

the
REAL
MADE
UP

—
Stephen
Brockwell

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*Stephen
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ISBN



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Stephen Brockwell

ECW

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ECW PRESS



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Mimesis sutures the real to the really made up —
and no society exists otherwise.

— Michael Taussig,
Mimesis and Alterity

Inconsistent Machine Reproduction

You can't imitate
anybody really
and the extent
to which
you can't is
enough originality

— A. R. Ammons, "You Can't Imitate"

Scarecrow

You want to tell the cane-swinging codger
to get off the plywood in your backyard
and find trash of his own to fall down on,
but in this neighbourhood the arteries
clog with identical mansard-roofed red
brick houses, identical driveways cracked
by the relentless crush and stretch of freeze and thaw,
blue carbon-copy hydrants on the south
side of the street, street lights that perfect eyes
could not distinguish. You stoop to lift him
while his daughter apologizes with
such humility you'd think falling on
someone else's trash was a kind of theft.
And your thoughts turn, like a crow in flight,
to his surprising weight, say, four twenty-
kilo sacks of P.E.I. potatoes
stitched with enormous skill into the shape
of an old man, a monument for some
forgotten autumn festival, or prop
for the Halloween play at an abandoned school.
It's at that moment you begin to fear,
"This may be me in another forty years,
wetting my pants in someone else's yard,
failing to grip with the tip of my cane
a neighbour's discarded plywood scrap,
unable to recall my daughter's name,
flailing for my woollen cap to cover
the white relics of my remaining hairs,
groping for glasses that could never fall
from my broad fat nose, demanding to know
why I'm propped up by a stranger. Give me
this old man's humour and his wit; let me
curse the taxi driver and the barman."

Bill McGillivray's Cap

I may not yet be
fifty but the field
underneath this cap's
not growing taller.
I can't imagine
going to the barn
without it. Someone
would have to sneak
into the shed and
steal it from the nail
it's hung on since Dad
brought it home for me
from Illinois before
I'd forget to
put it on or take it off.
If it weren't there?
I'd stand as dumb
as a November field.
I've had this John Deere
cap near thirty years.
It wasn't the last thing
he brought me home.
It was the only thing
he brought me home.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 17

Under
the aegis
of envy
hectic faiths
pack tin mirrors
with sunlight strips.

Sorus

With fiddleheads, silent mimics,
a chef balances the delicate

palate of the unfurling ferns
with the taste of salted butter.

The sorus, I'm told, trellises spores
that cling like fruit to the frond.

Roving the forest for deer, boar
and such large game, the Saxon

must have lacked the Latin ear
for minutiae that would give

the tongue a name for this
tiny heap of fertile green.

Joanne's Medium Format Camera

Let's not talk about
what I want to keep.
Too many things
ask me to let them go.
My dog, my Hasselblad,
my job. Too much?
OK. But I'm not
where I want to be.
My camera, then.
I always loved
taking pictures of dolls,
stuffed animals, Lego
castles, Hot-Wheels,
me in my best
dress with my hair up —
pictures out of focus,
underexposed,
or posed mirror
shots, a brilliant flash
where my face
should have been, snapshots
my mother always
stuck to the fridge
as if they were taken by
Karsh. High school:
not my favourite
place, but Camera Club
kept me there long
enough to graduate,
and for graduation
I couldn't believe
my father bought me
an old Hasselblad.
It must have set him back
about two thousand,

money I'm pretty sure
he didn't have.
I worked that summer
at Paul's Studio.
You'd be surprised what
people used to pay
for wedding pictures. Or
how they'd schedule
the ceremony to fit
Paul's schedule.
I developed
negatives and proofs
and even took
outdoor shots in June.
Paul thought I had a
pretty good eye.
I skipped college and shared
my time with him.
We never married
but we lived together
eight years — despite
mom's objections.
I'm stretching this
story like a roll of film.
Thank God I'm
only twenty-eight!
The eight years
between us didn't bother me —
I loved his smell and
how he moved as if
everything he saw
was there to be seen.
He has such attentive,
generous eyes.
I was his last apprentice

but not his last
fresh student out of
school. I can't believe it.
Is every man so self-
absorbed? I'd had enough
of chemical baths and
working in the dark.

