

poetry in transit



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from *Untitled*

The time to hear animals is before a rain,
before the winds that bring it in, when
the wire is dumb, the cottonwoods grumble
and the spruce whistles its gliding pitch.
When the morning sky is clear and the air
is filled with sounds travelling far and wide,
periodic waves of sound spread out over
the land and do not rise above it, but roll
out over the hills and hollows. Often the
Blackwater is nearly silent and all things
rock to sleep in the pervasive lull. The
wave front of my boat travelling through it
slips fastest when the sun is first on the water,
and I am carried along by the weather
as I surf the gathering swells and sinks.

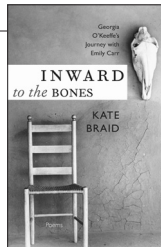
— Ken Belford

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Emily found the perfect rock.
When she set it down
and wasn't looking

I took it
of course.
Later she said I stole it but
I hadn't stolen it at all.
It was mine.

Emily says I am even more difficult
to get along with than she is.
That is what makes us friends.
She says she will not be so nice
when we go to British Columbia.
There, everything belongs to her.

— Kate Braid

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Pruning the Apple Tree

My brother in his coveralls,
pruning shears in hand, says, Think of this as art.
He starts removing all the winter kill,
the new green suckers shooting up the trunk,
and with his wide hands on the branches
says, Now feel the shape. Imagine it.
He fingers the end buds.
Here's the place, and here,
and while I watch him it makes sense —
how he leaves the biased cuts
like tiny points of orphaned light,
white words, facing out.

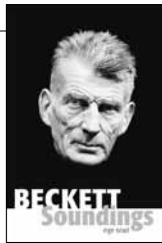
— Karen Enns

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*from Incoherent
State*

There is something about order
about equations and symmetry
that appeals and consoles
if you are horribly alone,
like a heaven-sent ladder
when you've fallen down a hole,
even if you cannot reach it
just counting the rungs
could save your sanity.

— Inge Israel

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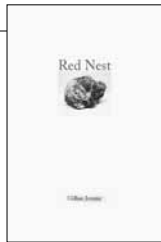
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from Red

Thou art happiest is red
Red music of lies and phantoms
In the red twilight of a quiet house
Stars nailed to an evening sky
Red ramp of dreams
Beyond the profundities of water
Red nest of stars
A nest is a lamp lit with red
A bat flapped from an old eyelid
Into pools of red earth Yes
Even the brain of the pomegranate—

— Gillian Jerome

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The Secret Signature of Things by Eve Joseph,
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Crow I have no song.
Think consonants—
hard beads
at the back of my throat.
Think black fan
snapped open.
It was raven
who stole the sun,
not me.
Think Hasidim,
barefoot
on a sandy beach.

— Eve Joseph

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Good Company

Sky ashen, cove silent, indoors dark as a cave:
pull a sleeping bag outside for the afternoon.
Don't raise your eyes to the sky, don't feel the grey in your pores,
just listen.
First, the creek murmuring.
Second, a gull calling.
And the sounds come tumbling: flycatcher whistling,
grouse drumming, distant robin singing,
flicker hammering, silent pause waiting;
two seals breathing. Is this place so crowded?
You had assumed you were alone. A raven croaks far away;
something splashes close by.
All around you, companionable:
soundless spiders easy in their webs.

— Christine Lowther

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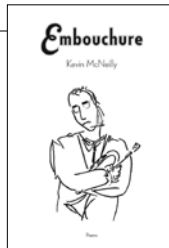


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Embouchure

You get as good lip service as you give.
Chops will ever out the fake: the put-on
line never cut grace notes from a sloppy
wad of clams. Trued up, a well-flubbed phrase ought
to betray nothing more than lacquered horn,
the schwa blat of hand-polished, open brass.
Style takes care of its own; chops make the rep.
An off mouthpiece can cut you like shrapnel.
Know the hard limits of your instrument,
and work its righteous edges. Be the pro.
Then come the call, let rip a proper lick.
Commit.

— Kevin McNeilly

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from **Witness**

Through the filter of winter trees
light spins our lives across the bed. At last
the children sleep in rooms they call
their own. I have learned to keep close
what is necessary, witness
the regularities of your breath, move
from room to room, study
shoulders rising, blanket falling,
proof of a nearly
perceptible breath, each
moon-struck child my gift
that says I am home.

