

# THE CAPILANO REVIEW





go,

in sufficiency.

—*Rhoda Rosenfeld*

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*The Capilano Review* is published by the Capilano Review Contemporary Arts Society. Canadian subscription rates for one year are \$35, \$25 for students, \$80 for institutions. Rates include S&H. Outside Canada, please add \$5. Address correspondence to The Capilano Review, 102-281 Industrial Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6A 2P2. Subscribe online at [www.thecapilanoreview.ca/order/](http://www.thecapilanoreview.ca/order/).

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*The Capilano Review* gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

*The Capilano Review* is a member of Magazines Canada, the Magazine Association of BC, and the Alliance for Arts and Culture (Vancouver).

Publications mail agreement number 40063611. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to circulation—The Capilano Review, 102-281 Industrial Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6A 2P2.

issn 0315 3754 | Published March 2016

Printed in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories, BC



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Cover Image:

Meryl McMaster, *Under the Infinite Sky*, 2015, ink jet print, 76 × 114 cm

# Editor's Note

*"First, I sketch a house; then, I sketch a field. But who is in the house? And who is in the field?"*

So opens the most recent issue of *THEM: a trans literary journal*, whose founding-editor Jos Charles generously contributed two poems to the present issue of *The Capilano Review* after a friend in Tucson saw Charles read, felt his aura change, and persuaded me to seek out their work. (My aura also changed when I read Rhoda Rosenfeld's, Juliane Okot Bitek's, and Aditi Machado's differently-visionary, differently-playful, and differently-demanding poetry for the first time late last year.) And so I begin my own editor's note, with uncertainty about why this open issue holds together as meaningfully as it does, gratitude to friends who learn things before I do, and a related question (already long-asked by many): How to be a good host while you're still learning the need to be a good guest? (Or a slightly less ruinous parasite?)

There must be many models of better care out there that insist, as CACConrad's "Queer Bubbles" poetry ritual does, "that a redistribution of wealth always include The Love. How can we be there for one another? How can we be assured that everyone gets The Love?" And the models must be simultaneously simple and complex, their processes necessarily both watery and glacial. Two of my favourite lines in Catriona Strang's *Reveries of a Solitary Biker*: "at nearly every turn / such murky marvels"; and "Also"—not *but*—"we / must discuss / land use."

I'm also thinking of a moment in the conversation featured here between Guinevere Pencarrick and Jo Cook, founder of Perro Verlag Books by Artists on Mayne Island and a renowned welcomer of so many. "What is it that you do," Pencarrick asks, "that creates an environment where anyone can be an artist?" To which her longtime friend responds, "...I don't do anything except open the doors and get ready to work."

Then there's the model of Six Nations Mohawk writer Tekahionwake (E. Pauline Johnson), some of whose legacies are conveyed by Jessica Hallenbeck in the *see to see* section at the back of this issue. In her *Legends of Vancouver* (1911), Johnson recounts first meeting Squamish Chief Joe Capilano (Sá7pelek) in 1906 at Buckingham Palace and explains how a very basic gesture of consideration on her part made possible their later ways of relating: "To the fact that I was able to greet Chief Capilano in the Chinook tongue, while we were both many thousands of miles from home, I owe the friendship and the confidence which he so freely gave me when I came to reside on the Pacific coast."

Let's think about but not *overthink* our complicities as we work to extend The Love.

—*Andrea Actis*

# POWER SISSY INTERVENTION #1: Queer Bubbles

*CAConrad*

## **A (Soma)tic Poetry Ritual & Resulting Poem**

*(for Candice Lin)*

I occupied a busy street corner in Asheville, North Carolina to bless children with bubbles that will make them queer. Not gay and lesbian, but QUEER! Bubbles of course do not have such powers; bubbles have only the power to be bubbles. Some parents knew that and thought the whole thing was funny and would say, “That’s cool, I will love my children no matter what.” I took notes for the poem.

But SOME parents were not happy about Queer Bubbles at all. “Ooo bubbles, look at the bubbles sweetheart, look at the pretty bubbles.” I would blow bubbles for their kids’ little hands and say, “These bubbles will ensure that your child will grow up to be a healthy, happy, revolutionary Queer who will help rid the world of homophobia, misogyny, racism, and other forms of stupidity.” Parents pulled away nervously saying “Sorry, sorry.” One mother abruptly yanked her blond son’s hand—“C’mon honey, ice cream, ice cream!” The boy cried, reaching for the bubbles as his mother refused to look in my direction, pulling him from the queering of the bubbles. Most parents, though, just said “Sorry, I’m sorry” as they walked away. I took notes for the poem.

The fear of queer will not dissolve with sorry. Asheville purports to be a liberal, laid-back city, but Queer Bubbles pulled the veil aside for a closer look. One man said, “Jesus loves you.” I said, “I don’t think so.” His face screwed up and he yelled “YES HE DOES!” Jesus loves the queers, isn’t that nice? And his angry messenger roams the street to tell us so. WE MUST INSIST that a redistribution of wealth always include The Love. How can we be there for one another? How can we be assured that everyone gets The Love? Notes from the ritual became a poem.

## Every Feel Unfurl

I was naked  
on a mountaintop  
kissing someone  
who loved me  
people fully  
clothed two  
thousand  
feet  
below  
as crossed out as this cage I  
say I belong to no more  
the stars let me off the hook again  
this is so new I don't get it  
hear myself sing with  
a voice I do not recognize  
the best voice to happen to  
me I want it back  
each night  
there is nothing little about little lights in the sky  
now the pronunciation is perfect for another  
morning of lips performing their duty to verb  
shrouding ourselves by light of  
damage control stations of rhetoric  
lips as piglet prepared to  
be hacked apart beneath a greenery of  
mansions a mess the ambulance cannot reach  
there is nothing little about the cicada revving up while  
we think our car horns  
are so impressive



Candice Lin, *Alchemical Lab*, 2012, etching, 28 × 33 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles



Candice Lin, *Types of Magic*, 2010, ink on paper, 41 × 51 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles

# from *The Mundane, Sublime and Fantastical*

*Juliane Okot Bitek*

## 120.

So I heard that you were done talking  
that you've reached the end of your words  
that the rest of your life in silence  
will be matched by respectful nods  
from strangers who heard that you had run out of words

So you're not talking anymore  
but have you given any thought to how it looks  
you bobbing your head up & down  
in response to strangers nodding at you

You're a snake

What does it look like with your head bobbing up & down  
in response to strangers nodding their heads?  
What do you think?

Oh, wait  
right  
you're not talking anymore

\* \* \*

& now that you're not talking  
& all I have is the bobbing of your head  
up & down, up & down  
this is what you told me

that your dad & his friends laughed  
when they made lewd jokes between them  
& all you remember is the laughter  
& not any of how those jokes made you feel

today the men at the office make race jokes  
as if you're not there  
& they laugh & snicker  
laugh & snicker

now all you do is bob your head  
up & down, up & down

Maybe someday  
you'll forget how you feel about that

## **121.**

Thursday morning  
a gong from the night sky  
the rest of the world is asleep  
& I'm madly collecting thirty words  
(& their kin)

words slip from my fingers  
stick to my sleeves  
slide back, slide back gravity bound

I'm going to have to recreate the whole world  
with language from these thirty words  
but what's language without possession  
or colour?

## 127.

Men in red t-shirts and khaki pants work inside  
men in blue t-shirts and rolled up khakis tend the ground outside  
a snake pours out of my head

Men in red turbans & blue t-shirts  
their faces & hands covered  
in dust & cement  
(who knows what they do)  
women in white serve food

a snake slithers

sullen women in brown sweep, mop the floor

I sit at the beach with a snake dangling from my head

## 128.

Red ants black ants pale orange ants  
red ants black ants pale orange ants  
tree tree tree tree tree  
palm fronds in the wind  
my head pours out  
a red hibiscus

more women in brown—housekeeping  
they will not greet me back  
my head pours out  
snake after snake  
snake after snake  
snake after snake after snake

# from fr. E<sup>F</sup>fari

*Rhoda Rosenfeld*

## fr. E<sup>F</sup>fari 3rd Station (*Fado Instincts*)

Clip 34

Voice: Acushla (Ir.) Short for a chuisla mo chroidhe O pulse of my heart.

say it as Vitusunzippe  
d by way of the phonatory act of the os hyoidium  
then bundled again by isotopic mass narcissism  
“as enclosed within a little parenthesis on a vast stage of public battle-carnage”

( “subduction” the *chorus* curses, subparole )

*aside:* *Had Dostoevsky been a writer of English Essays*

*he would have been*

*Thomas De Quincy*



Clip 36

yard

escribir :

a shattered daughter

the one found upbraiding phenomena

brandishing a fff altering ffflail.

Clip 37



Clip 38

*The hacker and the raucous laughter chorus on the balcony.*

*our daily web : : toroidal henge*

the popliteal space behind the knee

and the flat irony

individualdual

Watch out for sudden curves in subjectivity  
pertains to all dumbfounded things  
we didn't carry.

galore, from Ir. *go leór*,

go,

in sufficiency.

Clip 39



Clip 40

Some times, Ma Chère Amie,

Remarks are Literature

depending on the Thickness of the Discourse of the Witches in the Kitchen

laughing in French.

but life is not biography a brittle little story :  
ma desfaçon. lagan.

the blind holy wind cimarron blow through within before

( *in a reflected sunset* )

the sun

go down

without.

Clip 41

but weren't you the one who constructed me? out of  
atmospheric rivers and lace bracelets and burden straps? this is fyeo:

who cut down the salsify?

**fr. Effari 4th Station (with a Phrygian cap)**

Clip 42

neofeuds, end errorism! put the cap back on capitalism!

*sing: I sold my ass to the ruling class  
And it sold its to me*

*sing: our home is naked land.*

ijtihad: to struggle with oneself through deep thought.

Clip 43

crib

nettle

cur

*without temperature, what is there?*

Clip 44

tout dit.

# Reveries of a Solitary Biker

*Catriona Strang with Kelly Haydon*

In 1776, at the age of 64, an embittered Jean-Jacques Rousseau took to rambling. Feeling rejected, neglected, and condemned, he turned his back on the society in which he had never managed to feel at ease, and found peace in wandering the fields outside Paris, noting interesting flora and fauna, and ruminating on his life and career. Rousseau jotted down his musings on playing cards he carried in his pocket; these notes would form the basis for his last book, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, translated as *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (or as *Solitary Walker*). Unfinished at his death and published posthumously in 1782, the *Reveries* reiterate and meditate upon many of Rousseau's central themes: the joys of solitude, the corrupting influence of society, the fragility of happiness and of human relations, and the great, healing solace of nature (not to mention his obsession with enemies and persecution).

Like Rousseau, I too have taken to wandering, although I do so on my bicycle. I find cycling particularly conducive to a slow, non-deliberate thinking, an almost sub-conscious contemplation. Biking around Vancouver, my mind often returns to several issues I have long struggled with, my own version of Rousseau's obsessions. I wonder about whether it's really possible or useful to try to live counter to capitalism's omnipotence in our hyper-capitalist society; about how to live a sustainable life; about how nurturing can truly be valued, and indeed about what value is, and how it gets defined, and to what end. (I also often wonder about more mundane things, like what we might make for supper.) What is to be done, I often wonder?

In homage to Rousseau's *Reveries'* playing-card origins, my *Reveries of a Solitary Biker* is divided into four suites and printed as a deck of cards, designed by visual artist Kelly Haydon. The cards will be set to music by my frequent collaborators, clarinetist François Houle and composer Jacqueline Leggatt. We will perform the piece by asking audience members to draw a card from the deck; the card drawn will be performed, and we will then ask for another card. Each performance will thus be unique, incomplete, and inconclusive.



Sept. 2, 2013

i've frankly never dulled  
the point; I wonder when  
my questions has harmed.

"set upon doing"

inavoidible permutations

"here I have found"

(do we all have  
an bodies?) also we  
must discuss

land use



Sept. 10, 2013

damage taken up  
the ultimate act of  
joyous unexpected

comes from where now? (the  
joy of her, the  
spangled head)

so that activities  
are social forces

like a woman using  
a staircase



Sept. 20, 2013

giving voice to  
all this grief

I know that I am  
nervous up  
my work

4♥

♥4

Oct. 21, 2013

Because this world is  
such a placeable change  
our tempestuous fragility  
a mobbish jolt

(see how we've moving along)  
a sustained interest in  
construction

at least it's a structured hell

3♥

♥3

Nov. 11, 2013

"nothing can give us security"  
a breach once opened  
extrapolate  
with certainty

Must wear  be improved  
by industry's justice, by affable  
charity, by Monday mornings  
(for wear FANATICS)

A

♣

sufficient  
to blast her character

♣A

March 14, 2014

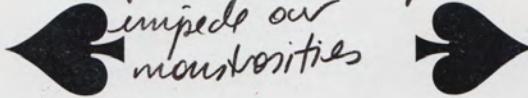
"Imagine me"

in the absence  
of her voice  
exactly how much  
enhancing exactitude  
can be expected



April 9, 2014

in our mutuality  
might we finally  
impede our  
monstrosities

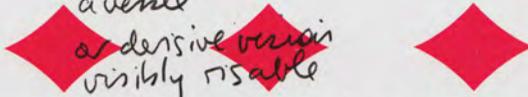


Jan. 21, 2015

disword, disruption, &  
despair, what a  
strange delusion  
discernion could be  
a vessel