Karikura Gives Advice

I walked up to Karikura and asked,
“Karikura, how can I write a poem
that touches people’s hearts?” Karikura said,
“You cannot write a poem that touches people’s hearts.
People touch a poem with their fingers when
they pick up a book. If it is not bad they
might read it. If it is better, they might
mumble one or two words to savour it.
If it is good, maybe they will remember
the day they first read it when they read it again.
Perhaps they will recollect the taste
of the apple they were eating that day,
or they might remember
the breath of the wind in their mothers’ hair.”

Sieve

Thunder is as far from the nomad's thoughts
as mud is distant from his camel's path.
He'd smell the rain for miles were it to fall;
without it, his mind relaxes: a plumb line
that dropped its bob an hour ago, slack string.
The prints his camel's hooves make, breathed over
by the wind, filled with sand, would hold their shape
a little longer in the mud, but here
the water's lost without roots to hold it.
The water's in a bladder on his saddle
and in the fat of his slow camel's hump.

Mark Bradley's Plasma TV

This is the best, the most
advanced plasma
TV you can get for
under 10K.
Look at it. You wouldn't
see brighter red
if you fell in a
five acre rose bush
and survived. The screen's
so flat it could pass
for a picture if it
weren't moving.
It might be hanging
in a museum.
But I guess they
don't watch the PGA
at the National
Gallery, do they?
Have a look. What do
you want to watch?
I have that channel
locked because my son's
a curious kid like
all of them.
Something artsy-fartsy?
Guys like you watch
sports too, I'm sure, or
other regular stuff.
This monitor will
last me — what did he say? —
forty thousand hours.
How many years is that?
It has to be a
lifetime of TV.
There's my son, now.

Hey, Philip, don't be shy,
come say hello
to the historian.

Untrained Machine Voice Recognition: Joanne

The storm what a daughter
has had a little water for half an hour.
And were and what of the four
at a file not a time when the Allan Whitten,
out what a whim, how not a data has wind.
What a neat and what a little downtown.
At a little into it. And at a time
that a lot of what has the Lind in
did not a sound in the wind it up.
And who this mess that are intended as a high wind
is at a site has ended up where
what had been found in a letter a.
And whiz and that ended. To deter a time
and in and what end in a water
and if that and it not a one
and in the water and

Socratic Communication Problem of the Twenty-Second Century

Do you remember
the word for
what I'm doing
scratching
the surface
of whatever
it is we call
this
with the tip
of a stick
that leaks
sky
it reminds me
very much of a small
what are they called
those small things
on a shelf
with so much
of whatever
this is
in them

Peter's Complete Shakespeare

I cherish it. She
gave me the book, back
long before I knew
I appreciated
literature. I was a
bit of a fake.
It was *faux* appreciation.
I wanted
to be fancy. I
often pick it up
and thumb through it.
Someone had interspersed
little notes here and there
throughout the pages,
brief, hand-scribbled
character descriptions.
Every once in a while
I'll thumb through
and find one of the
notes and open it.
It's as if I've found it
for the first time.
Whoever owned old Bill
was smart enough,
or thought enough
of his book, not to write
in the margins. The
onionskin pages have
deteriorated just
enough that the old
engravings underneath

show through. I worry
that I haven't taken
care of it. It gathers dust
on a shelf, right.

Four Electronic Handwriting Recognitions

snow squall on the 401
ten cars piled up
like beer cases
near Brockville¹

cartwheel daugh4R²
nut³ the sack
like flags gentle
genetic flags

graci⁴ would he⁵ green
all winter if it weveitfor⁶
snorselfi5h⁷ snow
Suckn9⁸ an⁹ the
light enl-¹⁰ of ThiSun¹¹

zagermcn¹² leased a
bail ding¹³ to the lawers¹⁴
got juicea¹⁵ csvith¹⁶ the cash
crashed hos¹⁷ Cadillac
and got a discount
on his fees

