

**Both Sides Now**  
**Joni Mitchell, 1969**

Rows and flows of angel hair  
And ice cream castles in the air  
And feather canyons everywhere  
I've looked at clouds that way

But now they only block the sun  
They rain and snow on everyone  
So many things I would have done  
But clouds got in my way

I've looked at clouds from both sides now  
From up and down and still somehow  
It's cloud's illusions I recall  
I really don't know clouds at all

Moons and Junes and ferries wheels  
The dizzy dancing way you feel  
As every fairy tale comes real  
I've looked at love that way

But now it's just another show  
You leave 'em laughing when you go  
And if you care, don't let them know  
Don't give yourself away

I've looked at love from both sides now  
From give and take and still somehow  
It's love's illusions I recall  
I really don't know love at all

Tears and fears and feeling proud,  
To say "I love you" right out loud  
Dreams and schemes and circus crowds  
I've looked at life that way

But now old friends they're acting strange  
They shake their heads, they say I've changed  
Well something's lost, but something's gained  
In living every day.

I've looked at life from both sides now  
From win and lose and still somehow  
It's life's illusions I recall  
I really don't know life at all

I've looked at life from both sides now  
From up and down, and still somehow  
It's life's illusions I recall  
I really don't know life at all

**Woodstock**  
**Joni Mitchell, 1970**

I came upon a child of God  
He was walking along the road  
And I asked him, where are you going  
And this he told me  
I'm going on down to Yasgur's farm  
I'm going to join in a rock 'n' roll band  
I'm going to camp out on the land  
I'm going to try an' get my soul free  
We are stardust  
We are golden  
And we've got to get ourselves  
Back to the garden

Then can I walk beside you  
I have come here to lose the smog  
And I feel to be a cog in something turning  
Well maybe it is just the time of year  
Or maybe it's the time of man  
I don't know who I am  
But you know life is for learning  
We are stardust  
We are golden  
And we've got to get ourselves  
Back to the garden

By the time we got to Woodstock  
 We were half a million strong  
 And everywhere there was song and celebration  
 And I dreamed I saw the bombers  
 Riding shotgun in the sky  
 And they were turning into butterflies  
 Above our nation  
 We are stardust  
 Billion year old carbon  
 We are golden  
 Caught in the devil's bargain  
 And we've got to get ourselves  
 Back to the garden

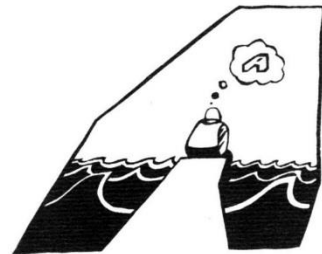
**Aleph Unit**  
 bpNichol,1973

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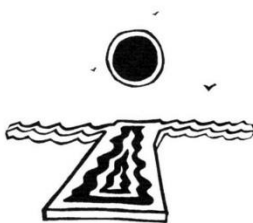
closed



opened



surface



observed



not







my urge to write you what lines i can. the sun is dying. I've  
heard them say it will go nova before the year's end. i wanted  
to send you this letter (this poem) but now it's too late to  
say anything, too early to have anything to send.)

i wish i could scream your name & you could hear me  
out there somewhere where our lives are

we have moved beyond belief  
into a moon that is no longer there


i used to love you (i think)  
used to believe in the things i do  
now all is useless repetition  
my arms ache from not holding you

the winds blow unfeelingly across your face  
& the space between us  
is as long as my arm is not

the language i write is no longer spoken

my hands turn the words  
clumsily

**Untitled**  
**bpNichol, 1988**



fr  
pond  
glop



I do this, passing the opened fish  
to Ross who tries to twist their  
heads off on the table's edge  
the way Cyril tells him to. but  
some of these fish having  
necks thick as a wrist, Ross  
struggles and Cyril shows him again  
using his weight, using the table's  
edge, until he gets it down pat.

