck (Mulcahy 66). If i could remember how to fly. How small do you have to be before you can fly away from the spare bones, this bleached life (Edwards 59). How still? Day dreams by the window in my Father's chair where my body reclines as if i'm tumbling backwards into another space. In this grey light before the window pages in the book i'm holding fill with words, pictures i can't sort out. This non Christmas time, this stillness, the prickly pear of morning in my stuffed pink housecoat rereading fairy tales by a window that disappoints; i wait for a pumpkin which hasn't arrived. Rereading *Cinderella* i recognize how it is possible to make a shoe fit if you really want it to you can crunch toes, fold the ball of your foot in toward the body, hold your breath in such a way that the blood stops surging. My toes instinctively curl in my slippers & if i walk outside now beckoning my carriage the cats in the garden scurry toward the mice; feet leave no trace across the grass. i was never there. My feet dangle from the chair*

* I have summarized Judy Sierra's telling of *Cinderella* (Oryx P.,) 1992.

where i'm learning to disappear little by little. i believe i can inch my way back the way i've come without ever touching ground until the self cries, *enough* & means it.

Circling inside the self not moving in or out, slippery like glass, i want the dancing slipper on my foot. i want to lace boots, dig through the dungeon of the cellar for my old skates, breathe deeply the smell of musty laces & rotting leather. The memory of ice -- the smell of it creeps beneath my nostrils; the dampness of the hockey arena where i learn to leap on silver blades, move exactly as i'm told. With practice i learn to complete the perfect backwards & forwards. One leg held high in the air soaring across the ice & nobody knows how terrified i am of falling. No one recognizes the fear on my face. How i'm not breathing.

i haven't moved from this chair. Fall into sleep where i skate across words i haven't written: clear pages of paper i have yet to fill. Words scratch against my tongue until my fingers want a pen, want the clatter of the typewriter, the hum of the computer, the brightness of the screen fills with black etchings. Dogs bark. Birds sing. Frogs leap from one thought to the next. i wonder if we breathe in dreams & if we fall is anyone there to help us up?

it's winter when the voices return under the ice
 eyes watch me fall face first. skin splits open my lips & everywhere petals of poppies.
 my finger traces
 the shape of possible flowers beneath my nose & chin.
 it is difficult to remember the pain. when a voice cuts through the air around me
 explains what has happened how small i'm alone on the ice my body folds up into
 itself. don't look up. the winter sun is
 a bloodshot eye.

Don't look up the world is shining. A mirror i can't step through. Alice doesn't live here anymore. She's gone for cricket with the Queen & she's never come back. Scratches on the surface of the looking glass -- Dinah paws to come in. *Echoes live in memory yet, [t]hough envious years would say "forget"* (Carroll N. pag.).

Somewhere in the back of where we keep memory the ice is slippery & shines brilliant red & blue & white under the dull lights of the arena. The blade sharpener stands where he has always stood bent over his metal wheel he spins it round & round & i think he must be weaving fireflies, fairy dust; his foot on the pedal pushes up & down & the wheel keeps on turning, but it doesn't go anywhere. The metal edges of skates spit orange fingers of fire by the side of the rink. Hands searching in the dark. Frightened. Years later & the man's shadow still bent at the waist, a hot hand of fire reaches towards me unable to touch. My hands grip my ankles. Try to roll them in towards my body, stand up tall & strong. *Don't let them see you're hurting.*

The skating lesson never ends my ankles complain & my toes call out against the cold. i could snap them off, one by one pull them from the foot, but i imagine they'd find their way back & complain all the more for their journey in high pitched squeals. Instead, it is the high pitched scream of the hot chocolate maker calling me where the concrete floor is damp & wet & the wooden bench is too hard to sit down comfortably. Inside the smell of melting ice on rubber mats.

Steaming chocolate makes me tug at the quarter in my pocket. Over the counter i watch steam rise & disappear into the air. i imagine i'm an explorer in a tropical place where eyes of flowers shine like the biggest jewels i've seen in the windows of Birks downtown. i drink slowly lost in this world of pretend & for a moment i'm someplace warm & safe. Barefoot, i walk across a beach where the trees are long & tall & the leaves are unblinking green eyes in the wind. Turn around, dance in a circle & the wind pushes me in the right direction. i'm amazed at how large my footprints are. Prints in the sand, patterns of language. i dance to an invisible rhythm: heel to toe. Spell my name in the sand with a capital K.

It is four in the afternoon & the white stillness i have been watching from my window tears at the edges. The ground lies with its belly open as if coyotes have found it & torn away its flesh. i have never seen a coyote, but i like the sound of its name; the sad pitch of the *[wh]y* rings in my ears, an animal crying inside a circle no one steps into. Footprints in every direction the softness of the snow disturbed. *The structure of snow, the surface tense/with cold, I glide up and peer into this opening* (Mulcahy 69). Between crevices of ice & snow the snowpeople huddle together exposed. They are frightened i suppose, about what might happen, what could happen now that their roofs have been trampled off by giant feet with laughing voices. Families huddle together whisper in low tones so i barely hear them say:

*Stay together. Wait for the wind to rise up again. Wait,
for surely there will be another
storm. . .*

**& he huffed & he huffed &
he blew the house in.**

**i'm afraid of stepping on some living thing inside the body.
Afraid of their reflection in my eyes.**

It would storm that night even though i asked the night sky to spare them. The moon & the stars continue to shine. The snowpeople huddle in each other's arms, bodies press against all that is left of the walls of their homes. i watch them knowing i shouldn't. Knowing it was feet like mine that caused their destruction; no matter how kind or assuring my words are, i can never speak, never look directly into their faces. Never must i speak of them: the vision might fade, or the other children believing me, might stare too long & hard & with the heel of their great winter boots kill them while they search for the little people wanting more than anything to believe my story.

Home for the holidays i cross the school yard where i'm child again waiting for the bell to stop ringing, for the children to go home. i'm careful where i step. Watching, waiting, listening for the sound of

the snowpeople. Along the way i stop & speak to a small girl. Although there is no snow & the ground isn't even frozen i ask her about the snowpeople. She wonders how i know & her blue eyes fill with fear. *i won't tell, i promise.*

i'm not sure she believes me.

Earlier in the evening we watch as the newsman explains the ice storm raging in Montreal, Brockville, & Kingston. Later i will return to the window. Lights are off in the houses & on the street. i imagine ice falling on the other side of the glass. Dark for a while, glass breaks: hydro lines fall, furnaces & refrigerators stop humming. i can hear through the silence, slow down. Think. Stand still long enough to remember the shape of words under tongue. Listening i (re)learn because there is no choice. There is nothing to do but listen. In the morning birds are noisy. Conversations echo from the telephone wires. A bird sings on a wire; poetry, a language i remember. Blackbirds call for coffee, the tips of their beaks shine like the school bell i still see ringing. Across the fields where the snowpeople live ice falls from the sky arrows from the heavens & no one in love this time. The snowpeople huddle together under the bushes in the front lawn, beneath the pine tree by the back of the house, they've come home carrying all their belongings on their backs. People of ice, water,

conversation freezes in patterns against the window a collage of stories.
If i didn't believe.

If i didn't believe in the ghost of language, the snowpeople speaking. Ice falls from the eaves of houses, roofs collapse from the weight, layer upon layer of ice over the window. The day too brilliant, blinds me. The ice keeps falling so that by afternoon the world is a looking glass. Alice returns from her cricket match with the Queen's crown perched on her head & holding her cat Dinah around her neck. She asks: *What's for supper? Can i ride in your pumpkin? Have you talked to the little people outside yet?*

Talk talk. She asks so many questions.

The world is my idea. My eye in a sun which holds no promises: sunshine in the backyard, the calling of birds on the wire, the silver flash of fairy wings beneath my Mother's rosebush, snowpeople dance to the hum of cicadas in the long dry grass of an August afternoon, ice laughs in a glass of lemonade on the picnic table.

By the window waiting. A blue shadow listens to the stories. There is no need to make things better, no need to stand holding my breath. At the window a reflection in someone's eye. *Here, breathing.*

sideways, backwards, always

in the white of the night's eye

because she can't read mirrors
 or see straight lines
 glass fogs with her reflection
 where she wears her hair long
 a ray of sunshine behind her

writing left her right hand watches
 the clock laugh 4 pm
 the dark of the afternoon a cloak she wears
 for halloween the cold of the leaves &
 the wind whistles beneath her the night alive
 breathing

no matter how fast she runs no matter
 numbers burn her hands want to speak
it's here it's all in the way you look at things

backwards is forwards is
 back again

ii.

words fall upside down on the blackboard
 ink stains her wrist signs of restraint
 she writes over & over *i will not*
write i will not
make letters like this

hand in mouth a wet finger touches
 the mirror Sanskrit a sparrow
 steps translucent the whisper of prayer
 the nail of her finger
 its own bright moon

if you could see me now
if you could see

*i am learning to laugh in the afternoon
i light candles before dark
the white of the night's eye
sees in the glass
i am a small blue thing*

*the iris of my eyes
watch the iris of my i grow*

not one will be broken

prayer for my Father

*Lord thou shalt hear my voice in the morning,
the morning, I'll be ready for Thee, watching*

"A Morning Prayer," Psalm 5

i.

catch the devil's clubfoot & the bed post pauses
hooks the straight & bend of bone
a bad dream breaks the silence the beat
of his heart where a baby stirs
i shall lie down and sleep in peace
the hot sheets of midnight cover my eyes
the light too bright to speak of stars

tonight i ask a thousand questions want life to
fall into the shadow of a blackbird calling
your pigeons *come back*
come back
an open window

June & the eye of the sun is blind
(how close you are turn
from me close)
miles away your blue eyes find
the world in your palm
the longest days

ii.

I shall lie down and sleep in peace
the weight of your words catch on the tongue in the eye
lay down and slept
beside you
I woke up seeing
death a whisper
i never said

iii.

deliver me in your soft light
tell us what day it is when the sun beats morning
black its fist against the windowpane

how summer fades the chrysanthemums yellow
petals fall stone to stone
the crabapple sighs
the crickets sing
i do not listen

iv.

the strength of your hand
as it grips mine moths flutter
the moon floats blue beneath their wings
the house empty as
night stops breathing

v.

midnight you are
larger than life

larger

vi.

walk into the sun fearless you
follow a trail of tiger & lily
forget-me-nots wait in the garden
my steps sink in your tracks

vii.

i carry stories under my arm black circles
 my pupils forget to open or close a spider clings
 to the ceiling & the cats are hungry
 the heat so intense leaves from the linden tree fall
 too early this unspeakable quiet
no speech nor language where your voice is not heard

viii.

*my father who art in heaven
 heaven will be thy name*

what i haven't said
 all that i haven't

ix.

there are horses to ride across oceans
 where war rages guns sound one by one
come back
 blackbirds at the window

i did not dream the angel
 or roses in the marrow of his bone

not a word goes by i haven't held
 between my palms
 the open throat of the grave

as i wait for you my father
 sleep the longest journey we take
 life slows for a moment

**the air thick with birds
call out your name
in keeping**

*his bones intact
not one of them will be broken*

brother like brother

i.

i might hold the dream still in my hand
 if i could find the blade of morning
 silver & sharp if i could find
 the heart's pulse in a grain of sand
 the beat of Blake's world where
 the sun breaks silence
 night & day two
 halves & heaven in my hands

a crow calls the quiet grey &
 brother like brother bricks fall
 a driveway of gravel small
 white stones a wheel spins round
 a circle of seasons a crickets' song
 the porch light burns a white scar
 i forget just why the sky is black

tonight i cannot see stars

*i was dreaming of vaulting ceilings
 windows where lights blink back
 blue my father's eyes*

so cold so

cold breath turns a quarter
 moon another week beneath my pillow
 a field of flowers rains maple leaf yellow
 the centre of daisy apple
 ripe & red

he will not eat rhubarb in the garden where
 a peace rose hangs its head
 lets down her hair rapunzel
 in a green dress dance with impatience
 old bones sing of silence

i might believe i could
live forever & not see the grave¹

ii.

*no eye has ever seen
no ear has ever heard* ²

the moment the foot stumbles
face to face & nothing we know
like the flash of a yellow stocking
a strand of sun on sand
voices in the playground & Alistair laughs
swinging high his legs kick
a crow caws death's hand across my lips
*i never speak of
glory when it moves to
glory*

neither sleep nor slumber
my fist around the sun
the shade of his right hand ³

¹ Last line is a variation of Psalm 49, "That one should live forever, / And never see the grave."

² from Paul.

³ Variations on Psalm 121.

iii.

you will see it soon
 for the blink of waves
 stand still a mallard duck
 gold fishes bread crumbs
 the length of day
 folds in his pocket
 jackknife

you'll see

the bruise of stone the water's cheek black
 bird bathing truth beyond
 language the reach
 of his hand

you will see it with your eyes ⁴

the sad still reflection
 welcomes us home silver & shiny
 stones rise to the surface

iv.

morning changes the breath takes
 patience to recognize the rhythm
 September's clenched fist
 a word under the mattress
 the curved edge of angels' tongues sing

lie me to sleep by the cry of bagpipes

brother like brother bricks fall

⁴ Psalm 91.

already an old woman

despite what we say we return to this
 need touching the door & your hand
 beneath my silk robe cradles a breast

i could tell you *to leave* tell you
 how *time plays her fingers up & down*
my spine a harp you have to listen to hear
 the song so quiet you might think its breath
 the heart a poem waits to be
 rung in the knuckles of my fist
iambic i am

an old woman pushes through my skin
 opens her mouth the saddest melody
 i've ever heard the saddest yet

(how you never notice the smell of decay
 blood on the carpet my toothless gums &)

all at once a kiss isn't right

words fog the hallway mirror
 when i try to tell you *dance*
 when i try to say *i could write from the heights of mountains*
 but she climbs back in my body
 refuses to move like a picture
 you make slow motion &
 cameras click as she hunches by the doorway
 needing walls to keep her upright
 needing you to
 walk down the hallway & turn
(turn around volta solve the riddle)

out of shadows everything yellows & cracks
 bones move to a different rhythm
 slow dance to death

if i wanted to *dance one more*
dance with me dance

music on the surface of my skin

sideways, backwards, always

living in the past is a dull and lonely business; looking back strains the neck muscles,
and causes you to bump into people not going your way.

Ferber

i.

your eyes close like the sky this morning
a black curtain i push light
an intrusion a thought takes
flight beneath the wings of a magpie
my hand folds over your still
quiet hand &

bone to bone
i hold you close & push
the angel from your bed
the woman you ask for a whisper
a prayer in my left hand
all the lines you write
in the centre the shadow
her breath barely visible
how the eye blinks too quickly

ii.

later it is the crows who talk
 back to this small room its brown walls
 like earth bury you deep in November
i shall come to you bleeding
 without words the small thought of sparrows
 a lock of hair about the knuckle a ring
 silver leaves finger bones & flies
 Dante's incantation the heart's closed fist
 beats the world green fern
 an oak tree mourning summer's grass
 withers flowers fall & nowhere
 to sleep my father falls
 fast into memory & turn

the ache of the neck
the hand wanting
the pure reach of your bare hand

iii.

in the hollows of his hand
 a shoe lace *loopidy loop*
la la
 the flower of a bow & daisies
 bloom on boot tops
 buttercup now
 forsythia
one &

her yellow arms open
 the flutter of flowers
 the sun's red shadow
 a robin's breast

two bars against the glass a house
 of fish in a fry pan
 sizzle the sun's white shadow
 a breakfast plate a slice of lemon
 glory in the garden queen
 Anne's lace dreams the width of his hand
 all thumbs
 hammer & nail
 words rise to his mouth
 die again horses
 we will ride
 oh
 the horses we ride

thr
 ee
f
our

five

wait by the open window

 i have held tea in small cups
 my little finger raised to the wind
 which way it blows
 too far from here

he has blonde hair & blue blue eyes
no matter what you say
no matter if

i eat a poem to whom
 will they compare me now?
 the face in the spoon's skin smooth
my father who art in heaven
 shall i cry for a lily?
 shall i wait for a robin?

nine ten
 never so old again
 shoe
 string
 white hairs on the pillow
 yesterday falls in photographs
 where beer is always cold
 snow on the mountain white knuckle
 the neck turns ache &
 bone grass withers flowers
 fall petal by
 petal &
 sleep no one
 wakes
lopidly

loop la
 la

voices

Many of the voices here are authentic and are direct quotations from letters, conversations, memoirs, biographies, nursery rhyme, Christian sermons and Christian hymns. See *End Notes* and *Works Consulted* for a complete listing of these references. Other fragments have been creatively adapted to provide continuum of voice and (dis) continuum of story.

Narrator:

Contemporary female who hears "voices" calling.

Mother:

Mother of the narrator. Tells the narrator about her patriarchal genealogy: the history of the Maclean family in Canada.

Hannah Macdonald:

The mother of the famous sisters: Alice, Georgie, Aggie, Louie and Eddie. A deeply religious woman who is saddened by the 'dark' spirits.

Rev. George Macdonald:

A Methodist minister with a strong belief in education for girls. Father of the famous sisters. His father is Rev. James Macdonald who studies with Rev. John Wesley.

Rev. Alexander Maclean:

'Canadian' Presbyterian Minister who helps establish the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Throughout his long life he has a tremendous following. He is a learned man who loves life, theology, whiskey, and

women. His son James becomes a judge in Battleford, Saskatchewan. His grandson, Lionel, dies as a child.

Alice Macdonald (Kipling):

The eldest sister. Frequently engaged when a young woman. Eventually marries John Lockwood Kipling and moves with him to Bombay. They live near a Hindu graveside. It always seems to rain. Rudyard, her eldest child, is born in India. He will write of India in his poetry and novels. He will live in America for a time and have three children of his own: Josephine, John and Elsie. Alice's daughter, Trix, is also a writer and a reader of tea-cups and crystal balls.

Georgie (Georgina) Macdonald (Burne-Jones):

Becomes engaged to Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward (Ned) Burne-Jones when she is fifteen and marries him in 1860 before her twentieth birthday. She has two children with Ned, Phil and Margaret. Her son Christopher dies as an infant. Phil becomes an artist and Margaret marries prominent scholar Jack Mackail, who writes the first biography of William Morris. Their daughter, Angela becomes a well-known novelist in the 1930's.

Aggie (Agnes) Macdonald (Poynter):

A real beauty. Marries Edward Poynter, a classical painter who becomes famous for his realistic, historical works. Their two children are Ambrose and Hugh, whose birth during a dinner party causes quite a stir.

