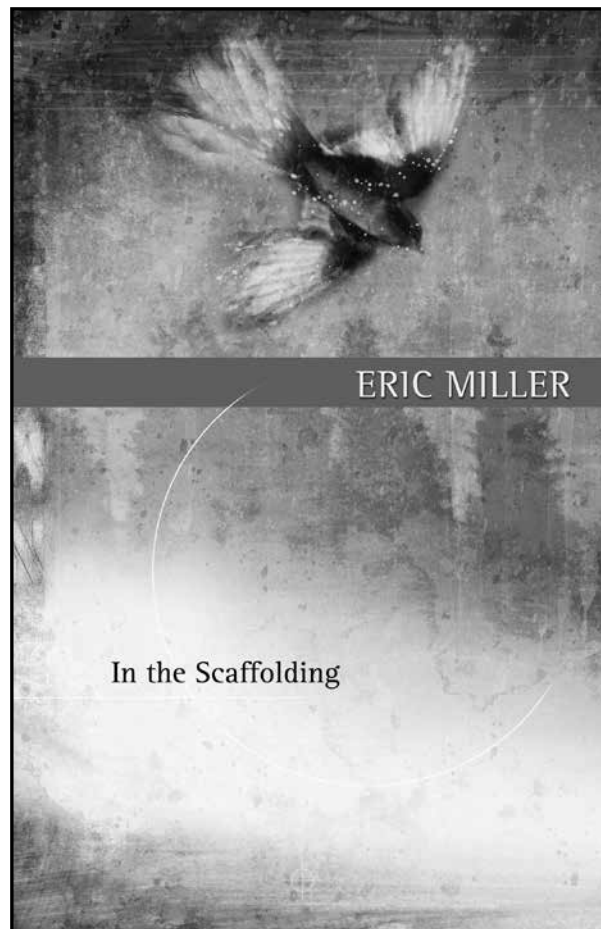


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## RAIN AFTER CLEAR

We hated the winter rain  
but with its intermission and its resumption  
knowledge of its alliance with us  
brims a reservoir:  
we taste with mollusc adhesiveness  
the cold footsole against linoleum,  
we sense how the air is more supportive  
of our love for indolence and enclosure  
and this saturation seems deliberately  
to make a show, not quite convincing,  
of impassability, discouraging us  
exactly according to our wish —

an exhortation to sloth,  
to take for our sloppy clock  
the vague heavy drip from the drainpipe,  
a full splattering accompaniment  
to the monosyllabic chirp of the damp sparrow  
and the beat, hardly regarded,  
of the interminably saturated heart.

And then how passively fat  
the first stalks of plants ooze from the loam  
dissenting out of a bulkier  
laziness from seclusion in earth,  
as though growth were a superior disregard,  
indolence the slovenly avenue to virtue.

— Eric Miller

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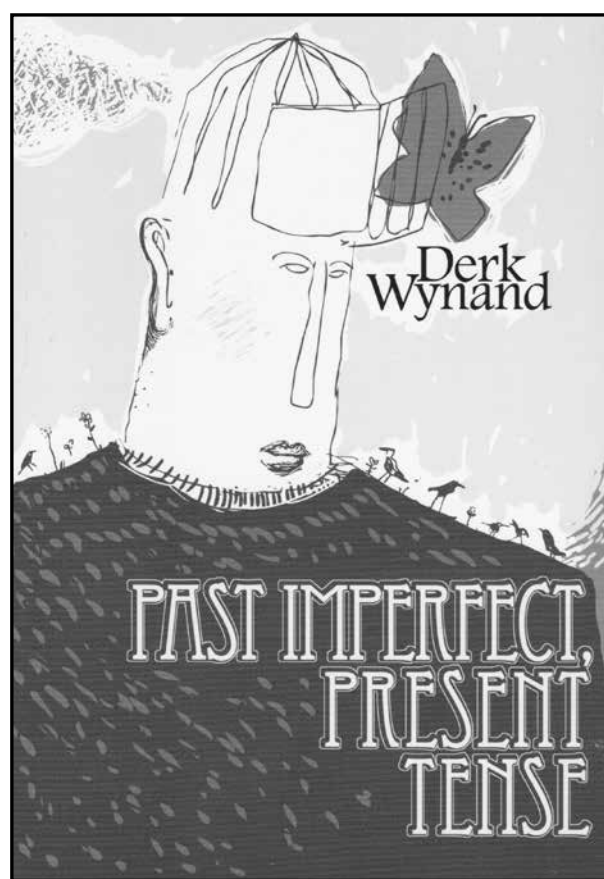
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## *from* MUSICIANS ON A BUS

What trick of light has turned everyone's hair  
suddenly gray? Is this Blitzkrieg or siege?