taking the fish last, Cyril  
moves his knife twice, down  
one side of the spine and back with  
a quick jerk, stripping the spine away  
like a chain of ice,  
his blade never touching the meat,  
laid flat now, the white  
triangular ware, the Newfoundland trade,  
and he skids that into a barrel  
for Pete to scrub.

the table's old wood gets  
plush with blood then ridged  
in grey scum and Pete sloshes  
a bucket of water under our hands  
and the scuppers gradually clog and we  
move knee-deep in fish and blood  
a thick pool washing heads and entrails  
under us and blood drips from our jackets  
spatters our faces and dries and  
spatters our faces again, and I squeeze  
my gloved hands and the fat and blood  
pour out of them like gravy  
and all around the air is flashing  
white gulls, shrill with their crazy hunger,  
wheeling, diving to fight for the floating guts.

all this life being  
hacked apart, us letting



blood out of its envelopes,  
the world suddenly seems to be all  
alive, blood running inside  
of us and outside of us, inside  
our hands and over them, with little  
between the two, a cover of skin  
keeping me in or out I'm not  
sure which, but some sharp  
bones have gone into my hands  
and some of the running blood is mine.

**from Short Talks**  
**Anne Carson, 1992**

**Introduction**

Early one morning words were missing. Before that, words were not. Facts were, faces were. In a good story, Aristotle tells us, everything that happens is pushed by something else. One day someone noticed there were stars but no words, why? I've asked a lot of people, I think it is a good question. Three old women were bending in the fields. What use is it to question us? they said. Well it shortly became clear that they knew everything there is to know about the snowy fields and the blue-green shoots and the plant called "audacity," which poets mistake for violets. I began to copy out everything that was said. The marks construct an instant of nature gradually, without the boredom of a story. I emphasize this. I will do anything to avoid boredom. It is the task of a lifetime. You can never know enough, never work enough, never use the infinitives and participles oddly enough, never impede the movement harshly enough, never leave the mind quickly enough.

### **Short Talk on Walking Backwards**

My mother forbid us to walk backwards. That is how the dead walk, she would say. Where did she get this idea? Perhaps from a bad translation. The dead, after all, do not walk backwards but they do walk behind us. They have no lungs and cannot call out but would love for us to turn around. They are victims of love, many of them.

### **Short Talk on the Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman**

A winter so cold that, walking on the Breestraat and you passed from sun to shadow you could feel the difference run down your skull like water. It was the hunger winter of 1656 when Black Jan took up with a whore named Elsje Ottje and for a time they prospered. But one icy January day Black Jan was observed robbing a cloth merchant's house. He ran, fell, knifed a man and was hanged on the twenty-seventh of January. How he fared then is no doubt known to you: the cold weather permitted Dr. Deyman to turn the true eye of medicine on Black Jan for three days. One wonders if Elsje ever saw Rembrandt's painting, which shows her love thief in violent frontal foreshortening, so that his pure soles seem almost to touch the chopped open cerebrum. Cut and cut deep to find the source of the problem, Dr. Deyman is saying, as he parts the brain to either side like hair. Sadness comes groping out of it.

### **Short Talk on Who You Are**

I want to know who you are. People talk about a voice calling in the wilderness. All through the Old Testament a voice, which is not the voice of God but which knows what is on God's mind, is crying out. While I am waiting, you could do me a favour. Who are you?

### Short Talk on Afterwords

An afterword should leave the skin quickly, like an alcohol rub. Here is an example, from Emily Tennyson's grandmother, her complete diary entry for the day of her wedding, May 20, 1765:  
Finished Antigone, married Bishop.

### My Religion Anne Carson, 1995

My religion makes no sense  
and does not help me  
therefore I pursue it.

When we see  
how simple it would have been  
we will thrash ourselves.

I had a vision  
of all the people in the world  
who are searching for God

massed in a room  
on one side  
of a partition

that looks  
from the other side  
(God's side)

transparent  
but we are blind.  
Our gestures are blind.