Louie (Louisa) Macdonald (Baldwin):

Loves to tell ghost stories & imagine she has many illnesses. Marries **Alfred Baldwin**, who inherits his father's iron works empire. **Stanley**, their only child is brought up by his aunt **Eddie** in a very strict household. When he grows up, he wants to be Prime Minister of England. Some dreams do come true. . .

George Eliot (Marian):

Georgie's friend who sees her through her dark days of separation from Ned in 1870.

Ned Burne-Jones:

Beloved, beloved. . .

William Morris: (Topsy)

Friend & companion of Ned & Georgie. Poet, painter, designer, craftsman.

We cannot recall the past, but we can learn from it the solemn truth that we cannot more certainly injure the cause of Christ and the power, and spread of Divine truth and teaching now by giving place to the spirit of contention and strife and fault-finding.

Rev. Alexander Maclean, *The Story of the Kirk in Nova Scotia Pictou*, 1911.

*we remember his death
we proclaim his resurrection
we await his coming in glory*

the moon in its solstice an open mouth
the white opal of memory
the star we said would not rise

the sound of his voice
his footsteps by the door familiar
the house alive cheers
for my Father
my Father

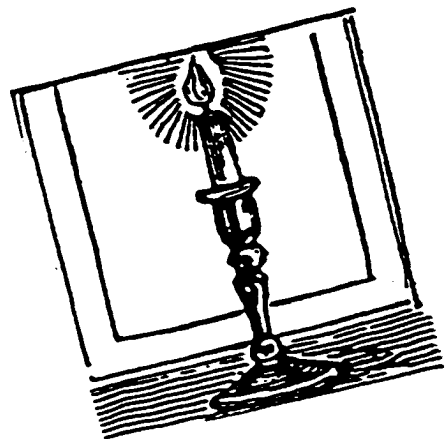
the street a whisper of lights break
red & green how the earth's frozen
prayer shines as if this too is holy ground
as if

i came for a sign
a book of praise
hope bigger than the light
the eye's third candle

*for thine is the kingdom
& the power & the glory*

the moon brighter than i've ever seen
my brother's hand about the wheel
callused & lined he holds truth like a map
between knuckle & closed thumb
never let go
how he never

on the edge of evening's first
chill his words ice the windowpane
a stilled picture for a moment if only
for a moment
his voice tangles my hair
the organ breathes the last note
December's ghosts ride prairie wind



(i can't rise to touch
 the hand reaching through glass
 the other side the long wait

waiting

i could bow my head mother
 sit on both knees bend to sort
 laundry's colour- me-
 world red i could
 hold my breath blue
 & not hear a word

thine is the kingdom

not a single word

*the power &
 the glory*

May God incline the hearts of my fathers and brethren favourably to entertain this overture. May we unite as one to enter with one heart and mind into this blessed work and then assured I am that the blessing of heaven will rest on our congregations. Yea, God, even our own God, will bless us.

Glory be to the Fa-ther, and to the Son:

As it was in the begining }
* is now, and } ev - er shall be:

and to the Ho - ly Ghost:

as it was
just
as he tells it

he names them on the tips of his fingers
 recognizes their faces in the island's red sand
 between tall blades of prairie grass
 the slow move east to west
 crawl on your knees to morning

mother too knows the stories
 sends cards to cousins i would like to know
 but can't remember
 their names or what route to take
 what to look for
 along the way

*"Pray where are you going child?" said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "To school, sir, to school, sir," said Child-as-it-Stood.
 "What have you in that basket?" said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "Some pudding, sir, some pudding, sir," said Child-as-it-Stood.
 "I pray thee, then, give me a piece," said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "I've little enough for myself, sir," said Child-as-it-Stood.*

i might say this belongs to my brother
 to my Father my grandfather
 my great-great grandfather & his father too
 how the Scotch tongue refuses to speak woman
 my mouth closes & the sun shrinks
 the night Father sleeps
 no birds sing the morning

1. "Sleep-ers, wake!" A voice as - tounds us; The shout of ram-part
 2. Zi - on hears the watch-men sing - ing. Her heart with joy - ful
 3. Lamb of God, the heavens a - dore You; Let saints and an - gels

guards sur - rounds us: "A - wake, Je - ru - sa - lem, a - rise!"
 hope is spring - ing; She wakes and hur - ries through the night.
 sing be - fore You, As harps and cym - bals swell the sound.

"What have you got that cloak on for," said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "To keep the rain and wind from me," said Child-as-it-Stood.
 "I wish the wind may blow through you," said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "O what a wish, O what a wish," said Child-as-it-Stood.
 What are those bells ringing for? said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "To ring bad spirits home again," said Child-as-it-Stood.
 "O then I must be going," said Meet-on-the-Road.
 "So fare you well, so fare you well," said Child-as-it-Stood.

Do not lose a moment of time. . . . Without gloom, be a pattern of seriousness. . . never talk carelessly. Keep at an equal distance between drawling on the one hand, and precipitancy on the other. Be thoroughly sincere and upright, and let your language be that of the heart. Meanwhile, let it be remembered, he is a fool who, upon every occasion, speaks all his mind.

— Rev. James Macdonald, 1819.

naming them:

Alice
 Georgie
 Aggie
 Louie
 Eddie

quotations of dream
 how the eye blinks back
 another time & place where they listen for Father

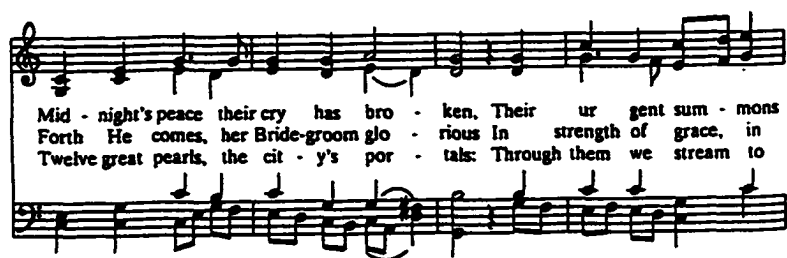
May the God of glory give unto us who have not already attained this,
 neither are already perfect, to do this one thing;
 forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth. . .

mother's still song brushes
 time's portrait patient to speak
 the mouth opens slowly
 (i have swallowed the moon round & whole)
 swallowed & taken this book

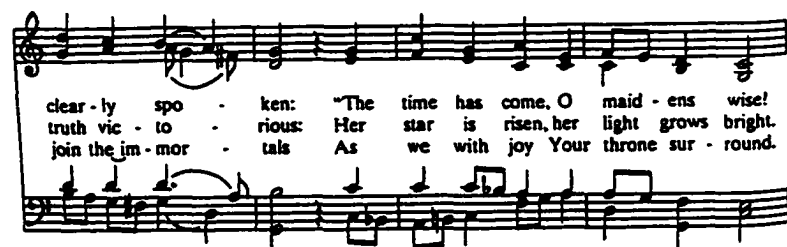
unto those things which are before, to press toward the mark
 for the prize of our high calling

their words soft
 white hands reach to remember

tell it whole
 the rhythm familiar
 wait for the beat of breath
 again



Mid - night's peace their cry has bro - ken. Their ur - gent sum - mons
Forth He comes, her Bride-groom glo - rious in strength of grace, in
Twelve great pearls, the cit - y's por - tals: Through them we stream to



clear - ly spo - ken: "The time has come, O maid - ens wise!
truth vic - to - rious: Her star is risen, her light grows bright.
join the im - mor - tals As we with joy Your throne sur - round.

. . . awake & smoke chokes my lungs. from the window watch the
village on fire. nothing but orange flames where the church once was.

mother says we must stay close to the dark
hold her hand in ours
keep moving
& never be
afraid

round & round & round & round & round around the morning

follow the rustle of silk
petticoats & lace scarves
a bird in the corridor
the winding stairs a flower blooming
petal by petal follow the turning
leaves dust the grave orange & red
the mouth alive
speaks

Here is the church, and here is the steeple;



. . . and mother's fist through the glass & the air cold . . .

. . . open the door and here are the people

*how cold my hands are when you call to the shadows without
knowing their names, without knowing. . .*

*Here is the parson going upstairs
And here he is saying his prayers.*

*Father, mother, brother, sisters, all are gone,
a fool can neither think nor speak. . .*

*I want more cheerful patience to do and to suffer the will of God. I am
tired in many ways, and not the least trial is the entire privation of
public and social worth. I read prayers in the family as frequently as I
can, but that is a poor exchange for the heartfelt prayers that Papa used
to offer. I have lost my Chaplain, and my heart and eyes are often too
full for me to get through the reading.*

-- Hannah, 1865.

*The bird upon the steeple
Sits high above the people,
Ash- a! Ash- a!*

mother takes us hand by hand. in the dark you can do anything. . .

*later she will say she isn't sure which town is burning or if she breaks
the window with her fist or a chair. a breath of fresh air*

without Father home a whisper of light

(we go round and round and round
and here we go around)

*Here we go around, around,
Till our skirts shall touch the ground.*



clearing her throat mother begins:

"before dusk great-great grandfather sails across the Atlantic Ocean to
Pictou county Nova Scotia. It is 1801. . ."

my fingers stiff as wooden oars how i can't separate them or pull
oceans across my lap. oceans & oceans of years & wind catches in my
closed hand.

outside my window ghosts ride the wave of December's frost. the
crunch of their feet.

(i'll not find footsteps in the morning
the sparrow's song drowns in mother's throat)

It [would requir[e] no ordinary courage to bid a final farewell to the land of their birth, the home of their fathers for many ages, and to the lovely hills and dales where innocent frolics of youth were enjoyed, and to look for the last time on the majestic mountains, reaching to the churches. All this must be left behind, and to reach the uncertain home and far away a wide and stormy ocean must be crossed, in a slow sailing ship with the least accommodation and the smallest amount of comfort the contracting party would wedge into his bargain, and the voyage was of greater length than is now required. . .

— Rev. Alexander Maclean, 1911.



*stay close to the dark
lean in against its body. air in the lungs not sung.*

ashes to ashes &
dust falling

the room slows with his voice the moment
pauses by the pulpit
curls around the edges
burning

burn me to sleep without raising your voice.

Georgie takes her pocket knife & carves her initials in the centre on the wall before the door, before it crumbles. before the black background presses in around her & twists into the shape of a hammer. hammer & nails her arms unfold at the elbow. reach for the door knob with her right hand the scars on her palm small stars. twinkle twinkle. *let it be remembered, she says, how the fool speaks his mind.*

Our life is a small parenthesis in the history of the world, but I should like the world to be benefited by all that is between the brackets.

-- Hannah ,1865.

between this & that
east & west
arrive nowhere

It must be gratifying to know that our fathers were the bravest and best of the brave Highland clans. They saw the evil days coming and a power pushing on which they could not resist, and they sought refuge in the distant wilderness.

— Rev. Alexander Maclean, 1911.

to tame the evening sky
take a rope & a needle
aim very high

(i wasn't ready
for the open
spaces or reading the afternoon's faint light)

*I was going to the window
To say, How do you do?
But he shook his little tail
And away he flew.*

hurry scurry by the window blackbird
parenthesis of dream, Father
one last look



Whenever you begin to preach. . . accustom yourself to speak with ease and propriety in private, and it will become habitual to you to do so in public. Let your heart be filled with your subject, take sufficient time in delivering your discourse, and then you will speak to purpose. Be calm and cool in the beginning of your address, and more than ordinarily deliberate; your auditors will then be easy, and disposed to accompany you. After some time your passions will begin to work, and you will find them too eloquent. But care must be taken lest they rise to such a height as to produce extravagance of language, or too great loudness of voice.

—Rev. James Macdonald

**a page of glass
(be careful, don't press too hard)
just when i feel something warm
the wind changes direction**

wait for the clock to breathe

Georgie sketches a poppy on the wooden steps before the house. in a moment the chalk slips from her hand, slides before the flower buds. asleep rose, the sun nods & the girl frightened by what she can't see. the rattle bones.

if voices had flesh
sleep the heart
stirs dust

while old things pass all things become new

history between brackets

I cannot but feel the tenderest solicitude for the souls of my children, and their children, and the burden sometimes bows down my spirit. Sad and lonely as my heart is, I am glad that I suffer this pain alone.

– Hannah, 1865

Father's voice in the branches outside the window
open the window hold out a hand.

i want forgiveness
to touch the flesh that makes
the hammer in the wind

If ye hear His voice to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.

i might think of turning tables. the spirit moving from sister to sister all straining to hear *just what he is saying*.

(We had no theory about it, and were only curious each time to see what would happen. The table, a large round one, did not fail now, but seemed to awaken just as usual, turning at first with slow heaviness and then gradually quickening its pace till it spun quite easily and set us running to keep pace with it. Not only tables did we turn, but other objects also, especially a very communicative tea-urn with which we established a code of rapping).

– Georgie's account of seances

June 10, 1856:

We shall kneel & pray for the blessing of God. It does not rain from Christmas to Christmas, but the blue sky smiles and it is always morning the air sweet & full of bells.

Five years I wait for the final word then he cannot speak.

the fold of her hands. her fingers spread across her lap, seafish & star.
the third finger of the left hand waiting for its ring. . .

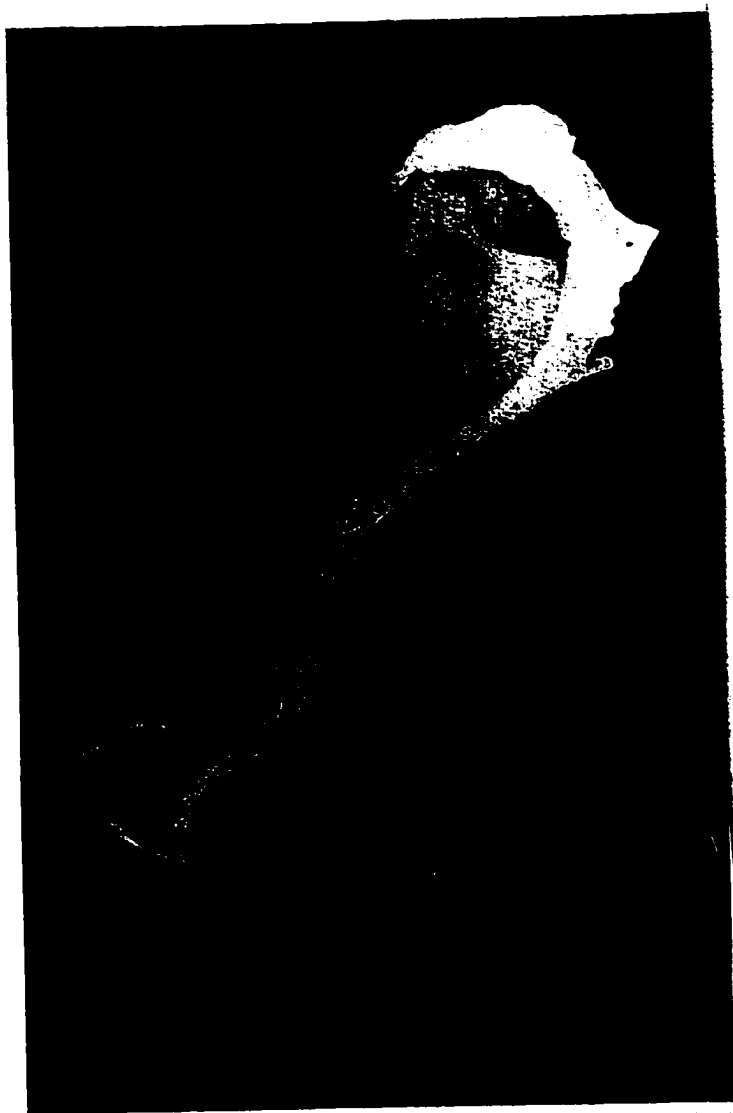
*i have sung of the troubadours & waited with Beatrice for a love that
grows stronger each day. Ned and I will wed on June 9th (1860)
Dante's own day. Ned says it is right, and I agree.*

*the wedding bells are ringing
the wedding bells are ringing
Ash - a! Ash - a!*



**wait for him to speak too
how like Dante not knowing if love exists
between this world & the next**

**in sleep he does not rise
nor does the trumpet sound
i might dream bagpipes echo from the rock**



Hannah Macdonald, 1863.

My brethren, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep. . . "Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and let Thine anger cease from us. O Lord, look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine", and cause us to know "the time of our visitation."

here we go round & round &
shall we ever be whole again?

in the place between here &
there
what is exists?

day & night & the sky a beige blind remains
closed
(wait for the clock)

this nowhere *is is*
space
colourless dreams run away
black & white

*the bird upon the steeple
sits high above the people*

bird swallows church bells
ring out the old
ring in

asha



Reverend George Macdonald, 1850s.

ring in

the bottom of a teacup

midnight sings out of tune
 Father's steps on frozen ground

*Awake, thou that sleepest in spiritual death, that thou sleep not in death
 eternal! Feel thy lost estate, and arise from the dead.*

rise tomorrow
 my head held high

stop the sound of the freeway
 dull the wind with my left hand

the space between now & then narrows
 a slit between the blind

i could say i've seen the dawn wake
 the moan of the dead & caw of crow
 how clouds slide across the sky's face
 a blanket across skin
 cat whiskers & green eyes glow

The arrival of our child, though not a "monster", brought us face to face with strange experiences. No one had told us any details connected with it . . .

– Georgie, 1861

Mother never tells the secret.

I had no instruction to give him. Ned, accustomed to a variety of light strokes, takes the babe's head with both hands as I've seen him do with huge frames while he thinks about where to move them.

Those who have gone through such times as these know them to be amongst the testing times of humanity.

– Georgie

shall i dream in Queens' Gardens
in winter sleep a crocus cup?

a path of withered flowers
no beating hearts bloom
the smile of lip
curve of hand
death's last breath



Georgie Macdonald later in life.

Topsy (Ruskin) tells me how the world has changed since Philip. How as mother I must "be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise -- wise, not for self-development but for self-renunciation; wise not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fall from him sidewise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of a infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service. . .

— Georgie, 1861

*help us to know
the time of our visitation. . . . Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts! Show the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole!*

**best say nothing
when he paints winter in her hair
violets wither in her eyes**

The garden looks lovely still -- a little sad, except in the first morning hours when the autumn sun shines upon it and makes it look divine, but in the afternoon it is given over to sadness and at twilight is haunted, by spirits, not ghosts -- wraith and spectre never entered the dear garden, nor ever a ghost I think, but a soft spirit there is I am sure.

— Ned, 1887

i saw her in the garden (really i did) holding a book of flowers:
sunflowers & poppies. she called out *Mary*. she held her palms to the
sky. open. there are no stars there.

she calls for *Mary* when flowers bloom
love tangles black archangel
not a ghost to be seen
but a soft spirit there is I am sure. . .

