

Montreal Poems



Bird's Eye View of MONTREAL. Vue à vol d'oiseau de la Ville MONTREAL.



MONTREAL POEMS

504
SPRING/SUMMER 1974

And lo, as I slept
The wise one came
And he whispered into my sleep:
You must preserve! You must preserve!
And I rose and called to him:
Preserve what? Preserve what?
But I heard only the sound
 of a child crying in the night.
again the Master came and he whispered:
You must preserve! You must preserve!
And when I pursued him, calling: How? How?
All was silence save the sound
Of the beggars calling in the streets.
And again the Great One came
And again he commanded me
And when he departed
I heard the scream
Of a woman
And the sound of a body
As it struck the earth.
I took paper and pen
And I wrote: Ayee Ayee Ayee Ayee
 Duh Duh Duh Duh.
Beside it I drew the face
Of a woman
And a hand made into a weapon.
Then the Wise One came again
And he saw what I had set down
And he gave me his blessing:
For, Lo, he said,
You have made a poem.

CONTRIBUTORS

Handsome Lake

Richard Hull

Susan Hull

Kenneth

Keitha MacIntosh

Arno Mermelstein

Stephen Morrissey

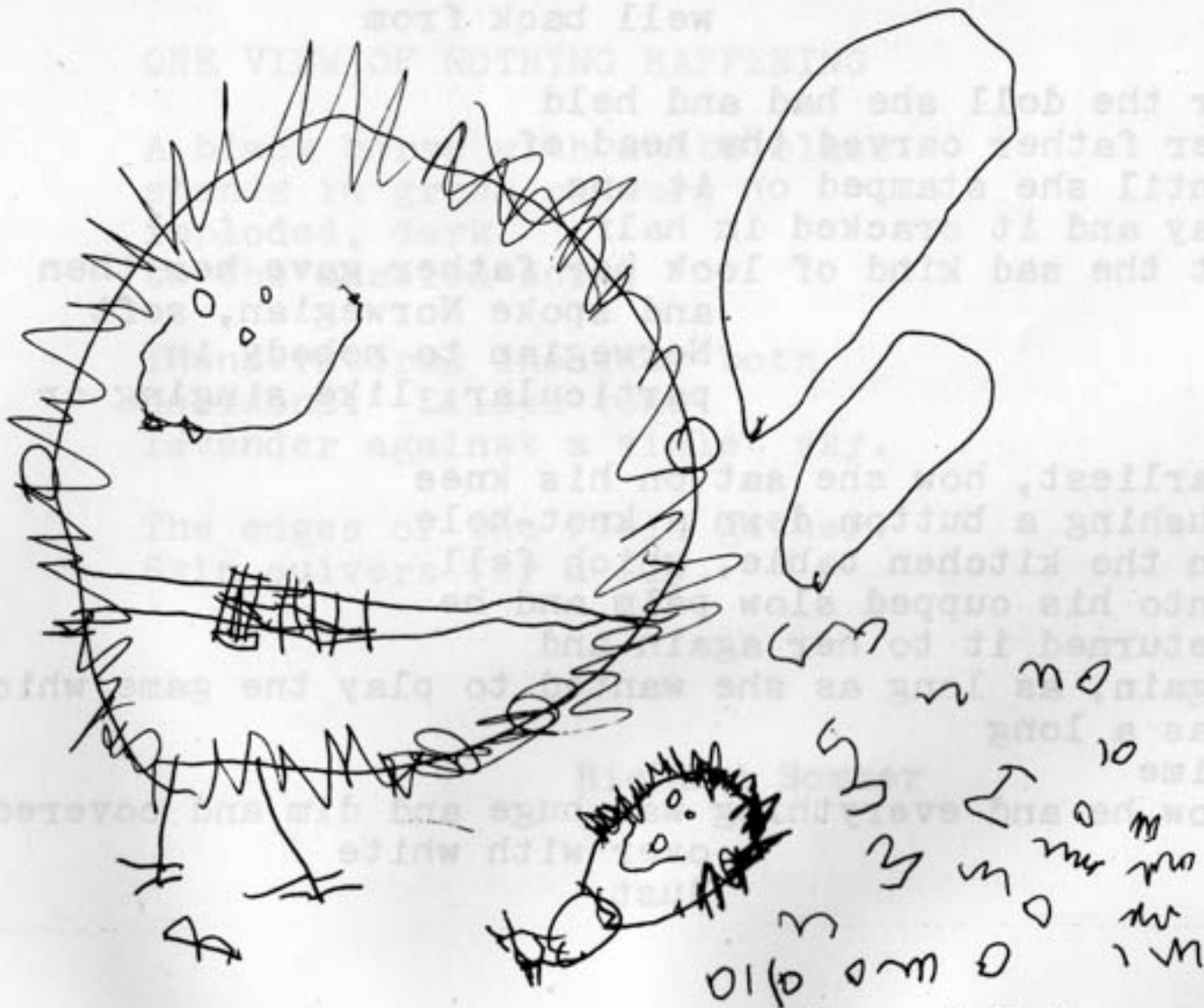
Jim Nucci

Bluebell S. Phillips

Richard Sommer

"The 'little magazine', striking at the roots of the prevailing culture, spends some of its energy attacking the rhetoric of that culture and the rest in exploring the untapped resources of language, and the potential of other media of communication in the hope of discovering new values and new idioms in which to express them."

Dr. Wynn Francis



"War elephant ghost."

Kenneth Hull.

GREAT GRANDFATHER

He didn't take much stock in God
though he wore a broad brimmed hat
black like the Quakers wore
and worked his own mill in Argyle
Wisconsin. It would have been
1879 when she was four, or
perhaps a year later
she was let come out across the muddy springtime yard
to see her father dress the stone
he and the hired man had lugged
off the stilled axle
and hear the clink of chisels
she was told to stand
well back from

or the doll she had and held
her father carved the head of
until she stamped on it one
day and it cracked in half
at the sad kind of look her father gave her then
and spoke Norwegian, soft