Our blind gestures continue  
for some time until finally  
from somewhere

on the other side of the partition there we are  
looking back at them.  
It is far too late.

We see how brokenly  
how warily  
how ill

our blind gestures  
parodied  
what God really wanted

(some simple thing).  
The thought of it  
(this simple thing)

is like a creature  
let loose in a room  
and battering

to get out.  
It batters my soul  
with its rifle butt.

## Choral Ode to Man from Antigonick Anne Carson, 2012

### CHORUS:

MANY TERRIBLY QUIET CUSTOMERS EXIST BUT NONE MORE  
TERRIBLY QUIET THAN MAN  
HIS FOOTSTEPS PASS SO PERILOUSLY SOFT ACROSS THE SEA  
IN MARBLE WINTER  
UP THE STIFF BLUE WAVES AND EVERY TUESDAY  
DOWN HE GRINDS THE UNASTONISHABLE EARTH  
WITH HORSE AND SHATTER  
SHATTERS TOO THE CHEEKS OF BIRDS AND TRAPS THEM IN HIS FOREST  
HEADLIGHTS,  
SALTY SILVERS ROLL INTO HIS NET, HE WEAVES IT JUST FOR  
THAT.  
THIS

TERRIBLY QUIET

CUSTOMER

HE DOOMS  
ANIMALS AND MOUNTAINS TECHNICALLY  
BY YOKE HE MAKES THE BULL BEND, THE HORSE TO ITS  
KNEES  
AND  
UTTERANCE AND THOUGHT AS CLEAR AS COMPLICATED AIR  
AND  
MOODS THAT MAKE A CITY MORAL THESE HE  
TAUGHT HIMSELF  
THE SNOWY COLD HE KNOWS TO FLEE  
AND  
EVERY HUMAN EXIGENCY CRACKLES AS HE PLUGS IT IN  
EVERY OUTLET WORKS BUT  
ONE  
: DEATH STAYS DARK

DEATH HE CANNOT DOOM.  
FABRICATIONS NOTWITHSTANDING  
EVIL  
GOOD  
LAWS  
GODS  
HONEST OATHTAKING NOTWITHSTANDING.

HILARIOUS IN HIS HIGH CITY  
YOU SEE HIM CANTERING JUST AS HE PLEASE  
THE LAVA UP TO **HERE**

**from Land to Light On (II i)**  
**Dionne Brand, 1997**

Out here, you can smell indifference driving  
 along, the harsh harsh happiness of winter  
 roads, all these roads heading nowhere, all  
 these roads heading their own unknowing way,  
 all these roads into smoke, and hoarfrost, friezed  
 and scrambling off in drifts, where is this  
 that they must go anytime, now, soon, immediately  
 and gasping and ending and opening in snow dust.  
 Quiet, quiet, earfuls, brittle, brittle ribs of ice  
 and the road heaving under and the day lighting up,  
 going on any way.

**ossuary VIII**  
**Dionne Brand, 2010**

Havana. Yasmine arrived one early evening,  
 the stem of an orange dress,  
 a duffle bag, limp, with no possessions

the sea assaulted the city walls,  
 the air,  
 the birds assaulted the sea

she's not coastal,  
 more used to the interiors of northern cities,  
 not even their ancillary, tranquil green-black lakes

though nothing was ever tranquil about her,  
 being there out of her elemental America  
 unsettles her, untethers her

being alive, being human, its monotony  
 discomfited her anyway, the opaque nowness,  
 the awareness, at its primal core, of nothing