Here and there a handkerchief appears, not  
in surrender, but only to wipe sweat from a brow,  
blow a nose, provide a diversion for the eyes.

The palm trees go by. The houses go by. Cars go by  
in both directions. On the planet's other side  
the light of dead stars must be firing up  
the imagination of insomniacs.

In the jungle passing outside monkeys must be  
howling, parrots making a better music.

Inside, the musician's fierce glare  
tracks his own silence above the vast space  
of his outstretched hand.

— Derk Wynand

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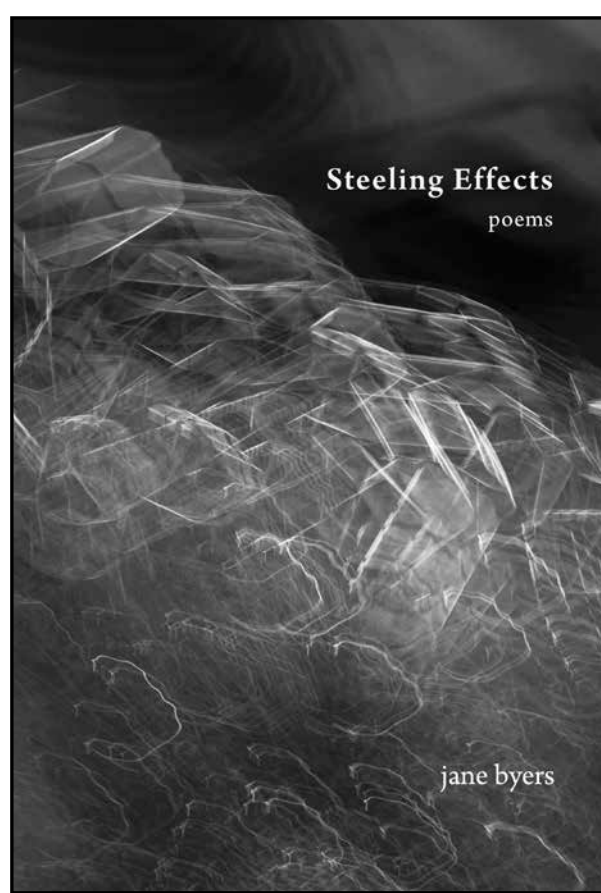
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## COMING OUT

They made me fire-hall pasta with ground beef  
and spicy sausages,  
more meat per square inch  
than a slaughterhouse.  
Four a.m. stomach revolt:  
the meat, or adrenaline coursing at the chirpy alarms,  
burning holes in my sleep  
as I studied their job demands on the nightshift.

The firemen are polite, as if  
cadet training includes how to treat the ladies.  
When “woman in the hall” is blared over the PA,  
they’re all chivalry and smiles,  
business as usual—  
donning their bunker suits for an incident.

As I cut jicama and tempeh  
into matchsticks for a salad,  
I wonder what the boys at the hall would think.  
I have to hope that some of them would like it.  
On shift, I never came out as a vegetarian.

— Jane Byers

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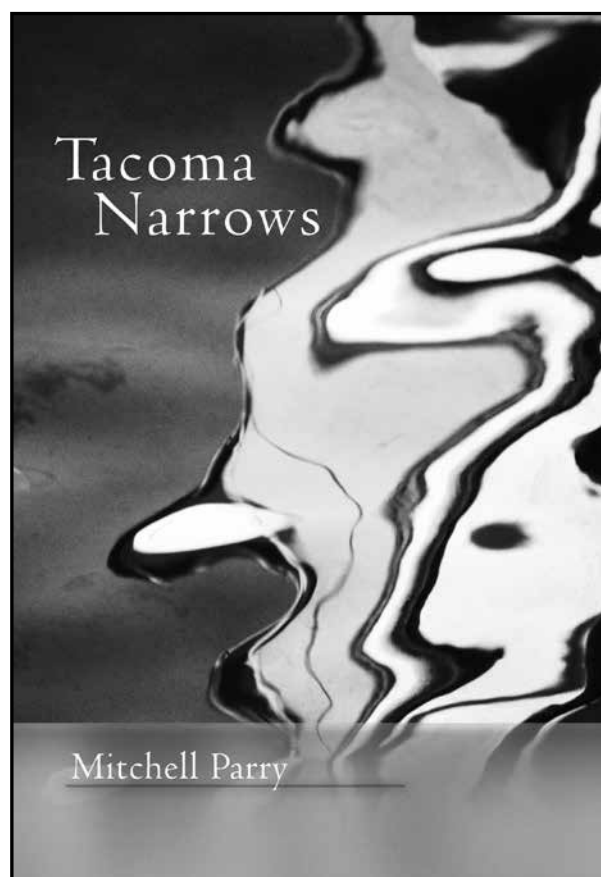
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## AFTER THE QUAKE

