

poetry in transit



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Hymn by John Barton,
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Foul Bay at 2 AM

Soundlessly the clam diggers flicker down stairs hanging
against grey cliffs sunk low into ebb tide, lamps strapped

to hard hats as they descend in procession, holy miners
of night, the only noise a tingle of spades inside

empty steel pails, a flinty inner echo of quiet, the wind's
sandpaper lifting mist from the sky, starlight flinted

against the moon's albino, half-shut eye, clam diggers walking
into the sea, the stars soluble, phosphorescent, unclaimed.

— John Barton

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My Darling Nellie Grey by George Bowering,
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January 26

I am a magpie after all.
I fly only to reach the good stuff.
I have been doing this all my life.
I have met many fliers along the way.
I am a black and white bird.
I become hard to find in the snow melt.
You can locate me by the loot.
You can decide not to read it.

— George Bowering

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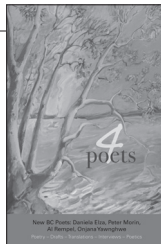


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*from interpreting
the winds*

what the world is

is how we age

its grapes in cellars

at a constant 12 degrees celsius.

how we drink them

over tables smooth with worry

at the end of the day when *you have*

nothing in your grasp but perplexities

and the best we can do ... is

share them with each other.

— Daniela Elza

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Water Park

A slide gushes children down to earth.
Parents sprinkled on the outskirts,
camped on beach towels on the grass,
desultory sentinels.
Yesterday, six Canadian soldiers
rode upon a gravel road near Kandahar
to their deaths. Sixty maimed.
Gouged lives bleeding into a pocked earth.
Parents, children, grandparents
far away from our splashes and delighted shrieks.
Nothing balanced on the scale.
Suffering, pleasure meted out
indifferently. This cold clear rain
under the bluest sky.

— Fiona Tinwei Lam

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from *The Wake*

On our last walk along the seawall,
you stopped mid-sentence
to watch a heron pass us in flight.
Isn't she beautiful, you whispered –
the stone span of her wings, textured like granite –
and I looked, and looked again,
and saw, like those hours in your lamplit office,
the gold light falling all around us.

— Evelyn Lau

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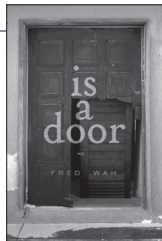
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is a door is a door wood
is a door a board
is a door barred
is a door abhorred
is a door locked
is a door shocked
is a door cut
is a door shut
is a door a jar
is a door nailed

is a door split
is a door fixed
is a door hung
is a door stripped
is a door bolted
is a door supposed
is a door closed
is a door broken
is a door spoken
is a door a word

— Fred Wah

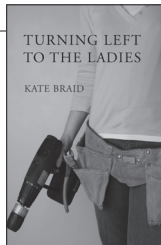
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The Beauty of Men

It is not violence but muscle—the force to do—
curled and bent and burning
inside.

They deny it. Hide it. Rip it out
with hammers and knives and guns, even crosses
if they have to.

These are the signs of the beauty of men:
set jaw, the shimmer of muscle
eager to lift beyond any limit, lost

in the wild pleasure of motion. They will move the world
with their own two hands, force it if they have to, doing
what mere thought didn't know had to be done.

— Kate Braid

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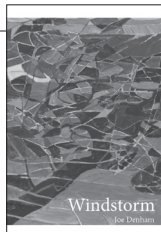
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*from South of Black
Point, Southeast
Wind Screaming
from Windstorm*

Love forms its own weather. Currents of air
colliding in time, contingent, metaphor upon
metaphor, but still the hard matter of fight
upon fight between feedings and sleep and hour
after hour of the hauler, or computer, or whatever
work we set all else aside for...

A white curtain drawn by a whisper of air.
Fresh-milled fir reddening in late-August light.
Warm rain beyond the window left open
onto the land we care and toil for,
our newborn son sleeping peacefully there.

—Joe Denham

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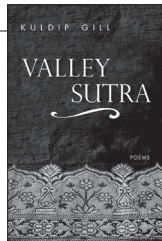


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Mill Yard Sounds

That bricolage of mill sounds,
a screech of each saw-cut as the head sawyer pulled down,
the rolling gears of the log-haul,
the whistle to shut down as men moved lumber
down the greenchain, and everything dripped water.
The hemlock, fir, cedar sawdust rose cumulus and turbaned
around heads of mill-men, the forklift driving in and backing out
its burden locked in its arms, and the horns of the honking truck —
a driver impatient for the load of lumber. The chainbelt
clanging as it conveyed clumped wood and bark into
the burner, smoke and embers fisting and spitting.
They sat on the lumber with tin lunch buckets
open, eating curries, achars and rotis in the sun.