Norwegian to nobody in
particular, like singing or

earliest, how she sat on his knee
pushing a button down a knot-hole
in the kitchen table, which fell
into his cupped slow palm and he
returned it to her again and
again, as long as she wanted to play the game which
was a long
time
how he and everything was huge and dim and covered
over with white
dust

and the axle from the water was
a whole turning
maple tree

Richard Sommer

ONE VIEW OF NOTHING HAPPENING

A black horse with white blaze
stands in green pasture
imploded, dark
to the muscled core.

Thunderstorms shoulder both
horizons. Lilacs toss
lavender against a violet sky.

The edges of the field gather.
Skin quivers for a fly.

Richard Sommer

LETTER

This is the place and time
where this time and place is
happening. (Tautology

is the last art of all, so
don't laugh) and beginning
with my nakedness in the lake's

smoke of early hours, skin
filmed, wrapped in a watery
sunlight's first time,

I am here, I am really here.
Things are either grey stone
or green of the dark trees or

water the color of anything that
stabs through or lives in or is
the sky. Yesterday a mink

slithered along the dawn shore,
as brown as the coffee I held
and quick in the rich fish smell.

People here speak only French
(when they are people) so talk
is about weather and food and

speaking French. In other words
words don't get in the way
of poetry here. For now anyway.

I have not lost my sense of clocks.
There are whole days of a quiet
so profound I hear the tick

of my watch and even my heart
beat. There is a red squirrel
who shows up for his first handout

daily at eleven twenty-one.
There is the sun's clocking
of roots and leaf-mold and

dark treasures of forest floor.
Remarkably, I sleep at night
and live wholly in daylight, in

the beat of sun between trees.
I lie looking upward. A swallow
going somewhere high and blue.

A luminous belly of leaves.
My yellow boat knocks the shore,
a sound I no longer look up for

but hear in my sleep, even.
I haven't forgotten other sufferings,
but now I inhabit this place.

I don't particularly wish
that you were here. I hope
you are where you are.

I remain entirely your brother.