a temporary ache of safety,  
leafed her back like unfurling fiddleheads,  
she glimpsed below the obdurate seduction of Atlantic  
and island shore,  
when they landed, a contradiction,  
a peppery drizzle, an afternoon's soft sun  
the oiled air of Havana pushed its way onto the airplane,  
leavened, domestic,  
the Tupelov cabin like an oven darkening bread  
she was alive in this place,  
missing forever from her life in the other,  
a moment's sentimentality could not find a deep home  
what had been her life, what collection of events?  
these then, the detonations,  
the ones that led her to José Martí Airport  
so first the language she would never quite learn,  
though determined, where the word for her,  
nevertheless, was *compañera*  
and there she lived on rations of diction,  
shortened syntax, the argot and tenses of babies,  
she became allegorical, she lost metaphors, irony  
in a small room so perfect she could paseo its rectangle,  
in forty-four exact steps,  
a room so redolent with brightness  
cut in half by a fibrous bed,  
made patient by the sometimish stove,  
the reluctant taps, the smell of things filled with salt water  
through the city's wrecked *avenidas*,  
she would find the Malecón, the great sea wall  
of lovers and thieves, jineteras and jineteros  
and there the urban sea washed anxiety from her,  
her suspicious nature found,  
her leather-slippered foot against a coral niche

no avoiding the increment of observation here,  
in small places small things get their notice,  
not just her new sign language

oh yesterday, you were in a green skirt,  
where's your smile today,  
oh you were late to the corner on Tuesday

don't you remember we spoke at midday,  
last week near the Coppelia,  
you had your faraway handbag

your cigarette eyes,  
your fine-toothed comb  
for grooming peacocks, anise seeds in your mouth

you asked for a little lemon water,  
you had wings in your hands,  
you read me a few pages from your indelible books

what makes your eyes water so,  
I almost drowned in them on Friday,  
let me kiss your broken back, your tobacco lips

she recalled nothing of their encounters,  
but why,  
so brilliant at detail usually

the green skirt, the orange dress, the errant smile,  
the middays all dissolved into  
three, five, ten months in Havana

one night she walks fully clothed, like Bird,  
into the oily pearly of the sea's surface,  
coral and cartilage, bone and air, infrangible

and how she could walk straight out, her dress,  
her bangles, her locking hair, soluble,  
and how despite all she could not stay there



**K. 219, Adagio**  
**Jan Zwicky, 1998**

Now the sky above New Mexico  
is hazy with Los Angeles, what words  
will you invent for clarity?

Some things were always nameless:  
the heart as rainbarrel,  
the ear a long-stemmed glass.

The fiddle is still maple tuned with starlight,  
the bow, breath with a backbone,  
sweet with sap.

That long trill  
is a hand that lifts your hair  
a final time, sunlight, a last kiss

that knows it is the last.  
And the phrase that follows:  
a small voice talking to itself, how

some moments are so huge  
you notice only little things:  
nicks in the tabletop, the angle of a fork.

Drink. It  
is what you will have  
to remember:

rain's vowelless syntax,  
how mathematics was an elegy,  
the slenderness of trees.

**from Eleven Paintings by Mary Pratt  
Diane Brebner, 1993**

**I Christmas Fire**

I think of the wives in India consumed in  
flames, the pious, or the unwanted. One

throws herself upon the pyre (because  
she knows life is now not worth living).

The other is thrown, or set upon. But  
each one burns, her own sweet self goes up:

in flames, in smoke. And, after Christmas,  
the tinsel and paper, the packaging we

disdain, all the barriers that keep our  
mysteries under wraps, everything goes

to the fire barrel. Now a second celebration  
can occur: the drum, all rusty, all

lettered with ancient names, glows in the  
snow, a body that burns with a life

of its own. How we feed it, all the things we  
would have disappear. And it burns, it burns

the fierce light of the dying but undeparted.

**III Silver Fish on Crimson Foil**

This is the river of blood, the salmon run;  
so ruthless, in their dark bed, the dusk years

bring to bear, upon anything, or all things  
that we care to call dreams. You want to

believe it will be easy, clear & fluid; life  
looks you straight in the eye, and you flourish.

You want to believe: if you swim like crazy  
everything turns out right at the end. Now,

I ask myself: What bloody river is this? I set  
my mouth (that wants to gape) stubbornly shut.