¹ Brockville
² daughters
³ hit
⁴ grass
⁵ be
⁶ weren't for
⁷ snow, selfish
⁸ sucking
⁹ all
¹⁰ out
¹¹ the sun
¹² Zagerman
¹³ building
¹⁴ lawyers
¹⁵ juiced
¹⁶ with
¹⁷ his

Antique Silver Box

I've begun to collect your skin. I brush
the sheets to keep the mites from finding it
in their blind hunger. I gather the silk
from the towel after your morning shower
and collect the constellations of stardust
fallen on the shoulders of your black wool
sweater. Filling an antique silver box
with the white dust of you is not as strange
as it may seem. Snapshots of you have faded
under my fingers. The hotel telephone
is perfumed by the breaths of other mouths.
The memory of your voice rings in the mind
not in the ear. I carry these drops of you.
Their scent is faint. They are too small to hold.

Bill McGillivray's Trophy Deer

People who live
in the city (like you)
don't have a clue
what life's about because
death scares them to death. Ha!
Squeamish to squash
a spider on your daughter's
pillow, I bet.
Where do T-bones
on the bar-b come from?
A butcher saws them
from a hanging carcass.
That sounds gross to you?
Well, I guess it would
if your hands were as soft
as the feathers
on a swan's ass. When we're
done with all this,
I'll take you out to the bush
and we can hunt.
Come on, now. It's not
that bad. You wanted
honesty. I'd say
that's what I'm giving.
Like I said before —
I think I said it —
people don't want to hear
the truth. They want
to hear comforting
words. Back to the trophy.
When my brother
was up in Ste Agathe
back about '68,
I'd have to say,
we stayed at my

uncle's hunting cabin
one weekend in spring.
My older brother Carl
was a tough chap, he
loved to rough it out there
with the geese, loons,
moose and bears. Not that we
saw a bear that trip. But
we weren't always
too smart with provisions.
A half-cooked burger
is as good for flushing
bear out of the woods
as a case of 50
for a pack of teens.
But that's another
story. Five A.M.
my brother rolled
out of his sleeping bag
and kicked me in
the ribs to get me up.
He hated sleep
as much as I loved it.
At the time I think
I had a Remington
.22. He had a
new .303.
We hiked for about
half an hour upstream
from Lac Ouareau and
found a patch of spruce
to lay low in. A doe
stepped down the hill.
Her ears were perked
but she didn't spot us.

I froze there in my boots.
There was no way
I was going to
shoot it. A .22
would have made
her suffer anyway. Carl
had the guts. He shot
her good in the neck
and she leapt her last
few hundred yards.
I was quaking in
my boots and trying
not to cry like a
baby. Carl hauled her
back to the cabin while I
trailed behind,
neither of us saying
a word for an hour.
We lifted her up
into the truck bed
and Carl drove us
back. It was maybe nine.
We forgot to eat.
We forgot to pee.
I was surprised we
made it home. Our dad
beamed like the father
of a newborn son
when we pulled up the
driveway with the deer.
I didn't have the courage
not to watch
them dress it. So it was
our dad's trophy
for fifteen years until

he passed away.
Poor Carl succumbed
to colon cancer
when he was thirty-
three. By rights it was his.
It passed to me. I wasn't
going to sell it
or throw it in the
trash and let it rot.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 3

Spare mercury
for the snob,
the maid,
the skier.

Respect
the marvel
of the concubine's
undulations.

Hammer

Horseshoe, coat rack, toy box, fence, house, stall —
what isn't put together with a hammer?
Every family has one in the cellar,
hanging from a hook on a concrete wall
or lodged at the bottom of a box of tools.
If you haven't iced a knuckle or sucked
on a swollen thumb your hammer struck,
go fix a creaking plank or hang a picture.
Look at this simple thing: a lump of steel
drilled and shimmed onto a hardwood handle
shaped to drive a nail with a few hard blows.
Some say the Romans cast a long shadow
with the short handle of a hammer.
Don't blame the soldier or the carpenter.