I dropped to my knees & laughed  
as the doorframe rocked above us: our hearts

flexing in aftershock. *I guess I should*  
*put on some pants*, you said. As though nakedness

were barred from the Big One. I had expected  
deep shifting, thunder, waves, a boatswain's roll

& sway — not muscled pounding like  
Babe the Blue Ox humping the outside wall.

The animal earth trying to break in, the cyst  
already pouched in your breast, my stammering

pulse — and the earth keeps shaking,  
shifting. The weight of our arrival

sets the plates in motion. Some days  
it shudders to remind us. False alarms

are the hardest gift, yanking from us  
what we will only need once. The neighbours

gathered in the street, their faces glowing  
torches against the unavoidable sun. How

their teeth rattled in their laughter: *I thought I was*  
*a goner. The Lord walked through town*

*this morning. Next time.* Next time  
we could hide our hands in that fur, ride

the lunges of its spine to Juan de Fuca  
& up to our necks in ocean. What else can we do

but run into the living room, join hands, dance  
a circle on the swaying floor, heel-toe, heel-toe.

— Mitchell Parry

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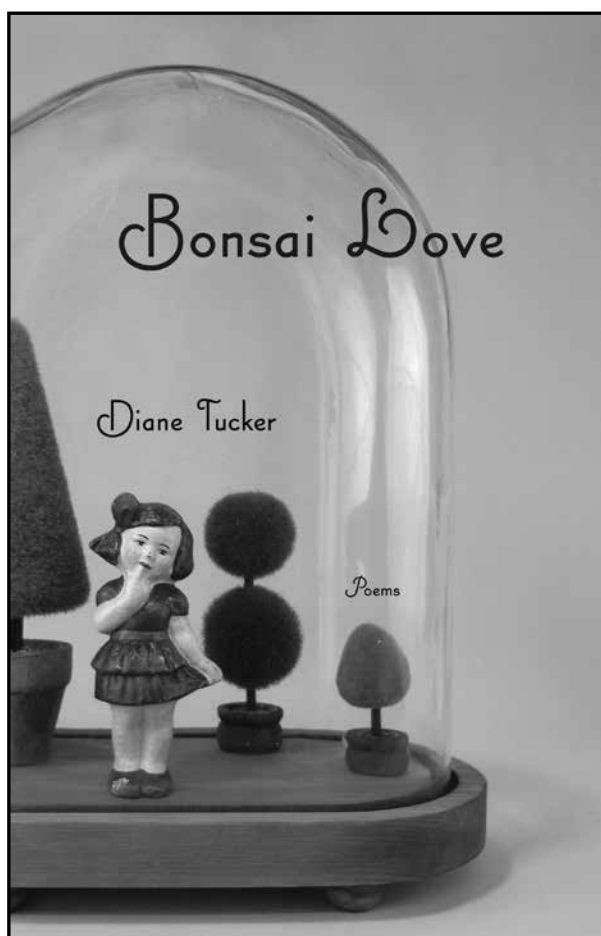
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## WHY DON'T YOU TAKE THE BUS?

You don't want to touch  
anyone, press too close.  
The seats, you assert, are too small.

Does your small-boned body  
feel the shudder of strange sorrows,  
strangers' ambivalent breath  
snaking into your own lungs?

May I urge you to sample  
this particular propinquity?

Sit quietly beside the old  
Ethiopian lady. Feel her heavy  
round side against your own.  
Don't break gaze with the toddler  
in the stroller, his quizzing eyes.  
Fill your lungs with all the fetid  
communal air; new flesh freshens it.

It is benefit and blessing,  
bearing with broken others,  
the weight and heft of every  
other rider toward the sinking west.

When you arrive home  
I will gather your small bones  
against me. I will shake you free  
of every lurching hesitation,  
free of every rush and rattle.

And in the cloud of having touched,  
we will lie flat and motionless  
against each other's silent bodies,  
hallowed and transported.