I carry on, one silver creature on the heraldic  
field, companion to lions and unicorns, worthy

of shields. I carry on. Up the river I go  
to my crimson foil, the river, and bed,

that I am carried on; and the blue heavens  
will move, reflected in all, and the silver

fishflash of my joy will shout, and then  
every good thing will be words in my mouth.

### **Skin Divers** **Anne Michaels, 1999**

Under the big-top  
of stars, cows drift  
from enclosures, bellies brushing  
the high grass, ready for their heavy  
festivities. Lowland gleams like mica  
in the rain. Starlight  
soaks our shoes.  
The seaweed field begs, the same  
burlap field that in winter cracks with frost,  
is splashed by the black brush  
of crows. Frozen sparklers of Queen Anne's lace.

Because the moon feels loved, she lets our eyes  
follow her across the field, stepping  
from her clothes, strewn silk  
glinting in furrows. Feeling loved, the moon loves  
to be looked at, swimming  
all night across the river.

She calls through screens,  
she fingers a white slip in the night hallway,  
reaches across the table for a glass.  
She holds the dream fort.  
Like the moon, I want to touch places  
just by looking. To tell  
new things at three in the morning, when we're  
awake with rain or any sadness, or slendering through  
reeds of sleep, surfacing to skin. In this room  
where so much has happened, where love  
is the clink of buttons as your shirt slides  
to the floor, the rolling sound of loose change;  
a book half open, clothes  
half open. Again we feel  
how transparent the envelope  
of the body, pushed through the door  
of the world. To read what's inside  
we hold each other  
up to the light. We hold  
the ones we love or long  
to be free of, carry them  
into every night field, sit with them  
while cows slow as ships  
barely move in the distance.  
Rain dripping from the awning of stars.

Waterworn, the body remembers  
like a floodplain, sentiment-laden,  
reclaims itself with every tide.  
Memory terraces, soft as green deltas.  
Or reefs and cordilleras —  
gathering the world to bone.

The moon touches everything  
into meaning, under her blind fingers,  
then returns us to cerulean  
aluminum dawns. Night,  
a road pointing east.

Her sister, memory, browses the closet  
for clothes carrying someone's shape.  
She wipes her hands on an apron  
stained with childhood, familiar smells  
in her hair; rattles pots and pans  
in the circadian kitchen.

While in the bedroom of a night field,  
the moon undresses; her abandoned peignoir  
floats forever down.

Memory drags possessions out on the lawn,  
moves slowly through wet grass, weighed down  
by moments caught in her night net, in the glistening  
ether of her skirt. The air alive,  
memory lifts her head and I nearly  
disappear. You lift your head, a look I feel  
everywhere, a tongue of a glance,  
and love's this dark field, our shadow web  
of voices, the carbon-paper purple  
rainy dark. Memory's heavy with the jewellery  
of rain, her skirt heavy with buds of mercury  
congealing to ice on embroidered branches —  
as she walks we hear the clacking surf  
of those beautiful bones. Already love  
so far beyond the body, reached only  
by way of the body. Time is the alembic  
that turns what we know  
into mystery. Into air,  
into the purple stain of sweetness.  
Laburnum, wild iris, birch forest so thick  
it glows at night, smells that reach us  
everywhere; the alchemy that keeps us  
happy on the ground, even if our arms embrace  
nothing, nothing: the withdrawing  
trochee of birds. We'll never achieve escape

velocity, might as well sink into wet  
firmament, learn to stay under,  
breathing through our skin.  
In silver lamella, in rivers  
the colour of rain. Under water, under sky;  
with transparent ancient wings.

Tonight the moon traipses in bare feet,  
silk stockings left behind  
like pieces of river.

Our legs and arms, summer-steeped,  
slapped damp  
with mud and weeds.

We roll over the edge into the deep field,  
rise from under rain,  
from our shapes in wet grass.  
Night swimmers, skin divers.