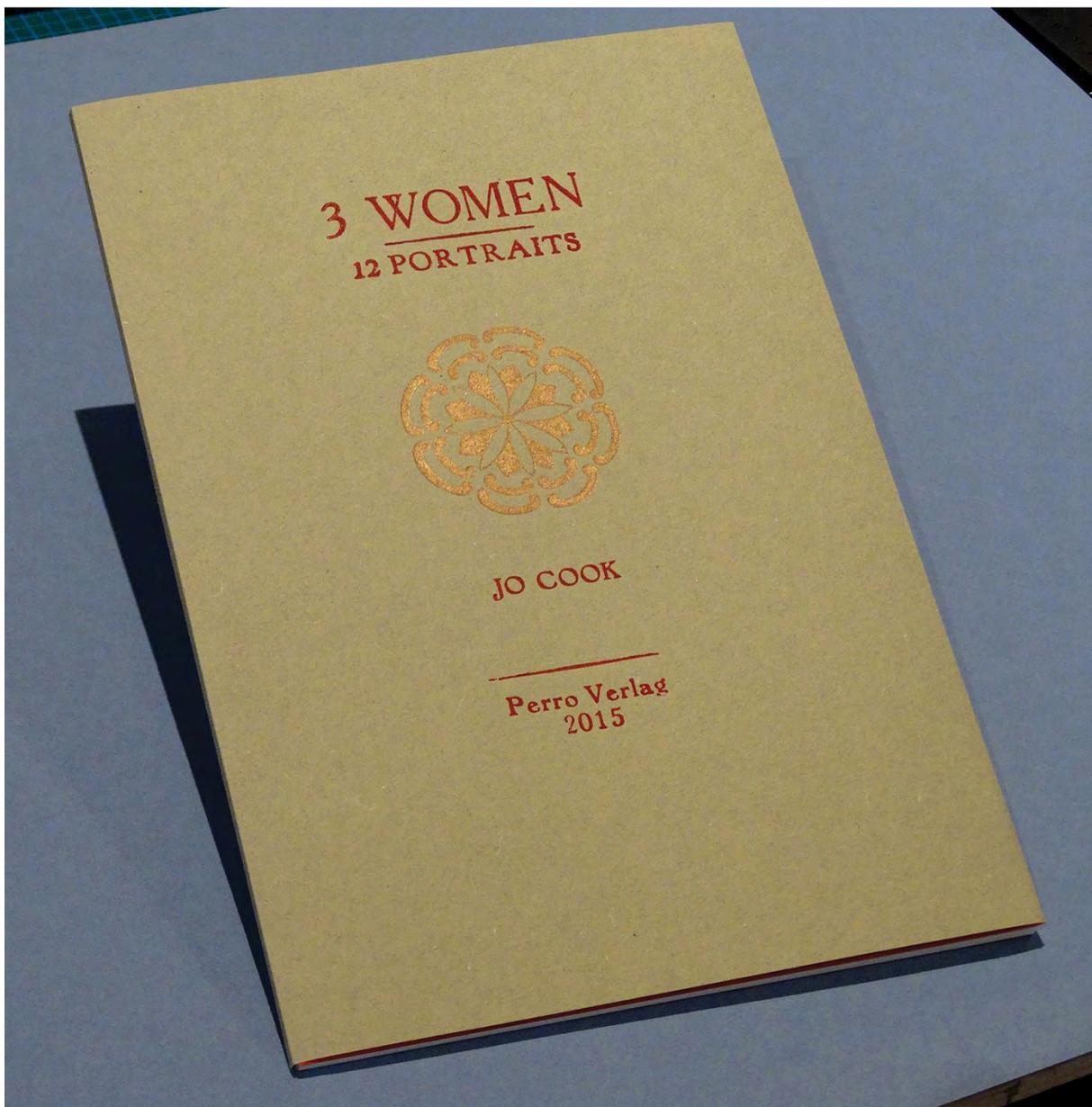
as dense as vision  
visibly risable

at nearly every turn  
such murky marvels



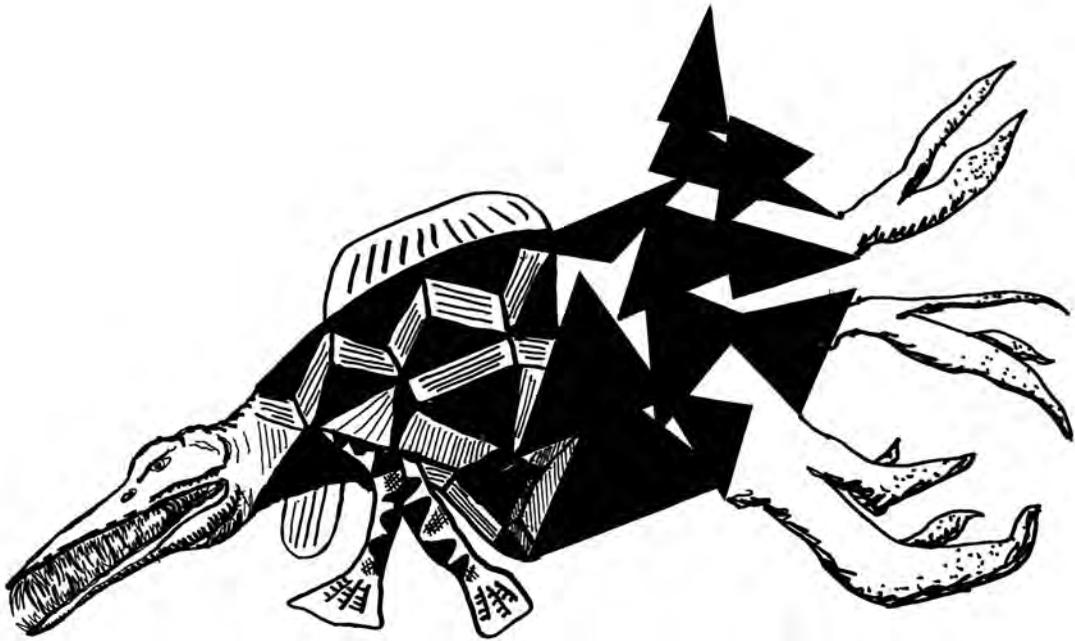
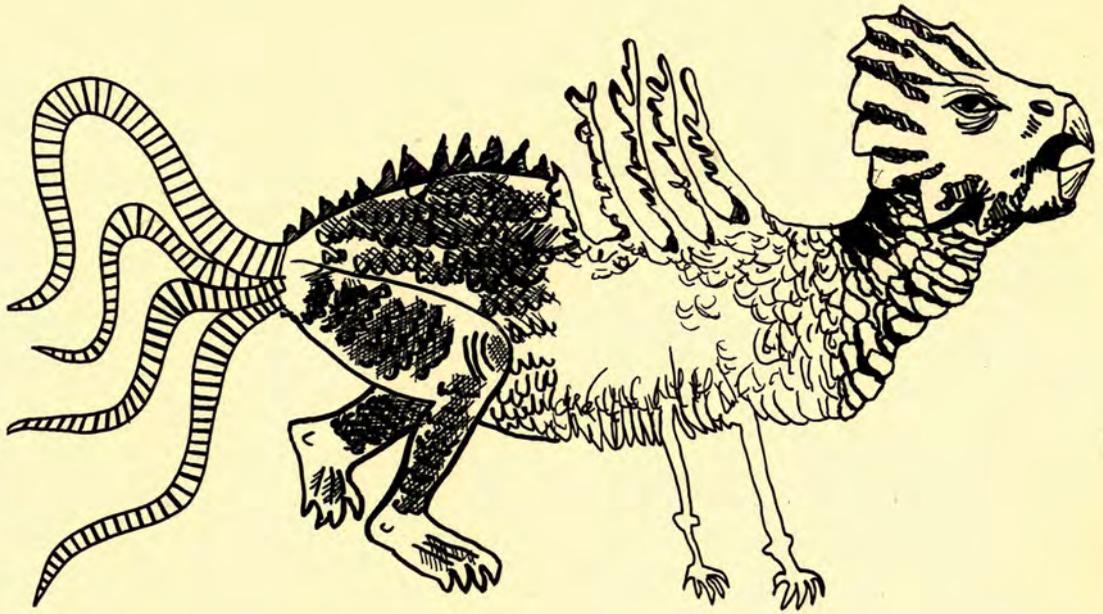
# Perro Verlag Books by Artists

*Jo Cook & Collaborators*

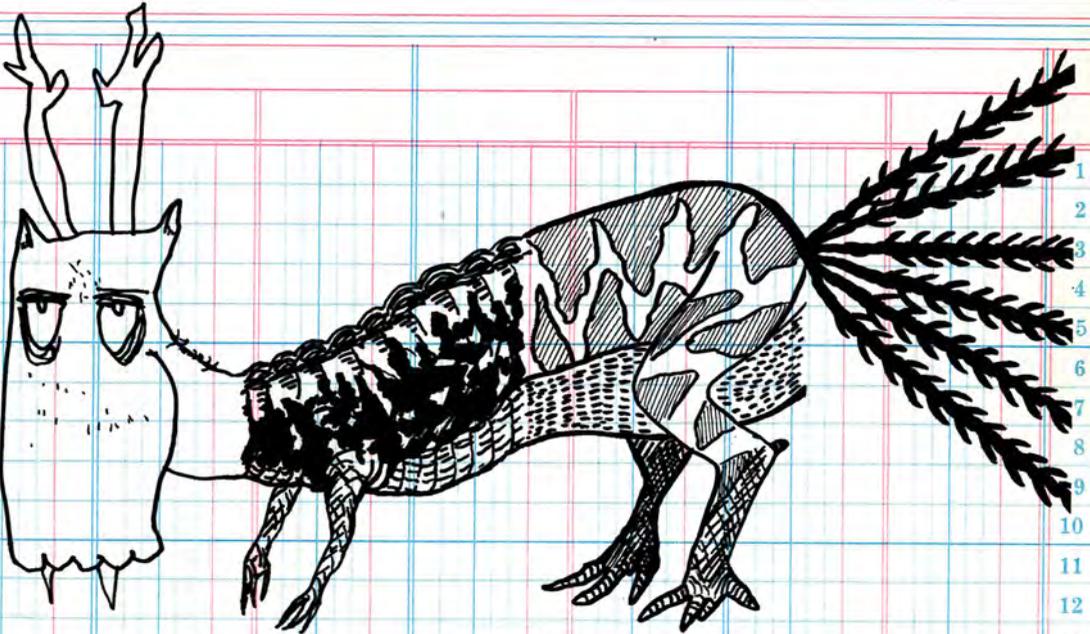
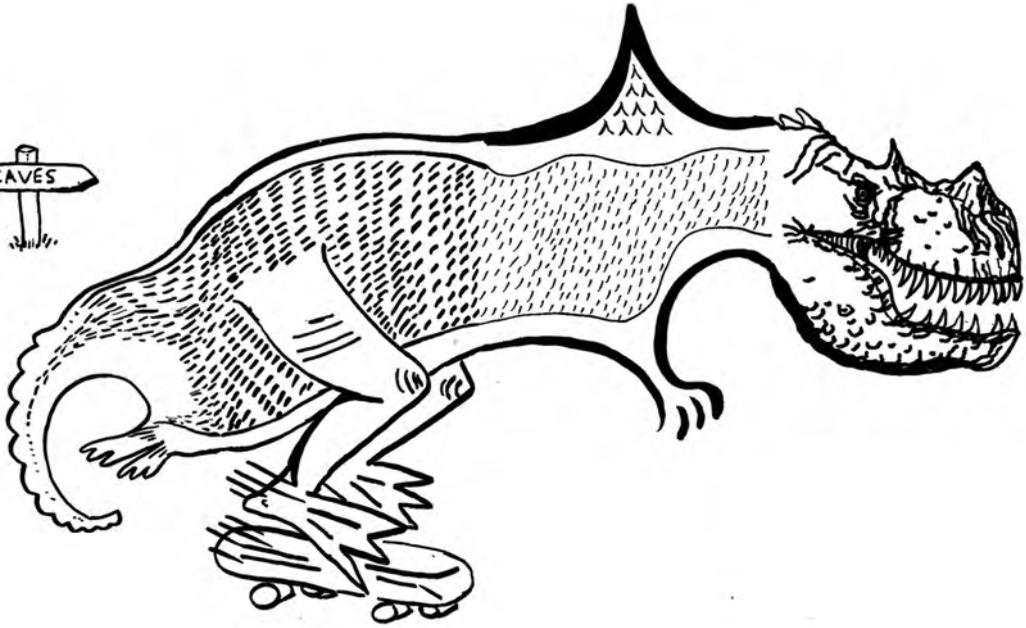


Jo Cook, *3 Women, 12 Portraits*, 2015, two-colour wrap-around letterpress cover on handmade Saint-Armand paper (9 colour and 6 black and white pages), perfect bound, 27.5 × 19 cm





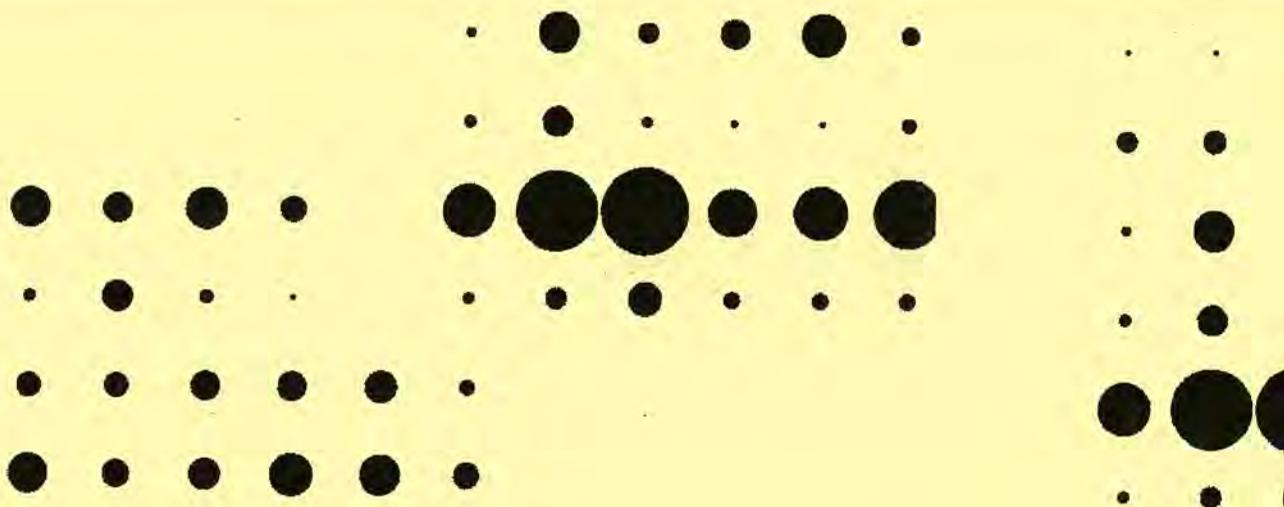
Jo Cook, Wesley Mulvin, Owen Plummer, and Terry Plummer, *Exquisite Dino World Corp*, 2007, collaborative drawings (22 pages), side-stapled, with red binding tape finish, 21.5 × 13.5 cm

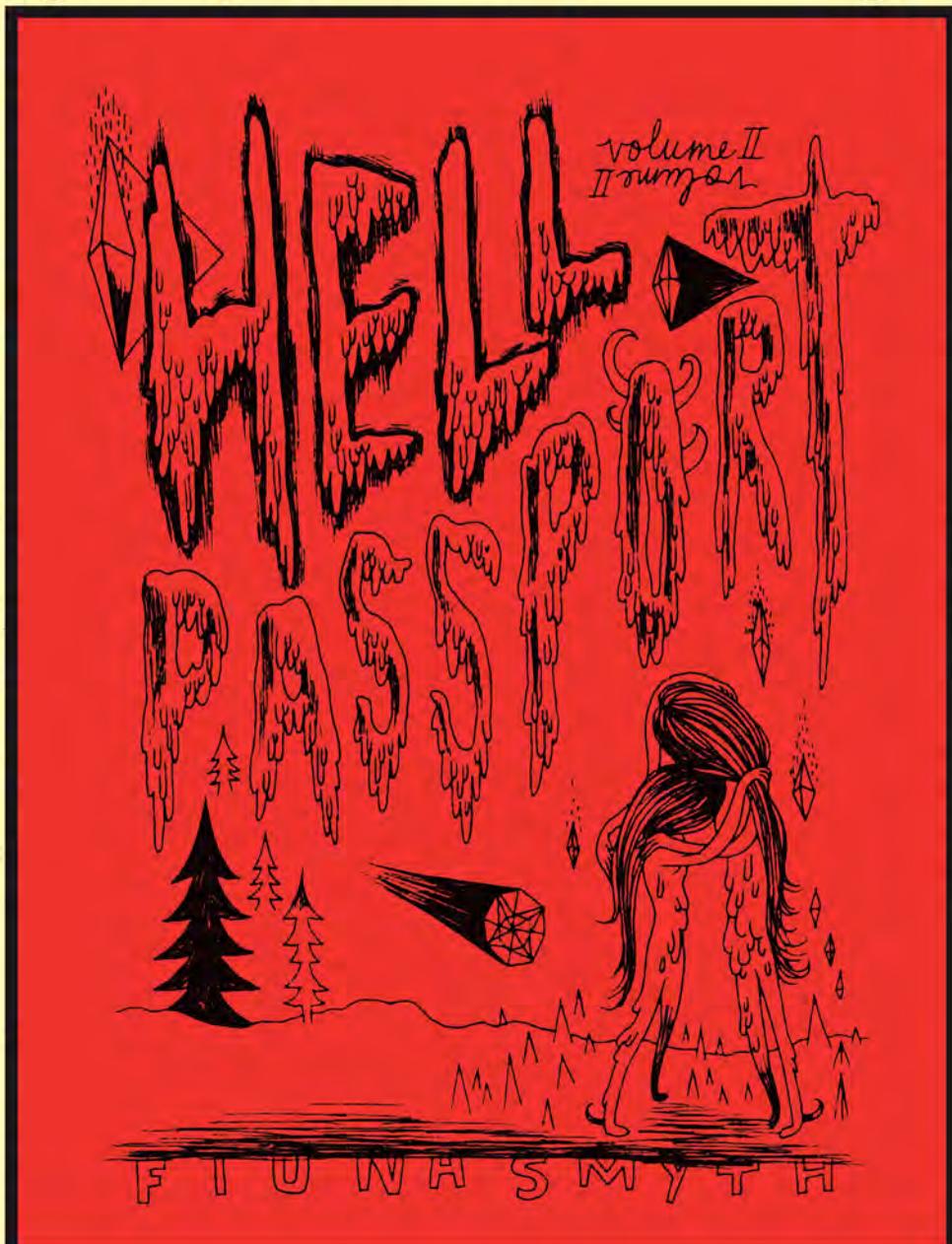


1  
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15



SEVEN

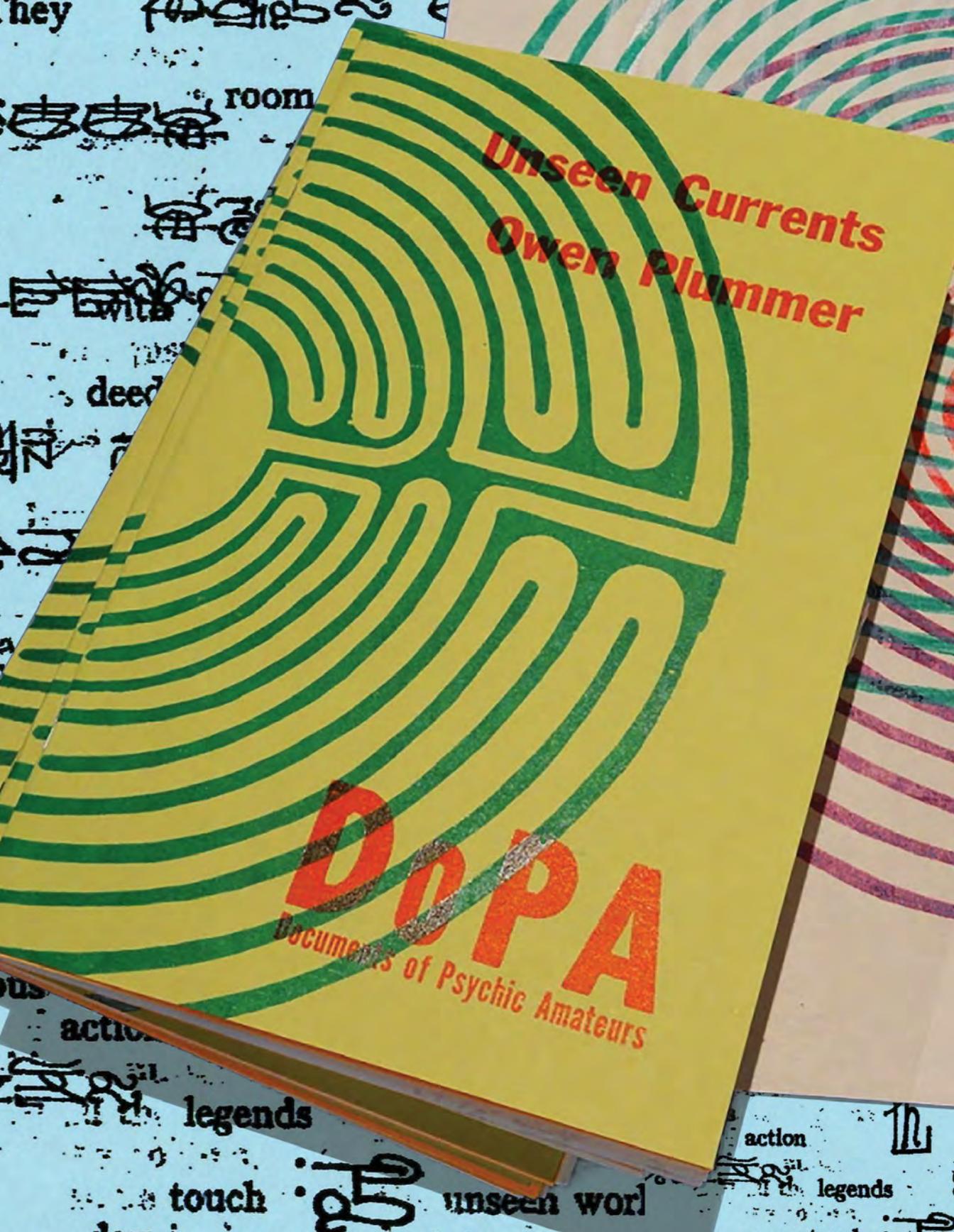


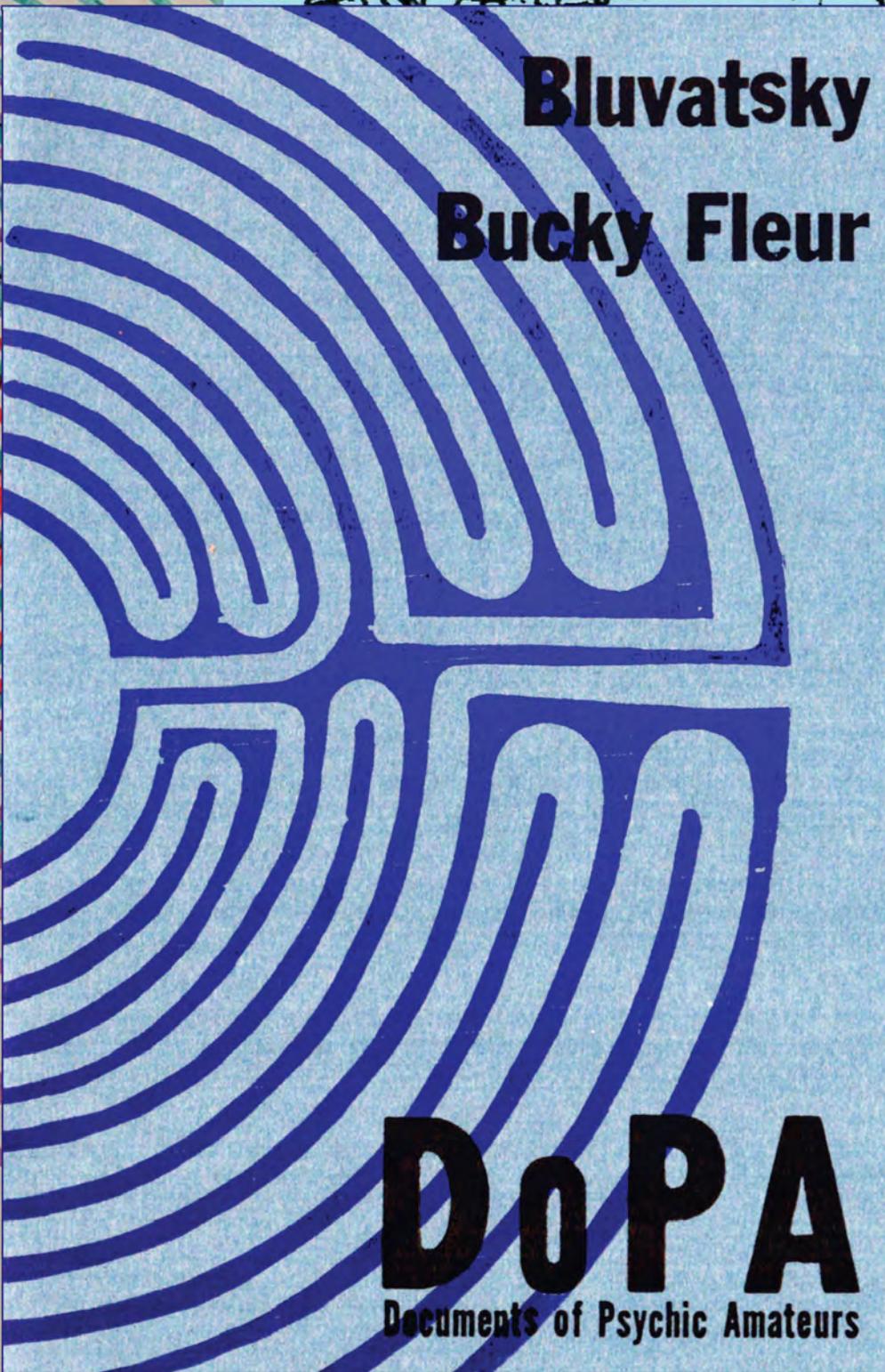


Fiona Smyth, *Hell Passport Volume 2*, 2006, 16 black and white pages, red cover stock with ice-blue end papers, 18.5 × 13.5 cm