— Diane Tucker

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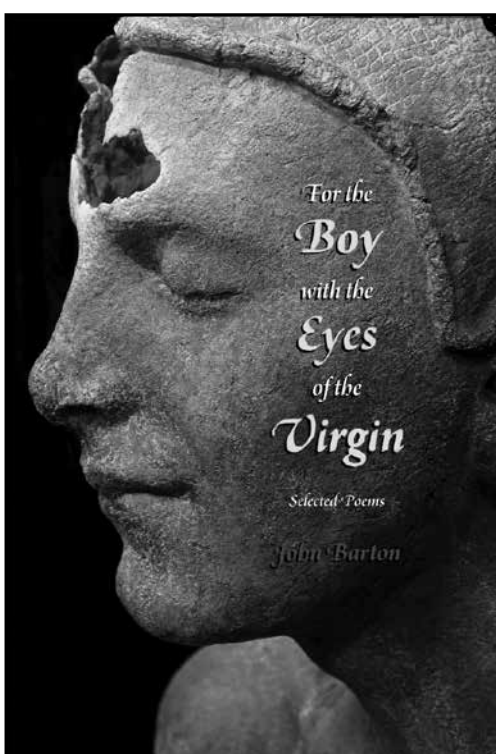
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## THE LIVING ROOM

*Their rubbish alone was left.  
He was a vacant lot,  
he had become an exemption.  
The squares of his mind were empty.*

—P. K. Page, “In Memoriam”

At the drop-in clinic near the centre  
of town, I namelessly drop off  
cotton shirts wrinkled as grey skin  
to be slung on hangers and rifled through  
by men whose flesh thins under the shaking  
force of their scapulae, the deft  
articulation of fingers a memory  
as they thumb through gaunt fabric—  
the colours so bereft  
*their rubbish alone was left.*

Even as I drive away, a man buttons  
wash-worn cotton about his body  
as it vanishes, ribs rising through  
jaundiced skin like stains as he breathes  
haltingly, or so I think, driving away  
with my fears intact, overwrought  
about whatever might or might not be  
deadly in my own blood, haunted  
by my one parting thought:  
*He was a vacant lot.*

Against my will, I slip inside  
his flesh. Its slim vitality sits  
amply on my shoulders as I drive uptown  
every remaining bit of pleasure to be  
had from it an undiscovered country  
lying within reach, vague satisfaction  
of desires unable to die  
with him, the body a cairn, fog  
lifting as I pause at an intersection.  
*He had become an exemption.*

His world opens up: his death is my death  
his love my love, the men he kissed  
and held are men like us who've passed  
through the ordinary arms of several others  
dates in loose cotton shirts who drove us  
home after the movies, each entreaty  
to love made on nights when warmth was wanted.  
Guys who made us feel safe not cautious.  
One foolhardy night he fleetingly felt free.  
*The squares of his mind were empty.*

—John Barton

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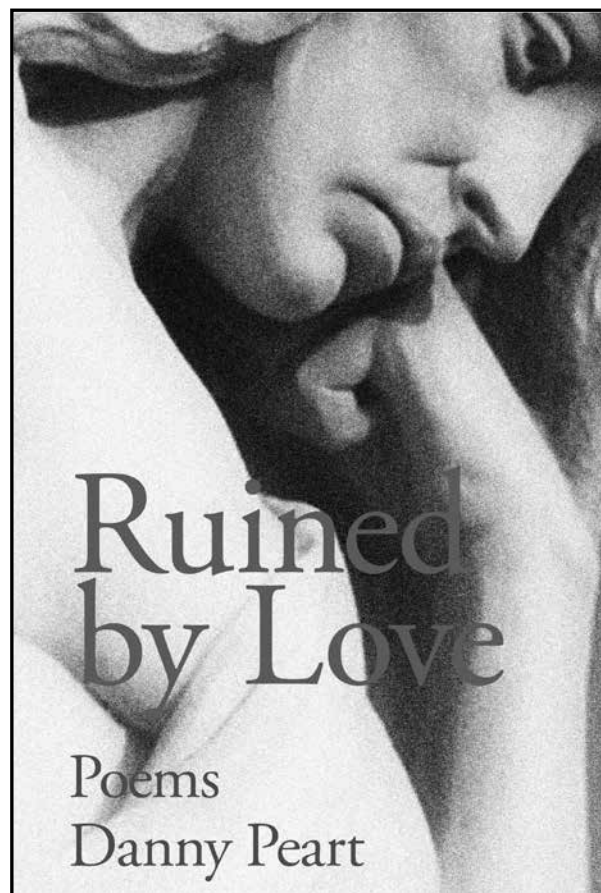
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## ELDER RAVEN

I saw him once, Bill Reid,  
at a fundraiser in the Commodore Ballroom.  
He was in a wheelchair by then,  
the artist's spirit, betrayed by his body.