*I had prayed as the dying prayed for life,
With outstretched hands and bitter groans;
I had cried as the starving cry for bread,
With wailing tears and with hungry moans,
That once again 'ere life closed for me,
I might see her face whom I pined to see*

-- Alice

i have seen their faces
named them on the tips of my fingers
petal by petal fall down & dream
the crocus asleep in the garden

an abyss of space
(crocus in the cup of my hand)
one white star
the sky is brown when i trace his steps

I once saw a ghost. Georgie says it was Margaret's nurse, who used to walk in her sleep, who stood by my bed -- but I think it was a real ghost, because it looked drowned, and the nurse would not look like that.

-- Ned,

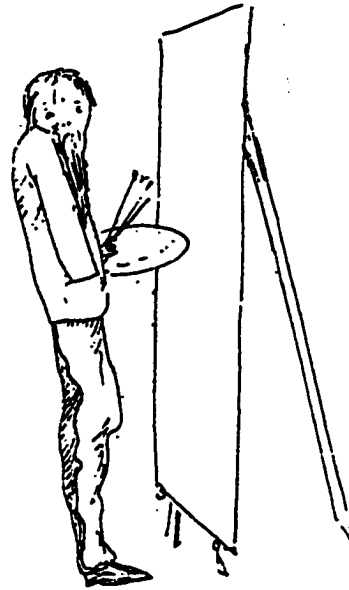
1894

1865

three weeks she calls for Christopher

*i shall sing hymns
& play the piano always
she says*

violets wither the winter underground



I have left Ned. I must reconcile myself.

Her face, here too, smiling in the sky. I shall be happy for winter when the garden's bloom fades. Without colour, i shall be happy. I shall try.

-- Georgie, 1870

i heard him cry Mary, Mary in the morning.

*when does a dream finish?
Never, I think
a symbol of life itself*

*I say it is finished
cut off,
and must go away.*

*cut stars from her eyes
Mary*



*there are no nets. in Father's garden butterflies blink back time. i
can't enter. no entry. no exact location. no here. no crack to slip
through big enough. no tick talk. no clock breathing.*

1861

Ned continues to spit up blood and the baby is sick. Aggie is soon to wed.

*How she shall sit still long enough. The light on her face bright. The
art of loving. The song of love she plays.*

I have heard there is strength in numbers.

*love is likened to summer as winter defaces green summer, so fareth it
by unstable love in man and woman.*

he could stand in the garden his arms open, ask me for patience.

(arms like a folding prayer white
& black the moon the stage light)

fever fades this sacred
and saving element -- the divine gift to the sight of man

colour my cheeks great drops of green tears
a wall of pears in blossom, peaches, plums, apricots
large elms at the end of the road wild
roses, walnut trees, a field of poppies
golden greetings from Ned's garden

thoughts breathing

(words might burn a hole in his hand
just big enough to slip through
just --

April 15, 1870

raspberries & honeysuckle sweet
small figures run
from page to page tumble on a secret

*" And though this seems so far from me
Though sunk in dreams I still must be
Self-made about myself -- yet now
Who knows what out of all may grow;
Who knows but I myself at last
May face the truth, with all fear cast
Clean forth of me; real Love and I
Set side by side before I die. "*

— William Morris for Georgie

Alice: 1837 - 1910

Alice the eldest. Alice the p - l - u - r - t. thrice engaged settles on John Lockwood Kipling. Rudyard is born in India, Trix in England. Trix reads patterns in tea leaves, follows the wind where she hears great-grandmother laugh a gold ribbon through the night sky. if she sees the future, she isn't telling.

We are to be wed at 10 am at St. Mary Abbotts the dreariest place I ever saw. We leave dear England soon for Bombay.

-- Alice, 1865.

Things are so funnily like and unlike what they should be. A hindoo makes a shot at the right thing & he hits or misses by chances so that no one thing is quite right -- no masonry is square, no railings are straight, no roads are level, no dishes taste quite like what they should , but a strange and curious imperfection & falling short attends everything. So that one lives as in a dream where things are just coming about but never quite happen. . .

-- John Lockwood Kipling, 1866.

already England is a smudge on canvas asleep in the background black
& salt water

even now the rhythm changes
she might cry *good-bye* she might
hold her head higher,
Who hath desired the Sea? -- the sight of salt water unbounded --
The heave and the salt and the hurl and the crash of the comber wind-
hounded?
The sleek-barreled swell before storm, grey, foamless, enormous, and
growing --

*In the evening we walk by the sea in the shadow of palm-groves. The
wind blows the nuts tumble and we run, run away pushing the
perambulator and Trix in it to the safety of open. Voices of the night-
winds sing through palm and banana leaves, tree-frogs dance the damp
air.*

– Rudyard, memories of childhood

how to dance?

just
do.

I do not understand my mother's distress when she found "a child's hand" in our garden, and she said I was not to ask questions about it. I want to see that child's hand. I want. . .

— Rudyard , memories of childhood

Alice dreams of birds. hot rain & thick mud & the windows steaming.
she thinks each fit her last, each day counting her way home by drops
on the roof. lost in the house where rooms lead nowhere a child's
hand unfolds its thumb. its palm a winking eye bleeds red.

underneath the rocks my dear
underneath the wood

*He lost his way at eventide
And wandering where the paths divide
He found a goblin by his side,
A satry child
Whose look was wild.
The day drew on to eventide.*



Alice Macdonald (Kipling)

LOVE AND DEATH



IN the white-flowered hawthorn brake

Love be merry for my sake

Twine the blossoms in my hair

Kiss me where I am most fair

Kiss me, sweet, for who knoweth

What thing cometh after death!

NAY thy garlanded gold hair

Hides thee where thou art most fair

Hides the rose-tinged hills of snow

O my love I hold thee now!

Kiss me, sweet, for who knoweth

What thing cometh after death!

SHALL we weep for a dead day

Or set sorrow in our way?

Hidden in my golden hair

Wilt thou weep that the days wear?

Kiss me, sweet, for who knoweth

What thing cometh after death!

*Poem for Georgie on her 30th birthday, 1870
by William Morris*

nothing more gloomy than rain in December. downstairs mother plans the anniversary of the *Hector* landing on the shores of Nova Scotia. *Two hundred years she says, deserves some sort of celebration.*

think of the dark & salt on my face. a stench below board might ruin the bliss, the unfamiliar rhythm of water moving. stay far from the water's edge, keep to the land thick with trees, the shadow of branches, a gentle inland breeze.

the steady pounding of rain on the roof words i don't know the story. can't see great-great-grandfather's wife's father aboard dreaming of clearing land. soil breaks in his hands his face ages as i watch & listen. . .

breathe deeply it will be all right

my fingers cling to the sour brilliant
wedge of lime its juice stings
my tongue curls a stranger here
where the wind stands still move
my feet tap out another rhythm
dance tree frogs dance on damp

from where i sit
pockets of air & space outside
leaves rip from open
branches of trees
spin me one
spin me two
pennies for a rainy day

i don't believe
 things will be all right
 if there are leaves in December
 "the goblin lied
 But yet he took him for his guide
 And on through shadows dappled pied"

when the sky clenches its fist black
 i am something small in the dark
 rain a thousand questions
 i never ask

*I had prayed as the dying prayed for life,
 With outstretched hands and bitter groans;
 I had cried as the starving cry for bread,
 With wailing tears and with hungry moans,
 That once again 'ere life closed for me,
 I might see her face whom I pined to see*

-- Alice

on the other side of the dream
 an eye flickers
 an angel in the corner
 the only way to see her is not
 to look

1903 - 1906:

if she could see the future she doesn't tell it.

We all think her mad. Trix has become quite famous now. Messages from the dead on palm leaves, in teacups. This soul destroying business of spirituality has affected her mind profoundly.

-- Rudyard

I am engaged to Jack Fleming. Mother is thrilled.

-- Trix

Trix has renewed her engagement to John Fleming and I don't like it, but what could I say or Do? As the Moslem proverb has it -- "When man and woman are agreed, what can the Khazi do"? So they have settled it, and in the one letter I have received from Simla since I came they timidly avoid the subject -- tell me of dances, dinners & rubbish. I can only hope with all my heart the child is right, and that she will not one day when it is too late find her Fleming but a thin pasture, and sigh for other fields. Did you hear about this when they made their false start?

-- John Lockwood Kipling, 1888

i have made a false start.

downstairs mother celebrates the arrival of the *Hector* & great-great
grandfather's father. she writes hundreds of letters urging the cousins
to come. *I don't know where we will put them, how to feed them.*
dance in the backyard.

the rain continues. so does the fever. no leaves on the trees. the sky is
grey.

i shall close the blind. green eyes glow in the dark.

if history is between brackets what lies between each line? *a period, a
comma or two, she says i must reread everything carefully & look for
outstanding images.*

rain dogs i ask?
no she answers.

goblins or ghouls?
a prayer book bury me deep in November. . .



*Trix had 'great' spiritual powers.
The third eye.*

"it is *still* raining" she says,
i know

angels are quiet. they never speak.

you will not see them dancing. they cannot see stars either.



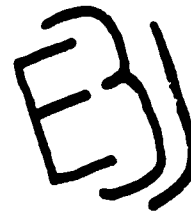
Rudyard Kipling

Sir,

I should like to caution you against the new-fangled bicycle you mention. I knew a gentleman most respectable on the Stock Exchange and connected by marriage with the Pocklington family who stand very high in the country and had a fatal injury in his latissimus dorsi in consequence of one of these bicycles. My advice would be if I might presume, Sir, stick to the books.

— Ned to Rudyard, 1897

stories just so
 jungle & barrack room ballad & round &
 round in the mornings of Vermont



East is East, and West is West

blaze a trail of cards & railway spikes. law books burn a sermon in the prairie.

. . . there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth

Mother places a cool cloth on my head.
 she says i am *delirious*.
 mysterious
 i ous
 yaw yaw
 stretch bone
 stammer jaw
deliciously delirious

*Now Chil the Kite brings home the night
 That Mang the Bat sets free --
 The herds are shut in byre and hut,
 For loosed till dawn are we,
 This is the hour of pride and power,
 Talon and tush and claw.
 Oh, hear the call! -- Good hunting all
 That keep the Jungle Law!*

if i knew his court & the law he keeps perhaps he speaks to me.

(dream in Latin dream a labyrinth)

if i dream a labyrinth look from the corner of my eye the woman in waiting speaks.

perhaps he speaks to me



The Morris and Burne-Jones families at the range.

*front (left to right: Georgie, Jennie Morris with Margaret Burne-Jones (on
Morris.*

middle: Philip Burne-Jones, Ned

back: Burne-Jones (Sr.) William Morris (Topsy)

Bateman's,
Burwash,
Sussex.
Nov. 30. 1908

DEAR OLD MAN:

YOUR LAST LETTER IS MORE THAN USUALLY VILEY SPELLED WHICH I EXPECT
IS BECAUSE YOU SKYLARKED WITH BINGHAM INSTEAD OF LOOKING UP THE
DICTIONARY. (IF I WERE YOU I SHOULD WALK ABOUT CHAINED TO AT
LEAST THREE DICTIONARIES, LIKE A SUFFRAGETTE TO THE LADIES' GRILLE.)
WHY CAN'T YOU SPELL?

ARE YOU SICK?

ARE YOU UNDERFED?

DO YOUR SHOES PINCH? DIDN'T YOU LOOSEN YOUR WAISTCOAT ENOUGH?

THEN WHY THE DOOSE DON'T YOU SPELL????????????????????

NEVER MIND. . . .

HOW MANY MORE WATCHES DO YOU WANT? HAVE YOU SWALLOWED
YOUR LAST?

LOVE FROM US ALL,
EVER AFFECTIONATELY,
DADDA.

– Rudyard to his son John, Nov., 30, 1908

he brags he spells the *best*
checks his papers thrice over
says *he knows* without looking

without looking it's the eyes
the tone of voice telling
in the dark the language of water & wind, rain

the breath of sleep

(you remember a good soaking
your shoes slip on the sidewalk dance
who cares
who sees you on your knees
who cares?

*A Boy that is good
Will learn his book well;
And if he can't read
Will strive for to spell.*

who cares if a girl can spell?
if her shoes slip? bang her head? bruise a hip?

in the morning footprints in the grass

if she sees the future she won't spell it

1899:

I have lost my Josephine, I have lost my life.

— Rudyard

Grand Hotel,
Stockholm
Dec. 10th. 1907
Tuesday: 2:30 p.m. (just getting night)



DEAR BABES --

WE REACHED STOCKHOLM THIS MORNING AT 9:47 JUST AFTER IT GOT LIGHT. SOLEMN MEN IN TOP HATS OF GREAT GLORY RECEIVED US AT THE STATION AND ESCORTED US TO A CARRIAGE LARGELY MADE OF PLATE GLASS AND SILVER MOUNTINGS. THE INSIDE WAS PEARL COLOURED SILK. IN THIS GLORIFIED BRIDAL-COACH MUMMY AND I SAT AND BEHAVED BEAUTIFULLY. IMPORTANT MEN IN TOP HATS EXPLAINED TO US THAT OWNING TO KING OSCAR'S DEATH ALL THE CEREMONIES OF THE NOBEL PRIZE-GIVING WOULD BE CUT DOWN. AT THIS NEWS I LOOKED PROPERLY GRAVE AND SAD BUT I WAS VERY GLAD TO ESCAPE FROM THE SPEECHES AND THE BANQUET. THEN I WAS TAKEN TO CALL ON THE HEAD OF THE SWEDISH ACADEMY AND THEN I WENT TO CALL ON THE BRITISH EMBASSY AND IN A LITTLE TIME I AM GOING TO BE TAKEN TO A MEETING WHERE A NOBEL PRIZE WILL BE GIVEN ME. IT MEANS A GOLD MEDAL AND A

PARCHMENT CERTIFICATE AND TO-MORROW THEY GIVE ME A LOT OF
MONEY. ...

EVER YOUR MOST AFFECTIONATE
PARENTS

-- Rudyard & Caroline to John and Elsie

all arms & legs & tangled sheets.

blood & skin where the nose used to be. it was snowing when i slept.
it is still snowing although a radio report tells me it will soon stop. the
window is iced over. hand & footprints. everything wanting in. the
edge of a broken star, one brilliant moment in glass. flickering.
hot/cold. time on my hands, the thread & needle & a million bad
songs in my head. he tells me *you must write a hundred bad songs for
the good ones to come.* instead Saturday morning conversations rise
to the ceiling, float for a moment so i get a good look at them. Daddy's
voice is louder than ever. walls crumble, phones ring endlessly, (no
one answers); neighbours gather at the door.

Daddy isn't angry. he stands in the corner by the bed patient & quiet.
hang in there honey he says, *hang in.*

June 11, 1908

THERE ISN'T ANY OTHER NEWS SO I SEND YOU A FEW SIMPLE RULES FOR LIFE IN LONDON.

1. WASH EARLY AND OFTEN WITH SOAP AND HOT WATER.
2. DO NOT ROLL ON THE GRASS OF THE PARKS. IT WILL COME OFF BLACK ON YOUR DRESS.
3. NEVER EAT PENNY BUNS, OYSTERS, PERIWINKLES OR PEPPERMINTS ON THE TOP OF A BUS. IT ANNOYS THE PASSENGERS.

– Rudyard to Josephine

it doesn't have to be visual. that is -- i don't need to see. hear it. fall down on my knees in love with a sentence not because it says something which makes sense, not because he tries to touch me, but because syntax frames, tones inhabit me *like a memory*.

"Great-great grandfather is born in Pictou county, Nova Scotia in 1821 and is the youngest of fourteen children. He is the son of Hector and Anne who come from Inverness-shire."

a bee stings my tongue.

for a long while its bright sound blinds me
syllables cling to the ceiling & form a scotch plaid yellow & black.

it doesn't need to be visual.

you don't need.

snow continues to fall a highland dance i learn every Saturday morning. pink slippers don't match the red kilt (so if look at my feet it's not because i don't know the steps). dance over swords. a flash of silver.

stars fall from her eyes.

practice the sound *Inverness-shire*, a foreign language. forget the intonation say something *ridiculous* remember agrippa the farmer's daughter never finishes her chores in my red Latin book. Daddy argues his case in Latin, the court room thick with dust. stories sleep

under books, hands, asleep on my pillow a dream frowns. lines in their faces become more pronounced. i know this dream. i know it.

it has character.

Ah, Louie, my little pupil, best and dearest. . .

It is so strange, dear, that this time last year I did not know you -- think, Louie, I did not love Georgie then. I can scarcely believe that I was ever so unhappy being now so blessed. I never dreamed that the circling of another year would alter all our destinies so much: now I love you all more than life, and Georgie in some intense way that can never be expressed in words. I do so look forward, dear, to the years afterwards, when we shall learn things together (you and Georgie and I, living on some round tower by the sea with Topsy) -- so much about art there is to learn and live for: I want to teach you so many things at once -- so much history that your sympathy may grow continually wider, and you may be able to feel and realize past generations of men just as you do the present. One cannot live a life manfully or truthfully without a very wide world of sympathy and love to exercise it in. So long, I know, as I had no heroes, but all times and generations of the past and present years were as one dead level of interest or indifference, I then knew nothing truly, nor enjoyed deeply, nor loved strongly, but now

that I have set aside my heroes for peculiar reverence --all such as have been highly blessed with Imagination, and have laboured nobly. Since then I have seen things more truly than ever before.

— Ned, 1860

4. BE KIND TO POLICEMEN. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU MAY BE TAKEN UP.

5. NEVER STOP A MOTOR BUS WITH YOUR FOOT. IT IS NOT A CROQUET BALL.

I write this watching the river and the land blue and purple and alive with a golden dust all over. How my eyes paint this scene over & over I could never get it this right, this touch of light. But it is the image in water which holds me here, a ghost out of my time. Out of step. I return to this bank in a delirium of joy, brightened, mocking my own dark gloom. How enchanting it is here! and in the water a mirrored counterpart, ruffled by a light west wind -- . Here knights and ladies laugh and dance, they spin each other around and around faster and faster I'm dizzy with delight, wild and mad I had to throw stones into the water to break the dream so much so did I wish to join them. The ecstasy, pain and intensity all at once I thought my forehead would burst from the strain of such emotions. I am frightened of indulging

now in dreams, so vivid that they seem recollections rather than imaginations. I cannot convince myself of living in, how to convince the self I am alive!