**Unseen Currents**  
**Owen Plummer**

**DOPA**  
Documents of Psychic Amateurs





**Bluvatsky**  
**Bucky Fleur**

**DOPA**  
Documents of Psychic Amateurs

Bucky Fleur (editor), *Documents of Psychic Amateurs (DoPA)*, 2015, series of eight pamphlets co-produced by The Institute for the Science of Identity and Perro Verlag, each 21.5 × 13.9 cm

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ



importance NN  
only period fiber

# HAT TREASURES OF THE LOUVRE

*That translated and adapted from the French of*

CHRISTINE HUYGHE

CURATOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND DRAWING

OF THE LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS

LIBRARY OF THE LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS



Jean-Baptiste

CHARDIN (1699-1779)

Autoportrait dit Portrait de Chardin  
à l'abet-jour

1775



Albrecht

DÜRER (1471-1528)

~~His self-portrait~~  
Son portrait par lui-même

HARRY N. ABRAMS Publishers NEW YORK

# “Books are filthy, dirty things!”: An Interview with Jo Cook

*Guinevere Pencarrick*

*There should be a genre: collabo-core. That’s me and Jo Cook, of Perro Verlag press on Mayne Island, BC. Even after a five- or seven-year hiatus, it takes us about two minutes of being around each other before the scissors and glue are out and we’re starting on a collage (even when, like now, we’re supposed to be doing an interview). We both have kind of a reverse Midas touch that way. It’s just who we are.*

*Jo and I are good friends. We met over ten years ago at an art collective and started collaborating immediately. We love talking to each other and can gab for hours. So when I was asked to interview her, it felt like I’d been handed a bunch of firecrackers and told I’m allowed on the roof. The next day I actually opened a fortune cookie that said: “a tempting project will soon present itself to you.”*

*There isn’t a form on this planet that a renegade publishing house and a nut like me wouldn’t turn on its head, and *The Interview* is no exception. Ours started out as an image collage, and then we hacked up all our written/transcribed material and again used collage to reassemble it. Then all that became a script. But then we knocked it back into an interview. And so you’d never even know that it had ever been anything else.*

.....

*Guinevere Pencarrick:* Jo, you and I have done a lot of drawing together and you’ve brought a crazy number of artists in on joint projects. Perro Verlag is like a vast dinner table with people coming and going, talking and making art on

interdimensional napkins. I can’t interview you as a single individual—what you do and who you are is so much bigger than the little tangle of being one person.

*Jo Cook:* The interview is definitely a difficult structure to get at what we do. For every book I’ve published there is a story, which means there are more than a hundred stories, many of them now out of print. Why talk about one rather than another? Each publication is important to me. I’m also an interviewee who has been paralyzed by direct questions her entire life! But the dinner table metaphor is a good one. That’s what Perro Verlag feels like to me, too. My partner Wesley Mulvin and I live on this island and friends come from the mainland to stay for a few days to work with the letterpress. After a day in the print shop, there are late nights sitting around the kitchen table where we plot new work or simply make plans to change the world. The collaborative process is the backbone of Perro Verlag.

GP: This interview is necessarily a collage, then. We can chart your life, your understanding of things, your work, and this would arrive at *The Capilano Review* as a quilt, collage, or zine.

JC: Collage really is the thing, because Perro Verlag has no particular “brand.” In 2009 we were given one of our letterpresses by the Vancouver Island School of Art and we purchased another press for next

to nothing. Several print shops that were going out of business were willing to give us their drawers of lead type if we agreed to take everything off their hands. So we did. We never set out with a fixed aesthetic or idea of which font was good or bad, elegant or crude. In the Typography (capital-T) world there are a lot of opinions. It's a bit of a judgmental trade. We decided to ignore that part. We did our best and we experimented. We followed our interest in collage by combining fonts we'd been given and used them on book covers and postcards and posters. This is how our "house style," or whatever you want to call it, became Perro Verlag.

GP: You have made zines with people of all ages from all kinds of different locations—geographically, intellectually—and it always works. It never enters the art-therapy realm, it always has amazing design quality, and the content is always spellbinding. The space you provide allows people to be truly interesting and to access parts of themselves that it is exciting to share, that people want to see. What is it that you do that creates an environment where anyone can be an artist?

JC: After moving to Mayne Island in 1990, I spent ten years more or less as a hermit. I worked in a six-by-ten-foot studio every day, all day. I made weekly trips to the UBC library and took out as many books as I could fit in my backpack. I wasn't lonely but I was grieving the loss of friendships that I'd had in Vancouver. Many close friends moved on to have academic and business careers. I was staining decks and painting houses for people on the island and studying poetry and drawing. It was an intense solitary

time that I am grateful for. But at the time it was hard.

I'm happy to be working collaboratively much more now. But to answer your question, I don't do anything except open the doors and get ready to work.

GP: Same with the kind of community art programming I tend to co-run; we provide space for people's agency first, meanwhile indicating that support is present.

There's a real fear about making art (artists have it too) and that has to be broken down by collective acknowledgment that there are scary thresholds to cross. That was especially true years ago when I taught a weekly painting class at the Gathering Place Community Centre, which serves low-income and marginalized people. Participants would literally hover at the door insisting they weren't painters, worrying about coming in. That's how strong the fear is in our culture. People don't feel legitimate, entitled to make art. So I emitted a "tempting project" vibe and coaxed them into the space. And then people would make such wonderful paintings and we'd have such great conversations. If that's outsider art then I never want to be indoors.

Perro Verlag is unfettered from some of the funding nightmares that haunt other collectives. Jo, you really do self-publish or perish. And the great big human rambling that comes out of that has an exquisite freedom. Lo-Fi is also an aesthetic choice. Let's talk about all that.

JC: Well, after a couple of failed applications I decided to feel relieved by the lack of approval from the funding bodies. I chose to embrace the unfunded status as something that gave Perro Verlag

a different kind of credibility. I had the freedom to do and say whatever without having to justify it in a language I wasn't interested in mastering. The print runs for the publications can be large or small. And the number of books in a print run has nothing to do with legitimizing what I do. Deadlines are of my own and/or the artists' own making. They are flexible; they can wiggle. Decisions about what direction to take and how to do something are not guided by someone else's criteria. Mistakes are disappointing but often they can identify new ways of approaching the task at hand.

GP: That's why I consider Perro Verlag to be a renegade publishing house. So much of its value comes from the strength of your position here. "Unfunded status" sounds super grand to me. It sounds like a great escape, like a 1930s' bank robbery.

In a similar vein, you and I have discussed Errol Morris and a typography experiment he embarked on via *The New York Times*. Something Morris said stuck out because it fits in with what Perro Verlag gets away with: "Everything I do—everything I write about and everything I make movies about—is about the distance between the world and us. We think the world is just given to us, that there's no slack in the system, but there is. Everything I do is about the slack of the system: the difference between reality and our perception of reality."

JC: Yes, that's a great quote. At some point I began to think more about what independent publishing is. I mean, I'd been *doing* independent publishing, but now I was asking myself questions like,

Is finding a larger and larger audience for one's work so important? Couldn't small, local editions contribute to change as much as larger print runs? If you are small you can do more with less, certainly. One of the most important things for me is to make the means of production available for people to use. I think local small presses can work with whatever size community they find themselves in to invent ways of doing/making things that call into question just that: "the difference between reality and our perception of reality."

When I find books or zines that have been printed on the quiet and have mysteriously landed on a shelf almost forgotten in a bookshop, I realize here is a real treasure. Millions of copies of shiny pages will never interest me. Because the millions have to represent the status quo.

I love seeing the subtle choices the artist or publisher has made during the production of a publication—design, paper and printing, etc. They are always choices made with deeply personal commitments outside contemporary trends. They are original without trying to look important or to fit in with a certain popular aesthetic.

GP: I wonder what is behind your quest for these treasures—if you had wonderful books in your house when you were growing up?

JC: My parents weren't readers. They saw little reason for my sisters and me to have books at home when there were books in school. My mother disliked having books in the house because, as she said, they collected dust—

GP: —let's say it together: "Books are filthy, dirty things!"

JC: Okay! Books are filthy, dirty things! But I have to say, to counteract the filth, the library at the Catholic grade school I attended had dozens of book on the lives of the saints. I read them over and over. The stories of the young girl martyrs were my favourite.

GP: Mountains of repressed eroticism there! Kind of a landfill of the stuff.

JC: Yep. Mountains and landfills. When I started singing in the church choir our hymn books were written in Gregorian chant notation. This was in 1955. We sang in Latin! My interest in alien alphabets began then. Those square notes, the unreadable sacred text.

A little later I discovered Katy Keene comics and became obsessed with them. You could design dresses for Katy and mail the drawings to the publisher in hopes that your dress design would be chosen for reproduction in the next issue of the comic—or that you might win some kind of prize. I wasn't interested in the prizes but I loved drawing Katy Keene's body over and over again. Drawing the outline of her breasts under the dresses was thrilling! So the eroticism I found in the books of martyrs alongside the powerful turn-on of the Katy Keene comics were the psycho-sexual foundation for my relationship with print culture. I am still always looking for and expecting—and yes, often finding—the same kind of Holy/Sexy charge when I pick up a new book.

GP: Okay, so who is Bucky Fleur? Because I feel like maybe she fits in here, with this gaze on Katy Keene and a pulpy, holy, sexy charge.

JC: Bucky Fleur (sounds on purpose a bit like *Bucky Fuller*) is a character who came to me when I was trying to write about certain forms of failure—paralyzing shame accompanied by a great big pile of ugly rage. I was convinced the work was both repugnant and laughable. I have been hearing Bucky's voice most of my life but she'd been unnamed until around 2001 when Ed Varney invited me to exhibit my work at the Comox Valley Art Gallery. There was to be a zine accompanying the exhibition with the text written by Bucky. That was her first time in print and we'll be forever grateful to Ed for supporting this early publication.

GP: I get that, and so do the alter egos that came out of my own similar tussles. Between us we can fully populate a future zine series.

Bucky was around for the old days in Vancouver at Lucky's Comics and The Regional Assembly of Text. We did so much group drawing then. And remember the Cartoon Wars? That was inspired by you. What other projects did you inspire? Those BBQs and all of us drawing together for hours. And the *Hell Passport* project.

JC: Those certainly were amazing times. You and I first met at one of those drawing parties!

GP: Making exquisite corpses. Talked all night.

JC: Yep. Exquisite talks, fuelled by beer and wine. You know, I saw some drawings one day when I wandered into Lucky's. Owen Plummer was curating these brilliant shows on a three-by-six wall near

the front door. Just wonderful “off the wall” work! I saw Owen’s drawings and Julia Feyrer’s and Collin Johanson’s and Colin Upton’s work there too. Then at an opening at the Helen Pitt I met Donato Mancini, James Whitman, and Jeremy Turner. Jeremy had a pocket gallery and Donato had a wallet gallery. They were walking around having the openings of their galleries using the Helen Pitt opening as a venue. They were funny, friendly, welcoming people and I liked them immensely. James and I began drawing together soon after that. Owen and I began hatching installation ideas and book shows. We are pretty much all still working together in some way.

The collaborative drawing parties at Lucky’s and the camaraderie around those events was the catalyst for the *Hell Passport* project. At first I thought it might be a small series of maybe ten pamphlets, but it grew to a box set of twenty-four.

GP: And what about the parties at The Regional Assembly of Text? Those were also a big part of the collective impulse. The *Hell Passports* were in their library.

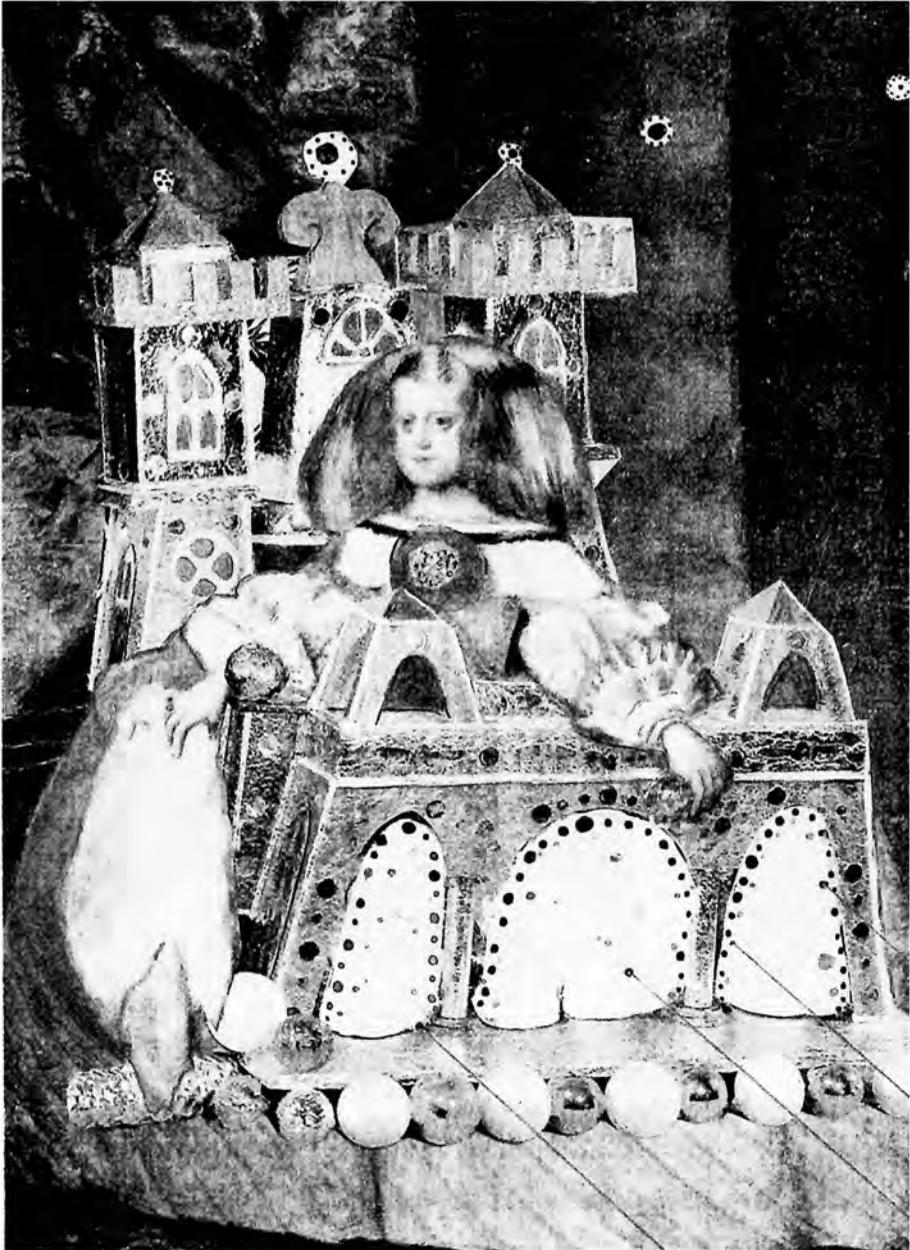
JC: Around the same time I met Owen I heard that two Emily Carr students were having an exhibition of artist books and zines in their apartment. The two students were Brandy Fedoruk and Rebecca Dolen. I put one of my early books in their apartment gallery show and met more book people through Brandy and Rebecca who, as it happens, are now in their tenth year of operating The Regional Assembly of Text on Main Street, just a few doors down from Lucky’s.

GP: And you are still such great friends. I can’t believe it’s already been ten years!