There was a silent auction.  
Al Purdy and I were bidding  
for the same item.  
I knew Al's work, but just couldn't tell him.  
He left with Bill Reid's book.

Years later I found a copy of it,  
The Black Canoe.  
I had to buy it and take it home,  
though the out-of-print price just about killed me.

I learned about the sculpture of Bill Reid,  
his place in the Haida tradition.  
Traveled north to see Haida Gwaii.  
Placed my hand on the Bill Reid totem in Skidegate.

I saw those huge black ravens jump and fly.  
Hard to tell if they were young or old.  
Didn't seem to matter.  
One raven stood apart.  
Watching, aware of all,  
his place secure.

— Danny Peart

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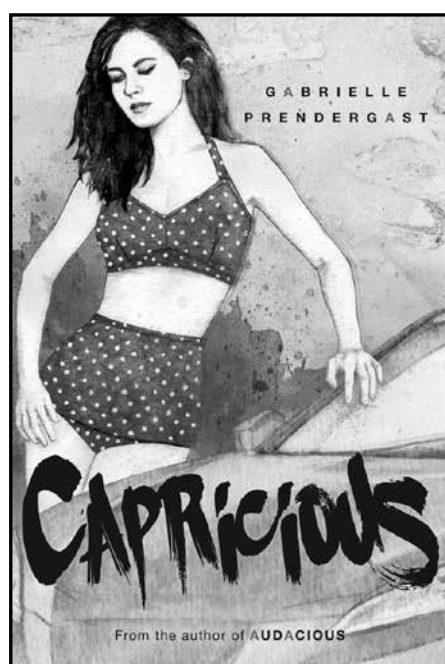
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## *from* NINA'S SON

I remember  
Neglected dolls  
Hard, cold plastic

Their chemical smell  
Like funeral homes  
Or janitors' closets.

So unlike

The baby's soft, fat foot  
Cupped in my hand  
Warm and smooth

His glossy head  
Black and sleek  
As an otter.

— Gabrielle Prendergast

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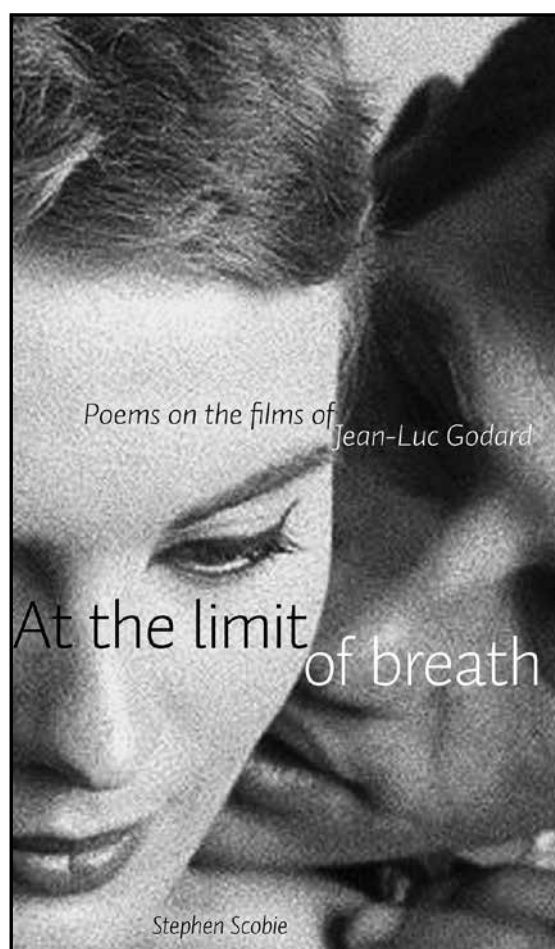
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*At the limit of breath* by Stephen Scobie,  
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## Masculin féminin Masculine Feminine 1966

We often went to the movies,  
Madeleine and I. When the screen  
lit up, we felt a thrill.