— Kuldip Gill

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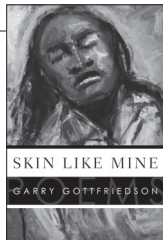
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The First Snowfall with Horsechild

in the Moon following the blood-telling stories
the dry-meat racks will once again be heavy
and the geese will have become memory
as was the time you heard your name whispered
the trees will again be naked
and the skin upon our Mother will tighten
Horsechild, your fur will thicken
and warmth will calm you
fighting the anxiety in your weary eyes,
for the first snow will lift your spirit
the Winter Dance Singers will offer their voices
to shroud our bodies with protection
as we await the fury of Old Man Winter
Stomp-Dancing his way South

— Garry Gottfriedson

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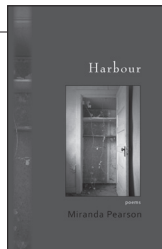
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from Coal Harbour

while I wait intent on the slow
wooing of the poem. How one word
colours the next,

hand-over-hand, knots on a rope,
slanting the light reflections of boats
quivering on the thin sea.

Lately, I have not looked up from the page
to see my life.

— Miranda Pearson

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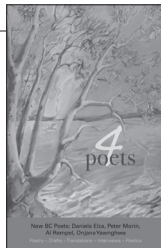
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from *Fidelity*

you could steer the course of the universe, guitar strings zinging,
the double-thump of the bass-drum deep inside your chest-box,
the imagined mess of metal and dash-board plastic and birch-bark,
and the flip-over tumble between a blur and black-out,
the wheel on the driver's side spun free of bone-on-bone
and the hard-hallowed socket of reason, yet somehow you pulled
it back, mom said it was angels, but she always says that,
dad said why the devil didn't you keep your eyes on the road, mom said
leave it alone or he'll cry and you – you were still shaking on the davenport
craving a smoke and not wanting to think about it, or go there, instead
wanting to push it off, to take the keys off the hook, to take another spin
around the block first chance you got—to drive like nothing ever happened.

— Al Rempel

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Lousy Explorers by Laisha Rosnau,
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from *He Was the Number 14*

He was the Number 14, a bus ride
down Hastings one way, strung
with blinking lights and sparks
of trolleys unhooked, headed
to Arbutus, the salt lick of ocean,
tongues swollen to lap up the whole thing.

He was chain-links around the marina,
winches loosed by wind, rigging
played against spar and mast like chimes
frothed into a frenzy. He was the main stay
snapped and boom slammed into the dock,
light splintered on black water.

— Laisha Rosnau

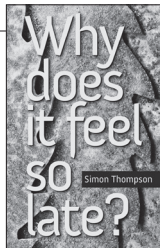
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The Great Terrace Flood, 2007

The river bank is crumbling to meet us
a dark mess of wet logs and roots.
Abandoned houses are married
with a ring of sandbags.

The river pulses up and down,
helicopters clatter overhead.

Watchers stand on the old bridge
as whole trees fall in
and float away rootballs up,
leaders nosing the river bottom
like curious pigs.

— Simon Thompson

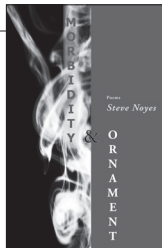
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Chi pang
miao mei yu

池旁妙妹竽
何没吹军歌
后悔不礼貌
入水变成鱼

Chi pang miao mei yu
He mei chui jun ger
Hou hui bu li mao
Ru shui bian cheng yu

Pond-side a marvelous Sis and her flute.
Why do you not play the troupe-songs?
Regret is not appropriate, she said,
And slipped into her fishness.

— Steve Noyes

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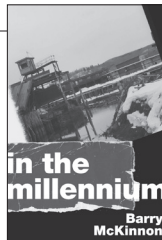


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*from An Unfinished
Theology*

what did the angel ask who has come in mortal form –

are you all right?

I answered torment & pleasure of space & time (energy of
the impossible that makes us look / see again, to reverse

become.

— Barry McKinnon

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