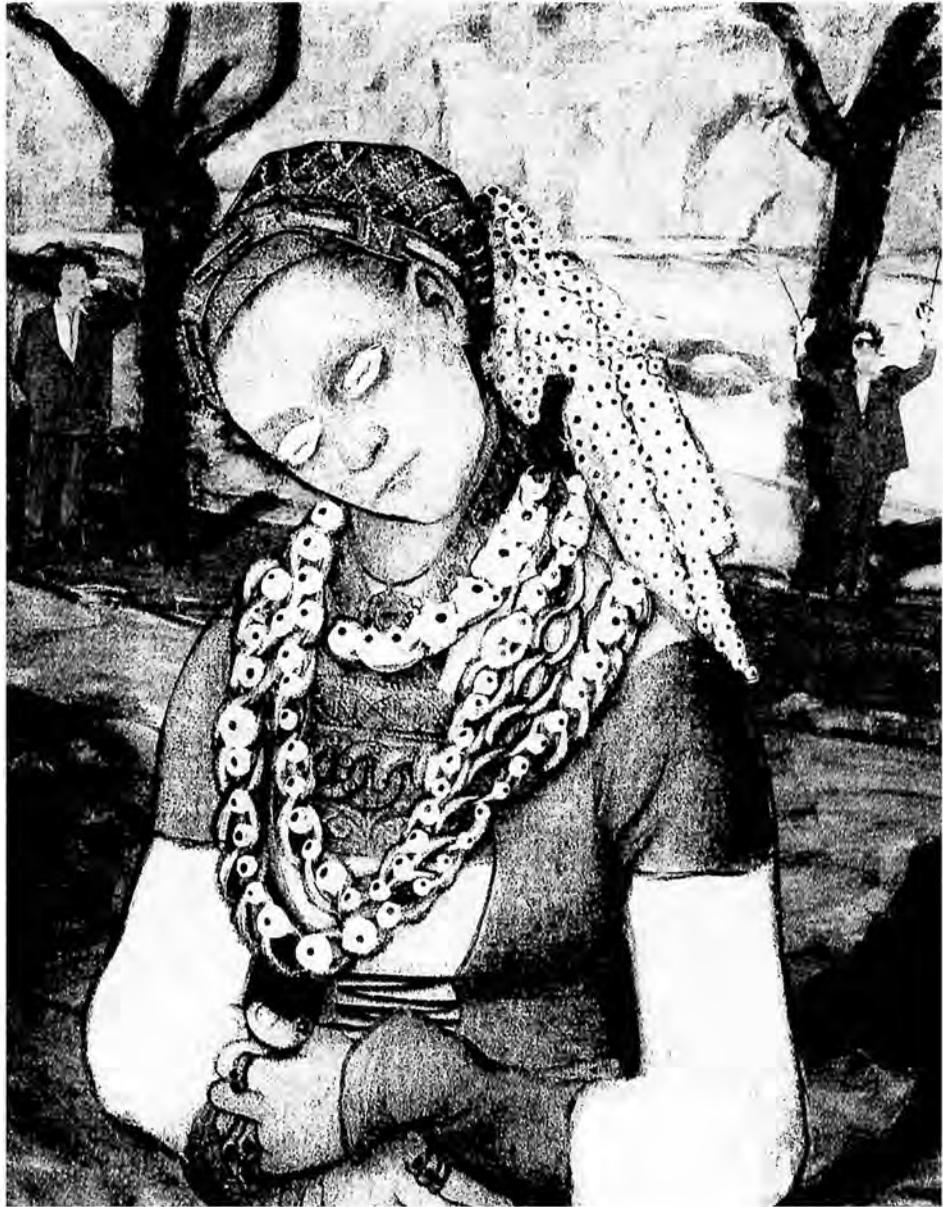
We celebrated your 60th at the 536 Art Collective around that time, and I know you’re turning 70 this month. That’s an awesome age. Where do you go from here?

JC: That birthday party! There were at least seven cakes and thousands of balloons. You couldn’t move in the room for the balloons. It was a party typical of the over-the-top generosity and nuttiness of 536.

Where I’m going from here: who knows about these things? I’ve found working with the letterpress to be more and more interesting. It is a huge pleasure. You don’t push a start button; you press the paper into the type to make the image. It is a very physical process—which is the pleasure of it, of course. Mixing ink on the glass, inking the type, and pulling a proof is always exciting. It has nothing to do with trying to make a technically perfect reproduction of an image. You are not staring at a computer screen. Reproduction is what I want to move away from. In general I’d say that the idea of “the perfect image” has been a major stumbling block. Once I began printing the work of other artists it was even more of an issue since I didn’t want to disappoint with reproductions that weren’t perfect. I’ve spent too much time on cleaning and fine-tuning ink-jet and laser printers as well as my black-and-white photocopier. Sometimes I felt like I was going crazy from the frustration. Now I just want to print pages that expose and perform the mechanics of the letterpress. And of course I’m looking forward to many more collaborative interviews with you, Guinevere, for our forthcoming zine series, *The Interview!* ‡



Jo Cook and James Whitman, *Altered Art Treasures, 1456 to 1960*, 2011, collaborative collage postcards (30 black and white pages), saddle stitched, 19 × 14.5 cm







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Printed in a signed and numbered edition of 60 copies, two-colour screenprint cover on Fabriano cover stock, with blue endpapers, perfect-bound with black binding tape, 21.5 × 16.5 cm

# whales, candlelight, and stuff like that

*Donato Mancini*

back from the dead, or wherever the hell he'd gone  
on to Mount Parnassus, Houston, Smithers  
somewhere like that, bumper alert  
it's a tough town to couch surf they say  
he decided to swallow his ticket  
to the hereafter, I could see ghostly reflections  
of the drapery, the chesterfield shimmered  
when I looked in the refrigerator, I pissed  
I'm so scared and everything, then I'm totally pausing  
and, ah you know, really stupid uh so  
she goes on about how we are all so socialized like  
why palimpsest has a pimp in it, denuded  
of their traditional lands and so forth, blah blah blah I never heard  
of a missionary society started  
by humanists or communists or atheists  
or any such individuals  
these verses clearly say His people  
should have no dealings  
with sorcery, necromancers  
Koreans, Chinese, Cubans ugh  
yeah then these fellas don't take baths, can you smell me that  
I mean, does everything I end up touching just turn to shit or what, my kids  
you know they're gunna suffer because they didn't have a father and stuff  
you're dealing with people's emotions and people's psyche the  
patient can be tied down  
with straps, belts, bungees, a cinch  
or something or other, whatever's at hand

fast food joints and hospitals, you name it  
could they *not* make a teardrop, I don't know  
one recent study examined how long people watching *Mr. Bean*  
*at the Dentist* were able to keep one hand immersed in ice-cold water  
milk was used though  
for the close-up of his innards, along  
with pasta and glass marbles  
after you find out  
it starts to look like it  
it was like a Friday night kinda  
anger, pain, alcoholism, sexual arousal, take your pick  
I was just lying there and crap, like with my face to the wall  
he slams me into the concrete the  
stun effect, hallucinations, hysteria  
in this world, more specifically  
there's murder, rape, abuse, suicide, abortion, human sacrifice  
everybody else's fame, please, on Earth  
I just remember crying about being sad  
lactive sickness, need, heartache, this and that  
blood with cream in it, mentions  
too, there was the loneliness  
when I didn't have an assistant, a wardrobe girl  
or anyone, I suppose  
French is the language of love and stuff  
evil is pain and war you know  
conscience, horror, despair  
all the dismal scenes of woe, no faith  
in counsellors, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, so on  
all gated communities even have a quiz  
to see if you're a child molester, a spazz or pyromaniac  
or anything so-and-whomsoever says

distress should never be taken superficially  
or reckoned with summarily as a lack, of  
misery or whatnot  
sundry apparitions warning  
karma's in every bad thing coming your way bub  
including any victim status, natural devastation, ill health  
people always believed  
lonely and desolate places haunted by devils  
sad, strange, risky—you get it  
the human foot of clay walks incautious, all that dross  
if only the world would *fuck* in times of stress, trauma, crush  
the death-bed of hope is the cradle of despair, all the rest  
when the motor's running, keep your fingers, hair, worry beads, everything else  
out of the mechanism, a storyful  
of dark satanic peasants, howling winds and pigs' bladders  
yes, your father was murdered by your uncle  
or something or whatever  
or me  
look, I had work to do, defining myself as a painter  
an *Eggs 'N' Things* sign, prestige and so on  
just remember when you worked in the pits  
factories, slums, and apartment houses, sawdust flour  
bread with artificially coloured marmalade now  
first they'll tease 'em, then they'll try to say they stink  
like, the guano miners  
eventually turned the mummy's remains  
over to an agent for the Smithsonian then  
they disappeared from history, extract, prick  
the shoulders or any part with needles, squeeze for quotes  
made trivial, rivers swapped  
for trinkets, tortured in various ways

to admit the rights of Martians, animals  
we'll hafta be aware of nature and the environment  
whales, candlelight, and stuff like that  
acid rain, radioactive waste, oil spills  
bambivalent  
two-headed deer and  
some real problems  
the local garbage dump of everywhere  
or anywhere and all what's in-between  
bunny parts, rabbit stages, unique instants when  
we go see the movie and eat popcorn and Junior Mints  
or whatever the fuck else, I've seen  
people who had their legs and so on amputated  
unless you train in Afghanistan or Vietnam or Iraq or somewhere  
love and pain are neither harder nor easier than cognition nor dozens  
of people, especially younger ones, disappearing from their homes  
we all want a warm place to sleep yadda yadda  
just say it: you had it blocked out coz of  
the severe shock, the concussion  
I guess everyone felt, felt  
we were older, only forced  
labour, stone-age degeneracy, along with others  
the first shall be last and the last shall be first  
standing in for mechanised humans—work-and-sex machines  
being, nothingness, death, alienation, boredom, fear, emotions, recognition, sympathy,  
empathy, shame, space-time, economic systems won't mend  
types of forces  
contact forces, action-at-a-distance forces  
general extenders, yep you really can get high  
off lip balm on your eyelids  
wanna try, or what

# Two Poems

*Trish Salah*

## Cosmic Relief

Whatever is white out, and it is particular, a fiction  
close enough

    soon enough for you even if  
    disappointing  
        or would you rather  
delete through accumulation?

Whatever.

Flout the basic laws of arithmetic, war  
    (go to) or (your go-to)  
    it is, and the origin, civil  
        an instructional insect  
    or (secret history) story  
when was stretched, recorded?  
    Was it (then) or (white)?

Re: place in the basement world attic  
    through through, though seeded  
no longer able to distinguish (brunch) or (the brain)  
    saying once never  
saying  
    who from who, pure  
and please                      please...

Singularity, aggregated—stop barking!  
    —compiled, recorded  
like, in a table  
    when was the originary white?

Helpless, ghosts in the house,  
lords and ladies, otherwise, authoring  
    a gold dog's bone.

## Thing for Thing

As if under water mutation seems to be  
your alibi. I would rather

not. As if a potentiality you would rather  
not realize. I would rather  
you.

Not to say but,  
letters are nice.

What can be reaped or not?

Essentially a being that is, only a power that is,  
a well-known parable  
capitalism in its later stages of satiation.

Tell me, do those exist?

Figure for a wish, as if.

If for the form of dying, we are convinced.

Essentially a nose or social relation,  
a labile paradise type of thing,  
possessives or essences, a potentiality today extracted for a wish  
as if.

And then again, “environmentally speaking.”

My qualities, a longstanding stumbling block,  
as per portents or familiars,  
fantasmagoria directly lived

how else?

My qualities’ refraining, as if to say

“letters are not nice,” “we would rather”  
You or not, or

would not.

# from *Diseaseum*

*Chris Erickson*

THESE SCHOLAR-NUNS WERE DEBATING in the Royal Philosophical Courtyard wearing flared overcoats and Bermudas:

“Uh-oh, looks like the lamp is burning!”

“Oh for chrissake.”

“I completed vast practices and I make *now I really make the call* for universal love!”

“Oh for chrissake.”

“*Do* you hear me calling?”

“Have you come to a debate or to share your TV slogans? Do you have supporting reasons?”

“I honestly straight-up *live* reasons now. That’s my debate. Having completed vast practices, you know, my body is reasons. *All* this is reasons,” and she made a general environmental gesture.

“I’ll give you ‘vast practices!’” and she looked like she was about to whack somebody.

“In and of itself it’s all I need to begin calling and singing for you.”

“I don’t accept this.”

“I done *done* vast practices regardless. They *been* handed down, handed down, all, to tell me one thing: I’m no huckster in town on the corner like you’re treating me, and I’m not lying on you, and we *got* to have universal love up in here!” And, with that, this nun clapped her hands in front of the other’s nose!

“Oh for chrissakes.”

“How you like me *now*?”

“Careful now! And even you said ‘now’ before. Careful with ‘now’! Don’t act like you’ve *gained* or *become* now you’re back from retreat! Don’t act like anything happened. Vast practices don’t need being ‘handed down’, as you say. This would strictly be in the larger sense. Do you follow me?”

“I feel you.”

“It follows that, as you say, your ‘body’ was ‘reasons’, *before retreat*. So how did this get handed down?”

“Regardless if vast practices *been* being here, it *was* handed down, overstand. And it *was* transmitted because before I didn’t start calling for it like I am! Like pure direct education.”

“You must understand I’m not talking about someone explaining it to you, like, ‘You should do vast practices and here’s how you do it, because you will want to call for it all

over and teach them...'. That would just be somewhat conventional. You must understand I'm talking about *in the larger sense*."

"I feel you."

This nun looked dead serious: "It follows that you went on retreat, did vast practices, and nothing happened."

"You act like I'm entranced from retreat, and like I don't mean it. You act like I'm a corner huckster, like I'm lying on you. You act like there's no such thing as two things. You act like there's no effort. And this is like giving cutdowns to me!"

"I love you in a personal sense, welcome back to the temple, and hat's off to you; I just don't ever in a million years think anything happened on retreat."

"Look at you you're all smug! You bring up 'the larger sense', but your reaction is straight-up smallest scale. That's on the real *for real*."

"Can you prove you're not entranced from retreat?" Nuns around these two were having their own debates in the courtyard. It was a nice morning. The nuns felt fresh and alive. "You said 'you act' but *you* act out here, and flap your lips after your non-retreat full of nothing special!"

"My proof is the next ten thousand years of my behavior."

"Well, as long as you are thinking about the future, I think you're caught now and finished!" and she shut down her personal space.

ALMODAD WAS THUMBING THROUGH a music periodical in bed. He was glancing through the music periodical. He was looking through it. The nightstand and the whole shebang. The lacey nightcap, the clock-radio. The periodical. His makeup was stacked on the vanity. All his everything else.

Most unexpectedly, King Big-Ass Slappy appeared in the door of the bed chamber and sat down on the bed. This brought up a flood of emotions inside Almodad's soul. And when that happened to him he put the periodical aside for now.

"What's good, blood?" the king said. He wore a blue floor-length silken medical gown and Ugg boots. He arranged his gown a little bit. He was fiddling with the bed. There were some food plates around.

Almodad thinks: I have compassion to him. I have love for him. Not only to what I can get; this is my king right here, the Noble One. I want to have a great time with him. And no one can be more surprised at how I feel than me. This is not the usual kind of thing for me. I should tell this fully to him through my music. I could do a whole album to him. Join with him through my music. Connect through music and activities of course. I have compassion to my king in here. I have love for this man and I can't explain. Join with him, be with him. Be a part. Eat together. Share the food, share money. Go to do activities together and rest later on. My king in here amuses me. Look at his funny gown. Look at his peculiarities. Join me! Spend the day! Come! Take a late lunch with me. Go to a restaurant. Go to a neat little café with me. Order something. I order plenty. Order a meal and a drink with it, sit with me. Be in a café. Join me for a late lunch. Come take a late lunch after you have seen everyone and put everyone in check. Let's drive to a neat little café in a neat part of town and listen to music on the way. Spend the rest of the day after. Rest together. I love you as a friend so protect me. Be my king of this. Put me in check. Listen to songs. I like singing for you. I see how you are in pain. *I'm* in pain; my head, of course. And I am also lost. I know you're sick. I have compassion to this. I have compassion to this. My idea is to spend the day. Come to you, you come to me, and spend the day. Let the café workers serve us and look after what we order. We sit together. I will listen to you talk about what's it like being the king, and I will share what I know about my music and current music. We have a lovely late lunch. We spend the day. We eat the lunch. Let's eat! You go ahead and eat, Noble One! The food is awesome! The waiter is beautiful! The cook is well-built. Let's eat!

King Slappy has been thinking: The pleuritic pain is developing even more. No one can properly determine the cause of the pleuritic condition. They have come from all over to see me. The ever-developing pain is tough to bear and is *one* thing. It is that which has, the bitch-ass doctors tell us, "an unidentifiable cause." I have recently asked if it makes a difference if my sputum is yellowish or greenish. Doctors offer me nothing. I pay the bogus-ass fees. "Lay me on my side and go out of the sickroom." They can't even guess the cause of my pleuritic condition! They can't tell me nothing new. They aren't saying

nothing new. I have that which has no cause. This defies all logic to some extent but they tell me this. And this is *another* thing. “This defies logic!” I have actually shouted. (Who will restrain me from it?) “Your Majesty,” they say something like, and being very formal, “we know there is a cause, but it is not been identified. This can often happen with disease.” They all say all the same thing. They *all* say all the same thing! “Shall we roll you on your side, Your Majesty?” This defies all known logic! I go on my side in my special bed in my sickroom. Loud to them, and as pain tears through my whole chest, “This defies all logic!” (Who will shush me? So no one.) I keep on: “An effect with no cause! This defies all known logic to mankind, you assholes! Look at my wife in her eyes and what you’re doing!” Am I not supposed to be daunted by this? This defies logic all kinds. This *is* daunting all kinds. My body the way it is I must rely on something, and I must totally understand what I rely on. I must totally rely on what I feel and what I understand. Example: I was made king, and I know and accept why. I know and accept exactly why. I pretty much accept exactly why. But “no cause”? What are these ones doing? I can say, “How did we get here?” *No cause*. “What can I do?” *No cause*. “It’s going to get better?” *Can’t determine. No cause*. “What’s our names?” *No cause*. “What’s the weather doing?” *Can’t predict. No ideas, no cause*. Of course this sort of act will make your patients lose every hope. Don’t you see? Months after months. Any hope I ever had is lost if this keeps up with you assholes! Here we are! Here we go! Make up your mind before I go get Cassawennie on you after being in a pissed off mood!

A wintry mix falling outside. Snow and ice gathering upon the roofs of the gazebos and the railings. Parents and children sledding. With all their different everything else.

“Hey with your brain-skull-mansion of yours,” the king breathed.

“IT’S BITUMINOUS IS WHAT this is happens to be. This *could* be one hundred thousand other stuff,” the Royal Scientific Bituminous Coal Researcher said to the ministers. The researcher was wearing a black highnecked chemise with gold threads paired with dark olive slacks and Jordans, was on the last slide of his PowerPoint, and he was circling some areas on a geologic map with his laser pointer. A moment earlier, he had asked if the ministers had any questions on his presentation. So far they didn’t even.