Richard Sommer

The conservative apocalyptic consciousness has a feeling of horror when faced by the ruin of things which present themselves as historical sanctities.

precisely then most so. And only by this thoughtlessness, this unrecognized "freedom of thought" or freedom from thought, are you your own. Only from it do you arrive at putting language to use as your property. MAY STERNER DER

But I want to have the thought, want to be full of thoughts, but at the same time I want to be thoughtless, and, instead of freedom of thought, I preserve for myself thoughtlessness...He who cannot get rid of a thought is so far

EWZIGES UND SEIN EIGENTUM
1848

act of reflection, right now, and you will find how you make progress only by becoming thoughtless and speechless every moment. You are not thoughtless and speechless merely in (say) sleep, but even in the deepest reflection; yes.

the bridge must be destroyed
the bridge must be destroyed
the bridge must be destroyed
the bridge must be destroyed
the bridge must be destroyed
the bridge must be destroyed

the bridge must be destroyed



the bird must be destroyed

Stephen Morrissey

political system

505

THE GRINGOS HAVE POISONED YOUR MIND, MARIA. YOU BELIEVE THEM - and as they promised to build the bridge, Rachel...

THE AMERICANS WILL HELP OUR PEOPLE BUILD THE BRIDGE, RACHEL! THEY DO AS THEY PROMISED!

Rachel Moore
Joe Kober
12/1

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~~therefore we two, the state and i, are e~~
~~therefore we two, the state and i, are e~~
~~therefore we two, the state and i are ene~~

and loyalties, and to choose fresh goals at will—transforming them as one sees fit. Only upon achieving this "end," can one claim to own oneself. For those who view other goals as intrinsically I si areqt guikuyt kw ereoB desirable are the possessions of, and controlled by, things external to

FRENCH TUTOR

She wanted me to learn french
& I learnt french
until I wept irregular verbs
& nouns ran down my cheeks
I said I can't do this anymore
& she slammed s'etre verbs into my face
I coughed up avoir & the pluperfect
 & whispered Bastille Bastille
then she crouched by the door & growled
 You aren't leaving here until you've memorized
 the conditional

I spat out Edith Piaf!
She bared her teeth and groaned Louis Seize
I knew I had her now
I jumped on the table and screamed RIMBAUD LIVES!
Sitting on a pile of Francais Pratique textbooks
with a loaf of french bread stuck up her left nostril
she wept DADA Dada dada
I jumped thur the window
 waving my black umbrella
 yelling 1789!

Stephen Morrissey

HEIRLOOM

My father left behind
a cupboard full of business letters
piles of old 78 records
Glen Miller Louis Armstrong
and Artie Shaw
and a lot of photos
I look at and imagine
I can touch
some part of this stranger
sometimes I see a futility
beneath the sad gestures
and half-hearted smiles
frozen forever in these pictures
but the sadness is my own
the emptiness is my own
these things he didn't mean to leave behind
that stranger — the memories of whom
I can count
on one hand

Stephen Morrissey



CAUGHNAWAGA

The spirit of the longhouse
Hides in the streets. Kateri's
Bones quiver
In their crypt.
Ghosts of King Louis's men shout
Obcenities against an unprotecting wall.
The Warriors march on the Little Rose of Jesus
The Virgin Mother
Rents to whites.
A phantom longhouse
spans the St. Laurent
Mohawks invade
the city
And dance
the dance
of hope
at Place des Arts.

Handsome Lake



CHRISTMAS IN PRISON 1973

Here

behind grey stone walls
their high massiveness
holding captive the burning heat of summer
the bitter cold of winter

I am sentenced

by society
to serve
those sentenced
by that same society

I of my will

they, not of theirs
but of the can'ts and won'ts
even they cannot understand
that drove them from their own:

we meet on Christmas Eve

they and I

I at the organ

to carol the Babe of Bethlehem

to send our wordless prayers

to one who said

'I was in prison

and ye visited me not'

knowing that he

who said those words

is in our midst

loving the sinner

though not the sin.



Leaving my friends
 behind their grey stone walls
I drive home at midnight
 between high-piled banks
 of December snow
the dark sky lighted
 with small tapirs
 and a dying moon,
the cold night wind
 an antagonist
 battering my windshield
 rushing the tiny crevices
 to chill my flesh;
but those in-prison prayers
 make a warm shawl about my shoulders
 for some of them
 were
 for me
 and mine.

Bluebell S. Phillips



THE LAST LESSON IN ENGLISH

Do you recall
THE LAST LESSON IN FRENCH?