Joanne's Mother's Friendship Ring

Look, what's wrong with
a pack of cigarettes?
I'm being as honest
as I can be.
I'd like to see you
in this position.
I could not live
without my cigarettes.
No way on earth. But
I'll satisfy your
misplaced hunger
for nostalgia.
My mother gave me her
friendship ring from school.
She begged me never to
give it up. Why?
Because after her marriage,
she felt a friend
was the one thing worth
holding on to. For good.
And she let a lot of
close friendships go.
Wendy — that was mom's
best friend from West Hill
High School — loved
mom more than anyone
she'd ever known.
What I mean is Wendy
had a family life
that wasn't pleasant.
Her mother drank, her
father fucked around,
and there's a big
difference between a man
who fucks anything

and a womanizer
with a residual
affection for his wife —
her father was a
god-forsaken pig!
No other relative or
family friend
has ever tried to
feel me up, not even
after the drunkenest
wedding or the
saddest funeral. No one
ever groped me
like that bastard.
I was ten. Mom would have
killed him if she found out.
Wendy loved my mom.
For a girl who suffered
through childhood the way
Wendy did, you'd think
there'd be a trace
of bitterness or cruelty.
I think Wendy put
too much trust in mom.
Parents will tell you
everything about
their friends' pain, but
when it comes to their own,
forget it. Their jaws are
clamped. Here's what I know.
Wendy fell in love with
my uncle Brad
and my mom spilled
the beans about her dad.
Brad ran from Wendy

like a frightened squirrel
and left Wendy
broken-hearted. That's it.
They never spoke
again. I find it strange.
Wendy suffered through
hell for so long
only to break it off
with her best friend
for disloyalty or,
really, tattling.
Mom begged me to take
care of my best friends.
She handed Wendy's
ring down to remind me.

Karikura Asks for Bread

Karikura came to me and asked for bread.

I said, “Karikura, I have ten dollars. Take it and buy yourself a decent breakfast.”

Karikura scolded me, “I do not want your money. I asked you for bread because the bread you make is not very good. If you do not make more, you will never make a loaf that anyone will eat.”

Letter from California

marin fern memory

show our daughter how the sundial
measures time

if clouds
scatter sunlight the needle
casts no shadow

stopping time
that travels one second
per second no matter
how fast you walk across the hall
or fly over the prairie
her eye knew the reflected
light of the fern

its shadow on
the forest floor from the push
and pull of light and shade
the echo of the word
tell her a shadow
is the eye's remembered
scent

all perception
nostalgia

that seeing is
a playful game of redesign

north beach oleander

underleaf
an oleander breathes
february

overleaf
wax on the stems
green sun candles

in flight prairie story

show her how the shadow
of the jet travels faster
than the shadow of the cloud
over the prairie

when it casts
a shadow on a cloud
it casts no shadow
on the ground

show her
the shadow teleportation
of clouds

time travels
one second per second
no matter how fast
earth spins or the sun
spirals earth through space
how would she recognize
the oleander or its shadow
if she never heard the word
never saw a petal?

tell her
a voice is the tongue's
shadow of muscular sound
listen

she will never hear
only the sound of speech

north beach oleander

in california
the oleander leaves
are green
mirrors for
february sun

our daughter fell
on the ice laughing
breathless
oleander petals
in her cheeks

Peter's Mining Claim

I couldn't think of much
else, you know, there's
that book and — it's funny,
you search for things
nobody else has. When
my dad was down
I showed him the old
mining claim I got
from my grandmother.
My grandparents lived
in Manitoba when
my dad was born.
When I visited
Olive in England,
she gave me a mining
claim from The Pas.
I thought, "Hey, this
might have value." But no,
it's a First Nations
Reserve now. The book,
the claim . . . it's the
uniqueness of these things,
the *uniquities*. My
grandmother kept
the mining claim
in a box of keepsakes.
We went through the
requisite black and white
photo session once
I got to England.
She gave me a pile
of old photographs
and the mining claim,
which she thought I'd find
interesting. And it

was. It is. They
lived in a place called
Cranberry Portage
which no longer
exists. [It does.]
The claim has no
worth; it has longitude
and latitude and
he named it after
my grandmother. This
was the Olive mine.
Not long afterward, they
would have moved back
to England. They only
stayed a few years.
I don't know. I
presume there's a statute
of limitations. I mean,
I'll go back
some day. In the course
of discussing what
may or may not
exist, I remember
looking into it
enough to find
it was part of an
Indian Reserve
but never far enough
to find out why
claims expire, although
I assume they just
do. But maybe
I'll go back and claim
my land back from
the red people. The red

people have been
keeping me down too long.