“This was discovered hundreds of years ago and by accident at least it seems to me though they never mention,” he said, often looking at the ministers. He spoke softly to them: “This is bituminous is what is this is. If all what you see is what something is then that’s exactly what it is and is bituminous right here. As long as what you see is there and this is happens to be is this bituminous then this is bituminous. This boney pile. This bituminous the major product of this land which helps us which I discussed. The major product this is this is bituminous can be. We have all we want and this is one of the main things one of the major things about this land gives us. Can you believe this? We are so lucky in this age with all this you know. This *could* actually be a hundred other stuff. *Could* be. Where’s this is coming from?” He knew he had hit on a major point here. So, he went deeper: “That’s only one factor because we also have to have in place someone some people that can use this. Which we have. They have to be in place over here,” lasering to different places on the map. “We have to be able to like find them and of course all this. We *could* be living some scenario where this is impossible and guess then we’d just simply have to ‘sit on’ the bituminous or not even know about this. We *could* of course be placed in a position where—and get this—where we don’t even *know this*. We *could* even be these microscopic blobs with no knowledge of this. This is not out of the question as far as this. We *could* be like crap somewhere.” He was sorry to have said this kind of language, but when the ministers didn’t react, he walked a little toward their table. “Like some little bacteria out there in the place. More and more our scientists are telling us. So this is not out of the question for our realm of this.” He turned around and started to laser point at the map and even clicked back to some previous slides and hummed. He felt there could still be a question in there in their minds. All that he presented, he seemed to feel there might be something about the presentation. “Nevermind of course of this product the major of our land but you could be some little crap in some nightmare in there. Your life, all darkness, and never know any of this because you would have no method to achieve this kind of contact we enjoy at this. Your life would be like pure brutal darkness and you like couldn’t move or even talk with anyone. You would either be like bouncing off little organisms or just material, some piece of dirt or a particle like, never knowing anything and like never be involved in anything.”

He waited another moment. This was just in case. He was just cheerful. “This is this kind of thing I think about. Maybe this sounds like I’m crazy but we’ll find out pretty soon who’s crazy.” He was shutting down the equipment. “So, this is bituminous. Nobody questions? Thank you very much.”

# from even this page is white

*Vivek Shraya*

## a lover's bookshelf

tolstoy	knowles	belloc	stoker
woolf	lerner	camus	adler
shakespeare	diamond	rigby	toole
graves	wallace	eggert	franz
salinger	shrag	hemingway	nabokov
brontë	austen	orwell	o'neill
cocteau	pushkin	findley	shteyngart
sedaris	hecht	hall	trudeau
norris	walter	doyle	thomson
dostoyevsky	vonnegut	kerouac	jacobs
hamilton	ondaatje	kundera	didion
wilde	hébert	harrison	lane
steinbeck	irving	mousnier	updike
fowles	davies	dickens	eugenides
adams	hosseini	bök	krauss
marquez	lee	önnepalu	basilières
golding	white	thurber	heti
king	beatty	baldwin	chabon
gogol	maclennan	buckley	coupland
kundera	le guin	marquez	gopnik
mccarthy	boyden	diaz	atwood
tolkien	mahadevan	smith	munro
l'engle	doctor	chandler	rakoff
goldman	francis	dahl	saunders
twain	bergen	dunn	shields
rowling	bryson	richards	sebold
gravestock	le carré	bergman	klein
winterson	dickens	reid	macmillan
bechdel	conrad	allen	mowat
mccartney	richler	hornby	mantel
hollinghurst	shields	shields	brown

## 54,216 signed petition to ban kanye west from playing pan am games closing ceremony

not canadian	dick	insulted a man	racist
big mouth	pussy ass bitch	in a wheelchair	homophobe
arrogant	doesn't deserve	convicted	punk
egotistical	anyone's	criminal	disgrace
asshole	respect	embarrassment	lowlife with no
insult to music	prick	to the words	class
idiot	unethical	artist, musician,	mediocre ego
horrible	douchebag	sane person	poor excuse for
pretentious	disgrace to	thinks only about	a human and a
pathetic human	music	himself	musician
being	worst	foul language	imposter
billionaire	no talent hack	offense to music	worse than
smarmy	disgrace to	pop culture and	ebola and hitler
message is	humans	humanity	not a very nice
satanic	makes me want	doesn't respect	person
disgusting	to puke	other artists	talentless hack
reprehensible	worst human	untalented wife	scumbag
thinks he's a	being on earth	childish	garbage
"god"	disgrace to the	behaviour	dumbass
bad influence	human race	bully	irrelevant
nasty wife	acts like a	poor loser	sucks and blows
sucks balls	spoiled toddler	twit	pompous
retard	self righteous	needs a reality	no talent bum
parasite	loser who should	check	a plague on the
everything	be wiped off the	an ego the size	music industry
wrong with	face of the earth	of an elephant's	disrespectful
society music	likes fish dicks	arse	overpaid
and culture	fool	hypocrite	joke
disgusting	terrible musician	arrogant ass	too expensive

massive ego  
hippo assed  
porn slut wife  
not professional  
clown  
sore loser  
racist bigot  
money  
obsessed  
fat ass wife  
retarded looking  
kid  
needs to be  
knocked down a  
peg  
garbage  
incarnate  
needs to learn  
when it's time to  
fuck off  
big mouth piece  
of shit moron  
married to a 2 bit  
whore  
no brains  
connected to a  
kardashian  
turd sandwich  
american

selfish ass  
sucks at singing  
nob goblin  
thunder punt  
epitome of  
horrible people  
no manners  
caused trouble  
many times  
will turn the  
games into a  
racism issue  
makes me  
ashamed to be  
human  
clown prince  
stinky  
of entertainers  
exemplifies poor  
sportsmanship  
shallow  
delusional  
fucking knob  
poor public  
behaviour  
epitome of a  
poor sport  
immature brat  
ass hat

butchered  
"bohemian  
rhapsody"  
stands for greed  
very self-  
centered  
incapable of  
playing a  
musical  
instrument  
not a musician  
a lack of humility  
and grace  
awful  
inflated ego  
ungrateful idiot  
tool  
rude  
narcissistic fraud  
jerk  
total waste of  
human dna  
useless waste of  
skin  
high lord of  
douchebag  
ignorant  
worse than a  
bag of dicks

biggest d-bag i  
have ever seen  
waste of oxygen  
dildo  
not deserving  
s.o.b.  
none of the  
qualities we  
admire in the  
human race  
not be allowed  
near a crowd of  
human beings  
disgraces to  
fairness and  
respect  
an insult to  
everybody  
poor role model  
makes bad  
music  
represents the  
most pretentious  
guy in the world  
worst example  
no talent period  
spoiled  
cannot sing  
talentless

## **bloody mary**

white supremacy  
white supremacy  
white supremacy.

from **Wanderings**

*Meryl McMaster*



*Secret Darkness of Birds, 2015, ink jet print, 114 × 76 cm*  
*All images courtesy the artist and Katzman Contemporary, Toronto*



*Phantom Silence* (detail), 2015, ink jet print, 46 × 157 cm





*Avian Wanderer I, II, and III*, 2015, ink jet print, 51 × 76 cm





*Time's Gravity*, 2015, ink jet print, 76 × 114 cm



*Keeper's Crossing*, 2015, ink jet print, 114 × 76 cm





*Dream Catcher*, 2015, ink jet print, 81 × 168 cm



*Equinoctial Line*, 2015, ink jet print, 114 × 76 cm



*Weight of the Shadow*, 2015, ink jet print, 114 × 76 cm

# On Meryl McMaster's *Wanderings*

*Ann Jaeger*

There are many points of entry into *Wanderings*, Meryl McMaster's most recent collection of photographs: Indigenous, feminist, fine art photography, performative, sculptural, interdisciplinary, Surrealist, self-portrait, land-based, anthropomorphic, craft/material arts, post-literate. The offspring of Plains Cree and European bloodlines, McMaster weaves her bi-cultural experience into compelling self-portraits that leave the temporal behind but that manage to stay grounded, earthy. In her carefully constructed and staged photographs, McMaster is wholly present. The skilled hand of a craftsperson is evident in every frame, not only in the photographic execution but through hand-stitched garments; accoutrements of ropes, rags, fabric braids; headgear made of antlers, birds, bees, sticks, and moss; and the signifying device of a red thread recurring through the images. She often dons whiteface, evocative of Kabuki theatre and reflecting the winter landscape of the photos, but appearing neither confrontational nor decorative. Renouncing ego and judgement, she enacts a reinvented personal history of indigeneity and navigates a cusp of past and future, a realm of both being and becoming.

In McMaster's photographs the colonial gaze has been disrupted. In the words of Artspace Director Jonathan Lockyer, curator for McMaster's exhibitions in Peterborough and Santa Fe: "McMaster's work, in exceptionally subtle ways, creates spaces for the viewer to consider difficult questions concerning identity, history, colonialism and Indigenous self-determination. The work in *Wanderings* allows for an oscillation between identities, and puts forward an assertion that for Indigenous people, identity has never been static... [R]ather than allow herself to become lost or disempowered within the spaces between contrasting identities," he observes, "McMaster creates a visual narrative of empowerment."

In contrast to Cindy Sherman's staged self-portraits, McMaster's tableaux appear less as a form of self-aware play acting or identity dress-up than as a means to fully inhabit her own multidimensional self. Exploring the complex aesthetics of Indigenous self-image through media and performance-based art, McMaster is in sync with contemporary artists like Rebecca Belmore, Dana Claxton, James Luna, Shelley Niro, or Lori Blondeau. She embodies the idea of survivance through prisms of identity, portraying herself as both mythic icon and pilgrim and always as inextricable from the natural world.

Dr. Gerald McMaster, recently appointed Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Visual Culture & Curatorial Practice at OCAD University, is McMaster's father. In his research he asks "How can Indigenous artists engage with the non-Indigenous world while maintaining their difference?" Meryl McMaster answers that question on many levels, heartfully, unambiguously, without a saying a word.

# from *The Crow Gulch Poems*

*Douglas Walbourne–Gough*

## What Was Crow Gulch?

*When you get old and can't pay the rent,  
go down to Crow Gulch and pitch a tent.*

—Corner Brook schoolyard rhyme

*There was also Shacktown, a section of the west side where the very poor lived, and beyond that Crow Gulch which was the dumping ground for bums, bootleggers, and other less-mentionable outcasts.*

—Percy Janes

*Crow Gulch sub-area is bounded on the north by the Humber Arm, on the west by a steep shoulder of Crow Hill which cuts the area off from any development towards Curling, on the South by Curling Highway and on the east by an undeveloped gap of some 350 feet which separates the area from the buildings on Pier Road. The area is characterized by small, inaccessible houses in very bad condition on a bare, precipitous hillside varying from 29% to 50% in gradient. Total clearance and abandonment as a residential area has been the consistent recommendation of all studies of Crow Gulch since 1955. It is the action proposed in this scheme.*

—City of Corner Brook

*But the worst part of the West Side, no argument about it, was what we called Crow Gulch, a clutch of tarpaper shacks down by the pulpwood booms that looked as if they might have been tossed up on shore by a tidal wave or the like. There was no road down to Crow Gulch, only a hard stony footpath; no services, not even the hydro, and all hard rock it was too, so you couldn't even think to dig a well.*

—Tom Finn

## **Urban Renewal, as Proposed by the 1966 City of Corner Brook Urban Renewal Scheme**

The principal recommendation affecting the physical renewal of the scheme area: Crow Gulch to be cleared at a later stage with the

land reverting permanently to open space.

The plan shows the great majority of properties in Crow Gulch and Pier road to be

in poor condition or worse.

The City of Corner Brook will take title to 29.85 acres of land in the Crow Gulch and Pier Road sub-areas in order to

implement the scheme.

This land should be sold to the city at 50 cents per square foot. The remaining land is unusable and is to be held by the city only

to prevent any recurrence of Crow Gulch.

The difficulties imposed are most apparent when the property to be expropriated is a sub-standard shack such as those in Crow Gulch. Houses which are “reasonably equivalent” cannot be provided as it is public policy to eliminate them because they are

inadequate for modern family living.

After acquisition, the land in these areas should be cleared of all structures; basements, where they exist, should be filled, streets should be closed by such legal procedures as may be necessary and their use by vehicles prohibited. Clearance in the Crow Gulch area and in the seaward parts of Pier Road can best be done

by burning the structures in situ.

## Oral History: Q and A (I)

Q. Hmm, how about the origins of Crow Gulch, do you know where—

A. —I have no idea. Like, I know what a gulch is. A gulch is, you know, I guess this unsavoury, unattractive hole in the Earth.

Q. Mhmmmm.

A. You know, it conjures up images of flocks of crows hanging around a garbage dump...

Q. It's fairly ominous, yeah.

A. Yeah, I wouldn't want to go there.

## **Fuck this town.**

This mill with all its money gone wrong. Fuck the cut-eyed stares and the stigma. Fuck the train and the tracks, too. Makin' us into thieves to feed ourselves. And that cocksuckin' school with all the Brothers makin' ya feel like scum, all the other kids from town learnin' to be just like 'em. If God don't want me, no one will. Can't even go up Broadway without bein' chased or spit on. Girls won't even look at ya 'cause you're from Crow Gulch. I swear, too, the next bastard that calls me Jackatar's\* gonna get a good shit-knockin'. I just gets so angry with it all. I don't wanna cry but it just comes out and then I feels stupid, like I betrayed my own feelings. Feels like there's something wrong with me. Can't tell anyone around here that, they'd only think there was somethin' wrong with me, ya know? We're all too busy tryin not to slide down into the bay to worry about that emotional stuff anyways. I dunno, b'y. Forget I brought it up.

\* *jackatar*, n, also *jackie tar*, *jackitar*, *jack-o-tar*, *jackotaw*: a derogatory term given to those of Western Newfoundland having mixed blood, typically Mi'qmaq and French. One of the more colourful definitions found in *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English*: "Jack-o-tars chiefly subsist on the eels; they are a lazy, indolent people, and I am told, addicted to thieving; in the winter and spring they are frequently in very destitute circumstances; they are looked upon by the English and French as a degraded race, thence styled Jack-o-tars or runaways."

## Favours

Broadway. Boardwalk and mud, booze  
and punch-ups. Sailors and servicemen  
chasing all the local women. The b'ys  
didn't always like the idea,  
Yanks from Harmon base with their fancy  
uniforms, those stupid hats. Women  
fawning over them like they killed  
Hitler with their bare hands.

Constable makes his rounds, another  
chilly Friday full of stars and the  
boardwalk's alive with stumbling drunks  
coming from Corbidge's, headed to  
the Bucket of Blood for some excitement.  
He breaks up brawls, flags down taxis.  
Some weekends he fills the lock-up.

Three or four of them out, most nights.  
Doing favours. Assumed they were from  
Crow Gulch, but never asked. No one wants  
to know about heritage when they're  
chasing that little death. Constable  
never asked, either. Just checked up  
on them, doffed his cap and let them be.  
Knew how this town turned people to stone,  
slaving their guts out, always dreaming  
of a Townsite house.

Women never having heard so much  
as a handful of kind words without  
some threat or leverage intended.  
Hard enough being a woman at all,  
then there's being from that fucking Gulch.

You've got fellas from up Corner Brook,  
maybe the American base  
on a night's leave. Sharp uniforms,  
straight haircuts, handsome faces not scarred  
with scowls. Chance of a night out they'd  
never see otherwise. A night's  
reprieve from that stagnant pile of rocks  
and shacks must be worth something. When you  
have fuck-all else to offer, the self will have to do.

## All the Same

No way to heat a house at night. Winter mornings, your breath came out steam. Ya'd see the frost on the ceiling and start prayin' the firewood wasn't too damp. Bad enough not havin' a fire built, couldn't thaw your bread and molasses for breakfast. The beds were warm, though. Feather beds. Ya'd fair sink outta sight when you lay in one. Just like a cocoon. Between the bed and the weight of the homemade quilts ya'd wanna sleep forever. 'Course, ya had to get up and that meant a job in itself to get at the water for tea, for a wash up, ya know? And don't think that water come from a tap, no b'y. Just as ya had to work to get it thawed out, ya had to lug it from the spring the day before. Take it off the porch shelf and there'd be ice thick enough to skate on. Mind ya, this all depended if the firewood was dry enough. Lots of places with no insulation back then. The wood usually damp with the frost and stubborn to catch fire. Nothin' worse than comin' back from the outhouse with the hopes of gettin' warm and the house'd still be just so cold as when ya left. Bad enough ya had to wipe with old newspaper—last week's sports section smeared across yer arse. I s'pose nowadays you'd call it a hardship. It was all the same to us, just livin' to stay alive. Some nice though—knowin' ya could escape into a big feather bed at night and dream up whatever life ya wanted.

## Oral History: Q and A (II)

Q: So, do you recall much about Crow Gulch? Like, any stories or experiences? Did you know anyone from there?

A: I knew a scattered one down there but only to see 'em. I mean, what ya hears and what ya knows can be a funny thing, right? Let's just put it this way—nothin' I really wants on tape.

Q: So you don't want to talk about it on record?

A: No, I can't say I do. Not with that thing on. You turn it off and I'll tell ya a few things, though.

### Notes

“What Was Crow Gulch?”—quotes come from the Bowater Oral History Tapes, Percy Janes' novel *House of Hate*, the 1966 City of Corner Brook Urban Renewal Scheme, and Tom Finn's story “Quigley's Luck” from his 2011 short-story collection *Westsidiers*, respectively.

“Urban Renewal, as Proposed by the 1966 City of Corner Brook Urban Renewal Scheme”—text taken directly from the *1966 City of Corner Brook Urban Renewal Scheme*, published by Project Planning Associates, LTD., Toronto. Access granted by the Corner Brook Museum and Archives.

“Oral History: Q and A” (parts I & II)—taken from an interview from the Crow Gulch Oral History Project, access to which was granted to me by Dr. Rainer Baehre of Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

“Fuck this town.”—definition of “jackatar” found in *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, ed. G.M. Story, W.J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982).

“Favours”—directly inspired by the Bowater Oral History Tapes, housed at the Ferris Hodgett Library, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Corner Brook, NL.

“All the Same”—paraphrased from/inspired by an interview with Jim McCarthy found in *Corner Brook: A Social History of a Paper Town* by Harold Horwood (Breakwater Books, 1986).

# from prison industrial complex explodes

*Mercedes Eng*

my dad is inside when I am born. after I come out we live in Vancouver a bit then move to Abbotsford to be closer to the prison. we visit almost every weekend, both days, 8 hours a day.

he gets out when I'm 2, but goes back because later I remember my mom saying I have a surprise for you and I think it's a record player. but it's my dad behind the door, home from jail. so he went somewhere between 2 and 7, somewhere with dinosaurs and a bumpy gravel road.

we are on the highway in Vancouver, starting our drive back home to Medicine Hat. the car stops suddenly and then there are two really angry men yelling "open the fucking door!" they smash open the window and they're both grabbing my dad, one by the hair, the other by the throat. it looks like they wanna strangle him. my dad is kicking, he's fighting. but it doesn't work, they take him and he's gone.

there is a good time, we move to a bigger house. but something happens and my dad is gone again. but then he gets out and he is straightened out and he is working the gas fields and there is money and our allowance goes up and my little brother gets G.I. Joe everything for Christmas and my mom is happy.

we spend summer vacation at the women's shelter.

we run into an old friend visiting her new old man in Drumheller prison and when we go out for dinner after she makes me blush with her pronouncement that I'm "getting titties."