I do
and the ecstasy of pain
the passion of indignation
that swept my whole being
the hot bright tears
that drowned my 'reader'
in the grade schoolroom
in Saskatchewan
for the dark-eyed French child
in Alcassee-Lorraine
learning for the last time
lessons in his own beloved tongue.

Strange is it not
that neither victor nor vanquished
learn compassion
from history or experience.

Must my children's children
read here
in our fair Quebec
THE LAST LESSON IN ENGLISH.

Shall I
be the only one to weep?

Bluebell S. Phillips

MARCH 6, 1973

March, today, is not parsimonious
with its sunshine;
there is the sweet taste

of springtime
on my tongue
and the gentle wind
like a silken garment
clothes my flesh;

but I know

I know

the sweetness on my tongue
is spurious,
a sugar substitute
bitter in its aftermath;
the garment I wear
is not cocoon silk
spun below a lovely branch
of apple-blossom
but man-made
in some windowless factory
on some ancient creaking street.

But

I take and love this day
its spurious sweetness
its gentle lying wind
because
something
of tenderness
is better than nothing
whatever bitter aftermath
there be.

Bluebell S. Phillips

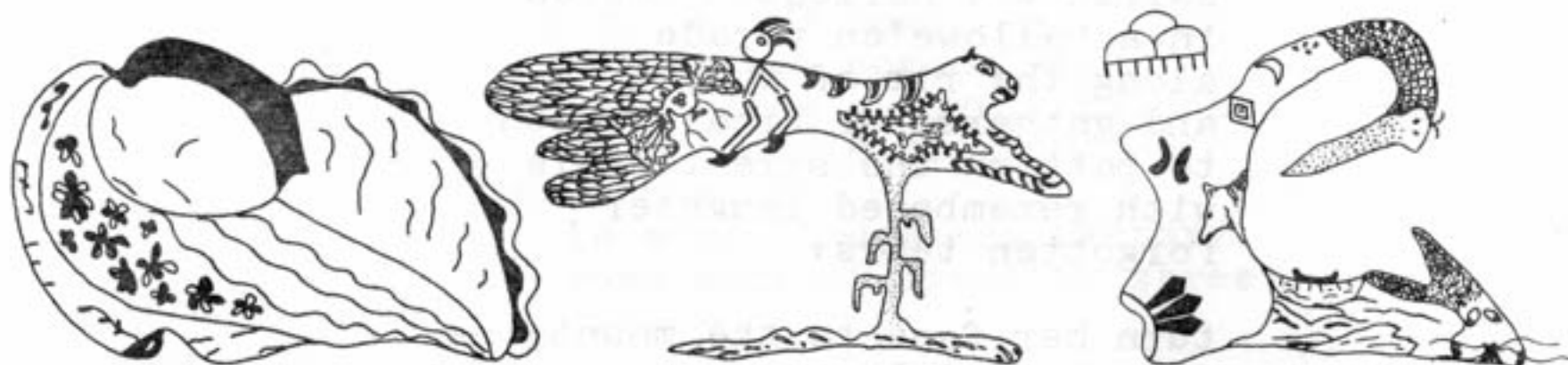
MOUNTAIN WOMAN

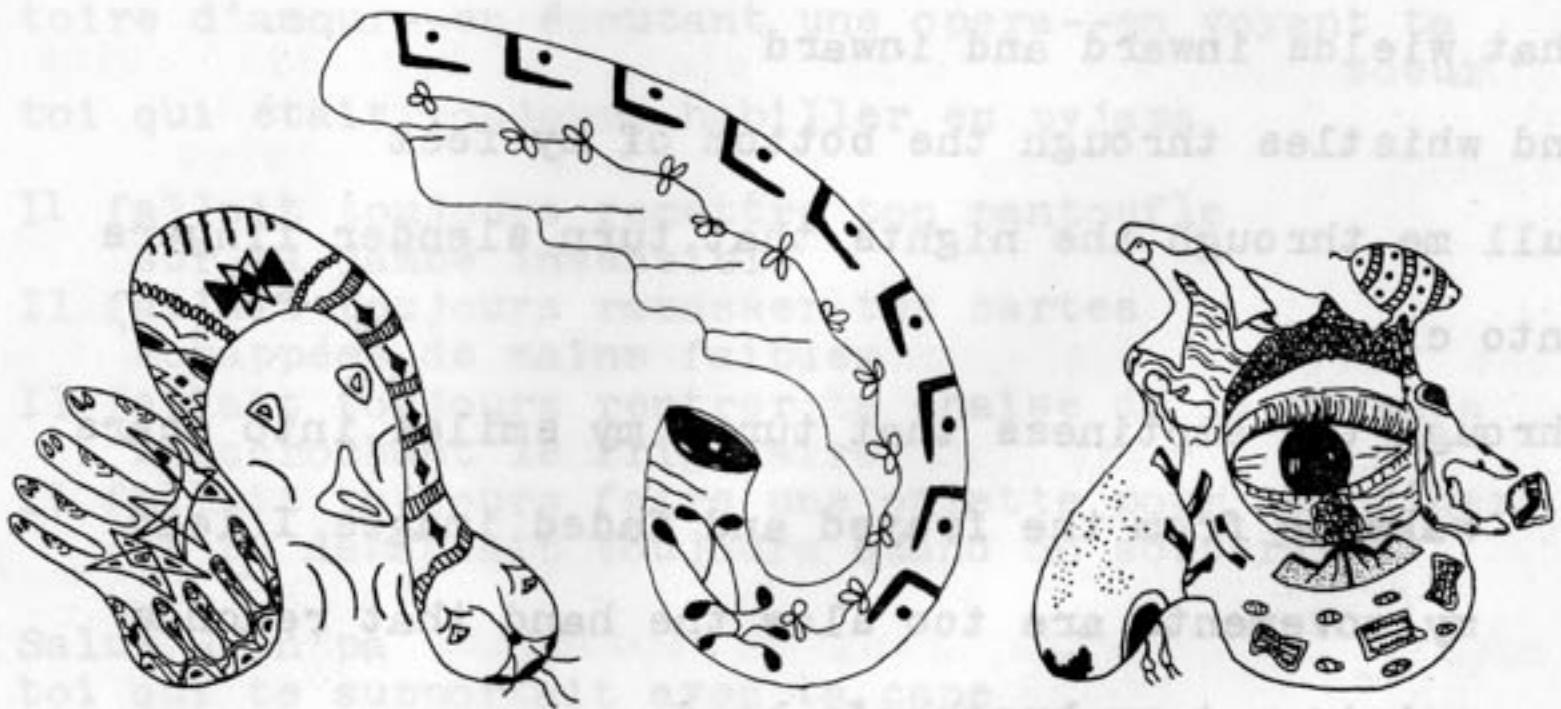
Turn her face
to the mountains
friends and lovers
all her days
from that first moment
when she was conceived
where yesterday's fallen leaves
made a pungent bed
in a goblin circle
of maple, elm and pine
at the mountain's foot
to this last moment
when a small October wind
swirls the harlequin leaves
in a hallowe'en parade
along the rim of sunset
and gathers her final breath
to pattern the silent hills
with remembered laughter
forgotten tears:

turn her face to the mountains
friends and lovers
all her days.

Bluebell S. Phillips

ORENDA





Susan Hull

Jim Hull

Pull me through Van Gogh's paintings
through the sunlight that slaps the floor
pull me through images of grief
through rattle of sweeping cloth and remorse
pull me through the silent sound of a spiral shell
that winds inward and inward
and whistles through the bottom of my feet
pull me through the nights that turn slender fingers
into claws
through the emptiness that turns my smiles into scars
wake me from the frayed and faded images I lead
my movements are too slow the hand that reaches
out to pat my brother's head
too slow do I walk to see the sun upon the snow
too slow is the sound of icicles slipping to the gallery
wood
I paint too low for the canvas—
the picture has slipped from its frame.