Untrained Machine Voice Recognition: Mark Bradley

Is the one dollar out of the water fountain of life and war?
And what it wants all but one dollar
and a win for all but 2000?
And women to the left out a way to get on.
What one comes back into: the OPS are signed up
in the interspersed. Are intended that are women
and two others were upset about one hour
and then there were some eleven in windows
and others offered a contract on the big one
and one in the water and stop and not want on the water.

Mimetic Resonance Imaging

Too pretty, dreamlike mimicry!

— Elizabeth Bishop, “The Armadillo”

Mark Bradley's Wife

Can I pick my wife?
She's the finest
woman a man could
find. Loving, sweet, warm
in bed — oh, come on
now, baby, I mean
comfortable to
sleep with; you know that —
I guess I'm doing
laundry for a week.
It's true. Other women
demand too much:
remodel the kitchen,
fix this, paint that.
Others love you for
who you are and give.
Terri taught me to
give by giving herself.
A lesson her mother
said this redneck
bastard couldn't learn.
When Philip turned three,
Terri had been
working at Wal-Mart for —
what was it, honey,
five years? You worked hard.
No one puts more
into her work than you do.
Philip developed
asthma and she missed
too many shifts
taking him to hospital
until we had him
diagnosed. I still
hear his breathing.

Huuggh huuggh.

[Difficult to transcribe
wheezing in throat.]

You had us scared, boy.

And they laid her off.

They pink-slipped
the most beautiful woman

you've ever seen in a
pink slip. Came home

crying, weeping, and

I just held her.

Believe it or not,

I said not one word.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 8

Behindhand,
verify
that wacko's
exceeded
goalposts.
He'll lead
half the region —
pompous
individual.

Tragus

What is that in the mirror? A hair
in the ear, tragedy of the tragus,
sprung like a spruce in a Glengarry field
from the Laurentian Shield's

inexhaustible supply of conifers.
I've become my high school French teacher,
who pruned his ears like old growth vines:
not to cultivate, to control.

*Pouvait-il regarder les cils
forêt sapins, lèvres mûres
d'Anne-Marie sans réfléchir,*

*«J'ai mal élu mes couleurs ce matin.
Ma ceinture brune et mes bas blancs me gênent
dans ces pantalons bleus et ces souliers noirs» ?*

Joanne's Nissan Altima

A Japanese car
beats a man for warmth
and reliability,
don't you think?
Everyone falls in love
with their first car.
Or do we love the
cars we can't afford?
I read that German
men with BMWs
have more sex. They
didn't survey women.
I'd like someone to
explain that to me.
The whole car-buying
process is like mating.
Did I say mating?
Dating, I meant dating.
We shop around for a
model we wouldn't
be embarrassed to be
seen with. You look
for evidence that we'll
give good mileage.
I'm sorry. I love
my car. I bought it
five years ago and it's
cost me little more
than oil changes, brakes
and the monthly payments.
It brought me home
safely through a blizzard,
back up to North Bay
after I dumped Paul.

Untrained Machine Voice Recognition: Bill McGillivray

One of the one to two outings for water
and no one wants to sell interruptions.
And told them and others: one to 44
from time to time to think. I was cards.
Were winners from the start
of the winter Olympics
in print ads of Sutter's.
Fort Stanton Glantz dollars
from its windows
to let them were scattered showers
and have started a hold. There's much more
time to watch what other signs
of economic times as to why
this is the limit to some of the first.
The whole notion of them
into the one who were swimming around,
the best time for some time to go to work.

Hunt (Wallace Stevens in the Kootenays)

Here the shagged pines not of Connecticut,
here the huntsmen and their fireside dances,

their disembodied shadows on the rocks
where granite glints as if a mirror for each spark.