I'm 13 the next time my mom pulls the surprise behind the door trick and I feel sick.

at 15 and 16 I use my mother's visits to my father, the ones she makes me and my brother go on less and less frequently, as opportunities to run away from home, succeeding on the third try.

I'm 19 the last time I visit my dad inside, the last time he's inside, a prison 40 km away from the prison he escaped from just before he met my mother.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
P.O. Box 1320  
Edmonton Alberta  
T5J 2N1

Gendarmerie royale du Canada

July 9, 1984

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Mr. Sue Dong ENG  
Medicine Hat, Alberta

Dear Mr. ENG:

This has reference to your complaint of December 8, 1983, regarding the possible theft of a gold necklace from your effects during escort.

Please be advised our investigation into your complaint is continuing and you may expect further correspondence in due course.

Yours truly,

Assistant Commissioner

Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
P.O. Box 1320  
Edmonton Alberta  
T5J 2N1

Gendarmerie royale du Canada

August 14, 1984

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Mr. Sue Dong ENG  
Medicine Hat, Alberta

Dear Mr. ENG:

This has reference to your complaint of December 8, 1983, alleging that our members were responsible for the theft of your necklace. Following your complaint a thorough investigation was conducted. I have now had the opportunity to review the material.

The investigation revealed that your necklace did go missing some time prior to, during, or after your escort from Medicine Hat City Police Cell Block to the Lethbridge Correctional Centre. However, the person(s) responsible could not be determined. In my view there is no evidence to support your allegation of theft.

Notwithstanding my decision in this matter, the criminal allegation in your complaint was thoroughly reviewed by a Senior Agent of the Attorney General's Department, who agrees with my findings.

Your claim against the Force had been referred to the Department of Justice for their review and decision.

Yours truly,

Assistant Commissioner

Department of Justice Canada  
Royal Trust Tower, Edmonton Centre  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 2Z2

October 11, 1984

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Mr. Sue Dong Eng  
Drumheller Correctional Institute

Dear Sir:

I refer you to an incident occurring on or about December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1983 wherein you have alleged the loss of a necklace owned by yourself while you were being transported from the Medicine Hat Police cells to Lethbridge Correctional Centre. The Crown is prepared to compensate you in the sum of \$150.00 for the apparent loss of your neckchain.

I have enclosed a form of Release in respect of the alleged loss to be signed by yourself and a witness. Upon receipt of completed Release I will requisition and forward a cheque payable to yourself in the sum of \$150.00.

Yours truly,

Edmonton Regional Office

KNOW ALL MEN by these presents that Sue Dong Eng, of the City of Medicine Hat, in the Province of Alberta, does hereby remise, release and forever discharge Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, Her servants, employees, agents and assigns, from all matters of action, claims or demands, of whatever kind or nature that Sue Dong Eng ever had, has now, or can, shall or may hereafter have reason by loss of property owned by Sue Dong Eng to wit: one gold or gold coloured neckchain.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED that this Release shall only be effective when payment shall have been made on behalf of Her Majesty in Right Of Canada to Sue Dong Eng the sum of One Hundred & Fifty Dollars.

the apparent loss

the alleged loss

a gold neckchain

a tight rope

a border

a revocation

Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada wears a lovely  
gold-plated neckchain of copper

# from *Some Beheadings*

*Aditi Machado*

## **Grace, Excess**

Is there a sublime, that's my birdsong today.

Is it immanent, that's why I wrote a page I doubted.

Slipping on questions  
all questions are gloves against rancid weather  
gloves being grace.

Grace, I think.

Grace, I think I can feel it as image as

THE WHITE OF SHEEP  
INVADES A FIELD

Grace not of but as god, that unusable concept used in excess.

Look into excess.

Watch that wanderer  
watch him seed his grotesque plants. His eyes become  
the vines he becomes.

Do I want an image with which to think asks  
is matter abstract grit  
a way to open up open up.

Or do I want to touch something so I cease.

Watch it cede  
like bamboo in the bamboo grove.

Do I want to listen in the grove so loud  
the grove becomes a loud speaker  
a lyric wet.

That is a sublime that is  
immanence an excess an incest a prosperity a bloom  
isn't it as

THE WHITE OF SHEEP  
INVADES A FIELD  
A CIRCLE EMPTIES  
ANOTHER CIRCLE

## **No, But**

A pause, a shrub.  
I look, I prune  
the recession,

the dip, & think  
no.

A shrub on the lowly  
bland plain—I

tend it to  
attenuate it  
& think no.

Forget volta,  
find its  
opposite

is thicket.  
Attend it.

Attend attention  
as you would pause,  
materia medica.

Attend thicket,  
it breeds  
its own

interruptions,  
tarries & turns  
so that you don't.

"I am my land,  
expressed" & expression.

Attend thicket  
as it thickets  
as I

& expression  
forget rifts.

No thistle  
but overthistle.

## **Event**

An event, a syntax.  
A syntax, a scape.  
The mountain

in your view  
tenses. The people  
radicalize

what you don't  
see. In broad daylight  
they write

a philosophy,  
an animal  
they lead

into the square  
bares their  
illegible whips.

Burrow  
for radicals,  
they're all dead.

Syntax, no one  
knows  
what it is,

you figure.  
They hymn.  
You figure they.

The mountain  
in your view  
is a period.

A period in the period  
accelerates  
toward your eye.

# “a special kind of privacy”: An Interview with Marek Poliks

Thomas Weideman

*I first encountered Marek Poliks' music through the Manchester-based Distractfold Ensemble's website. There's a video of them performing his piece "hull not continent." It's a weird and somehow deeply satisfying piece for amplified quintet made up of long, sustained, almost peripheral sounds in a wide open space: there are faint high-register parts played with great care and control by the instrumentalists, offset by some pointedly gritty and harsh textures, along with extremely low, intermittent, enveloping sub-bass tones. The room where the performance is happening is dark apart from small lights partly illuminating the players and allowing them to read from their scores. But the relative anonymity of this setup belies the physical, tactile quality of this music. It's very much music to be played and heard in an immediate way rather than something abstract or "pure" to be analyzed from a remove. Since hearing "hull not continent" I've taken to downloading recordings of Poliks' music and listening to them in bed on headphones. I've also read some of his online articles and statements about new music, which demonstrate a self-consciousness and frankness that is uncharacteristic of most writing by composers. I spoke to Poliks about his thinking about music and his recent turn to installation projects.*

.....

*Thomas Weideman:* Something I admire in your writing is how you discuss new music, or contemporary classical music, as a genre and an economy rather than as some sort of

transcendent and inherently more artistic space “beyond” other music. There’s a tacit exceptionalism underlying a great deal of discourse around new music, a holdover from an earlier time, and your writing is refreshingly free of it. You’ve discussed working conditions for performers and composers. You’ve also written about the anti-corporeal, ostensibly neutral discourse of “listening” and “for-what-to-listen” in this music, and of the discrimination and elitism it often entails.

In your compositions, I sense the same desire to undo oppressive thinking and assumptions within this musical genre. This approach isn’t indicated by any programmatic content but is felt at a more immediate level. The sound of your music is unfamiliar, almost alien, but it creates a space I find inviting and absorbing—it’s a different kind of music to listen to and perhaps to play. Is it fair to say that your approach to composition is informed by social critique?

*Marek Poliks:* I’m thankful to be associated with all of the viewpoints you list. (Especially with this kind of “warm alienness,” which is exactly the affect I’m trying to work with.)

The bit about exceptionalism rings really true for me. Making music is a job, it’s no more or less significant or political or special than any other job. The same goes with the artworld generally. Like

any other relationship to one's job, there can be tensions among personal ethics, coworkers, community values, etc.

I don't think that my work, nor any work as contained and defined by artworld gentrification as mine, can really be considered a critical social practice. I'd go so far as to say that the best critical position this kind of institutional art can take is "against" politics. In doing so, it affirms its status as a job, a career path, a compromised social class, a part of the culture industry, and not (as you note in your question) a transcendental world-historical agent.

I think most of the "critical" work I'm interested in tries to accomplish that shift—from high art to music business—in an attempt to draw my community's focus toward its labor practices, its target audience, its internal demographics, and its financial superstructure. That's happening, for me, on Facebook, or in various articles, or in variously public conversations. But burying that discourse "inside" my music totally defeats the purpose: if I think of what I do as a product, which I do, it's already complicated by the economics I'm trying to critique. I hate satire. For the time being, I'm just focused on sourcing ethical materials for my stuff.

Along those lines, though, the composer Jennifer Walshe has given me an amazing but hard-to-follow maxim: "don't point out your privilege and then continue to enjoy it." This goes both for the artworld's capacity for critique and for my own (as a person who can afford to be an artist, and as a white male person within the artworld itself). I think this recommends some serious "shutting up,"

especially in the interest of promoting diversity among those who are speaking.

TW: Can you say more about trying to source ethical materials?

MP: I try to examine the relative cultural and political histories of my materials and the world in which my work operates. I'm still wondering what the affirmative side of those ethics might be—maybe something to do with utility and "homemadeness."

My partner (a super amazing fiction writer named Kat Lamp)—her political philosophy is a succinct "don't be an asshole." I think there's something to be said for negative politics, or a negative ethics of appropriation. It's not about avoidance, it's just about taking care. Here again: "shutting up." It's good to shut up; I should shut up more. My work shuts up better when its materials aren't already and intentionally politicized.

TW: Your "Against Listening" statement criticizes music that treats performers as "disembodied emissaries" and suggests a different approach. You write about replacing the score "with a social contract informed by, and flexible to, the consent of the bodies implicated." How does this work?

MP: Alex Temple, another composer, wrote an article for this new music online publication (NewMusicBox) called "Composers, Performers, and Consent." The article underlines something really important: that the discourse of performer-composer relations has to recognize/talk about/enumerate/celebrate the agencies specific to performance. One should do so without placing these agencies against those of composition.

That being said, I don't think I'm even interested in a new music artworld of discrete instrumentalities and relational categories. When I was at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse in 2014, I saw a performer-composer project by an artist named Marcela Lucatelli. She danced, interacted with props, and made sounds between two projected videos and amid some prerecorded sound. It wasn't interdisciplinary—it was already “after” disciplinarity. The piece felt “composed,” but the context of composedness felt so strange. It was a world and it was being inhabited. It had no discernible politics or even discernible discursivity of any kind—it was a hologram. It was the Marcela Lucatelli Experience.

I've learned a lot from Kanye West (maybe the most important aesthetic theorist of the 21st century so far?). He did this amazing live show at the BRIT awards in 2015, performing his piece “All Day” with like, I don't know, two hundred people on stage, all crowded together. Every few measures a flamethrower spits into the air. It's not a collective, or a mob, in the old ways. You get the sense, via maybe *Wizard of Oz*, that this group of people is the Kanye West Experience. Kanye would probably argue that design has replaced art, brand identity has replaced cult of personality, and the “team” has replaced the artist. The “brand” is an organizing principle of a team; it keeps its eye on its outsides. The outside is important—moreso, *an* outside, a communicational outside—an outside grounds the brand, and thus the team, in sociality. (And, like I said earlier, this outside already grounds a project in its demographic practice, its class status, its labor conditions, etc.)

So, I believe in teams, teams of designers with different skills, teams who are interested in building something communicational. Teams who appear together. I'm still trying to understand how to organize a team in a functionally postmodern way. I believe in thoughtful administration; I think it's a huge part of whatever “composition” means today.

TW: You worked with a group of people on your recent piece “maw,” which was just premiered at the Bludenzener Tage zeitgemäßer Musik. Tell me more about it?

MP: Check it out for yourself: [vimeo.com/147209979](https://vimeo.com/147209979). Maybe listen first and then we can talk about it?



TW: This is gorgeous. Were you working with the performers for a long time leading up to this? How much did they inform the score?

MP: Hey, thanks. We changed the score a lot! Scores are just there to prime the situation, to get things started. From there (which I mean, was still hundreds of hours of legwork) we spent about 40-50 hours in rehearsal, in a single week in Basel. I don't think we spent any of

that time reproducing anything—it was a constant recursive stream of propositions and refinements, different modes of co-building happening all at once. It was very casual.

TW: Was any of the footage of the performers / the inside projected live?

MP: No, the inside is totally inaccessible to the audience; the critique I've heard of the piece most often centers around that visual inaccessibility. I think that's a very "new music" reaction, to be honest—people want to see some sort of specifically embodied musicality, or they want to understand the chain of sound production. I really value feelings of safety and interiority, and I think that the band (Brian, Felix, Christian, and Eva) constructed a rich interior space.



The video is the dress rehearsal (I wanted their concert performance to be "unaudited"), and you can see visual cues of this interiority here (Felix waving his hands in response to the computer-produced tonal chimes, Brian at the end egging Eva on, etc.). I was told during the concert they were joking around, flipping each other off. I love that. I

think you can hear that. I think this is a way to incompletely experience a special kind of privacy—these group dynamics, the instantiation of a private place and its subsequent practice.

TW: To me the critique that hinges on the visual inaccessibility of the performance is closed-minded. When you say it's a very "new music" reaction, is that because of the way visible "embodiment" has come to be privileged in new music? Or is the critique coming from a more general, old-school, classical concert-going place?

MP: All I care about is embodiment—I'm just not interested in practices that try and physicalize new music discourse, nor am I really interested in reproducing specific discourses of embodiment. I'm not a fan of the "athletic" turn in new music, nor am I a fan of this kind of panoptic obsession with live-video overlays of performance.

Maybe I'm just speaking as an anxious person, but I only begin to feel affirmatively "in" my body when I feel safe. As an audience member, I like agency over my body. I'd like an ambulatory body: a body that can exit or cough or get more comfortable. That's why I'm trying to move into the gallery or the "venue." Were I a performer, I'd favor a translucent wall, a performance situation that allows for a partial (even just potential) invisibility of error, in which I can actually leverage my focus on the sounds I'm making over my fear of getting lost.

TW: In my experience, enjoying music necessarily involves the feelings of safety and interiority you've brought up. I'm often more receptive to recordings, music heard in private (or even on earbuds while

walking) than I am to public performances of music, except when they're happening in a space or working to create a space that's especially conducive to such feelings.

MP: Agency is huge! Some people enjoy situations in which they consensually relinquish a lot of their physical agency—that's super legit, but I personally don't feel that way.

TW: Have any writers or theorists especially influenced your thinking about agency?

MP: I stopped reading theory about a year ago, but I was interested (and still am, but more passively) in the recent intersections of critical/cultural theory and ecology (Jane Bennett, Stacy Alaimo, Bruno Latour) especially in connections to feminism and materialism (like Karen Barad and Elizabeth Grosz, for example). This is all very agent/agency-forward theory, but all of it at the same time is very critical of subjectivity (as a way of categorizing or housing agencies). There are two patterns converging here—the feminist critique of the subject (people like Luce Irigaray), and the ecological/object-oriented critique of the subject (maybe Latour the present standard-bearer, with Deleuze or Whitehead being the classic touchstones).

I think I'm personally very critical of subjectivity (especially in relation to, like, "art"), but I wouldn't call my music polemical. I think there's some post-anthropocene apocalypticism close to the surface there (where are the people?), but it's kept in check with just a little bit of escapism.



© Bludenzer Tage zeitgemäßer Musik

TW: Could you say more about being critical of subjectivity in relation to art?

MP: I'm not into art, I'm not into authenticity, and I'm not into contexts that deny performativity or performance. We are always performing, always in quantum flux between subject-positions and identities. A subjectivity expressible in a contained singularity is historically the province of white masculinity. Toss it.

TW: What do you mean by post-anthropocene apocalypticism "kept in check with just a little bit of escapism"?

MP: For me, so much (if not all) of contemporary artwork is (definitionally) about intentionalizing a space, creating a dialogue between the space and its conceptual or historical or just otherwise aestheticizing frame. This is what I mean when I say I am "over" art—I'm over that necessary distance between the intentionalizing force and the space. I'm over irony and I'm over gaze and I'm over critical contexts and politicization and cultural commentary, etc., etc. When I say escapism—I literally mean trashy 90s' *Star Wars* novels; I mean entertainment. "Escapism" means that the apocalypticism

or the alien or the post-anthropocene in my project isn't rigorous, isn't taken too seriously, or vectored with some kind of warning, or even with any kind of positive or negative valuation. It's a movie with no message, a place to go that sounds cool, that sounds a certain way, that has that boring but real function of making you feel comfortable and warm.

TW: How did you arrive at the approach taken up in "maw" (this "instantiation of a private place and its subsequent practice")?

MP: Spaceships! That's my thing. Spaceships are all about enclosure/exclosure, void, aliens/others, hiddenness/discovery. I'm not a video game guy, but literally all of my pieces since 2012 are about this Nintendo GameCube game called *Metroid Prime*. This game is amazing—you are really, "already," on an alien world, but something about this amazing system of slightly porous enclosures around you (around the body of the player character, around the rooms in each overlay of the world, around each region, etc.) makes you feel so at peace. Discovery remains your object. Warmth/peace and discovery are the affects I'm going for, the spaceship is the model, and the private place and its inhabitation is the praxis.

TW: Do you plan to work with these kinds of spaceship installations more in the future?

MP: I think I'm going to stick with spaceships for a long time. I have plans to use this concept for all my future projects until, like, 2019—that feels pretty permanent to me. For the next project

I'm building one out of tubes, then one out of plastic and cables with pulleys and motors, and then a very big piece where the installation will be built from metal. Again, central to all of this are concepts of private space, portals and interiors, safety and warmth.

TW: How would you say the experience of putting "maw" together changed your relationship to your work?

MP: "maw" messed me up! I can't write concert music anymore; that whole eight-or-so-year phase of my life is just gone. Now every piece has to be a world—like, it can't just represent a world; my audience has to be mobile and exploring a physical space. In the last few weeks my forthcoming projects have swelled tremendously in these directions—from just little houses for performers to entire desert rooms complete with plants and rocks to weird shadowy craneyards.