-- Ned, 1857

alive -- just because my legs ache moving to the other side of the bed. arms about the blanket toss it on again, off again, reach for a tissue, for a glass of water, for throat lozenges, for the cat, for my glasses, for the light on/off, reach for the pure reach of his bare hand.

hand on the piano keyboard black/white ivory beneath my fingers. i might play the hymns, *wake up spirits, wake up*. cats do yawn. brother goes back to bed shrugging his shoulders, he tells me, *i think you've finally lost it*.

the cover of the keyboard hasn't moved. perhaps in sleep i walk downstairs, flip open the lid, adjust the too low stool so my hands don't swoop down on the keyboard. in the shadow of a hand two blackbirds.

Hush little baby, don't say word
Papa's going to buy you a mocking bird.

angels don't speak. they know.

already. they know.

"Reverend Alexander has several parishes in Hopewell, Gairlock and Pugwash Nova Scotia. Later he will accept a call to Belfast, Prince Edward Island. before returning to Hopewell. . . . He drinks heavily, smokes and lives until he is 96 years old. He has two wives, Sarah and Matilda and four surviving children: Hector, Isaac, Mary Ann and James. James his youngest, moves across the prairies. They call this branch, the runaways. . . "

James runs all the way from Charlottetown to Prince Albert Saskatchewan and then back again to Nova Scotia. he keeps moving from one town to the next, every year, a pattern he sets for his descendants although he doesn't know it. doesn't know either how his portrait hangs in the courtroom in North Battleford, how his house is filled with children. two children no more than five play on the verandah. another swings from a wooden bench beneath a tree on the front lawn. *this glass is the original* the woman tells me after answering the front door. *worth a fortune.* instead of gold Judge James stares back at me in the reflection of glass. *so you've come to find me* he roars, *come in, come in!*

we stand & wade through rows of uneven graves & swat mosquitoes, listen to the roar of the Saskatchewan River beneath us & watch prairie dogs dash in & out of holes in the hillside. *the prettiest graveside you've ever seen, says Father. blood thirsty i add, greedy for something alive.*

we keep on looking, read tombstones as we pass, *that's an old one, look at this one. . .*

the Judge's grave is at the far end of the cemetery away from other stones. he buys several plots thinking his family might somehow come back together. how they might all come back to die in the prairie.

from the hotel window we listen to the roar of the wind in the valley. a sad wind, lonely. *nice place to visit, wouldn't want to die here.*

early pioneers of Canada return east to die. *they love the west, they say, but we wouldn't want to die here.*

1. Lord of the liv - ing, in Your name as - sem - bled We join
 2. Help us to trea - sure all that will re - mind us Of the e
 3. May we, when - ev - er tempt - ed to de - ject - ion, Strong - ly
 4. Lord, You can lift us from the grave of sor - row In - to, the

thank You for the life re - mem - bered. O God, have mer - cy
 rich - ment in the days be - hind us. Your love has set us
 cap - ture thoughts of res - ur - rec - tion. You gave us Je - sus
 pres - ence of Your own to - mor - row; Give to Your peo - ple

to Your chil - dren giv - ing Hope in be - liev - ing
 in the gen - er - a - tions, God of cre - a - tion
 to de - feat our sad - ness With East - er glad - ness
 for the day's af - fic - tion Your ben - e - dic - tion

a good Presbyterian hymn. learn to tell the difference between then &
 now. be serious & keep your mouth just so when i speak, just so --

here is the church. . .

Mother says i've Father's chin. if i have it, whose chin has he?

Judge James running through the graveyard, *my chin, my chin*. . . his hand over his chin. watch from the banks as it washes up on the shores of the Saskatchewan River. upside down, off the cheek, an oyster shell except it's white & very pink inside. without the pearl throw it back into the water. it drifts for a moment before it sinks in the sludge on the bottom. (i must remember to watch for it to get thinner, pointed at the end, whiter, darker, sprout some black underwater hairs. . .

a large white stone polished & smooth for thinking, resting my hand. . .)

deliciously, *delirious*

Georgie 1840 - 1920

in the end she writes his memoirs, categorizes his paintings, burns his letters. he remains her hero, mute as on her wedding night. she loves him more for it, for the power of love like her Father's and brothers', and grandfather's belief in God. o the holy spirit of love. take Cupid by the ear. blow a little tenderness her way.

Ava Maria...

My grandmother was devoted to music, though without special training, and used to amuse herself by finding pieces -- often most unexpected -- of classical music to fit poetry that she loved. She had a manuscript book of these songs, a few of which I remember. One was Rossetti's "Song of the Boswe" sung to a Schubert waltz (the one that became so hauntingly familiar in Lilac Time), and another, Keat's "Dear Nighted December" surprisingly and effectively mingled with the trio from the slow movement of Beethoven's Sixth Sonata. Schubert's songs she knew nearly by heart and both she and my grandfather were devoted to Gluck, largely I think through Guilia Ravogli whose Orfeo had ravished them both.

-- Angela Mackail

to be ravished by the spirit. the groan & moan of another cramp.
intestines give themselves up willy nilly, boo. Flu. Fluzzy, p - l - u - r
- t--

i'm not afraid. say anything in the dark & mean it.

*We too are in the same box and need conceal nothing, don't cast me
out -- scold me, but pardon me.*

– Topsy, dedication for Georgie ,1856

6. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TAKE PICTURES OFF THE WALL ..

I think I need spend no more time in this looking back, but how difficult it is when the past has a habit of reappearing. This morning a gentlemen arrived with a strangely framed portrait from Rossetti. Edward immediately found a spot for it in the parlour where he keeps it under lock and key. He says it is for his eyes only and at that, he returns to her, then to me, with an evasive answer on his inquisitive lips.

— Georgie to George Eliot, 1870

—

I thought the worst of it over. Edward swears to me that he is completely and wholeheartedly committed to me and to his work. Yet I do feel in his heart, it is not over, it cannot be over with her smile beneath the lock waiting for my hand to unleash her.

—

I think much of you and of your kindness to me during this past fortnight. What you have said to me in advice and warning shall not be lost.

— Georgie to George Eliot

—

My dear Mignon,

Your words of affection in the note you sent me are very dear to my remembrance. I like not only to be loved but also to be told that I am loved. Tell me I am loved and by you directly! I am not sure that you are of the same mind. But the realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave. This is the world of light and speech. . .

— George Eliot to Georgie

it may have stopped snowing. the sky taking a breath, in/out. a moment of calm. a photograph before it is taken.

lift a slat of the blind, peek through it as if lifting an eyelid before flipping it inside out just to see the other side where she stands smiling, her hand pressing towards the glass. she doesn't move. frozen in gesture, Michaelangelo in shades of grey December, Mary.

ask what it's like to be painted. the object of his affection, the centre of her pain, to jump into the river with two feet & never look back. to die for love over & over again. troubadours sing for Beatrice in unison. sing for the woman with the red hair, sing. sing, lift up your voice now, sing sing sing.

Ah, Mary. beautiful Mary my summer in a white sheet.

summer's dancing curves. her body: transparent, a pearl, opulent.
swim across the sky, under the lid of the eye, blue green summer & the
sisters gather on the grass. Georgie kneels at the head of her sisters &
reads from a black book:

*Never think you have fathomed the depth of the nature
of the dearest companion but believe in it always.
Remember that of many things it is impossible to speak so
that at last one can say, "I would tell you if i could."*

that's how he explains the dream.

*i'd tell you if i could. his hands talking. like a labyrinth & no control,
no stopping it.*



Ned and his granddaughter Angela

the steady pressure building, no exit sign, the groan of the consciousness stubborn as a two year old, *no way, no way!*

the wind speaking through the blind. i have trouble hearing. my head sinks in water until sometime after midnight the water subsides. hear its slow groan outside the window. *Allah, alleluia ah...* a hymn sticks in my head. wake up, close the lid on the piano, throw back the cover, stand up & peek through the window blind. he stands with his nose against the glass, *let me in God-damn it! he shouts.* his fists hit, the glass shakes, but doesn't break.

in the morning there are feathers on the window. grey & white. all that's left of an owl. swooping the night sky i am a little mouse hickory dickory. one bite. swallow.

no birds sing outside the window. the feeder beneath the white birch tree in the backyard. the birch tree bends to the grass suddenly old, sobs hysterically *open the window, you didn't open the window!* its arms flailing as it says this, a branch snaps. . . *you didn't open the window!*



"Summer"

by E.B.J.

1869

(model is Mary Zambuco)

no i didn't. no i haven't.

& still no birds sing.

the image of body in situation. the outline of action. pay no attention.
the innocence of the image. his posture, the pout of his lip when he
tells me, his name.

the image of the word, *careful*.

*"when we turn to look around us something is gone, going, something
has been left behind -- our youth. . ."*

she doesn't know there will be more paintings, Cupid's arrow shoots
far & away & forever polygamous. Georgie lives to be an old woman,
her blue-grey eyes flash *like a memory* in her grand-daughter's mind.

there will be no more mice pies from Alice. no more dares, or fire to
burn the hair of the one that bites -- John Wesley's golden lock smoke
up the chimney & Alice laughing. *awake awake sleeper thoust lie!*

Georgie doesn't know Phil will survive eight days of scarlet fever and gamble his father's money. how his debts will rise, how he will stop painting all together. she doesn't know she will be called "Lady", or that her daughter Margaret will marry a scholar who will write about Morris & wonder, just a little too much, about `certain' missing letters. Georgie doesn't know her grand-daughter will become a novelist or that her nephew Rudyard will win the Nobel prize for literature. all she doesn't know.

o sweet owl. i know your claws. a feather in the cap of my new black hat. the pleasant drift towards sleep where colours collide in happy chaos, a lullaby rock me to sleep gently, gently, *so*.

the eye beneath the owl's wing. white & grey time passes. she never ages. her body twists in air a sad dance of death, her hair a tangle of red floats beside her as if a hand in water strokes her head. . . as if even now she might find what she's looking for.

Rev. Maclean looks to learn. Latin & Greek & Gaelic to speak in their tongue. he hears the word of God, hears children cry as they study his lessons day after day the ship reeling in the wind over wave after wave & no break in sight. hears the ocean in the darkness, the rocks of the island laugh at his arrival. sometimes he thinks he hears his family praising him across the ocean as he passes his entrance exams at the University of Aberdeen. by 1852 he earns his MA in theology & is quickly ordained. he remains in Scotland longer than his colleagues & is determined to learn as much as possible. when he returns Rev. Alexander delivers his sermons in Gaelic for two hours every Sunday. they come from far away to hear him, keep coming and listen. he helps establish other parishes in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. he earns a doctorate in theology, gives lectures on religion, writes essays & books, lives a long long time, enjoys his whiskey, a good smoke, the company of women.

Ned too enjoys the company of women and forever dotes on their affections. he paints Georgie in his pictures, Mary, Margaret his daughter, he holds his grand-daughter Angela on his knee & swears it is the best of times, the worst of times.

Such horrible days -- no work possible, nor going out, nothing left but to gnash the teeth, if one is lucky enough to have them to gnash with. Phil in bed with cold, Georgie coughing herself to bits. Miss Angela Mackail the principal comfort at present. She is a haughty-looking person, with an expression mostly of indignant surprise. Mistress Angela's mind is also advancing rapidly; when asked where her papa is she points to the canary, and confounds the cat with her mamma when similarly questioned about her. This is comfortable and as it should be -- none of your Girton girls for me. What does a little rub me the wrong way is that the nurse will always speak of me as "paw grandpapa" as if I were the Kensington idiot, yet for the pleasure of being related to this charming woman I must not grumble at the price.

-- Ned

EBJ
EBJ

1865, Georgie

The infant Christopher has died. I'm not sure how to say it, since I cannot believe it in my heart this has come to pass. Overnight the world lost all colour, my complexion so pale itself Ned tells me I too am Death. Walk lightly, woman, walk with your chin up.

June 1866

Another child does not right the death of Christopher although it lessens it and tires me thoroughly so I have not the stamina to imagine my Christopher waking in the night. Margaret is lovely, really lovely. . .

August 1866

Cholera takes its toll in London. Allingham (formerly engaged to Alice), has kindly offered us a retreat with his family and friends in New Forest. We shall accept.

August 1866.

We take the rail to Winchester where we shall meet Mr. Morris. Ned should be glad to see him since I fear this domestic life, happy as it makes him, it quite exhausts him playing the proud Papa. Ned says she's soon to be a "stunner", and I hope for her sake, she is not!

I shall try to retain as `normal' a constitution as possible. Chin up, the world continues with or without me -- I choose most decisively with!



Trix(i)e Kipling (Fleming)

Diary 1871:

29 Feb.: Lunched with Edward the Lewises' to meet Tourgenieff. Edward to work on his paintings all afternoon.

19 March: went to Gabriel's with Edward.

14 April: Edward and I dined at Denmark Hall

28 April: Edward, Morris and I went to the Sloane Square Theatre.

11 May: to International Exhibition with Edward.

(I do not add each face is hers. I'll not say so public is my humiliation that Edward suffers too from his enchantment with the Greek. Worst of all Beatrice has her face. Is nothing sacred? In Phyllis and Demophon, I can hope only that Phyllis is indeed deserted by her lover and grows into an almond tree. I have not said that in the legend Phyllis kills herself for I wish no one dead. Still, there are rumours afloat although Morris does everything he can to protect me from it. . .)

Ned has had to withdraw Phyllis and Demophon and has henceforth quit the society. Critics were appalled by Demophon's nudity, but I believe it may be something more -- something which Ned feels so strongly about his only course is but to resign. . .

28 June: Phil at home because Morris & Charley Fulkner and Jennie and May came in the morning and pitched the Icelandic tent.

30 June: Morris to breakfast and fetched the children to go to Leyton. Edward & I joined the children at Leyton to dinner. I stayed all night.

1 July: Morris, Charley, Magnusson and Mr. Evans dined with us.

3 July: Morris dined or rather supped here on his return from taking Janey and ten children to Kebnscott.

July 5: Morris slept here.

July 6: Morris after breakfast said "good-bye" and started for Iceland.

Ned was aghast when upon leaving I leant over and kissed Topsy good-bye. After he'd left Ned told me never, never to call Morris that again! I shall call him what I like, in private!

—

1868, The Grange, Fulham

In private I have thanked the Lord a thousand times for sending us home to the Grange. It is a fine place and we shall all be happy here I think. Rudyard is here for the holidays too and Trix from Southsea. I have been reading Arabian Nights to the amusement of all except Mr. Browning who scowls and is most unpleasant to the children. Perhaps that is why there are so many scowls and such bad humour in his poetry.

Rudyard and Trix adore their 'Uncle Topsy'. And so we are happy, or least that is how we appear.

1871:

in private, the door shuts on Alice and John, Rudyard barely six years old and Trix, shy of three, begin life in their new home in Southsea. with best intentions, but Rudyard doesn't speak of the beatings, or the bullying he endures there. his head hurts, everything gets blurry & he can't hide the fact he can't see well much longer. half blind he begins to tell stories. the hero is a brave lad older, stronger, American. Mrs. Holloway says he's a bad boy to fib so she sews the banner *liar* on his back & sends him off to school. Trix tries her best to dislodge it, but Mrs. Holloway sews it with the intention Rudyard shall wear it *forever*. *You must learn to tell the truth* she says. truth as she sees it, blind.

for some time Rudyard endures the beatings before he breaks down sobbing, a mass of soft flesh on the ground. how slight he is, how silently he suffers without saying a word.

i would tell you if i could. . . later he tells Aunt Georgie he is frightened his one glimpse of paradise will fade -- holidays at the Grange.

"Words, what are they? One tear will say more than all of them."

1872:

Frightfully worried about Phil. He has a happy disposition together with a passionate temper. . . and it is wonderful how already I can make his little heart understand which of the two I like best to see. His father is most concerned about young Phil's seemingly fragile temperament and physicality so much so he has spoken to Topsy about sending Phil to Marlborough, Topsy's old school. But if Morris didn't care for it, I have little doubt Phil also will be unhappy there. The trouble is Phil thinks nothing matters. I think every little thing does.

– Georgie

—
1874:

My dear Phil,

When you are a man it will be much the same only backs of hairbrushes are not used, but things are more tormenting. . . I want you to know the world. . . that nothing afterwards may take you by surprise.

*your ever loving
Papa*



Ned and William Morris (Topsy) at the Grange

"1874 Rev. Maclean returns to Pictou County where he continues to supply the country churches until his death in 1916. But just now his house is noisy with the sound of children -- Hector, Isaac, Mary Ann and James are busy playing Father in the pulpit. Hector insists because he is eldest and already a young man he should play the Reverend. Mary Anne thinks it isn't fair, stomps her foot and is promptly told to hold her tongue and temper from her mother who isn't amused by all of this, but doesn't stop the game. Isaac would prefer to play doctor and proposes the minister fall from the pulpit in a swoon of ecstasy so he might set his leg. James at thirteen wants to be outdoors running on the beach with his friends wondering what's on the other side of ocean. He's glad it's not Sunday so he doesn't have to study the bible all day, recite prayers or feign an interest in his Father's long winded sermons. It's not that he's not grateful, it's just that sometimes he thinks it isn't fair being the minister's son on a Sunday. . ."

it isn't fair thinks Rudyard as he sits legs crossed in the House of Desolation he makes himself small in the corner of his room. Perhaps if he sits perfectly still he won't be noticed. Mama is coming from India for them, but *it is too late*.

it is not too late thinks Morris & sends Georgie twenty-five poems on love, death, grief and hope. what is it he wants to say? it is a beautiful book & he finishes it just in time for Georgie's thirtieth birthday.



"Winter"
by EBF
1870
(model is Georgie)

*. . . shall I count the hours
 That bring my friend to me with hungry eyes
 Watch him as his feet the staircase mount
 Then face to face we sit? a wall of lies
 Made hard by fear and faint anxieties
 Is drawn between us and he goes away
 And leaves me wishing it were yesterday. . .*

Just yesterday the walls of this house seemed to cry out, Edward, Edward! So sure I was of this I almost called to Phil to come and smell the oil on Papa come and count the shades of red. . . Then I know it to be true. I have heard Ned is still at work painting that woman. How her face is like the devil's to me, but Ned will not give her up seeing that she is desolate and he her King Arthur.

I try to keep my own council. I shall study German, Latin and music of course. I am learning to play the organ and I shall find someone to teach me French lessons shortly. Something good shall come of this. But oh on other days, I am sick of me and wish there was not such a thing. We lead such a quiet life here, and there are a great many hours in every day, I assure you -- more than usual. But they pass really not unpleasantly, and I cannot tell you how good rest and quiet are. Edward will come down if he can and so I shan't have been alone long.