— Pamela Porter

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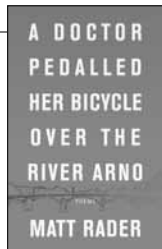
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"K'ómoks, Vancouver Island", from
"Reservations" by Matt Rader reprinted with
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Over the River Arno* by Matt Rader,
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K'ómoks, Vancouver Island

We'd miss it if we could, that quarter-hour
Drive to the next town west for groceries
Or theatre, a restaurant dinner, la carte du jour
Of needs and entertainments we'd disease
Ourselves with until compelled to travel.
When we did make the trip we made it quick,
Cursing the slow native cruise of traffic
We navigated in search of the new and novel
Beyond our village. Whatever reservations
We harboured we harboured in our cars
As we toured seaside and Reservation,
And chose to keep our thoughts ours
On local décor, jalopies, the giant whale maw
Big House door. Out of respect, of course. And awe.

— Matt Rader

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Northern BC Women* edited by Debbie Keahey,
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Bolt

I hadn't been on a horse for twenty-on years. Instead, I'd bucked boys off me on the bench seats of pickups, dropped out of high school, shucked off jobs like bad outfits, backpacked bug sprays, journals, thin clothes and thick sweaters from country to country, came back with cheap silver and film canisters of sand. Eventually, I eased into the ride, memorized postal codes, married a man because I wanted to smell the back of his neck forever.

And then, I'm on a horse on some northern back road, moose stamped on the crest of the hill like a figment of Canadiana, and the horse bolts. I hold on even as I miss the girl who would have let go—crack of helmet, broken clavicle worth that moment of air, body ready to forget its weight, ready to remember it again, the road coming up heavy to meet me.

— Laisha Rosnau

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from **The Dissertation**

She even annexed his speech,
the Indian words she was so drawn to.
It gave her own language authenticity,

a ring of wild metaphor.
It was ballsy, even magical
how she slipped into his skin,
the poet, who in the end
she surmised was beyond saving.
To call her a stalker is overkill.
He was simply her selection.

— Gregory Scofield

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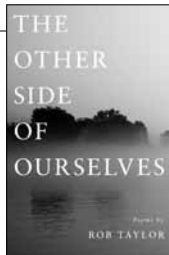


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Summer

All day the phone rings. *Yes.*
Thank you. Not today. Please.
The kettle quivers. Tonight's chicken
puddles in its melt. Upstairs,
goldfish *o* the water's surface.
A forecaster's voice twirls
on the radio: *Sun, sun, sun!*
Outside, children buzz and loop
like model airplanes. Newspapers
crackle on the porch. A squirrel
scrambles up a bird feeder.
If someone doesn't pick
those zucchinis soon, they'll burst.

— Rob Taylor

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A Lovely Day

Plump white clouds, a nice breeze. Not a scorcher, not one you'd
mind in any way. I found a near-new softball at the park
this morning behind the dugout & holding its white weight
in my palm remembered
days on the diamond with the Cosmic League

& summer nights at Riverview Park
when Dad pitched for the Royalite team
& my happiness when he struck out player
after player as the light in the hills began to
remove itself from the scoreboard and the skirts of
the weeping willows
blew about in the night breeze.

— Sharon Thesen

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In Praise of Mushrooms

My boot almost crushes domed towers dew-beaded,
sprung in the night through loamy ground,
knobbed umber caps on vellum stocks
frilled gills underneath to breathe in the deep.
Mushrooms surprising sprouted bright
white buttons on blackened logs, or fleshy
ruffles from ruin where tub and tiles meet.
Precious fungus—shitake, chanterelle,
oyster, portabella and truffles—
sponge-tongued taste of earth.
Spores float like words,
take hold in the cold and wait
to bloom in the dark.

— Cynthia Woodman Kerkham

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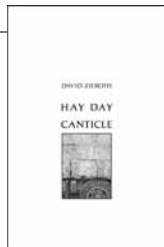
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— *from* **Hay Day
Canticle**

Yes, I told myself, sing, sing, the way my father
sang working with his crops, his fields, his tools
his cap pushed back, as if nothing could bother

his pleasure in feeling his muscles, only fools
would find an indoor life—he often said, smiling—
where each man had to obey someone else's rules

how he would've laughed at me, my constant dialling
up clients and talking sweet, describing the new
best thing I was pushing, my end-of-week filing

because he never trusted paper, found it untrue
too often the way words could be bent or twisted

— David Zieroth

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