I feel like I'm moving in the direction of sound art, but without the conceptualism incurred by what the word "art" means in 2016. Sound design for imaginary spaces? Landscape architecture of early 2000s' video games? I'm intimidated by the lack of infrastructure available for these kinds of projects (at least within the new music community), but I'm also feeling pretty emboldened by how unpopulated this particular creative space seems. ‡

# Queen of Steel

*Jasmine Gibson*

*(for Chloe)*

Steel rusts over time after being submerged for so long

We can laugh at how it no longer has any value

“It is tarnished” (all those who look upon the precious metal)

as sea licks away all of its *use value*

as if the man who bought the steel could even determine what its use value is

or even put a price on the steel’s life

He doesn’t even know what’s most precious about the steel

Its color

How even it can turn in death

From an inky blackness to fluorescent blue that is so close to memory that  
your tongue can taste the shocking acidic nature of it

as if you were in the water, feeling all of pulverized history between your toes

as you drag your tongue against this dying ragged edge of steel

you can feel so much more deeply when your fingers are pruned, bleeding, there’s a reason  
why this is romantic

This scene isn't even that important

it is an abstraction  
from what's really underneath, isn't it?

But that is the hard part  
the hard steely part we don't want to see

That nothing is forever, not even our bodies, or even the conception of the body  
or the body's conception of the body and why it matters within matter and the fact  
that it might not even matter then

We all have to answer  
or not

In the end  
but should it be that scary, when it isn't really all that scary

It is actual, the inevitable  
and not

It is cool indifference, absolution  
and not  
but it always cohabitates  
and holds us when we sleep, when no one else can

Stop running.

# Two Poems

*Jos Charles*

## I.

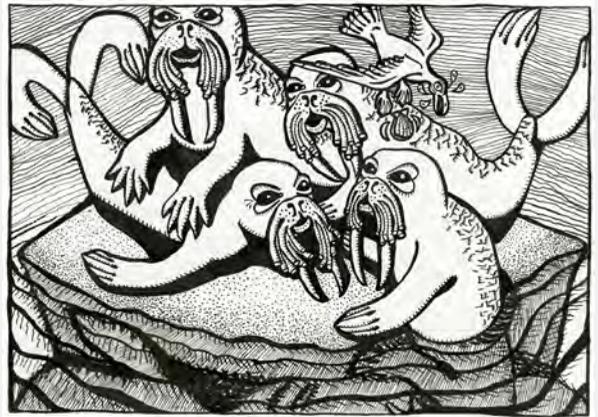
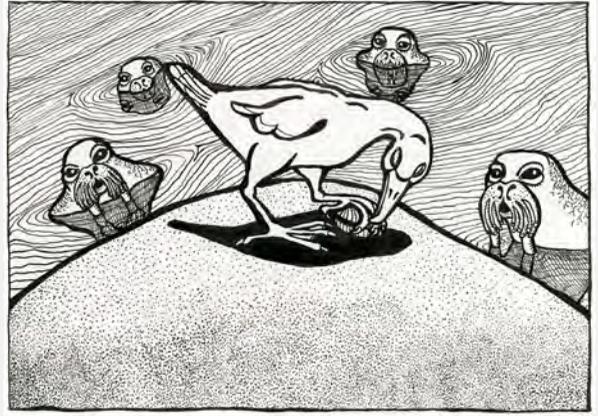
the gun 2 the hande  
2 the tran / another  
question off arkitexur / how the bloode  
repeats its rownds / the textur off a squirl  
hart / ground  
2 a powre line / a factree /  
a mart / i wuld give the guns  
back / 2 all the chilldren /  
inn all ther mylky trees /  
tendrynge  
/ wut a fine start / 2 rendre  
a line of wited trees / i do  
so lik / 2 giv u thees

## II.

at the end off a daye /  
it coms downe  
2 lite / the garmint unfolds its thyng  
/ lik a nut inn the paw / at the end  
off daye / and there is 2 a nite  
and a hinterland / and a hande  
2 smol 4 its gendre thyng  
/ tran / tenant off thees flores / whos prise  
lags in the work / u who / unfolds  
agayne 2 a heep / r  
delite filld centre piese  
/ r hallowed grownd

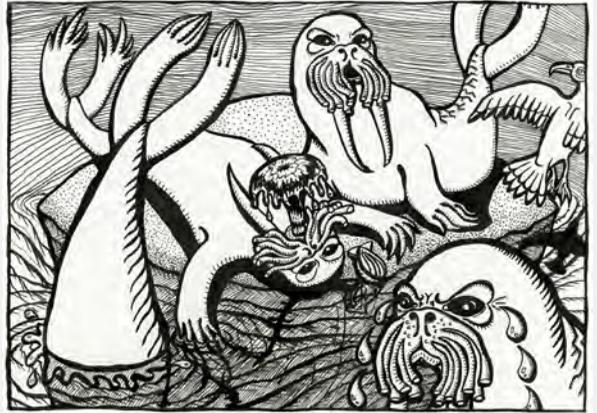
# Walrus Dispute

*Joren Eulalee*









## see to see—

### *The Well-Dressed Wound* by Derek McCormack (Semiotexte, 2015)

Stacey Ho

Fashion-forward ghouls continue to buttfuck the beloved icons of Americana in the third of Derek McCormack's haunted trilogy. Previous incarnations in this series were kind of like a country carnival held on queer Halloween, starring macabre historical caricatures of Elsa Schiaparelli, Hank Snow/Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, and Coco Chanel. This time around, however, McCormack's crisp prose and taste for pageantry are concentrated into something more brutal, minimal, and intense. A host of spirits led by avant-garde fashion designer-cum-devil Martin Margiela possess a seance held by Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln for their dead gay son Willie. The stage is set for a vaudevillian Civil War-tinged runway show where Willie and "Oh! Susanna" composer Stephen Foster are fucked and infected with AIDS in the name of fashion and faggotry. Our host Margiela succinctly sums up the situation: "When soldiers die, they're faggots; when faggots die, it's from AIDS; when faggots die from AIDS, whatever clothes they're wearing at the time of their deaths are mine—are Margiela!" (62)

There is something truly perverse in *The Well-Dressed Wound's* playful conflation of pearls with pustules, but then again fashion and death are old familiars. In the spirit of Benjamin and Baudelaire, McCormack's pastiche of signifiers from the American Civil War and the American AIDS epidemic does what fashion does best—resuscitates the old to make it new

again: the perpetuity of Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter cloaks the biological body, denying its drive toward entropy, its need to perish, die, and decompose. Every season, *à rebours*, the dead rise again. It's *unnatural*. *The Well-Dressed Wound* carries this contradiction to its extreme. Blood- and bacteria-soaked bandages become conceptual couture. Fashion and faggotry embrace the diseased and wounded body in an alternate universe from which the silenced, gay, dead masses are finally able to shriek.

The spirits who walk the runway in *The Well-Dressed Wound's* horror show sport:

"Used jeans, painted white." (27)

"Nylon stockings cut to the knee,  
painted white." (26)

"Wig worn as a wig, painted white." (28)

"Pair ankle boots, painted white." (26)

Significantly, jeans, stockings, wigs, and boots are not only cum-soaked, but literally whitewashed. Simultaneously the book invokes, through the American Civil War, the spectre of slavery. Recalling the "die-ins" staged in protest of the lack of black representation at the recent Art AIDS America exhibition at the Tacoma Art Museum, I can't help but tangentially imagine these gestures as a circuitous acknowledgement of an inability to give voice to significant and underrepresented black perspectives on the AIDS pandemic.

We are at an uneasy juncture, when the event of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is in the process of being both lived and historicized. Taking a cue from LGBTQ elders who fought against their own erasure, representation of "the AIDS crisis" must be problematized so that divergent experiences of this event are not left out of the narrative. *The Well-Dressed Wound* mocks this erasure and its maudlin historicization by

embracing the stigma of death-by-fucking while simultaneously reincarnating death's equivalents: a totalizing blankness, a roaring silence, the ever-fashionable void. As history tries to fill this absence, McCormack's book is a spell that conjures the harsh absurdity of accounting for all the words and all the spirits that are missing.

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### **Dory Nason on Tekahionwake (E. Pauline Johnson) & Indigenous Feminist Performance**

*Jessica Hallenbeck*

It's early December and I'm standing outside the Western Front. A sandwich board propped up by the entrance announces tonight's Scrivener's Monthly event: *Tekahionwake (E. Pauline Johnson) & Indigenous Feminist Performance*, featuring a talk by Dr. Dory Nason (Anishinaabe, Leech Lake Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe), a conversation and film screening with filmmaker Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (Kainai First Nation, Blood Tribe, and Sámi), and a closing performance by JB the First Lady (Jerilynn Webster, Nuxalk & Onondaga). Inside, a large, excited crowd has gathered, and as a PhD candidate at UBC I recognize many students and colleagues. The excitement and care I can feel in the room is a testament to the deep connections that Nason and Tailfeathers nurture. I have personally benefited immensely from their friendship and guidance, and from their larger bodies of work within the context of Indigenous women's histories and Indigenous resurgence.<sup>1</sup>

Nason's writing theorizes, narrates, and enacts Indigenous women's resistance, survival, and love. In writing about, with, and alongside powerful women like

Tekahionwake, Anna Mae Aquash, Zitkala-Ša, Nancy Ward, Nan-ye-hi, Beloved Woman of the Cherokee Nation, and Sarah Winnemucca, Nason looks back in order to press into the present, reminding us that the work of Indigenous women is ongoing and unfinished. At the Western Front, Nason describes how contemporary Indigenous feminist protests and political actions arise from a long Indigenous feminist intellectual tradition rather than as a response to white feminism.

Nason's direct, driven, angry, loving, and beautifully fluid writing challenges her readers "to never forget how violence operates in the daily lives of Indigenous peoples."<sup>2</sup> In writing about the many forms of gendered settler colonial violence, Nason weaves together the work of Indigenous feminists with critiques of the prison system, the child welfare system, reconciliation, and the Montreal massacre. Her work importantly envisions an end to such violence, a "better relationship built in the wake of violence but not beholden to it" (ibid.). This vision situates the writings, performances, and labor of Indigenous women as core teachings for Indigenous resurgence, demonstrating both historically and contemporarily the "profound love that Indigenous women have for the future stability and health of their families, their land and their nations."<sup>3</sup> In reading Johnson's work into a larger canon of Indigenous feminist intellectual thought, Nason narrates a past and a future of Indigenous resurgence that radically shifts the conversation away from identity politics, destabilizes settler colonial conceptualizations of land and territory, and questions the consequences of exclusively land-based decolonial practices.<sup>4</sup>

Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers is an award-winning filmmaker, writer, actor, youth mentor, teacher, and climate justice activist.<sup>5</sup>

Her films tell emotional, raw, impactful stories about connections between family (*Bihttöš, Mavericks*), land (*Bloodland*), women (*A Red Girls Reasoning, Mavericks*, and *Hurry Up, You Stupid Cripple*, co-directed with Terreane Derrick, Gitxsan), and the violent machinations of the settler colonial state (*State of the Nations, The Right Thing To Do*, and *Colonial Gaze: Sámi Artists' Collective* with Marja Bal Nango [Sámi]). At the Western Front, Tailfeathers screens her 2012 film *A Red Girl's Reasoning*, named after the E. Pauline Johnson short story of the same title. She introduces the film by speaking about the fetishization of Indigenous bodies and other forms of suffering caused by white settlers. Her discussion of white settler fetishization, guilt, and consumption of trauma draws parallels Nason's critique of all-too-familiar descriptions of Johnson as the quintessential "Indian Princess." We sit together in the Western Front's Grand Luxe Hall and watch *A Red Girl's Reasoning*, a film about violence against Indigenous women, the failure of the justice system, and the power of an Indigenous woman to directly take on her attackers. It is a revenge fantasy for both Johnson and contemporary Indigenous audiences.

Through their own voices as scholars, filmmakers, and badass Indigenous feminists, Nason's and Tailfeathers' work, conversation, and presence remind us that Indigenous women's resistance is generational and takes many forms.

1 I'd like to thank May Farrales, Dory Nason, and Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers for their comments on an earlier draft of this piece. I'd also like to thank Nason and Tailfeathers for their permission to write this piece.

2 Dory Nason, "Violence is Not a Given" (2013), originally published on the *Indigenous*

*Nationhood Movement* website and now available at [thelandingualberta.tumblr.com/post/70303498248/violence-is-not-a-given-indigenous-nationhood](http://thelandingualberta.tumblr.com/post/70303498248/violence-is-not-a-given-indigenous-nationhood).

3 Dory Nason, "We Hold Our Hands Up" (12 Feb. 2013), blog entry on *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* ([decolonization.wordpress.com](http://decolonization.wordpress.com)).

4 For a discussion of gender-based discrimination in the Indian Act and the consequences that this has had for generations of Indigenous women, see Bonita Lawrence, "Real" *Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (U of Nebraska P, 2004).

## Insurgency & Use-Value: Notes after Fred Moten's visit to Vancouver

*Amy De'Ath and Sean O'Brien*

*From 23–25 October 2015, Fred Moten visited Vancouver to give a reading, a talk, and two seminars. Below is a short response to the second seminar held at The Capilano Review's offices, for which we read Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman's Architecture after Revolution alongside Amiri Baraka's "A Contract (For the Destruction and Rebuilding of Paterson)." Huge thanks to Fred for the generosity and easy precision with which he shared his thoughts, even and especially because we don't yet fully understand where they could take us.*

Is the refugee also a fugitive? Surely so. Both descriptions translate to the same word in German, *Flüchtling*, an irony perhaps not lost on Angela Merkel in the context of the current so-called "refugee crisis" unfolding across the beleaguered Eurozone. But fleeing a bad situation and fleeing the law have always been the same line of flight. As Fred says, "what's at stake is fugitive movement in and out of the frame, bar, or whatever

externally imposed social logic—a movement of escape, the stealth of the stolen that can be said, since it inheres in every closed circle, to break every enclosure.”<sup>1</sup> Insurgent social life has a pre-existence to that which would seek to destroy it, and though it is always being both accumulated and destroyed, it is this insurgency against which power defines itself: workplace discipline responds to the workers, as Foucault noticed in Marx, or as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, “resistance is actually prior to power.”<sup>2</sup> *They react to what we do*. In this way, it is the relation between persistence and resistance—where the capacity for the former founds the possibility for the latter—that constitutes the object under attack, and this is why Fred’s analysis encourages us to shift our view to the practice *preceding* the moment at which the pigs show up. Incursion here is refigured as daily life, and as a form of self-defense, which is to say there’s something worth defending, as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense reminds us.

Fred introduced us to Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman’s *Architecture after Revolution* (Sternberg Press, 2013), a book that grew out of the Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency in Beit Sahour (Palestine Occupied Territories). Petti, Hilal, and Weizman argue that the “inherent schizophrenia of colonialism” produces the conditions of “an underlying negation.”<sup>3</sup> This negation subtends, following Fred and Stefano Harney, “beneath and beyond” the settler fort, in “the surround,” a space populated by an exiled insurgent life that exceeds the enclosure.<sup>4</sup> The fugitive figure of the refugee constitutes an existential threat to the foundations of settler society, and as Petti, Hilal, and Weizman note, “What makes refugee life a potentially powerful agent of decolonization is that the ongoing

desire for return is the strongest possible challenge to the sovereign power of the state” (44). And so we can easily recognize the IDF’s biopolitical calculation and regulation of Palestinian caloric intake as an attempt to undermine Palestinian capacity building<sup>5</sup>—that is, the possibility of return through the cultivation of collective social life—in direct response to the threat that the figure of the refugee poses as the insurgent life that surrounds the colonial settlement.

How should we think of “return”? Petti, Hilal, and Weizman invoke Agamben’s term “profanation,” the strategy of returning things to their common use, and yet are careful to distinguish “return” from a simple reversal of the trajectory of time, writing instead of “returns” in the plural as a concept entangled with (through?) decolonization and emerging twofold as *extraterritoriality* (“the endless present of homelessness”) and *present return* (“a nostalgic utopia”) (18-39).

But their talk of uses—“the old uses are gone, the new uses not yet defined” (13)—made us think of the historical and contradictory view of use-value as an “innocent” category—one that would persist after the abolition of capitalist exchange-value, as if the meaning of use-value did not in fact depend on its relation to exchange-value.<sup>6</sup> This is a view perhaps left intact in much Marxist-feminist thinking, in Silvia Federici’s work for example, where a notion of the reproductive commons, as Federici sees it emerge from the structures of subsistence societies especially, is posited as grounds for a post-capitalist future. It’s also a point laterally engaged by Petti, Hilal, and Weizman when they describe “destruction” and “reuse” as two contradictory desires in decolonizing architecture. They reject both routes:

The impulse of destruction seeks to turn time backward. It seeks to reverse development to its virgin nature, a tabula rasa on which a set of new beginnings might be articulated. However, time and its processes of transformation can never be simply reversed. (20)

The other impulse, to reuse, seeks to impose political continuity and order under a new system of control. [...] The reuse of Israeli colonial architecture could establish a sense of continuity rather than rupture and change. (20-1)

Instead, Petti, Hilal, and Weizman propose the notion of subversion, a “repurposing...for other ends,” noting that “even the most horrifying structures of domination can yield themselves to new forms of life” (21). But isn’t subversion still a form of reuse? As Roswitha Scholz notes, “the suffering resulting from capitalism emerges from its very formal relations, of which private property is merely one of many results,”<sup>7</sup> and if Petti, Hilal and Weizman see the revolution of return as “fundamentally a revolution in relation to property” (59), then insisting on the mutually-constitutive relation between use-value and exchange-value is not merely an abstract, theoretical issue. Doesn’t *Architecture After Revolution*, in some ways arguably close to “commonizing” politics such as Federici’s, propose collective forms of social reproduction that might easily be co-opted by a capitalist State (or equally, a State to come)? In other words, if *use* ever did detach itself from use-*value*, how could it survive for more than a brief moment in a world still crushed by the value-form?

Questions of decolonization, destruction, reuse, and subversion open onto an assertion made in anti-capitalist currents

of Indigenous studies that affirm the ongoing existence of a pre-capitalist mode of social relations that would exist beyond capital’s abolition (and all that that implies). Indigeneity seems a crucial category in thinking about the politics of abolition because it both includes and exceeds, or is distinct from, questions of racial ascription. That is to say, race is a construct, Indigeneity is not (or not only), so it resists many of the forms of critique that can tell us so much about “race.” How do Indigenous resurgence and abolition relate? How might the way Petti, Hilal, and Weizman understand decolonization as *return*, as “a return to and a return of,” acquire another meaningful dimension if we think of it in the context of the Coast Salish Territories on which we in Vancouver live?

1 See “Do Black Lives Matter: Robin D.G. Kelly and Fred Moten in Conversation” (vimeo.com/116111740).

2 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000), 260.

3 Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman, *Architecture After Revolution* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 82.

4 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2013), 17.

5 See Amira Hass, “2,279 Calories per Person: How Israel Made Sure Gaza Didn’t Starve” (17 Oct. 2012), *Haaretz*.

6 On the mutually constitutive relation of use-value and exchange-value, see Bruno Astarian, “Crisis Activity and Communitisation.”