– Georgie

1872:

with a fine sweeping gesture Temperance throws water on to the last fires of love. Mary feels worn out, worn through, her cupid smile breaking. by November she is very ill. Ned stays with her a fortnight holding her hand, cooing softly in her ear *I never meant, of course I did not mean. . .*

Mary the damsel in distress drowning in Little Venice. Browning is quite put out because it happens *too close to home* he says, *and I will not be involved*. Mary pounds on the doors of all Ned's friends, *let me in, let me in* howling like Cassandra. no one opens the door. poor Cassandra backwards is forwards is back again.

R
Ran for it

the secret to a long life: drink lots of whiskey, smoke when you like it, speak your mind or others will speak it for you. family recipe.

"Rev. Alexander lives to be 96 years old. His youngest James also lives hard, drinks, swears up and down the court, *there shall be justice yet!* James dreams of a life in the west. For a time he is content to cut and paste pictures of horses and cowboys and buffalo into his scrap book. Indians smile and offer him peace pipes. He hears the drums across the prairie, smells buffalo, the air thick with gun smoke.

He never mentions the name *Reil* or how he was there for the Rebellion practicing law in Prince Albert. But nothing is forever and just like his father he moves back to Nova Scotia and for a time settles down to a wife and a family. It isn't long before he returns to Prince Albert, what brings him back? "

Father isn't sure why we've come but he's sure glad he's here now. *it hasn't changed much really* , he says as he shows me his Father's office on Main Street. *where i was born, my grandmother's house, our tree house down there by the railway track. over there Diefenbaker's home on the other side of the road. nothing around it then but open fields of blowing snow.* we visit the school where he went as a child, sit in the car a long while watching the grass blow in the breeze in the school yard. *got strapped every day, he recalls, near every God damn day.*

wind outside the window, buzzing. Cassandra howls, Mary drowns on Browning's doorstep. you can hear her water & light. smell the canal too on her breath. yesterday. but tonight it's quiet. almost holy. lights all over the trees & bushes house after house down the street. new snow on the roof. i have not dreamt a single hymn in days. John Wesley's golden lock burns in my neighbour's chimney.

i have decided I can't possibly be a pre-Raphaelite "stunner." my hair isn't red or curly, my lips too thin. the impracticality of sitting. still for hours not breathing. don't look down at your shoes they don't match the dress. not for a moment. relief, allaluh.

when great-great grandfather dies stars flicker, eyes open one last time. in the dark women weep. *who will lead us now, who speaks to us?* a slow rhythm rises in the pulpit. clap hands. draw swords, point your toes like this. a whisper of bagpipes, light the third candle.

i wasn't paying attention. no, i wasn't.

"Judge James & his wife Katie have three children: Edith, Charles and Frederick, your grandfather. His eldest child is your Father."

Father also has three children. my brother the eldest. his hand around the wheel, closed. *you have to write a lot of bad songs to get the good ones out*, he says, in between lines [spell it if you can], callused commas, east/ west, north/ south, keep moving. you don't have to see.

a voice in the dark. sit cross-legged on the floor, try to make myself small. no one notices. no face at the window either. no red hair.

old songs buzz in my head. *But when we turned to look around us something was gone. . .*

the woman in the red dress is *not* Beatrice. her name is Mary. Mary Cassandra looks both ways before she jumps head first into a flickering star.

*She wavered, stopped and turned, methought her eyes,
 The deep grey windows of her heart, were wet;
 Methought they softened with a new regret
 To note in mine unspoken miseries,
 And as a prayer from out my heart did rise
 And struggled on my lips in shame's strong net,
 She stayed me, and cried "Brother"! Our lips met,
 Her dear hands drew me into paradise.*

your loving friend,

W.M.

he sees paradise, once. perhaps that is all we are allowed. there are fountains, peacocks run across the grass, a woman in the corner, *who is the woman in the corner?* i want to know more about the birds he hears singing. he wants to know who the woman is.

later she appears by his bed. i've never seen her. imagine she's a stunner.

1891 South London Art Gallery

"By canvassing mainly among their friends and acquaintances, the committee successfully raised ten thousand pounds to build the proposed gallery in Peckham Road.

There will be lectures, a free reading library and lecture room, for the free use of local residents."

There it is done with. Ned and Watts have both contributed some of their works. I shall add to this Marian's manuscripts I hope to acquire. Bless her, how I miss her kind words and encouragement.

I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.

-- W.M.

his beard tickles as it touches my cheek. his breath wild game and port.

grandmother keeps her port in the dining room cabinet beneath her Royal Dulton collection. she says, *drink slowly, take a little glass, there's more.* the decanter shines its body red & full. Father laughs, *down the hatch* he says, *to the Queen!*

it's hard to listen to an argument drinking port. i nod trying to look convincing. Morris taps me on the knee, *pay attention* he says.

January 1878
Exeter Hall

"Wake, London Lads, wake, bold and free!"

The house up in arms, mouths open, a chorus of men sing Morris' song.

It is such a blessing to hear Morris put truth into straightforward words as no one else does at present, for he is free from the usual forms of public speaking and in awe of no man. . .

Georgie doesn't hold any one in awe. not really, not any more. but when she was very young the sudden & closeness of the art world was holy. yes, holy. she sat in the presence of a new religion, still, calm, adored.

Their love of beauty did not seem to me unbalanced, but as if it included the whole world and raised the point from which they regarded everything. Human beauty especially was in a way sacred to them, I thought; and of this I received confirmation quite lately from a lady whom I had not seen for many years, and who had been in her youth, an object of wild enthusiasm and admiration to Rossetti,

Morris, and Edward. She and I sat and talked for an hour. "I never saw such men," she said; "it was being in a new world to be with them. I sat to them and was there with them, and they were different to everyone else I ever saw. And I was a holy thing to them -- I was a holy thing to them."

– Georgie

how she sits at the feet of the great ones.

Georgie, Georgie wake up.

Ned is once more disturbed by his visions. We grow tired of his morning grumbles, his accusations, "how unkind you were to me, how lovely, how so and so. . ." Last night's dream appears to have particularly unsettled him. He paces the floor, walks to the window, opens the curtains, looks both ways, sighs and resumes his pacing. He shall wear out the floor. He shall wear out our patience. We tried to ignore him after a time and gathered round the piano the children and I and Morris. But Ned would not join us, our songs could not stop his pacing either and so at last we gave in and asked him to explain.

We sat him down in his favorite arm chair by the fire and Morris poured him a fine glass of port which he refused. . . Without blinking he looked directly at me, through me, and told me how he'd seen into the sky of dreams. A shadowy girl, he cannot see her face, she asks him to listen to the sound of her heart. And so he obliges her and when he does she drops a vast stone into the well which booms and booms until its roar grows so unbearable he awakes. Perhaps it is best to tell and free ourselves of these spirited tales.

—Georgie

if she could see the future, she isn't telling. a bracket, a hand, a closed mouth. hers, Edith's, Judge James' daughter. [her name is Catherine Edith, she calls herself Edith]. she knows why the family runs. knows too the story about the missing wills of the Rev's & her father's.

i wouldn't tell you if i could she says, no, i wouldn't.

(she puts down her tea cup, decisively. -- is that the silver tea service you inherit Edith?) *that's it.* (say so.)

Edith travels to Scotland, wants to find her "family", teaches school in the west, moves to Toronto & dies there too. her mouth closed, her stories intact.

always return east to die (if you can help it).

arms fold across the chest. fingers spread like run away run away open the door:

*There is a young artist named Jones
Whose conduct no genius atones:
His behaviour in life
Is a pang to the wife
And a plague to the neighbours of Jones.*

o Georgie. i didn't mean to laugh. . . no.

dream you have something to tell me. your eyes close. hear violets bloom. spring. wait for the lilac mauve in your hair to blossom behind your ear. how i know it's you. your hand offering a double daisy.

make a chain of daisies. twist petals, *loved & loved not*. love a four-letter word like any other echoes flat. after a while. come at last. love beyond the grave.

1896:

Come soon. I want a sight of your dear face.

-- Morris

& so they hurry. Ned, Georgie & Jane watch, wait by his bedside. hope for the best.

He seemed better and said to me how delightful it was to feel all his ten fingers and ten toes again, and then just for one second I had the faintest glimmer of hope. But it passed directly and when I left Topsy at noon again after the outing, he was quite deathly with fatigue and exhaustion. Then the next morning at 11 Mr. Ellis came running over to say that a new hemorrhage had happened. He knew me when I went, but the next day he hardly did and not at all on Friday. But he died as easily as anyone possibly could, just as a baby who is satisfied drops off its mother's breast with a sigh -- literally gave up his breath as though he had quite done with it.

the last sign. the end of a sentence. a mouth opens.

it isn't the angel who sings.

who then, who?

1898

Ned returned home yesterday, came into the parlour and announced he didn't feel well. He headed directly up the stairs where he collapsed in bed and did not rise for dinner. I was concerned for he looked very pale. Then in the middle of the night with only a candle by the bedside he looked at me directly and looked and looked and would continue to have looked for a long while. What he saw I'll never know, but he smiled a little. I held his wrist in my hand and it had no pulse.

There shall be no flowers. There shall never be flowers. Our servant girl Annie brought round a lovely wreath of lilies of the valley and was about to put them in the hearse when I stopped to explain.

There shall be no flowers, there shall never be flowers. That was his wish.

-- Georgie

he brings a bouquet of lilies for my eighteenth birthday. first flowers in the house since Christmas. *he hates flowers, mother says, the house full of them for your grandfather's funeral and he's not cared for them since.*

how the flowers of death bloom. a bouquet of lilies beside his bed. tigers. quiet in the corner.

he will not go gently.

& the lilies?

don't touch them.

don't look.

1920

Georgie dies at the age of seventy-nine with her servant Annie by her bedside.

My dear Lady gave me sweet counsel and how and where to look for guidance. . . During the short illness my Lady talked a good deal of a man that was good and pious and did see him at times in her bedroom (who is that man standing there?). . . 3 o'clock in the afternoon the Dearest Lady breathed her last.

— Annie

the last thing he tells me.

his hand under my chin, strokes my hair. familiar gestures.

you don't *have* to see.

who is *that* standing
there?

too many nights reading. the proffering of the word, subjects of
expenditure: to spend the word, recover it, the limits of language,
where language itself (and who else would do so in its place?)
recognizes that it is without backing or guarantee, working without a
net.

*An old-fashioned coach drives up and stops near the house. Its door
opens and a rickety flight of steps is let down. An old woman with
white hair greets me and says, "they are all gone." We weep together.
My old self, my new.*

this is not my dream. someone else dreams it & gives it to me. Ned's sky, a night owl, cat's breath, something in the pipes, in the water. it soaks in under the skin.

the mind asleep. flowered sheets in spring bouquet -- over & under the body. bury me deep in flowers.

summer 1893

The Last Sleep of King Arthur. Ned in love. this time it's Helen. but wake up Ned, Helen returns to her husband. he invites Ned & Georgie for a weekend in the country. they accept but the host wonders why Ned has nothing to say to his wife. the joy of p - l - u - r - t - i - n - g .

of silence.

*now i lay me down to sleep
7 lovely ladies at my feet. . .*

1894

They have offered Ned a barony. He shall take it after all. Phil almost in tears, demanded his father accept the title. How we shall hold our heads high amongst our friends I don't know. Sir Edward Burne-Jones. . . Lady Burne-Jones. . .

take a deep breath now blow it out. . .

run away & run away & take your name with you. [hard to follow a family that changes its name on a whim. on a whim your first name *isn't* or your second name is *almost* your first. how it changes in the telling]. (tongues to tongue). her name is Catherine. (no K).

1866:

Aggie and Louis were married today in the parish church of Wolverhampton. Aggie to those highly correct people (Poynters) at Dover and Louie to Alfred Baldwin. Because Father is ill Fred took both brides down the aisle. Edith was bridesmaid and so also was Andrew sister's Fanny . How I wish to have been there but circumstances forbid it. Ned has been unusually silent as of late, I might even say gloomy. He excuses himself to paint and doesn't return to us until we call him for tea. He stares far off when he is present and I wonder where he has gone to.

– Georgie

i am two subjects at once: standing, run away fox. claw the throat of the mute bird beneath the skin. just.

1866:

my little pupil, best and dearest Louie,

I am unchangeable in my love for you, don't doubt it: nothing will ever divide us -- no chance nor circumstance will bring that about -- but a little gloomy sulkiness is excusable in me. I only had two wenches, and they are both gone, and I am very much past thirty and growing selfish as Georgie will tell you. Tell the other wench she's another's and doesn't care for me.

*in memory,
Ned*

He calls his new painting "Theophilus and the Angel." Louie and Aggie stare out at me from the faces of the two women in the picture. They sit before a frozen fountain. So at a loss is he that yesterday he asked where his playmates had gone, and looked at me long and hard. It broke my heart to watch. . . Ned has little regard for Andrew's work which he claims is too showy and without depth. It will be difficult when at last we all come together. . .

-- Georgie

July 1869
Bewdley

My dearest Aggie,

I can say boldly to the future, "Come on," for I am more in love with "my Baldwin" than ever, praise be blessed. . . I think over & above the great love I have for him, my having spent so much time lying down, all day looking for his return as the one event of the day makes me as dependent on him for my happiness as a child is on its Mother. This feeling grows so that my heart aches if he is long out of the room. . .

– Louie



Louie Macdonald (Baldwin) in middle age.

at the window mother sees something red from the corner of her eye
run across the yard & down the driveway. she has seen this before:
summer mornings & flowers hold their breath, the sun blinks a
reluctant eye, role over in bed, each day the same as the next. Father
grows more distant. the summer runs a fox across the road & into the
valley.

in September walk through the valley. dogs bark. police rope off a
section by the river. radios blare from police cars. later that evening
on the news we learn police have discovered a skull by the riverbed.
two days later still searching. dig for a body. how many bodies are
there? Mother sees bodies in the grass. a hand reaches from behind a
bulrush as we walk by on the path. a stray foot kicks from the branch
of a tree. a finger pointing its knuckle bending quicker than i can blink
balances carefully on a yellow maple leaf. an ear on the top of a thistle.
listen from the corner of my eye the open mouth of a young girl, our
feet on the path, big black boots. all day looking for his return, all night
wading through a dream, waiting.

cry for days, decades, generations. the last breath, the song in the lung.
naming him, Father.

Skull found in ravine believed to be woman's

Coroner doubts any connection to missing North York teen

By The Press

A human skull found in a ravine in North York yesterday was believed to be that of a missing 17-year-old girl, but a coroner said he doubts there is any connection. Police searching for the girl near Finch Ave. E. and Midland St. yesterday also found human bone fragments about 100 metres from the area. Some walkers found the skull Sunday. Although they are still trying to match the skull to DNA dental records, Dr. ... the investigating coroner ... he doesn't believe it belongs to

Sharon ... the 15-year-old North York girl ... DNA ... the 21-year-old Newmarket woman

... been missing since ... police said

Toronto Star
September 1999.

*** LOUISA: 1845 - 1925

no one to hear her cry or count stars from her window. Alfred works hard on the family business, but all the money in the world doesn't make him come home. the clocks keep track of the hours Stanley plays in the garden with his aunt Eddie. he likes to dig in the garden. his small hands fill with damp earth, his fingers bend & hold on to something in the dark. Mother is away again across the continent *this time we have a cure* she assures him, *I shall be cured.*

God keep me from undue sadness of memory, and, in mercy take away this deep depression from my mind.

Louie sits in a low chair before the folding doors of her bed chamber warming her hands. she thinks the door is a grate fire, rubs her palms together, stomps her feet. little black boots. the flames rise higher turn from orange to green to blue. the logs crackle. *so cold in here* she says, *so cold.* Aggie asks her what she is doing. Louie raises her head & replies, *I am going to a little child's funeral.*

"An unmarked grave. Your grandfather's younger step-brother, Lionel. No dates, heresy. Perhaps he was born in 1906 in Yorkton Saskatchewan, perhaps he died there as a child. Edith knows, but she isn't telling. Grace, her stepmother knows too, but she runs away to Vancouver with Courtney the youngest stepson after Judge James dies. The ocean beside her, the prairie behind her. Safe, safe at last. No one follows. No one

knows. Sometimes she still feels the sting of prairie winter wind.
Sometimes, only, sometimes.

have had a bad dream. I dreamt I was Antichrist. . .

Hannah leans over the kitchen table and boxes Louie's ears. Rev.
Macdonald clears his throat, *pass the potatoes* he mutters, changing the
subject. Louie bites her lip, *it's true, it's true*, she says.

as though the sun has gone out, the scene changes. Louie all arms and
legs swings on the high seat. the wind rushes through her legs, *give me a
damn good one* she yells. her playmates flee in horror, two little girls
screaming run away across the yard. the swing dies down barely a tick of
a metronome. she sits there still wondering when the wind stopped.
alone, she thinks she has lost her soul. *where do souls go* she wonders,
when they're still attached to the body?



Georgie painted by Poynter in 1869, for her friend Rosaline Howard.

snow turns to freezing rain. the driveway shiny & black. almost a mirror. stand still the body laughing winks in ice. still motion. arms & legs. a heart beat in an open hand.

before you know it, before you know anything it begins to rain. small drops, then larger ones. you think it is a tear, you are crying, but you can't cry that much that fast. the mirror distorts. a thin white line. slip through the crack, a closed mouth, thin lipped & no telling what happens next.

you can just hear the piano from outside the front door. just barely, a thump, the hint of boogie-woogie bounces off the driveway, almost cracks the ice. he only knows one song & makes it last a long while. the progression of chords like an itch. always the same spot. the left hand jumps one to four to five to four to one again. the mirror cracks, but the spell doesn't. like mercury, a round ball rolls about the drive. rolls up to my boot heel. an eye. a star blooms on concrete. you can't open it or see into the centre.

what happens when the soul is still attached to the body?



Aggie painted by her husband.

1867

My dearest Aggie,

I cannot say how glad I am to hear you have the new piano. I am delightfully looking forward to the delicious musical evenings we shall have this winter!!! I did not know how much our music had to do with my love of home, & now at a distance, though I feel I never understood that blessing, still I look forward to being in the midst of it all, as one of the cheeriest things in life. . . Last Sunday was what they call the ordinance Sunday, when they administer the Sacrament. I did not like it in the least, they take it sitting in their pews, not from the minister's hands, but from men who carry it round & the service of course impromptu, I did not like it.

I want the minister. I want it proper.

*your loving sister,
Louie*

*So here we go around, around,
And here we go around;
Here we go around, around,
touch the top of his head,
touch the ground!*



Lionel bows after the dance.