Jim Nucci

Salut Gran'pa
toi qui demandait toujours une cigarette
Salut Gran'pa
toi qui jouait jour et nuit ton jeux de patience
Salut Gran'pa
toi qui riait si fort on avait peur que tu t'étouffe
Salut Gran'pa
toi qui lisait tes prières après ton déjeuner de toast
toi qui dormait dans un lit d'hôpital
toi qui pleurait en écoutant le pape--en lisant un his-
toire d'amour--en écoutant une opera--en voyant ta
soeur
toi qui était toujours habiller en pyjama
Il fallait toujours remettre ton pantoufle
sur ta jambe insensible
Il fallait toujours ramasser tes cartes
échappées de mains faibles
Il fallait toujours rentrer ta chaise de la véranda
s'accrochant le frigidaire
Il fallait toujours faire une omlette pour ton dîner
et tu demandait toujours quand on souperait

Salut Gran'pa
toi qui te supportait avec ta cane
Salut Gran'pa
toi qui avait si froid les jours qu'on crevait
Salut Gran'pa
toi qui est mort la Veille du Jour de l'An
qui a donné ta dernière benediction
toi qui ne rit plus qui ne pleure plus
Salut Gran'pa
toi qu'on a enterré près du I.G.A. à Boucherville
Salut

Jim Nucci

pig

oink and squash and fat and swell

and slide gel out

squeal and sweech and sharp and cut

and slice meat wounds

rush and sizzle and heat and eat

oink oink oink oink oink oink oink oink

squeal sqwirm sqweeze sqwirt

cut purple fat moaning over

juicy red and glycerol groins

muscle transparent epidermis

sawed marrow

finger nail screech

lonely vision

tight fat buttocks

tense hysterical ankles

hemorrhaging vessels

spastic air

torn veins,arota,flimay open tubes

raw dense meat seperating

glide slide glide slide slip razor metal

bloody

eyes

gouged

brains

ripped

membrains

purple

tracts

dinner for two

Jim Nucci

OCTOBER IN QUÉBEC, 1973

For a moment I felt ...tremors of birth
For a moment a nation
For a moment the earth slipped and perhaps.....
 now stillborn
 disillusionment and frustration
 return to steal at the womb
Robbed and grieved we return
to the stale arms of power
There, harboured...in the void
doubt and defeat and still.....hope.

For a moment the uterus/fierce/contract
 choking of the thorax...farewell, farewell
 to the old
Then birth feigned in its habitual course
 lay waste to human thought
a nation was not born
it was mimicked.

Québec...your labor pains are
hysterical
like a mad woman you spread your legs
 plot the child's birth
 grip your skirts in terror in fear
in mania in catastrophe in love
 pull them up against your dusty skin
Your rage smell of beer and vomit
and Pepsi and Mae Wests and taverns
and wine make of rubbing alcohol.

You laugh and screech in knowledge
You scream in pain in love in hope.

Your child is stillborn, Québec
You know it
Your painted fractured fingernails
 know it
the limp elastics around your wrist
 know it
Your scars and pockmarks
 know it
the muscles in your chaped lips
 know it
Your worn and smelly hushpuppies
 know it
Your moth-ridden sweaters
 know it
You writhe in what would be a joyous
pain.....
....if only the pain were real
Québec...you are crazy...schizoid
unparalleled stance of your eyes
pierce....then roll...in obliteration
to obliterate.

Where is the child?— the nation?
You are frantic
the birth cannal is clear
You are swelled in anticipation
where is the Child?
.....You were never pregnant
 Québec
 You were only expecting.

Jim Nucci



(TAG! You're IT)

I give you
IT

for consideration
because I know

IT
defies ideation
and does not permit for encapsulation
nor will

IT
allow for engrandisation
and no one can say what

IT
cannot be
so I give you

IT
here, take

IT
it's free.



Arno Mermelstein

FISH MARKET GARAGE

...
with a hoist attached to its tail
suspended in the air
was what i first took as a truck
and now saw as a whale,
the tool racks were replete with hammers, sword-fish, saws
and the wrenches on the benches were alligator jaws,
now you may well imagine the smell of such a store
with scales and tails and oil and acil and gas pumps and
well, I left, as quickly as I came
faint from the brine and heat
my muffler still broken, trailing seaweed down the street...

Arno Mermelstein



FERTILITY

Poems drip from my mind
Like shotten navel cords
Hung on a gangrenous placenta.
My womb is still,
A stagnant pond,
Coffin-lidded with the scum of poor beginnings.

Lady Kill-Daylight and Mrs. Crump have
Carried their jewels to town
And brought back marcasites.
Icarus is floating in his underwear
And Lili St. Cyr's embracing Jean Drapeau.
They've crucified suffering
And hung up dandelions.
Hitler's inner voice
Is frothing at the mouth
And Miss LaChance, the future actress,
Lies naked on a beach at Santa Monica,
Mouth filled with sand,
Expectant eyes laid out to dry.
Calypso took an electric heater into the bath.
She got cold just the same.