**Black Sea**  
**Anne Michaels, 2017**

I could almost not bear to leave  
your islands at the framer  
so precious that paper  
the work of your hands

you chose (3/4 inch) frames, (anti-fade) glass,  
we wondered which wall might  
hold them all, wooden frames and  
glassy sea so heavy I could barely carry  
the dusk silence an n-manifold, cornerless

the length of you along the cliff,  
the (Somerset soft white) page  
of the bed, the black sea  
soaking our sight  
with its endless reappearance

the joining of souls seaward

**The River Pilgrim: A Letter**  
**George Elliott Clarke, 1990**

At eighteen, I thought the Sixhiboux wept.  
Five years younger, you were lush, beautiful  
Mystery; your limbs — scrolls of deep water.  
Before your home, lost in roses, I swooned,  
Drunken in the village of Whylah Falls,  
And brought you apple blossoms you refused,  
Wanting Hank Snow woodsmoke blues and dried smelts,  
Wanting some milljerk's dumb, unlettered love.  
That May, freights chimed xylophone tracks that rang  
To Montreal. I scribbled postcard odes,  
Painted *le fleuve Saint-Laurent comme la Seine* —  
Sad watercolours for Negro exiles  
In France, and dreamt Paris white with lepers,  
Soft cripples who finger pawns under elms,  
Drink blurry into young debauchery,  
Their glasses clear with Cointreau, rain, and tears.  
You hung the moon backwards, crooned crooked poems  
That no voice could straighten, not even O  
Who stroked guitars because he was going  
To die with a bullet through his stomach.  
Innocent, you curled among notes — petals  
That scaled glissando from windows agape,  
And remained in southwest Nova Scotia,  
While I drifted, sad and tired, in the east.  
I have been gone four springs. This April, pale

Apple blossoms blizzard. The garden flutes  
E-flats of lilacs, G-sharps of lilies.  
Too many years, too many years, are past....

Past the marble and pale flowers of Paris,  
Past the broken, Cubist guitars of Arles,  
Shelley, I am coming down through the narrows  
Of the Sixhiboux River. I will write  
Beforehand. Please, come out to meet me  
As far as Beulah Beach.

**Everything Is Free**  
**George Elliott Clarke, 1990**

Wipe away tears,  
Set free your fears:  
Everything is free.  
Only the lonely  
Need much money:  
Everything is free.  
Don't try to bind  
The love you find:  
Everyone is free.  
Your lover's yours —  
Surrender force:  
Everyone is free.  
The sun melts down,  
Spreads gold around:  
Everything is free.  
The rain is spent  
Lending flowers scent:  
Everything is free.  
The love you live,  
The life you give:  
Everything is free.



**Address Book**  
**Stephen Heighton, 2005**

Bad luck, it's said, to enter your own name  
 and numbers in the new address book.  
 All the same, as you slowly comb  
 through the old one for things to pick

out and transfer, you are tempted to coin  
 yourself a sparkling new address,  
 new name, befitting the freshness of this clean-  
 slating, this brisk kiss

so long to the heart-renders—every friend  
 you buried or let drift, those Home for the Aged  
 maiden relations, who never raged  
 against the dying of anything, and in the end

just died. An end to the casualties pressed  
 randomly between pages—smudged, scribbled chits  
 with lost names, business cards with their faded  
 bold-fronts of confidence, solvency. The palimpsest

time made of each page; the hypocrite it made  
 of you. Annie, whom you tried two years to love  
 because she was straight-hearted, lively, and in love  
 with you (but no strong-arming your cells and blood);

Mad Carl, who typed poet-to-poet squibs in the pseudo-  
 hickish, hectoring style of Pound, all sermonfire  
 and block caps, as AINT FIBRE ENOUGH HERE, BOYO,  
 BACK TO THE OLE FLAX FIELD ... this *re* a score

of your nature poems. When he finally vanished  
 into the far east, you didn't mind the silence.  
 Still, this guilt, as if it weighs in the balance,  
 every choice—as if each time your pen banished

a name it must be sensed somewhere, a ballpoint stab, hex-  
needle to the heart, the treacherous  
innocent no of Peter, every X  
on the page a turncoat kiss....