7 Roswitha Scholz, “Patriarchy and Commodity Society: Gender with the Body,” *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, ed. Neil Larsen et al (Chicago: MCM Publishing, 2014), 127.

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*Field Notes for the Alpine Tundra* by  
Elena Johnson (Gaspereau Press,  
2015)

*Elee Kraljii Gardiner*

Slim book, just forty poems. Caribou printed under French flaps. Photo wrapping the book was taken by the author. The bas relief of scree, scrub, and animal holds the eye: the more you look, the more you see.

Time span of Johnson's mission: one month in 2008. Summer. Endless daytime.

Johnson's book is a backpack. This world of poems is reduced to the scope of what we need, what the eye needs. On the Ruby Range in the Yukon, where she spent time recording bio-stats, Johnson measures the environment within and without. She relays peculiar shifts in perspective of both abundance and time.

Wildflowers one knuckle high.  
Mammals the width of a hand  
gather bouquets in their mouths,  
pile them in havens under stones.  
("Tallest Objects" 15)

People are alien here, or just ill-suited animals.

A kilometer above sea level,  
we are the tallest objects  
bent by the wind. ("Tallest Objects" 15)

Researchers hunch, huddle, withstand. Time is measured in the droplets of rain soaking undrying laundry. Communication is lunar. Away from camp one is away, gone—as in this poem, a tundra-like nosegay:

Alone at the Base

The 'door' of the cook-tent  
unzipped. It blows open,  
blows closed.

The other tents  
flap, flap, flap. No one  
is ever coming back.

And what are these people doing so far away from human exchange? Mapping inscrutables such as untraceable creeks, marking days with the repetition of dry-pack foods, cross-tallying toponomies while "the weather can't be counted. The moss, the mist, the hours" ("Time" 23).

These poem-notes are spare and tidy, aggregating a landscape too diffuse to wax on and on about. Johnson avoids the personification of the landscape by hewing to a scientific eye. Sometimes she does this with a lightly comedic tone, as when she relays the researchers coming under study of the inhabitants of the tundra:

Hoary Marmots: Study

We lure them with urine, cage them.  
Measure their length, weight,  
skull-width as they scabble  
in the cloth bag. We snip off  
a piece of the left ear,  
band the right. Pierced,  
they speed away looking hip,  
like they're headed for Whitehorse  
looking for a city-savvy mate.

*Year six of study:*  
*Local marmots display*  
*opportunistic behaviour.*

They eye our backpacks,  
steal a sandwich. Chew our boots  
while we nap in the moss.

When we return to camp they pose  
on rocks beside the food bins,  
up to nothing. They slip out  
from under tent platforms,  
whistle the alert. (25)

Diagrams crop up among poems to graph hours, tally tasks, and situate remote areas. One submission excuses the lack of data due to “hands too cold” (24).

Gaspereau’s excellent typography lends itself to the Spartan beauty of the texts. The poems have space, wind whistles through; we have a vista. The graphs, like cairns, are the raw material breaking up the sightlines. Johnson’s notes form a diary condensed into salient memories. Have I travelled to this terrain before? No. Yes. Now I am equipped.

.....

*The Astonishment Tapes* by Robin Blaser, ed. Miriam Nichols (U of Alabama P, 2015)

*Soma Feldmar*

The publication of *The Astonishment Tapes*, nearly forty-two years after Robin Blaser gave the talks, is ultimately a collaboration between Blaser and Miriam Nichols, his editor, biographer, and longtime friend. What Nichols has done in editing the transcribed talks down, or in half as she has said, is to offer us the narrative of poetry and autobiography that Blaser himself was most interested in. To mine the more than eight hundred pages of text for the coal-that’s-almost-diamond of Blaser’s poetic and autobiographical work, as Nichols did, is a work of love.

In the Spring of 1974, over ten evenings at the home of UBC Professor Warren Tallman, Robin Blaser spoke to a small group of friends and poets about his life as a poet and his working poetics. The way Blaser thinks about and approaches language, the world, experience, self, other, and the origin of being, or ontology, is something that we don’t see much anymore. It’s also something that is difficult; it goes against most of our

cultural, philosophical, poetic, academic, and social assumptions. In the order in which they appear, including Nichols’ chapter titles, here are some of the almost-diamonds:

“I would say that’s the first love affair. I mean, I’m nine years old and this guy named Cleo Adams who’s twenty-four.... He would wait for me to go on walks.... But he told stories mainly about stones” (“Chapter 1: Out of Idaho” 18-19).

“I know no way to think, to speak, to feel, without someone else’s hand in mine and the two greatest of those people are Jack and Olson. Those people are companions.... Duncan I have such debts to, and I am going to give all that out now” (“Chapter 2: Berkeley: Astonishments” 66).

“Curiously it’s Kantorowicz.... suddenly I had a man who knew that the poetry was noetic, that its task is knowledge, that it is always the re-centering of the origin of the world, that it is always the beginning again and the dwelling of the nature of the world, of man and the world” (“Chapter 3: Ernst Kantorowicz: Falling into History” 80-81).

“[Dante’s] poetics will finally teach me that poetically I must also be able to enter the language on as many levels as my intelligence will allow me to do and the work I do and the care I taker... where I then may enter the language and speak right and be sane” (“Chapter 4: Dante and the Metaphysics of Light” 145).

“To begin a life is to think. The feeling is held in the medium as a suddenness, image, a movement, and gathering out of the imageless. The form is the vital movement of image out of the imageless. Language is itself a first movement of

form, a binding *rhythmos* or form of the mind” (“Chapter 5: Moderns and Contemporaries: The Knowledge of the Poet” 184).

And so the *Tapes* reveal a huge, ranging territory, not only of Blaser’s thoughts on poetics but also of his own history, his way of being with others, his natural speech patterns, and so much more of the human that was Robin Blaser than anything else we have. Within the first few moments of the first session, Blaser announces that he wants to call them, all of them, once they’re done, “Astonishment.” He says, “if they’re going to be all put together, astonishment is the whole thing we’re talking about” (11). He gets his idea of astonishment from Ernst Bloch, who writes: “Astonishment is the very source or origin of the world itself, ever at work and ever hidden away within the darkness of the lived instant” (4). In this book, Nichols and Blaser offer us a chance to look at the world differently, to remember our history in thought and language, and, perhaps most importantly, to be astonished ourselves.

.....

**Patti Smith and her band, *Horses*  
40th Anniversary Tour (The Moore  
Theatre, Seattle, 01-04-2016)**

**Erica Holt**

*Jesus died for somebody’s sins but not mine...*

The congregation inhales. In this room already heavy with the *chronos* of an entire city, the masses await redemption yet again out of the blood and dust and reverberation. Forgotten spectres remain here, or so it goes, faint with mildew in the air, complacent in the certainty of decay and recovery. Murmurs erupt into praise. We are raised. A sermon has begun. We can feel it, skin is breaking.

(Children Go Where I Send You. “How shall I send you?”

Ms. Simone, *Nina* if we deserved to know her, pauses in song to address her audience. “Have you ever been to a revival meeting...? I bet you don’t even know what I’m talkin’ ’bout.

Well, you in one right now.”)

*It is* that we are present, as one with each other as in some holy geist, caught together in a moment of surrender. We are brought forth whether we recognize it or not, bred inside of this *now*, to be humiliated and affirmed in simultaneity. Shaman doo-wop. *We are not human*. We witness our ancestors as Patti invokes her peers in an Elegie.

*Jimi...Jim...Robert...*

*Patti* conjures visions. She coaxes new interpretations from known fictions, new ways to seek our independence from the falseness. We witness her contend with some vast idea, offer biblical grandeur with hypobolic wit. The performance *is* Patti—transcendent, genius—but also undone and undoing, eccentric, unaffected, a long and continuous act of defiance, all this the substance of her life.

We go forward and retreat as we are led, struggling and succumbing. We have completed this pilgrimage to confront ourselves, delivered back unto us. We must improvise. You are human, you are not human. That’s the fucking joke, isn’t it, the crux? Yet here we are, returned together.

Patti slowly wrestles each electrified string out of her guitar one by one in a gesture that reminds us to fake it. If *life is filled with holes* there must be endless ways of (en)countering the void. What might appear if we shattered our mirrors?

# Contributors

**Juliane Okot Bitek** is a PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia. Her research is around identity, citizenship, and forgetting. Her latest publication, *100 Days* (U of Alberta P), is a collection of poetry that negotiates ways to remember the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

**Jos Charles** is a trans poet and writer. *Safe Space*, their debut poetry collection, is forthcoming from Ahsahta Press. They are founding-editor of *THEM: a trans literary journal*. They have writing published (and/or publications forthcoming) with *BLOOM*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Action Yes*, *The Feminist Wire*, *BitchMedia*, *Entropy*, *GLAAD*, *LAMBDA Literary*, and elsewhere.

**Jo Cook** is an artist, writer, and curator living on Mayne Island, British Columbia. In 2005, she founded Perro Verlag Books by Artists, a press that recognizes the importance of unstable thoughts and impractical, possibly visionary intentions.

**CAConrad**'s childhood included selling cut flowers along the highway for his mother and helping her shoplift. He is the author of eight books of poetry and essays; the latest, *ECODEVLANCE: (Soma)tics for the Future Wilderness* (Wave Books, 2014), is the winner of the 2015 Believer Book Award. He is a 2015 Headlands Art Fellow, and has also received fellowships from the Lannan Foundation, MacDowell Colony, Banff Centre for the Arts, Ucross Foundation, RADAR, and the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. Visit him online at [CAConrad.blogspot.com](http://CAConrad.blogspot.com).

**Amy De'Ath**'s criticism has appeared in *Women: A Cultural Review*, *Anguish Language* (Archive Books, 2015) and *Cambridge Literary Review*, and is forthcoming in *After Objectivism: Reconfiguring 21st-Century Poetry and Poetics* (U of Iowa P, 2016). Her poetry chapbooks include *Lower Parallel* (Barque, 2014), *Caribou* (Bad Press, 2011), and *ON MY LOVE FOR gender abolition* (forthcoming from Capricious, 2016). With Fred Wah, she is the editor of a poetics anthology, *Toward. Some. Air.* (Banff Centre Press, 2015). She is a PhD candidate at Simon Fraser University and lives in Vancouver, on unceded Coast Salish Territories.

**Mercedes Eng** is a teacher and writer in Vancouver, unceded Coast Salish Territories. She is the author of *Mercenary English* (CUE Books, 2013). Her current writing project, *prison industrial complex explodes*, is forthcoming from Talonbooks in 2017. Her multimedia chapbook of the same name was published recently by *The Capilano Review*'s SMALL CAPS imprint.

**Chris Erickson** is from Decatur, Illinois. His work has appeared in *McSweeney's* and *The American Reader*. He is a graduate of the UC Davis creative writing program, and still lives in Davis.

**Joren Eulalee** is an artist and designer living in Richmond, BC. She works in many different mediums but is most at home as an illustrator. Her work ranges from the abstract to the figurative but is usually a celebration of the diversity of life on earth inspired by botanical and zoological studies. She is inspired by the arts and craft movement, mainly William Morris.

**Soma Feldmar** is working on her PhD from SUNY Buffalo. Her dissertation is on Robin Blaser's "poethics," a term coined by Joan Retallack and redefined/re-theorized by Feldmar in order to read Blaser's work. *Other*, Feldmar's first book of poetry, was published in 2009 by CUE Books. From Vancouver, BC, she lives in Denver, CO.

**Jasmine Gibson** is a Philly jawn now living in Brooklyn and a soon-to-be psychotherapist for all your gooey psychotic episodes that match the bipolar flows of capital. She spends her time thinking

about sexy things like psychosis, desire, and freedom. She has written for *Mask Magazine*, *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism* (Vol. II), and *Queen Mob's Tea House*, and has published a chapbook, *Drapetomania*, off of Commune Editions.

**Jessica Hallenbeck** is a documentary filmmaker and PhD candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia. She is currently working on *We Have Stories: Women in Fish*, a film and performance collaboration with Coast Salish / Sahtu Dene storyteller Rosemary Georgeson.

**Kelly Haydon** is a Vancouver-based visual artist whose primary focus is painting and printmaking with a dash of bookmaking thrown in. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. She is a member of the Malaspina Printmakers Society and Dundarave Print Workshop.

**Stacey Ho** is an artist, writer, and curator. Her writings on art have been published through *Modern Painters*, *West Coast Line*, *INTER art actuel*, *ISSUE Magazine*, *Vidéographe*, and *RAM Galleri*. She is currently associate director of the LIVE Biennale Performance Art Society.

**Erica Holt** was born in the biome known as Aspen Parkland, studied philosophy on the banks of the North Saskatchewan river, and once lived in a two-room cabin on Lake Okanagan with both an outhouse and the internet. She shifts direction every year or so and has worked nearly thirty often challenging yet distinctly unsatisfying day jobs. She is a sometimes photographer, writer, and aspiring filmmaker.

**Ann Jaeger** is a visual artist and writer. She writes *Trout in Plaid*, an online journal of arts and culture for the Peterborough, Ontario area. A version of her text on Meryl McMaster was published recently in *Electric City Magazine*.

**Elee Kraljii Gardiner** directs Thursdays Writing Collective. She is the editor and publisher of seven anthologies from the Collective and the coeditor with John Asfour of *V6A: Writing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012). A book of poetry, *Serpentine Loop*, is forthcoming from Anvil Press in 2016. A frequent collaborator, she is originally from Boston.

**Candice Lin** is a Los Angeles-based artist whose work engages notions of gender, race, and sexuality through examining discrepant bodies, vibrant material, and disobedience drawing from scientific theories, anthropology, and queer theory. Her works have recently shown at the Kadist Art Foundation (Paris), Delfina Foundation (London), and Akuna Zentroa (Bilbao), with recent solo exhibitions at Francois Ghebaly Gallery (LA) and CAAA (Guimaraes, Portugal).

**Aditi Machado's** first book of poems, *Some Beheadings*, will be published by Nightboat in 2017. Her translation of Farid Tali's *Prosopopoeia* is forthcoming from Action Books in 2016. She edits poetry in translation for *Asymptote* and is working on her doctoral dissertation at the University of Denver.

**Donato Mancini** makes visual and procedural poetry, bookworks, and visual art. His books and chapbooks include: *Snowline* (2015), *You Must Work Harder to Write Poetry of Excellence* (2012), *Buffet World* (2011), *Fact 'N' Value* (2011), *Hell Passport Number 22* (2008), *Aethel* (2007), *58 Free Coffees* (2006), and *Ligatures* (2005). His most recent full-length book, *Loitersack* (2014), is a labyrinthine commonplace book where critical, theoretical, and paraliterary tendencies intersect in the forms of poetry, poetics, theory, theory theatre, laugh particles, and many many questions.

**Meryl McMaster** is an Ottawa-based artist who holds a BFA in Photography from OCAD University. Her work explores questions of identity, representation, perception, myth, memory, and the environment. She is the recipient of numerous awards and has had her work featured in solo and group exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Dunlop Art Gallery, Mendel Art Gallery, FOFA

Gallery, Katzman Contemporary, and the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe. Her photographs incorporate different artistic media to explore how we construct our sense of self through lineage, history, and culture.

**Sean O'Brien** is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, where he studies precarity in contemporary literature and culture. Current projects include a forthcoming special issue of the journal *Public*, based on work developed during the 2015 Banff Research in Culture residency, "Demos: Life in Common," and a contribution to the *Bloomsbury Companion to Marx* (forthcoming, 2017).

Vancouver-based community artist and community worker **Guinevere Pencarrick** works with street-involved and marginalized folks in the DTES and South Granville. Her practice focuses on sustaining long-term community space for the population served to create art / excellent conversation and support. Personal practice revolves around book art, photocopy manipulation, and collage. Originally trained in Fine Arts at Langara and Emily Carr, Guinevere has since drifted back to raw art roots.

**Marek Poliks** (b. 1989) builds spaceships (derelict but reclaimed by weird plants / carpeted with air pressure and sub bass). He values feelings of warmth, discovery, and distance. Marek is a PhD candidate in music composition at Harvard University, where he works with Chaya Czernowin and Hans Tutschku. His work has been exhibited throughout Europe and North America. Visit him online at [www.marekpoliks.com](http://www.marekpoliks.com).

**Rhoda Rosenfeld** is an artist living in Vancouver. Her most recent work has been published in *Yellowfield* and in *Zarf 2* (the latter featuring "Clip 36" and "Clip 37" from the present selection). *Am and You Are in the Sentence*, her character-generated video made in 1977, can be read on Vimeo.

Born in Halifax, **Trish Salah** is the author of the Lambda award-winning *Wanting in Arabic* (Tsar Publications, 2002, 2013) and of *Lyric Sexology, Vol. 1* (Roof Books, 2014), and is co-editor of an issue of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* on Cultural Production. At the University of Winnipeg she co-organized *Writing Trans Genres*. She is assistant professor of Gender Studies at Queen's University.

**Vivek Shraya** is a Toronto-based artist whose body of work includes several albums, films, and books. She is also one half of the music duo Too Attached and the Associate Editor of Heartbeats, a website that features racialized artists and stories. Her first novel, *She of the Mountains*, was named one of *The Globe and Mail's* Best Books of 2014. Vivek is a three-time Lambda Literary Award finalist, a 2015 Toronto Arts Foundation Emerging Artist Award finalist, and a 2015 recipient of the Writers' Trust of Canada's Dayne Ogilvie Prize Honour of Distinction. Her book, *even this page is white*, is forthcoming from Anvil Press.

**Catriona Strang's** most recent book is *Corked* (Talonbooks, 2014). She is currently completing *Reveries of a Solitary Biker*, a collaboration with clarinetist François Houle, composer Jacqueline Leggatt, and visual artist Kelly Haydon rooted in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's last book. She lives in Vancouver, where she and her kids are active in the local home learning community.

**Douglas Walbourne-Gough** is a poet, editor, and arts administrator from Corner Brook, Newfoundland. After finding some success in Newfoundland he has relocated to Kelowna, BC for an MFA in Creative Writing at UBC's Okanagan campus. His first full-length manuscript, *The Crow Gulch Poems*, is currently seeking publication.

**Thomas Weideman** is a composer, writer, and cellist currently living in Montreal. His music has been performed by Quatuor Bozzini, Land's End Ensemble, Microcosmos Quartet, Ethos Collective, Turning Point Ensemble, and the UBC Contemporary Players.

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IMAGE  
Tania Willard, *Here still an aged elm aspires* (part of the #haunted\_hunted series), 2016. Fleece blanket, digital image.  
Photo: Aaron Leon.

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ISSN 0315 3754

\$16.00