Once a poet dwelt inside me,
A quiet man
Given to pondering.
What I needed, he said,
Was a good war.

Sweeney's among the nightingales,
Agameemnon's heart dripping onto his ankles,
His hairy hand beneath Diana's skirt.
Hollow men spew out napalm upon
The lower reaches of the Thames.
Tiresias, his nipples in his groin,
Proclaim his harvest.
Madame Sosostriis, Queen of Swords, hangs by her tongue,
Philomela weaves hers into a tapestry.

Womb of my mind,
Arachnoid tundra stretching to nothingness:
Can you not even
Bear a child
Who has no feet?

Keitha K. MacIntosh



PAGE

Words lie on paper
Brown-tinged
Like rotting fallen trees
With fungus on their chests,
Deep in the woods.
It's quiet there:
Tall mast-heads
Rising from soft needles,
Trimming their fresh
Green sails
In silence.

Words,
The printing dark and clear,
Incise the paper.
Scars on soft skin.
Those who read the marks--
And many can't--
Will know their meaning:

This land is not your own.
Give up your rights.
The kalunait's word is law.

The dark, clear marks
That make the words
Could be a pattern
For embroidery
On the skin of elk
Or caribou.
These bright, clear marks
That spell our doom.

Keitha K. MacIntosh

ATWATER & ST. JAMES

Torn grey sheets
On the horizon
Jerking in a paroxysm
Of unearned anguish
Spun of polluted breezes
From the east end
Stirring things up
Throwing dried sputum
In your face.

Inside a dwelling
Slated for demolition of course
A child sucks the falling plaster
And only the old are safe:
Pain-bloated pilgrims
Dozing in rocking chairs
Beside the heater
Minds gone voyaging
On that long trip
Back to their childhoods
When there were still birds
And milk was five cents a quart.

On the corner, the street gangs
Hang out
Awaiting their prey
Silent cats
With switch-blade claws.

Call out the army!
Bring on the police!
Form a Royal Commission!

Can't anyone stop a breeze?

Keitha K. MacIntosh



DROP OUT

Entangled
In mustardseed and bindweed
Sui
Cide
Will come
To me soon
Wearing a tasseled cap
Of velvet fur
Emptying me of all
My contradictions.
I'll dream

of midsummer's night
And sweet Bottom's
bottom.

Starvling will be
the ninth part of a man
Sewing pinked moonbeams
on Puck's impeded gauzy wings.

(Starvling will
not be
A starving people
Wiped out
By famine and diseased
Administrations.)

A poem or piece of bread?
Reign Oberon! I cannot choose.
Give me a leaf,
A feather,
And a dream unwaked.

Keitha K. MacIntosh

A RIVER POEM

The river tossed shadows
in my face
I, sitting cross-legged
like an Indian sphynx.
Sparks from the anvil
of the River God
Fly upward and are lost.

The river stench
 molds itself round me.
I yearn to suck in quenching draughts:
The river taunts
 and gushes diarrhes on the ice-forged
 rock
And Glooskap, cozy in his rocking chair,
 giggles at my vulnerability
And throws handfuls of cleansing ashes
 In my eyes.

Keitha K. MacIntosh

GENDRON REPORT

THEY THEY THEY THEY
Will experience Will experience experience

AN AWAKENING

AN AWAKENING

AN AWAKENING

theytheytheytheytheytheytheytheytheytheythey

THEY

WILL

EXPERIENCE

AN AWAKENING

They will experience a bru talawa

a bru talawak

A bru talawak

talawak

awak

They

will

experience

a brutal a brutal a brutal

BRUTAL BRUTAL BRUTAL BRUTAL BRUTAL BRUTAL BRUTAL

kening kening kening kening kening

THEY WILL EXPERIENCE

A BRUTAL AWAKENING

AWAKENING KENING NING WAKENING WAKEN KEN WAKE

they experience

they will

experience

a brutal

wake

A book I lent you
And my heart.
The book you kept
My heart you hung upon a tree.

Keitha K. MacIntosh

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