But we were often disappointed,  
Madeleine and I. The images  
seemed dated, they staggered and jumped

right out of the frame. Marilyn Monroe  
was showing her age, terribly. We felt sad,  
Madeleine and I. Once again it wasn't

the movie of our dreams, that total movie  
we carried inside ourselves, that movie  
we would have loved to make

or, more secretly no doubt, that movie  
we would have loved to live,  
Madeleine and I.

— Stephen Scobie

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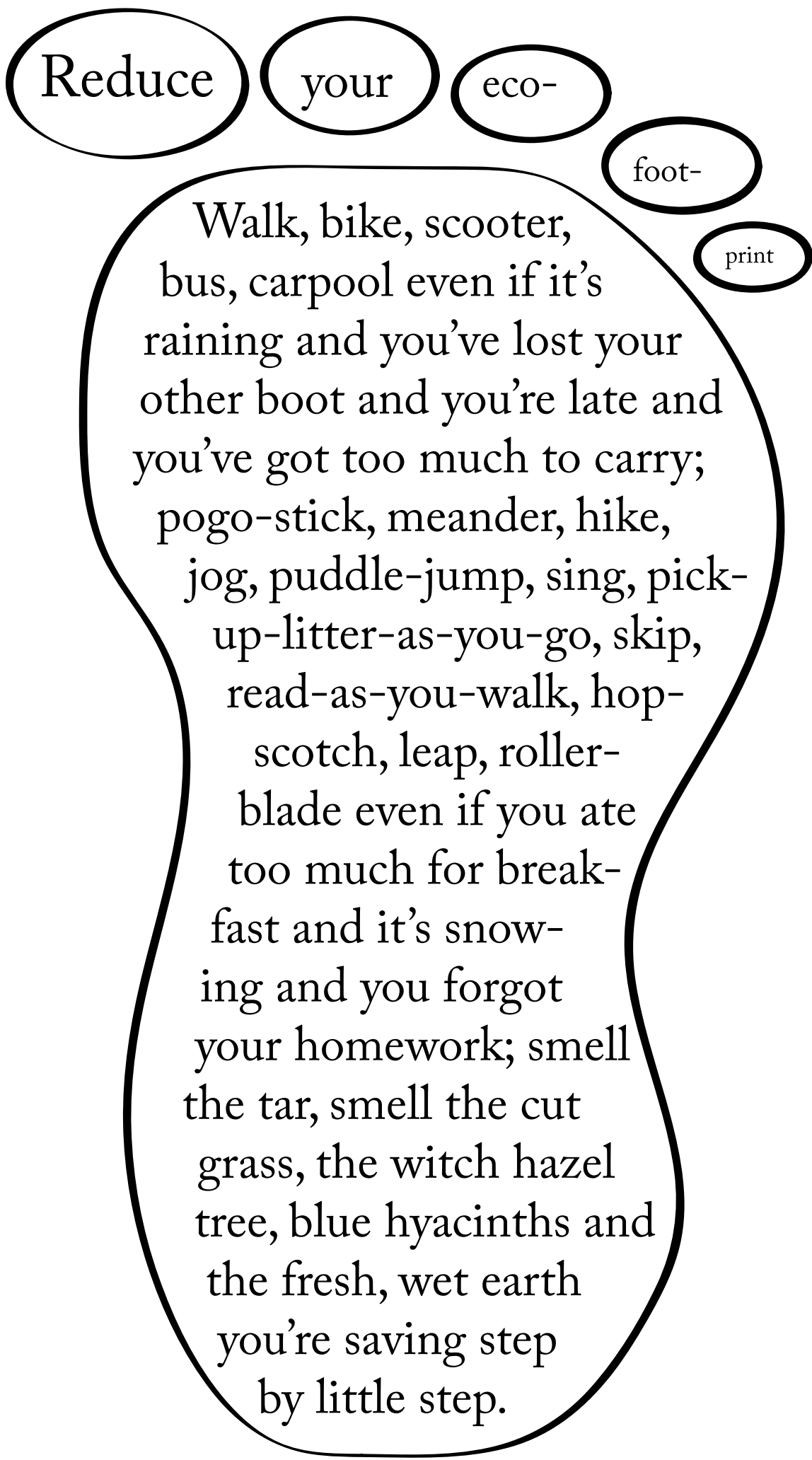
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GREENSPEAK: THE ECO-HANDBOOK FOR KIDS



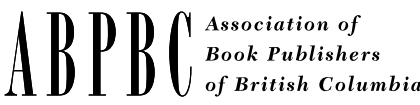
— Barbara Nickel

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