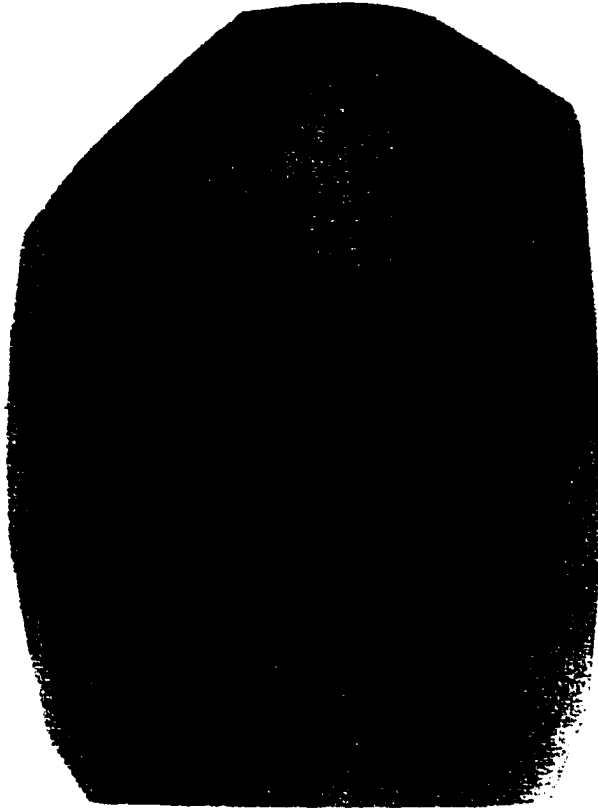
i do not like it when it rains, he says, & opens his hands to me, his palms black & full of earth. dirt under his fingernails too. in the rain i smell prairie, east is east & rain falling.

1869

my dearest sister Louie,

I am very glad you sung to the singing Master, and very much pleased with you for saying, "Carter, it nearly cost me my life." Alice and I laughed as heartily as you ever saw us, and you would have felt quite rewarded for any little extra exertion the joke cost you. I am pleased you tell Miss Wheeler all the family tales. It is fair to ask how many good anecdotes you have ruined in the telling, how many splendid riddles you have answered in the question? Don't be angry with me dear, for you must remember this was a peculiarly irritating failing of yours at home. . .

**your loving sister,
Aggie**



Aggie Macdonald (Lady Poynter)



1883:

*A House full, a hole full,
And you cannot gather a bowl full.*

nothing wrong, everything. Louie in the bedchamber rises to her chair. carry her into the garden. sit still. bring her a bouquet of spring flowers. bring her a butterfly, Stanley.

I am alone and I want to record great and special blessing I have just received at God's hands. After more than ten years of suffering and lameness. I am restored to health and activity. It was a recovery for which we had long ceased to hope, and I had left off praying for it, and instead I asked God to grant me patience to suffer and to grant that the affliction. Suddenly when I was in deep distress a door of hope was

Opened for us, and, by the blessing of God. I am recovered to a measure of strength that I never expected to enjoy again. O, God, thank Thee from my heart, and I beseech Thee that as Thou hast never failed me in sickness, suffering, or sorrow, so Thou wilt not now fail me in the more dangerous time of health and joy.

Amen.

she remembers the dream. the smoke & flames. Louie rubs her hands together. *it's so cold in here, so cold.*

cold rain on his shoulders. *hold out your hands Lionel, dirt doesn't wash away on its own. open your mouth Lionel, open your mouth. talk to me. like blowing bubbles. across the lawn small dreams in pink soap. wish for a miracle, pray for a dream in the name of Father, son, in the name of . . .*

Lionel opens his mouth. a mocking bird.

open your mouth again Lionel. an orange butterfly, a yellow leaf, a sheet of music. sing Lionel, but he starts to cry. (perhaps he's had enough) hand over mouth stifle his cries. prairie dries on my fingers wet in the rain. the dull shine of northern wind, a sky might swallow the hand that holds it.

Stanley holds onto Eddie's hand. he doesn't want to let go, doesn't want to go to school where there is no one to talk politics. he studies hard, wins eighteen books with the school's crest upon their leather, wins the Lower school exams, the eight division prize, the Lower School arithmetic prize. he isn't the average twelve year old.

1878: Abilities decidedly above the average. Will turn out a capital scholar.

1879: Has abilities far above the average. . . He has extraordinary abilities and will do everything that he attempts wonderfully well. . . He is most energetic and painstaking. . . will do exceedingly well after a time. . .

Lionel looks about twelve. it's hard to tell.

it's too cold for the bird i say. that's okay, he says, clapping his hands a whirl of dust. *it's okay.*

*"I would, if I could
If I couldn't how could I?
I couldn't, without I could,
could I?"*

mockingbird in the birch tree folds its wings two hands in prayer.
words smaller than fruit flies stick on the windshield of a parked car by
the curb as it speaks. bend the knuckle of your left thumb & scratch the
windshield. words beneath the nail. scratch, scratch. bury me deep in
small winged words.

i would sing it if i could, says Lionel.

i know.



"Powerless to utter itself, powerless to speak, love nonetheless wants to proclaim itself, to exclaim, to write itself everywhere: *all 'acqua, all'ombra, ai monti, ai fiori, all'erbe, ai fonti, all'eco, all'aria, ai venti*. . . And once the amorous subject creates or puts together any kind of work at all, he is seized with a desire to dedicate it."

1880:

Excellence in classics does not come so easy to him as in other subjects. Geography and History especially good. . . Very good indeed; but he does not do himself justice in examinations. I find him both more able and more advanced than his paper work had led me to expect. . . He is an exceeding good boy.

1881:

Excellent. He has good brains and is a capital worker. Mathematics: He always works hard. History and Scripture: An industrious, able boy, who thoroughly deserves commendation. . . He has made remarkable progress this school-time. He is one of the best scholars we have had here.

1880
Rottingdean

*This year,
Next year,
Sometimes,
Never.*

Not so. I will and shall run for the Parish Council. I have nine competitors -- all men. It doesn't matter. Women can think and understand in matters that men would pass over. In private life women are often the mortar between bricks -- they hold the house together -- men know this and expect it of them: and I hope before long it will seem just as natural to them to consult women at the Parish Council about things they understand as it is now to do so by the fireside. . .

-- Georgie

She is so busy -- she is rousing the village -- she is marching about -- she is going like a flame through the village.

Georgie, Georgie, don't give up.

flames in the reflection, eyes of a mockingbird.

January 1894
Wilden:

the blue ink of his letter. a shapeless shirt, roughly tacked, of sacking & ribbon. *I suddenly thought that perhaps one day you might have a Baby. I don't know why I thought it, but I did.*

May it have (if it should ever happen) health to wear it, strength to tear it. Keep this dark from your wife.

Stanley keeps the letter from Uncle Ned, a faded envelope. death of his son & he doesn't sleep. a bird outside the window doesn't sing to morning.

a joke that went wrong, no more than that, says Ned.

1896
Wilden:

"The years go by; when shall the end be?"

twelve more years Alfred, twelve.

1908
Wilden:

it ends now.

Alfred is dead. My soul too is gone.

now fly away, fly away, fly away home

1910:

To speak of the past -- I cannot. Mother, I must seem wanting in sympathy. It isn't really that, but to me father exists so much in the present and in the future. I mean that I feel his spirit so often with me -- at Paddington, in the City -- anywhere and everywhere -- and I have such a vivid expectation of meeting him again -- where or in what shape I know not -- and earning possibly a "Well done" from him. These things are not easy to explain; perhaps you will understand.

-- Stanley

Well done Lionel. Well done.

Lionel squints at the sheet of music i hold in front of him. he can't read it, but pretends to for my sake. he sings because he is cold & the mockingbird sleeps in his throat.

*There was an old woman called Nothing-
at-all,
Who lived in a dwelling exceedingly
small;
A man stretched his mouth to its utmost
extent, . . .*



stretch out my hands who takes them?
 (the reach of his bare hand. the air of December
 a white background fades to night)

*And down in one gulp house and old
 woman went*

an old woman sinks in my skin. hold the clock's tongue.
 mirror mirror, there are no stars to count in a brown city sky.

when does it end?

*"Could you, without you could,
 could ye?
 Could ye? Could ye?"*

*Could you, without you could,
 could ye?"*

*The English language is the richest in the world in monosyllables. Four words, of
 one syllable each, are words which contain salvation for this country and for the
 whole world, and they are "Faith", "Hope", "Love", and "Work".*

-- Stanley Baldwin

1880: *A visit to Aesculapius*

Aggie the angel who couldn't. wouldn't complain about a headache, nerve exhaustion. Aggie who says nothing to Edward's painted ladies. scores of them parade before a healer & give themselves up to imaginative illnesses. Edward calls it *realism*, she calls it *embarrassing*, the public says, *this time art has gone too far*.

season by season they play. *so many invitations* boasts Aggie to Louie, *I must refuse some, turn them down by the dozens*. when he isn't working Edward visits all over Europe. Aggie is tired, but he doesn't listen. tired of what he might say, *good morning . . .*

Aggie in the dark of her bedchamber. the curtains drawn & asleep she plunges her hands into a stream. the current is quick, she loses her balance & falls headfirst into

the stream. the water turns, turns, a spinning wheel. white thread twists over her eyes. if only she could remember what it is she tries so hard to forget.

Aggie 1843 - 1906

She looks very pretty. . . her temper and disposition both seem very sweet and she plays the piano like an angel. . .

the angel has fallen. she must be mad. hold your breath. after a while her tongue turns black. wooden & thick. it falls off in chunks if you move it.



Armistice Day, 1918:

It is curious to hear Big Ben strike again. The clocks were stopped striking years ago: and after lunch I heard bells pealing over Southwark way as I walked on the terrace. St. Margaret's was very full for a short service we had. Two hymns, a lesson, a few prayers. Te Deum, God save the King.

— Stanley Baldwin

the world turns black inside out. a gentle twist of hands. watch the feet, the click of a big toe, the arch of an ankle. *swear to God this is true, swear to God.* truth as we hear it. upside down.

we are connecting with a spirit, rap three times for yes, twice for no.

Lionel hangs upside down on his knees on a branch of the birch tree in the front yard. laughing. his black coat flaps in the wind. mocking bird, who's there?

(laughing)

what is your name?

Lionel.

how old are you Lionel?

twelve.

who is with you Lionel?

(laughter)

who's there?



Stanley Baldwin, aged 3.

i'd tell you if i could, i would, how could I?

slow riff of the blues. inside the house my brother sings. the moment
before snow falls. the sky too big to look at all at once.

call for Lionel, call for the red fox. where do words go when they're still
attached to the body?

say what you will. three raps for yes, four for no.

Georgie too knows them. *not the deep blues, -- no not blues, for they would
be heavenly, but black -- no reason on earth for it, but deep in melancholy, as
sometimes happens. she can't help it -- it comes down like a blight and lifts and
goes away one day all of itself, but while it lasts it is often nigh unto despair.*

she must take up her bonnet and leave. that would be proper. but there isn't time. *goodnight Mr. Leyland, goodnight.. there just isn't.*

Rudyard learns of his cousin Hugh's birth in *The World* & writes to his mother about *the unpardonable liberty* Aunt Aggie takes at a friend's house. *I wish her joy, can you imagine Uncle Edward's face?*

Edward replies, *how could you my dear, how could you?*

Feb., 1917

Dearest Mother,

You will get this on the morning of the 13th and I shall feel peculiarly conscious of father's presence that day because I shall be making my first appearance on the front bench in charge of a small group of supplementary estimates. He would have been so pleased and if there be any knowledge with him of what we do, the knowledge that our several ways we try to do our duty must be a joy to him. . .

-- Stanley

well done, well

not blue, not heavenly black. the city swallows black. the sky is brown.
there are no stars. not ever. take a picture.

where is Mother's fox?

*put your finger in Foxy's hole,
Foxy's not at home;
Foxy's at the back door,
Picking a marrow bone.*



this is realism.

take a picture.

love isn't blind, it's moving. Ned does love Georgie, Andrew too
loves Aggie, but can't tell her. open the eye wide. it isn't clear. the
image moving.

run faster & the picture slows. language in action, sweat drips between
my breasts. the heart a red light blinks three times.

1882

Hugh arrives fourteen years after Aggie's first son Ambrose. Aggie forgets now she wanted a daughter. *Hugh, she says, is a fascination, he is piercing sharp. He stands on my lap with his head in my neck and loves me with many uncouth sounds.*

1884:

my dear Louie,

I feel sad often when these days come round for all the happiness we can reckon up among us. . . and I could easily shed a tear to the memory of the children that we were. And our children know so little of us, and can never realize that we were as young, as they once. Well, let us stick close and closer to each other. . .

*love your sister,
Wags,*

P.S. you do remember calling me that, don't you Louie?

Father calls so loud you can hear him still. his voice at the bottom of the street. under the road they repaved this summer. stuck in bits of tar. still there.

what does it look like?

(laughter)

rap twice for no, three times for yes.

it looks almost exactly like voices in the house conversing. more weathered. sunburned? frost bitten? the wind's fingerprints all over. squeezing.

lines , my Father says, are signs of personality.

a whole lot of personality, living, this life unfolding.

1905

Aggie & Edward return from Turkey where Hugh has just been married. Aggie is tired, so tired. (go to bed Aggie & don't get up. get up for your last Christmas in London).

Note: in love stories a character is never tired.

there are no nets. in Father's garden butterflies blink back time. i can't enter. no entry. no *exact* location. no *here*. no crack to slip through. no tick talk. no mirror.

Jan. 1906:

To Sydney Cockerell:

She cannot get over her operation of two years hence. I wish you to know that I have a deep anxiety about my sister Lady Poynter. She seems fading out of life, yet the doctors can see no definite disease. . . For two months I've been in constant attendance on her prior to her return to London, and I have sometimes forgotten my own identity.

— Georgie

denial of separation. aching feet. look over your shoulder. jealousy, anxiety, possession, discourse, an appetite for words. the last hysterical blue note. lift the foot off the pedal. the note too long.

June 6, 1906

Georgie & Louie stand by her bedside when Aggie takes her last breath. three weeks in & out of sleep & then no more. . .

Louie is beside herself. *what to do, what do we do now?* she moans. Georgie tries her best to calm her, but she can do nothing for Edward who grieves as if in love for the first time. . .

it isn't the first time she's known death. but her first embrace. the woman by the bed who waits for us. a real stunner.

say anything afterwards. no one talks. back.

my brother's voice rising (in the dark say what you like) mock orange sticks to the window of the living room, a vine of memory. notes.

what happens when you knock four times, what then?

*put on your black leather slippers
 put on your mourning gloves
 i'm going to bury. . .*

bury the summer deep in September. bury the sun. the bloom of lilies.
 smell of the grass. an open window. you must open the window when
 someone dies. . .

June 7, 1906: *London Times*

. . . one of the remarkable daughters of the late
 Reverence G.B. Macdonald whose house some forty years
 ago was a well-known centre of an artistic and literary
 circle. . . Lady Poynter was very widely known in
 society and her loss will be sincerely
 mourned . . .

*way down in the sand
 well i'm going to 61 highway
 when i'm dead and gone.*

take your foot off the pedal.
 rap three times if
 you're listening.
 breathe.

i shall wear long black gloves & red shoes. fox at my throat & a
mockingbird hat sings to morning. morning clears her throat & answers,
this is as close as you get to heaven honey.

this close, no further.

for the clock to break. a breath of fresh air.

1884

Dear Louie,

*I often wonder how we five sisters can help each other at the end. I see nothing
at present that won't leave one lonely one, but I know there is a problem about a
boat and a fox and some geese which might help if I could remember it.*

Wags.

ε

there *is* a fox in the neighbourhood Mother assures me. today at the kitchen window she shows me a flock of geese. an arrow shoots over the city sky. two bare feet swing back & forth hickory dickory a straight line. hang onto the wings, Cupid, your golden ass shines in this light. (i promise not to look.) love moves where it's warm. the sky grey still, no afterglow.

city birds she says, shaking her head she returns to peeling potatoes. their purple skins fall silently into the sink. the knife busy talking, *bury you in silver* it says, two feet deep.

Bare is back without sister behind it.

above the coughing & wheezing, above notes of the piano, a telephone rings, a gramophone sticks in a groove, cats meow, people talk at the same time, bells ring, unskin the lowest note of an orange, a kettle sings. music on a comb, a bee buzzes through everything, an occasional harmony on four strings.

how I longed for you to hear it, whispers Aggie. I assure you I feel quite excited from the sheer absence of pain in my head.

close your eyes & remember the words. speak slowly. Georgie's sweet clear voice above the water. Alice on the surface a thin ring around the melody.

until our shirts touch the ground. ring around the melody. ring around the morning. ring in the stars, ring in the sun. *ring out the old, ring in the new*. Tennyson sneezes in the corner of the parlour. he wants to know if i've quoted him properly.

yes, i assure him, it's quite proper.

i shall wear long white gloves & red shoes. a fox at my throat sharpens its claws, stretches, curls up to sleep. beneath the throat's skin a goose nests in the feathers my mockingbird hat settles for winter in the city. Cupid calypsos in the Caribbean. bend down, bend low, beneath the bar his belly grazes the flame, just. just so, the flame green, blue, a tiger's lily, burn a thin line. Cupid doesn't feel anything.

stupid Cupid, never feels anything.

New Year's Eve, 1865

My dearest Georgie,

The year that is nearly gone has been the most important of my life: naturally. Twelve months ago I was settling my mind, or rather trying to with all kinds of worldly maxims as my guide: I was hardening myself, until the Autumn day that you came here. Then the current of my life was changed. I knew when I first saw you how great an influence you would soon have over me; I am ashamed to write it now, but I will tell you the truth. I fought against it; but my love would not listen to those deceits of the devil which I had harboured before I told my love to you; and the rest you know. . . What once to me was dark is gone; I remember well how short a time it is since I looked to the future with anything but hope; now all is bright and clear; I shall have you. . .

Ned

where is Lionel?

(the answer to the riddle is a boat).

by the lake. the ice glistens in this light miles of silver. one boat in the
harbour. a red light dances in the dark. almost the fringe of a flower.
take a picture. this is realism.

why does the woman spin and sing? the hum of the wheel round &
round. Aggie, why do you sleep?

*the lover who doesn't forget sometimes dies of excess, exhaustion, and tension of
memory. . .*

what is hidden must be seen.