Bad luck, it's said, to enter your own name in the new  
book—as if, years on, in the next culling,  
an executor will be leafing through and calling  
or sending word to every name but you.

**Herself, Revised**  
**Steven Heighton, 2010**

There's a final bedtime when the father reads  
to his daughter under the half-moon lamp.  
The wolf-eyed dog sits guard on the snowy  
quilt at their feet—ears pricked, head upright  
like a dragon on its hoard—while the daughter's  
new clock ticks on the dresser. When the father  
shuts the book, neither feels in the cool sigh  
cast from its pages a breath of the end—  
and how can it be that this ritual  
will not recur? True, this latest story  
is over, *Treasure Island*, which held them  
a dozen nights, but "the end" has arrived  
this way often before. Maybe she's tired  
of the rite, or waking to a sense of herself  
revised? Maybe he's temporarily bored,  
or unmoored, reading by duty or rote,  
turning deeper inside his own concerns.

How does the end enter? There's a hinging  
like a book's sewn spine in the raw matter  
of time—that coded text, illegible—  
and stretched too far, it goes. An innocent

break, the father gone one weekend or the child sleeping at a friend's, followed by a night or two she wants to read alone, or write, for a change, in her new padlock journal. She has no idea what has changed. She can't know that the enlargement of her life demands small death after death, and this one, the latest, is far from last. She will not notice this death, being so intent on life—so implied in its stretching crewelwork of seconds.

Some nights later, suddenly, writing cheques or checking email, he might notice and wonder at the change. In a sense such minor passings pre-enact his own. For a moment he might lay down his pen, forget the figures, peer over the roofline and find she was right—Orion, rising, is more blueprint of butterfly, or bird, than hunter. How does it enter, through what rift or flaw? Maybe it doesn't enter at all. It was there in every sentence: the end.

## **Rust**

**Michael Crummey, 1998**

The boy watches his father's hands. The faint blue line of veins rivered across the backs, the knuckles like tiny furrowed hills on a plain. A moon rising at the tip of each finger.

Distance. Other worlds.

They have a history the boy knows nothing of, another life they have left behind. Twine knitted to mend the traps, the bodies of codfish opened with a blade, the red tangle of life pulled from their bellies. Motion and rhythms repeated to the point of thoughtlessness, map of a gone world etched into the unconscious life of his hands by daily necessities, the habits of generations.

On Saturday mornings the boy waits at the border of company property, rides figure eights on his bicycle beside the railway tracks, watches the door beneath the deck head for his father coming off night shift.

Late September.

His father emerges from the mill in grey work clothes, a lunch tin cradled in the crook of one arm, his hands closeted in the pockets of a windbreaker. They head home together, past the concrete foundation of the Royal Stores that burned to the ground before the boy was born. Past the hospital, the hockey rink. The air smells of the near forest and sulphur from the ore mill and the early frost. What's left of summer is turning to rust in the leaves of birch and maple on the hills around the town, swathes of orange and coral like embers burning among the darkness of black spruce and fir.

The heat of their voices snagged in nets of white cloud. Their words flickering beneath the surface of what will be remembered, gone from the boy's head before they reach the front door of the house on Jackson Street. The mine will close, the town will col-lapse around them like a building hollowed by flame.

It will be years still before the boy thinks to ask his father about that other life, the world his hands carry with them like a barely discernable tattoo. His body hasn't been touched yet by the sad, particular beauty of things passing, of things about to be lost for good. Time's dark, indelible scar.

**Newfoundland Sealing Disaster**  
**Michael Crummey, 1998**

Sent to the ice after white coats,  
rough outfit slung on coiled rope belts,  
they stooped to the slaughter: gaffed pups,  
slit them free of their spotless pelts.

The storm came on unexpected.  
 Stripped clean of bearings, the watch struck  
 for the waiting ship and missed it.  
 Hovelled in darkness two nights then,

bent blindly to the sleet's raw work,  
 bodies muffled close for shelter,  
 stepping in circles like blinkered mules.  
 The wind jerking like a halter.