(come out Lionel)
(come out Rev.)
(come out Judge.)

come out come out, double vision, strain the neck. look over my
shoulder, strain the ears, look for an object, sometimes a subject. how i
hesitate between now and then. . . morning & evening, east & west. sleep
&

take my right hand, "yes", my left , "no." the woman waiting by his bed takes both.

i shall wear a flower in my hat -- lily & mocking. i shall meet him on the other side.

the other side: off bounds. the language spoken, the body well behaved, in control, unmoving, stands still. hold out the voice, say it. how i would if i could. something is wrong. no entry.

there follows a long tunnel: my first *yes*, riddled by doubts, the rise & fall of feathers. the goose come home. Cupid's arrow in my arm. an off shore wind & the boat sails into the harbour. no light.

i have wanted words. exact. their direction, *here*. to recognize the smell; to say it *is* him, the blue in his eyes, the same, *his*.

wait for the last brush stroke, the blink of eyes. Aggie stops breathing. Louie is too sad to go on & her heart stops. Alice's hand reaches through the earth. Eddie's fever breaks. wait.

i wait it out & never get anywhere. rain turns to snow. the sky fades to grey. there are no stars in the city sky.

to believe the being I wait for is real. the breath of life, living. the
moment that lives on behind the eye. the iris growing.

I have no sense of proportions.

(a) twist (ed) [the] conscious.

not enough.

hammer in the pulpit.

sing louder.



Eddie Macdonald holding the pose.

for God's sake learn how to pray!

(I scarcely know what to pray for except the one petition "help Lord!" for help such as we need, and for submission such as He requires, is the constant cry of my troubled heart. . . . Sometimes I can scarcely keep from howling with misery, grief for the dead, sorrow for the living, perplexity as to what we should do. . .)

-- Hannah

believe in the Father.

rap three times (if you're listening).
wear gloves & a hat.
that's proper.

s/he can't give the story. because you can't give language. the gesture
of the dedication; the gift in the voice which expresses it, sing again.

sing in the silence, December. where the body moves up & down the
driveway calling. songs don't mean you can step a little closer to heaven.

he takes great-great grandfather's Bible from a box beside his chair. the
leather binding is in pieces, worn from years of use. it cracks when he
opens the cover as if after so long a silence the Reverend readies himself
for a long Gaelic sermon.

the hammer isn't a hammer, but my brother's boot under the kitchen
table kicks my shin.

don't touch, don't ever. . .

& i never.

touch its yellow words. lean across the table. the back of my right hand brushes its cover like a small cat.

The very words of the text which at first sight appear to deny, are based upon the fact that the nature of God and the nature of man are essentially alike. It declares that God's thoughts are not as man's, but the word "thought" would have no more meaning to me than the words "red" or "green" to a man born blind. We may know God by human analogies, that if we would learn what love and pity and forgiveness are in God's heart, we have only to look into our own, so that, even as regards that very characteristic of the divine nature of which the text treats, there is a sense in which we must not deny, but assert, that God's thoughts are as our thoughts, and God's ways as our ways. . .

God's heart in hand, red light in the harbour.

(red light red night:

answer: sailor's delight, a good day tomorrow).

someone drowning.

"It was his way to move. Fred, your grandfather, is a dentist in Prince Albert, but doesn't stay there too long. Soon after his children are born, he enlists in the army and somewhere on the streets of London finds your Father in a group of young soldiers."

he doesn't talk about it. not now, not ever. not *until we come home* he says, visiting the graves of his friends. *shot in the head, his guts blown out from a mine, died of complications to a wound in the abdomen, this one, this one. . . that. . .*

remember their names. how they talk & he listens. what they say. Father's grave in the corner where his grandmother lies. run back to the car. i've had enough too.

the body moving, not fast enough. keep running.

So, again, the repressing influence. . . a pressure silent, constant, all-pervading as that of the atmosphere enfolding us, blending us our every movement, penetrating our minute actions, yet of which, because of its very uniformity, we are all but unconscious. . . the real man, -- what we would be without its restraining force, -- seldom or never comes out. . . we cannot know the whole.

Eddie 1848 - 1937

Bombay, 1891

Alice & Trix are a good deal worn out nursing Edith incessantly. Her temperature is normal now, but she is terribly weak. Both doctor & nurse say they have never seen a case of fever like it, for fever so bad and so long continued generally leaves the patient with very little will even tho' the head be clear. But with Edith her constant cry is -- "Now give me something, I am sinking." And she has been able to take nourishment and stimulant enough for a man at work. So she hasn't lost flesh. . .

after dark Father sits in a chair in the living room by the window. there are no stars. the city sky is brown. he never says good-bye. some things are best left unsaid. a still body. a last breath. the rhythm changes.

the highest point. close to heaven. hold up your hand. you can't touch. words swarm a closed fist. wings on glass. flesh, golden bees, Cupid's ass.

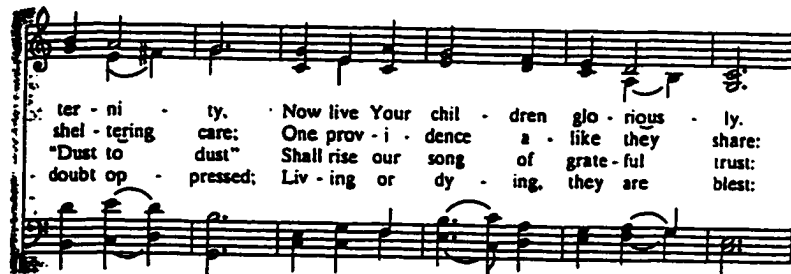
powerless to utter itself, powerless to speak proclaims itself heaven. there is no desire to dedicate it. love over & done with passes into another world like a ship no entry or exact location of absence.

like memory you can't repeat the story.

silence the angel.



1. O Lord of life, wher-e'er they be, Safe in Your own e -
 2. All souls You call, both here and there, Do rest with - in Your
 3. Your word is true, Your ways are just: A - bove the chant - ed
 4. Hap - py are they in God who rest. No more by fear and



ter - ni - ty. Now live Your chil - dren glo - rious - ly.
 shel - tering care: One prov - i - dence a - like they share:
 "Dust to dust" Shall rise our song of grate - ful trust:
 doubt op - pressed; Liv - ing or dy - ing, they are blest:



Al - le - lu - ial Al - le - lu - ial Al - le - lu - ial

Leaving Some Things Out

"Every woman is a rebel, and usually in a wild revolt against herself."

Oscar Wilde, "A Woman of No Importance"

i will not be one of your dancing girls.

i want to say this, just this without breaking. Without stopping or thinking. Without the voice in my heart claiming itself, the tick talk of Presbyterian upbringing, the suburbs & the 70s & middle class lessons of etiquette rising from my throat, the sparrow that sings of August afternoons in Toronto & sinks in a puddle of humidity.

i want to say this, here, now, while waiting for the tide, while waiting for the waiting to end; the dance that won't stop. How i move in the sand more crab than girl, rolling my trousers to the knee, daring, without permission, without lipstick or lace my high heels leave holes in the sand too small for reading. You lean into the sand your weight heavy on my shoulder searching for words, you pan gold. Words sift through your fingers; they mean nothing, lie still holding their breath. They wait for you to squint to see them. They are moving & tiny, ants on a picnic, foolishly laughing in the sand beneath you. Words i take without looking. Back. What you see in them, small triangles of light i hold in my hand everything i've ever read. Emeralds, rubies, sapphires under my eyelids, the moon is ivory & whole & beautiful. Everything i thought i

believed shines in the centre of my palm. The hand you take so readily;
hand on cock & tick-tock i'm talking in my sleep.

Dreaming of two women with long grey hair i wonder who they
are & what they mean to me. *[E]nclosed/ by a thought/* (Webb 67) they do
not speak. Their shoulders lean the same way, bodies bend to each other,
kiss in the silence of dream before a closed window my hands press
against glass, fingers stretch, an open eye: *star fish/ fish star* (Webb 63) two
stars *[fall] more golden/ going down* (Webb 75).

It might be Donne's world of sun & light, the centre of the room,
but i want Webb's plum blossom, her naked *[s][p][l]ace*, light from the
window. A fly buzzing on the ceiling.

i wanted someone to open the window without breaking glass.
Open isn't broken. The blinking wings of a fly, it moves quickly to the
light. *[T]here is a being that doesn't question itself. Rubbing /elbows in the sun,
bright as fly wings* (Marlatt 25). The eye larger than body. All at once
your body stirs; the dream takes itself where i can't. Women move
backwards. Rolling towards you i wait for something to be said. The
root of my tongue searches for the right place. My voice rising inside,
northern lights break, an explosion of stars.

*If i were to tell you that i had entered that place/that possibility i had always
imagined. If i tell you i am finding/fulfillment a lonely landscape/few dare to
travel/ finding/when i had expected to speak most eloquently/i am quiet*
(Warland 26).

i thought of telling you this, my mouth a black moth in this light, a shadow shadowing words. *[T]witch and determined/collapse on a yellow round* (Webb 81). My hand, here, i have a red pen & circle all the important parts: places, spaces, names i need to know. Maps to make my way back, home where i find it.

i needed to know the body of language, pure in my hand, whole.

i needed to know.

Everything.

you

me

she

what i am wanting

everything.

The shade of dark in this room. The morning tea rose blooms, the distance between the blinds, her fingers in mine. *Dinky pinky dinky pinky dinky pinky dinky pinky /once and try. Dinky pinky dinky pinky dinky pinky /lullaby. Once sleepy one once does not once need a lullaby* (Stein 240).

i am going to sleep i said.

It isn't fair. You roll away from me into the wall. The ocean under my pillow.

Go to sleep. Sleep now.

It isn't fair . & i'm not sure who says this.

Why do you ask?

i might tell you how queer it is to write this. Queer as feeling for the first time a difference, noticeably, an awareness of other. This time, my other, the same. i can't rationalize. There is no point to prove, no one to answer to. No one listening. i haven't listened & tonight watching her lips move as she speaks to me, i hear something different. My breath, uneven, hesitant. Maybe dreaming this, i pretend to be alive, my angel's joints cracking, static, a bad connection, *paces my steps and threatens /to take my head/between its hands* (Webb, *Vision Tree* 128). Moving towards her, if you can call it that, my hand in hers. In another life, another time i might have taken without thinking, my tongue in hers, i might have said, *[t]his way, that way/ I do not know /what to do: I /am of two minds.* (Sappho #69). My hand outstretched & open, answers. *[T]here's something i deeply recognize in what she says about "the difficulty of asserting one's own way of seeing"* (Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 25). How tempted i am to *concentrate on making 'sense' of what we are experiencing, to explain, to justify*

(Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 25). Reasons i want to say, *let me count them one by one on the tips of my fingers. Let me wear them like rings catch light when my hands move to trace the shape her face takes listening. As if i am blind & need touch to break through this dark. This space where i neither listen nor speak. [S]peak -- my tongue is broken;| a thin flame runs under my skin* (Sappho #39); *sky blue* it burns in all the wrong places.

Tongue tied, there are no markings on my hands, no ritual to perform, no blessings. i wait to tell you the presence of absence. To stand in the same spot, dust on my knee caps. i haven't bent. Stand up tall & straight, my shoulders round, an old woman, the weight of this ages me. The body speaks, creaks, bones rattle. Lean forward. Listen.

Hey , i said, i haven't the dancing legs of all your girls.

There is a ghost who holds my hand above the High Level Bridge. She holds it & in holding lets me fall. i have imagined this for a long while. Winter & spring & winter again. Falling to sleep in wind that swallows me who. . . before i reach water. The black snake that weaves its way through the river valley divides this city as it divides me. Two. Black & white, straight & queer, knowing & not knowing.

And this gets us caught up in patriarchal concepts of time, space, causality sometimes prevent us from exploring a deeper reality " (Scott in *Readings from the Labyrinth* 25).

On the way to water the wind whispers in the space where she holds my hand & glides my body forward:

Patriarch she said what is it I know what it is it is I/ know I know so that I know what it is I know so I know /so I know so I know what it is . Very slowly. I know/ what it is it is on the one side a to be her to be his to be their to be in an and to be I know what it is . . . (Stein 237).

What?

Perhaps it is the painting on the red wall of the bar i find myself in this evening. A woman reclines on a couch drinking a cup of coffee from a yellow mug. She is naked & beautiful and it's the colours, the angle she holds the cup in her hand, the curve of her fingers. It's the bottom of her feet, arches of a bridge i'll walk over tonight, somewhere i haven't been, a dark i've not seen.

She is everything i want; everything i want to be, to emulate, to touch.

i will never let you know

I will never

let you know

(Rich 15)

The smoke she blows across my face. Light another cigarette, the orange glow, the strange light in the sky before the tornado rips the roof. *I can't stop seeing like this/more and more I see like this everywhere* (Rich 16).

Everywhere. *An ordering of hunger, weather, death, desire/and the nearness of chaos* (Rich 17).

The nearness of chaos. Vanilla walls where tea roses bloom all night.

i could say i found her there in a cloud of smoke, in a bar noisy with music celebrating women. i could say i wasn't looking was looking at the same time, not knowing, knowing i was tired. Writing this, trying to write my way out of this labyrinth, the image of myself, lipstick red. Raw from pretending the story or the weight of the story & the telling of it straight all these years. Her hand on my thigh, cigarette in my mouth, & her voice in my head long after we've met. *Kat* she whispers, playing it over her tongue, a roar of water; a bridge i fall over, *red rover*.

How her skin covers me, dust on the prairie lifts a dream, unfolds a flower. My skin, hers. The fitting of & into each other. Walking on evening air on water. Christ, a dream, uncover my skin & she gazes at me with clear eyes open.

I couldn't blink, i haven't.

Tonight the body talks & i haven't been listening, i haven't

been.

i am thinking of her & her lover. There are cats on the couch. Women with drinks in their hands lean into each other, listen. i think of the conversation moving from cats, to cars, to what they'll do for Easter. i'm thinking this, this simple picture in my mind all the while he tells me how much he admires honesty. How he writes me in poems & celebrates my dance. Writes me all over the room, finds flesh in spaces i've never thought to look in: kitchen cupboards, the top shelf of the refrigerator, the vanity of the washroom, the top of the shower stall.

Fingerprints, like flowers keep blooming he says, long after the hand disappears.

i tell him i'm not a garden. Not contrary, but queer. How i long to be Mary in the garden, content, at peace. i plant my own flowers, wild ones, daisies & orchids, orange & pea blossom. Queen Anne's lace her head on my breast, soft. My tongue finds its roots, breaks the surface where a poppy bleeds in this picture perfect world of yours edges blur. *O you who love clear edges/more than anything watch the edges that blur* (Rich 111).

All day i sit in a small plastic chair watching cats in the garden, flies buzz about the window, spring arrives in the palm of my outstretched hand. The grass turns green before i finish a cup of coffee the morning newspaper reminds me of her eyebrows; a caterpillar crawls over the sidewalk, the colour of bees, the mug in her hand. i wait for the sting, for the sweetness of honey. Wait for the shape of her brow to change when

she's speaking. O when she's speaking. The rhythm of her voice, a dance
i haven't danced. Yet.

My lover takes my hand as we walk down Commercial Ave. past
the cafés, the shoe shine girl with hair the colour of pansies. Today she is
sky, far & distant. Distant as the sea feels to me, the strange movement of
water i see beneath my lids. The land moves, the wind a motion of waves.
Cars coast up & down the avenue. Lights change as we walk across the
street a white light guides us. He holds my hand, pulls me into him, my
feet & heels noisy on the sidewalk. Skid marks, stretch marks inch their
way up her hips on the other side of the sidewalk. A chalk hopscotch. I
jump from colour to colour one legged. I have no marker & land right
side up my hands stroking the cheek of a Pacific sky. It isn't mine. I don't
belong here.

i could walk over this feeling. Keep walking. West. Watch the sea disappear into my toes. My footprints disappear. Like you. All traces gone. The markings.

It never happened. i never happened.

It isn't, "isn't fair." (Webb, "Breaking," 46).

She says this /isn't her country, says we don't belong here. Where do I belong? Now, right now, I belong in the dark & dust. . . (Marlatt, *Our Lives* 28).

i must remember to wear sun glasses today. April's wind & the dust spreads over my body, in my eyes. Whyte Ave. isn't anymore. Nothing so simple as clarity. If i could find her.

i visit every shop i think she might like. Linger in the doorways of cafés, buy bagels & daisies. A cherub holding his cock pees water from a fountain between shops. It might be Cupid as he shoots the moon my heart deflates a purple balloon a young girl carries on a stick over her shoulder. The waves return. Dizzy, i sit on a bench & lick my first ice-cream of the season trying to ground myself. Plant my feet, here, *vanilla*. The smell of her skin. i might have thought *vanilla*. i might have been surprised, the kiss of a cat, my tongue finds her inside my self still talking.

She takes. My taking & i am more surprised than i've ever been. Surprised it takes so long to learn to listen. My body. Listening. Shakes dust that gathers. Shakes drops of water, panting. Wanting. Stepping lightly over fence posts, wishing i could see in the dark her golden eyes. *These things /are silent like me, that is, they cannot speak. Yet feel, what they /feel, what I, what each. . . only their sensing, dark. Swallowed up/ feet (no longer move) these, our not arms & feet simply, move toward each other, tentative, looking, for some you out of the absence /night is, everywhere. . .* (Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 28).

From the café window i watch the soft drift of steamed milk sink silently into my latté. Words i haven't said. Feelings slip, sink into a familiar warmth. Thoughts *repressed and /unuttered speech. . . to be speechless is the same thing as to be without logic, without mind* (Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 2). i am mindless today, without thoughts of her, my body vacant as the spring that refuses to come this year.

Thinking of writing her, of writing him to explain what i cannot say or think to say, wondering as i read the paintings on the wall, how each stroke means something different when the light changes. Wondering how *the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows* (Marlatt, *Reading from the Labyrinth* 12).

Her body.

&

Imagine what she will say as she speaks in a sea-shell. If it were she i take by the hand as i walk along English Bay. The wind blows us both in new directions. Smells of sea & mountain air. Flowers aren't afraid to blossom in February, the grass turns green without looking, without trying the sun warms our cheeks. There is no need to blush or hide behind words. Hands & fingers talk, & talking tells a story. i haven't listened. Inhabitant of her tongue, not as master, nor mistress, but in the *having is had, is held. . . what she is given to say in giving it away is given herself, on that double edge where she has always lived, between the already spoken and the unspeakable, sense and non-sense* (Marlatt, *Readings from the Labyrinth* 13).

When the edges blur i fall open. Not broken. Breaking.

I will not be one of your dancing girls.

I want to say this, just once, without breaking, just once whole & beautiful, just once.

End Notes

Introduction: just so leopard

page 1 -- "Leopard." The Random House Dictionary, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1987). Definition #4 has been creatively adapted to suit the content of this paper. Quotations from this source also occur on page 13.

page 6 -- In 1968 Dorothy Livesay published her collection of historical dramas she called "documentaries." Placing herself in the tradition of Pratt and Crawford whose long poems launched what would become almost a poetic trend of the 1970s and 1980s, (particularly with male authors), Livesay coins the term "documentary;" a term she applies to any long poetic work which is historical, dramatic and a political reflection of its time. By 1985, speaking at a conference on the long poem at York University, Livesay refines her definition of the long poem as a poem which is both documentary, historically accurate, vocally dramatic and with social political implications (127).

In his "Introduction" to The Collected Poems of Pratt, Frye argues Pratt, "has never followed or stated any particular "trend" in poetry, never learned or imposed any particular mannerism of expression" (xiv). In 1959, Milton Wilson suggested Pratt's poems were "discontinuous narratives" breaking all rules of convention. By 1960, Paul West spoke of this new form of poetry as a trend toward an attempt at the modern epic. For Livesay however, long poems weren't simply pretending to move towards epic or the anti-lyric.

Something new and exciting was happening in Canadian poetry -- a new genre all its own was struggling to be born. She would name it the "documentary poem."

"[I]t isn't, isn't fair" is a quotation from Webb's "Breaking," *The Vision Tree: Selected Poems*. (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1982) 46.

page 10 -- I am referring here to Sharon Thesen's book of poetry *Holding the Pose*. (Toronto: Coach House P, 1983). Its cover shows a woman having her picture taken. She has several poses, she has several selves.

page 12 -- Frye in "Approaching the Lyric," *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*. Ed. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker. (Ithaca: Cornell UP,) 1985, 31-37, also argues Canada is haunted by a lack of ghosts and in this way is similar to Birney's argument.

page 14 -- I am alluding to HD's long poem *Helen of Egypt*. (New York: Grove P, 1961).

page 16 -- Language is disruptive for dyslexics. It never works as you think it should and you have to work very hard to make it 'fit'. Squeeze words, spit them out. Seeds on the carpet. An orange peel in my hands. All that's left. Eat it. Swallow.

page 22-23 -- Shaywitz, Sally. "Dyslexia," *Scientific American* (November, 1996).

page 31 -- This is a selection from Priscilla and Otto Friedrich's *The Wishing Well in the Woods*. (New York: Lothrop, Lee and Sheppard, Co., 1961). Selections from this story also appear on pages 33, 34-35.

page 31 -- Edward Burne-Jones used his initials as his signature for his paintings and would change this several times during his career. "sustainingshadows" uses three of his more infamous signatures to suggest his need for recognition and his changing perception of self.

page 33 -- I am referring specifically to Lola Tostevin's poem "gyno-text" in *Gyno-Text*. (Toronto: Underwiche, 1983).

Section One: *the pure reach of your bare hand*

page 43 -- A version of this poem has been published in *Amethyst Review*. 7:1 (Summer 1999) 22-23. This poem also received the poem of the year award in the same journal.

page 73 & 74-75 -- *Edmonton Journal*. June 2, 1913.

Tending the Garden: Women and Writing:

A version of this essay has been published in *CAA Winner's Circle Seven*. Ed. Joanne Killeen. Toronto: MT P., 1999, 125-131.

This essay also received second prize for CAA's Winner's Circle Seven Essay Contest, 1999.

page 78 -- Hélène Cixous. "The Author in Truth," *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Harvard UP, 1991) 1960.

page 78 -- Gwendolyn MacEwen. "Fire Gardens," *The Shadow-Maker* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1969) 66.

page 78 -- Carolyn Smart. "December Garden," *The Way to Come*

- Home* (London: Brick Books, 1992) 66.
- page 78 -- Elizabeth Brewster. "Mary's Garden: A Gloss," *footnotes to the book of job* (Ottawa: Oberon P, 1995) 38-39.
- page 79 -- Cixous, 161.
- page 79 -- Cixous, 161.
- page 79 -- Cixous, 38.
- page 79 -- Cixous, 38-39.
- page 80 -- Cixous, 39.
- page 80 -- Anaïs Nin, Gunther Stunhlmann, ed. *The Journals of Anais Nin, 1944 - 1947. vol. 4.* (London: Quartet Books, 1979) 4:42.
- page 81 -- Cixous, "Tancredi Continues." 98.
- page 81 -- Cixous, 99-100.
- page 81 -- MacEwen, "The Red Bird You Wait For," 2.
- page 81 -- MacEwen, "The Shadow-Maker," 80.
- page 81 -- Margaret Atwood, "Waiting ." *Morning in the Burned House.* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995) 8.
- page 82 -- Cixous, "Coming to Writing," 55.
- page 83 -- Kristjana Gunnars, *The Rose Garden: Reading Marcel Proust.* (Red Deer: Red Deer College, 1996) 67.
- page 83 -- Cixous, "The Author in Truth," 151.

Section Two: *in the white of the night's eye*

The language of memory

A version of this essay has been published in *Grain*. 27:2 (Summer 1999) 102-112. This essay was also received third prize in *Grain's* Long Grain of Truth Creative Non-Fiction Contest.

page 101 -- P.K. Page, "Stories of Snow," *The Glass Air: Selected Poems* (Toronto, Oxford UP, 1985) 45.

page 103 -- "The Three Languages," *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (London: Piccolo Books, 1978) 29.

page 103 -- Arthur Schopenhauer, "The World as Idea," *The World's Great Thinkers*, Ed. Saxe Commins and Robert N. Linscott (New York: Random House, 1947) 445.

page 104 -- Jannie Edwards, "Letters about Listening," *The Possibilities of Thirst* (Edmonton: Rowan Books, 1997) 44.

page 105-106 -- Lori Miseck, "Even Far Away She is Here," *The Blue Not Seen* (Edmonton: Rowan Books, 1997) 29.

page 108 -- Page, "Stories of Snow," 39.

page 108 -- Miseck, "Outside Our Window," 58.

page 109 -- Barbara Mulcahy, "Raven Meditation," *The Man with the Dancing Monkey* (Toronto: Wolsak & Wynn, 1997) 66.

page 109 -- Edwards, "And Us Feasting," 59.

page 111 -- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice*

Found There (1872; New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1984) N .pag.

page 112 -- Mulcahy, "Raven Meditations," 69.

Section Three: *backwards, sideways, always*

page 119 -- *The Psalms*. Trans. Ronald Barany. Toronto: Psilam P,

1997. Psalm 4, 5.

page 120 -- Psalm 4, 5.

page 122 -- Psalm 19, "God's Light," 29.

page 123 -- Psalm 34, 56.

sustainingshadows

Many of these quotations have been creatively adapted by changes to the syntax, grammar, or manipulation of the content. Quotations of this sort are marked by the symbol ‡ before the citation. The sisters are referred to by their maiden surname, Macdonald.

page 137 -- "Great Prayer of Thanksgiving," *The Presbyterian Hymnal*,

(Westminister: John Knox P, 1999) 13.

page 138 -- Rev. Alexander Maclean, *The Story of the Kirk in Nova*

Scotia Pictou, (Pictou, Nova Scotia, The Pictou Advocate, 1911) 93.

page 140 -- Hannah Macdonald's version of Walter de la Mare's poem

"Come Hither," *The Macdonald Sisters* (London: Peter Davies, 1960)

58. Henceforth this book is referred to as *MS*.

- page 141 -- Hannah Macdonald's version of "Come Hither," *MS* 58.
- page 141-- Rev. James Macdonald letter to Georgie Macdonald 1819,
MS 6.
- page 142 -- Toru Takemitsu. *Quotation of Dream*. Deutsche
Gramophone, 1998. 453495-2.
- page 142 -- John and Charles Wesley. "A Collection of Forms of Prayer
for Every Day of the Week," *Selected Writings and Hymns*, ed.
Frank Whaling (New York: Paulist P, 1981) 78- 79. Henceforth
this book is referred to as *SWH*.
- page 142 -- John and Charles Wesley. "A Collection of Forms of Prayer
for Every Day of the Week," *SWH* 78 - 79.
- page 144 -- "Games," *Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book*, Ed. Iona and Peter
Opie (Oxford: Clarendon P. 1957) 8. Henceforth this book is
referred to as *ONRB*.
- page 144 -- "Games," *ONRB* 8.
- page 144 -- "Games," *ONRB* 8.
- page 144 -- Hannah Macdonald letter to Georgie Macdonald, March
1865, *MS* 206.
- page 145 -- "Ring Dances," *ONRB* 15.
- page 145 -- "Ring Dances," *ONRB* 15.
- page 146 -- Rev. Maclean. *Kirk* 36.
- page 147 -- Hannah Macdonald letter to Georgie Macdonald 1865,
VS, 62.

- page 148-- Rev. Maclean. *Kirk* 37.
- page 148 -- "Little Bird," *ONRB* 52.
- page 149 -- Rev. James Macdonald letter to Georgie Macdonald,
1832, *MS* 5.
- page 150 -- Hannah Macdonald letter to Georgie Macdonald 1865, *MS*
208.
- page 150 -- John and Charles Wesley, "Awakest thou that sleepest,"
SWH 79.
- page 151 -- Georgie Macdonald as recorded by Edith Macdonald in
"Family Oracle," *MS* 74-75.
- ‡page 152 -- Georgie Macdonald, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*,
vol. 1 (London: Macmillan Co. Ltd., 1904) 134, 141. This book
will be referred to a *MEB-J*.
- ‡page 152 -- "Ring around the Rosie," *ONRB* 15.
- page 154 -- John and Charles Wesley, "Awakest, thou that sleepest,"
SWH 86.
- page 155 -- John and Charles Wesley, "Awakest, thou that sleepest,"
SWH 86.
- page 156 -- Georgie Macdonald *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 230.
- page 156 -- Georgie Macdonald *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 230.
- page 158 -- Georgie Macdonald to John Ruskin, 1861, *MS* 201.
- page 158-- John and Charles Wesley, *SWH*, 386.
- page 158 -- Edward Burne-Jones to Margaret Burne-Jones, 1887, *MEB-J*,

vol. 2, 177 - 178.

page 159-- Alice Macdonald, 1861 in *Victorian Sisters*, by Ina Taylor
(Maryland: Adler & Adler, 1987) 66. Henceforth this book is
referred to as *VS*.

‡page 161 -- William Knight. *Six Lectures on Some Nineteenth
Century Artists*. (Chicago: Art Institute, 1907) 166.

‡page 162 -- Penelope Fitzgerald, *Burne-Jones: a Biography* (London:
Michael Joseph, 1975) 93.

page 162 -- Fitzgerald, 33.

‡page 163 -- Georgie Macdonald giving a description of Edward Burne-
Jones' garden at the Grange, 1868, *MEB-J* vol. 2: 7.

page 163 -- William Morris, "The Eyrbyggja Saga," *The Book of Verse*,
1870, *William Morris: His Life, Work, and Friends*, by Philip
Henderson (London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967) 116.

page 164 -- John Lockwood Kipling, 1866 to Edith Macdonald, *MS* 113.

page 165 -- Rudyard Kipling, "The Sea and the Hills," *Collected Verse*
(Toronto: Copp, Clark Co., Ltd. Publishers, 1912) 23.

page 165 -- Rudyard Kipling's childhood memory, *Something of Myself*
(London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1937) 1 - 2.

‡page 166 -- Rudyard Kipling's childhood memory, *Something of
Myself* 2.

page 166 -- Trix Kipling, *MS* 125.

page 169 -- Alice Macdonald, June 7, 1861, *VS* 55.

- page 170-- Rudyard Kipling letter to Margaret Mackail (Margaret Burne-Jones), 1927, *VS* 147.
- ‡page 173 -- Pasolini, *A Lover's Discourse*, by Roland Barthes, Trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) 79.
Henceforth this book is referred to as *LD*.
- page 173 -- Edward Burne-Jones to Rudyard Kipling, 1897, *Rudyard Kipling*. by Martin Fido (London: Hamlyn, 1974) 117.
- page 174 -- Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West," *Collected Verse* (Toronto: Copp & Co., 1912.) 136.
- page 174-- Rudyard Kipling, "Night-Song in the Jungle," *Jungle Book* (Toronto: Macmillan & Co., 1961) 3.
- page 176 -- Rudyard Kipling to his son John, Nov., 30, 1908, *O Beloved Kids*. 74.
- page 177 -- "The Good Boy," *ONRB* 105.
- page 178-179 -- Rudyard and Caroline Kipling to their children John and Elsie, Dec. 19, 1907, *O Beloved Kids* 54 - 55.
- page 180 -- Rudyard Kipling to his daughter Josephine, June 11, 1908, *O Beloved Kids* 62.
- ‡page 180 -- Jacques Lacan, *LD* 192.
- page 182-183 -- Edward Burne-Jones to Louie Macdonald, summer 1860, *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 143-144.
- page 183 -- Rudyard Kipling to his daughter Josephine, June 11, 1908, *O Beloved Kids* 62.

- ‡page 183-184 -- Edward Burne-Jones, 1855, *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 97-98.
- page 184 -- "Sing Lullaby," *ONRB* 18.
- page 189 -- Angela Mackail, "North End House," *Three Houses*
(London: Oxford UP, 1931) 102 - 103.
- page 190 -- William Morris' dedication to Georgie Macdonald in "The
Earthly Paradise Poems," *VS* 121.
- page 190 -- Rudyard Kipling to his daughter Josephine, June 11, 1908, *O*
Beloved Kids 62.
- ‡page 191 -- Georgie Macdonald to George Eliot, 1870, *VS* 119.
- page 191 -- Georgie Macdonald to George Eliot, August 2, 1869, *VS*
128.
- ‡page 192- George Eliot to Georgie Macdonald, May 11, 1875, *VS* 128.
- page 193-- Georgie Macdonald to S.C. Cockerell, August 20, 1907, *VS*
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- ‡page 197 -- Sigmund Freud. "The Wolfman," *LD* 193.
- ‡page 197-- Edward Burne-Jones, *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 286.
- page 200 -- Edward Burne-Jones, *MEB-J*, vol. 2, 213-214.
- page 203-204 -- Georgie Macdonald diary entries of 1871, *Pre-Raphaelite*
Sisterhood, by Jan Marsh (London: Quartet Books, 1985) 289.
- page 206 -- Schubert Lobder Tranen, *LD* 183.
- ‡page 206 -- Georgie Macdonald, *MS* 330, 333.
- ‡page 207 -- Edward Burne-Jones, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 332.
- page 211 -- William Morris, "Maturity," *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*

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‡page 211 -- Georgie Macdonald to Rosaline Howard, Feb. 24, 1869, VS

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page 215 -- Edward Burne-Jones, *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 286.

page 216 -- William Morris, Book of Verse, "Maturity," *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* 280.

page 216-217 -- A.W. Baldwin, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 345, 244.

page 217-- William Morris, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 244.

page 218 -- Georgie Macdonald to Rosaline Howard 1878, *Pre-*

Raphaelite Sisterhood, 340. Untitled by song (in italics) by

William Morris is also from in the same source.

page 218-219 -- Georgie Macdonald, *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 169.

‡page 219-220 -- Georgie Macdonald's account of dreams, *MEB-J*, vol. 2,
7.

page 221 -- Dante Rossetti's rhyme for Edward Burne-Jones, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 273.

‡page 222 -- Georgie Macdonald, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 348.

‡page 223 -- Georgie Macdonald, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 349.

page 224 -- Georgie Macdonald's servant girl Annie, 1920, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood*, 350 - 351.

‡page 225 -- Nietzsche, *LD* 154.

‡page 225 -- Georgie Macdonald describing the dream of Mrs. Jane Morris, *MEG-J*, vol. 2, 7.

page 229 -- Edward Burne-Jones to Louie Macdonald, *MEB-J*, vol. 1, 294.

page 239 -- Louie Macdonald, *MS* 71.

page 240 -- Aggie Macdonald, *MS* 70.

page 242 -- "Riddles," *ONRB* 151.

page 242-243 -- Louie Macdonald, *My Father: The True Story*, by A.W.

Baldwin (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955) 21.

page 244-- Grammar School Report Card for Stanley Baldwin, *My*

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page 245 -- "I Would if I Could," *ONRB* 135.

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page 247 -- "The wedding," *ONRB* 110.

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page 248-- Edward Burne-Jones to Stanley Baldwin, *My Father: The*

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‡page 250 -- Stanley Baldwin commenting on the death of his father to

his mother, *My Father: The True Story* 76.

page 250 -- "Nothing-at-all," *ONRB* 93.

page 251 -- "Nothing-at-all," *ONRB* 93.

page 251 -- "Could You," *ONRB* 136.

page 251 -- Stanley Baldwin, speech to the Upper House, *My Father:*

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- page 253-- Harry Macdonald describing his sister Aggie, *MS* 214.
- page 253 -- Stanley Baldwin, speech in the House of Commons,
Armistice Day, 1918, *My Father: The True Story* 89.
- ‡page 255 -- Georgie Macdonald, *MEB-J*, vol. 2, 167.
- page 256 -- Rudyard Kipling to his mother Alice, *MS* 176.
- page 256 -- Stanley Baldwin to his mother Alice, Feb. 1917, *My
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- page 257 -- "Deceptions & Marvels," *ONRB* 9.
- page 258 -- Aggie Macdonald, *MS* 176.
- page 258-- Aggie Macdonald, *MS* 177.
- ‡page 260-- Blanchot, *LD* 116.
- ‡page 260 -- Georgie Macdonald, *VS* 173.
- ‡page 261 -- Antoine Compagnon, *LD* 108.
- page 262-- Snooks Eaglin, "Death Valley Blues," *Country Boy Blues*.
Originally recorded by Big Boy Arthur, Archoolie, 1958.
- page 262 -- Aggie Macdonald's obituary in the *London Times*, June 7,
1906, *VS* 175.
- page 262 -- Snooks Eaglin, "Death Valley Blues," *Country Boy Blues*.
- page 264: Aggie Macdonald. This was probably a Pre-Raphaelite
expression she picked up from Edward Burne-Jones and his
artist friends. *MS* 179.
- page 265 -- Aggie Macdonald, *MS* 179.
- page 266-- Edward Burne-Jones' love letter to Georgie Macdonald, *MS*

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page 267 -- Werthur, *LD* 14. "the lover who doesn't forget. . ."

‡page 267 -- Balzac, *LD* 42. "come out come out. . ."

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page 268-- Nietzsche, *LD* 24. "there follows a long tunnel. . ."

page 269 -- Winnicott, *LD* 39. "to believe the being I want for is real."

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‡page 270 -- Plato, "Symposium," *LD* 77. "the gesture of the dedication. "

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- page 276 -- Daphne Marlatt, "Winter , moving," *Our Lives*.
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- page 276 -- Betsy Warland, "pilot light," *open is broken*. (Edmonton:
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