Minds turned by the cold, lured by small  
 comforts their stubborn hearts rehearsed,  
 men walked off ice floes to the arms  
 of phantom children, wives; of fires

laid in imaginary hearths.  
 Some surrendered movement and fell,  
 moulting warmth flensed from their faces  
 as the night and bitter wind doled out

their final, pitiful wages.

**Chapter I**  
*for Dick Higgins*  
**Christian Bök, 2001**

Writing is inhibiting. Sighing, I sit, scribbling in ink this pidgin script. I sing with nihilistic witticism, disciplining signs with trifling gimmicks — impish hijinks which highlight stick sigils. Isn't it glib? Isn't it chic? I fit childish insights within rigid limits, writing shtick which might instill priggish misgivings in critics blind with hindsight. I dismiss nit-picking criticism which flirts with philistinism. I bitch; I kibitz — griping whilst criticizing dimwits, sniping whilst indicting nitwits, dismissing simplistic thinking, in which philippic wit is still illicit.

**Vowels**  
**Christian Bök, 2001**

loveless vessels  
 we vow  
 solo love  
 we see  
 love solve loss  
 else we see  
 love sow woe  
 selves we woo  
 we lose  
 losses we levee  
 we owe  
 we sell  
 loose vows  
 so we love  
 less well  
 so low  
 so level  
 wolves evolve

**Dark Room**  
**Stephanie Bolster, 1998**

We're here, the three of us, lit by one candle.  
 Dodgson's wrist dips into solutions;  
 he nudges a glass plate to make her be there  
 sooner. Standing on a box, Alice peers down—  
 when will she appear in the slow mirror  
 that is not a mirror? A flame wavers, kept far away

so it won't burn, kept small so it won't ruin her  
development. Two faces wait above the vat  
where Alice will loom little, stopped.

But not: already hair has fallen in her eyes.  
He tucks it back behind her ear, flourishes  
the cleaner of his hands. Now? she asks.

She tugs his cuff. They don't seem to know  
I'm here, poet on the corner stool,  
watching a kind of homecoming. As a child I reached

to shift myself in chemicals, wanting my image  
perfect in that reddish light and tang.  
But the me who darkened with such grace

was ordinary once appeared, and stayed  
that way. Alice gasps as she comes into view.  
He hands the bathed girl to her, dripping,

says she's lovely in those rags. She laughs—  
then looks a long time at her beggar self.  
Although it's dim, I think I can say with near

assurance he does not attempt  
to unlatch her collar. It's time for tea.  
He draws back the curtain and she leaves,

he follows. This room is long and narrow, full  
of longing. Outside, cups clink. Here I steep,  
emulsified. Her milky shoulders start to dry.

**Seawolf inside its own Dorsal Fin**  
**Stephanie Bolster, 1999**

I sleep in the red of my rising  
arc, curled tight and finned  
within fin, rocked by black  
water I rock. I learn this one part  
of myself, each degree  
of its curve, how the water  
foams against warm skin.  
My fin learns me, the thing  
it is part of but does not  
belong to. We make each other,  
my fin and myself, myself  
and the taut water.  
When my fin breaks the sea's skin,  
through shut eyes I glimpse  
wave within wave, stone  
within stone, I surge  
through all the layers,  
my own incessant crest.

**Tapestry, The Cloisters**  
**Stephanie Bolster, 2011**

The unicorn made of stitches by hands by the thousands  
of hours in Ghent or Bruges or possibly years.  
The unicorn held in a ring of pickets  
his beard and buckled collar and blood where they caught him.  
All around the flowers with the names of Venetian glass  
the hellebore and unbidden berries. All around a place  
they went to day and night the candles straining the eyes.  
Skin softened by wool the sheep in the field the wolf.  
At this great distance the horn is the pinnacle  
as tall as the beast is rampant its tip a single thread  
squinted over an instant still flinching.