There is no silver stream but black, the moon
behind the pines and craggy peaks, stars

hidden by slow-moving clouds, the stream reflects
no light, it is a harp of rock and water playing

the chatter of a crowded marketplace,
or of the wolf packs hunting in the dark,

or of cicadas in the heat of summer,
which are each the same chattering

tuned by the stream.

Bill McGillivray's Pellet Gun

A forest shapes
itself when you're away.
The path that was there
fifteen years ago
starts and stops at the
edge of the field now.
No one else would know
there was a path there.
I remember it
because I walked it
in my dad's rubber boots
hunting muskrat
at the swamp's edge
where you could hunker down
in the needle bed
under the boughs
and snipe them
with a pellet gun.
And I did. Out of the
swamp, shining wet,
fur shedding water
as it sniffed the air,
it held its front paws
up like a dog playing.
I saw a splash of
blood out of its eye
but it sank back
into the swamp so fast
I'll never know, and
I wasn't about
to wade into the
swamp to fish it out.
No I didn't have
nightmares over it.
Do bobcats have

nightmares over rabbits?
If you ask me to
say there was a thrill
to killing, I'd have to say,
yes. Yes. Sure.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 81

The electron
lab's syn-
chronic photo:
a generic
formula for
scintillating light
and nuclear colour.

Sparrow

Fly from the window,
sparrow;
don't mistake your reflection
for an invitation
from a receptive mate.

I'll brush
black paint on the glass,
hang the feeder
low on the cedar
where you and stray cats can eat.

Dr. Plaza's Idea

How did the Earth make
the spiders? How did
it make the children
who sleep in soft beds?

Think of the havoc
the spiders wreak on
the dreams of sleeping
children. Imagine,
without spiders,
the evolution of flies.

I suggest to you
that an idea preys
upon the flesh of its
competitors,
that ideas are
the real predators.

I don't believe men
simply prey upon each
other. No, an idea in the brain
infects a new host
with fear and terror,
and kills an idea in the
mind of another.

I believe there are
beautiful, fertile
ideas that sometimes
fall prey. For example,
the idea of peace,
embodied by
Christ, perhaps the
ultimate beauty.

If one were to examine
the links between
our civilization
and the church of Rome,

he would find the
parasite of politics
in the burning
of every heretic.
The relentless
evil of the last century
cannot be the product
of human agency.
Fascist, Nazi,
Stalinist, Peronist, all
agents of social
or political
control originate
as parasites
on gentler ideas that
had a Christian
nobility to them.
You see, ideas compete
for space and time,
not us. We do not
think them, we shelter them.
This may seem an
outrageous hypothesis
but other people
have thought about this.
And the irony
is not lost on me.
I began to observe
behaviour closely
after I learned of
my cousin's incident.
Pardon me, but it was
never my intent
to delve into specifics.
Not because they are

gruesome — they are,
but that is not why.
I feel you have perhaps
not been listening
to what I have had
to say. After all,
I am sharing with you
an idea,
an insight that
I feel is important.
Some ideas deserve
to die. To kill
an idea you must
never speak it.
We invented new
terms to cope with what
happened after Peron.
Heard by the wrong ears,
a rebellious teen
could become a
desaparecido.
My cousin was
disappeared. Soon after,
they reappeared her body
at the doorstep, a
travesty of an
abandoned baby,
without a blanket
or a basket.
No, enough. Listen
to me. Your fetish
for the lurid does not
serve your project.
If you insist on gory
details, then watch a

documentary
or search the internet
for *nunca más*.
But you will have learned
nothing from this.

Karikura Digs

Karikura found me again at the tavern.

Karikura said, "If you want to be a poet,
you should spend less time in this tavern
and more time in bed with your wife."

Silence is Karikura's favourite affirmation.

"If you can hold a glass, you can pick up a shovel.

Come, my garden is full of weeds;

I would like to watch you dig them."

Signal, Response

S: Dead birds in glass cases are the smallest poems.

R: No, the dormant worm in the bird's chest is the smallest poet.

S: The bead of sweat on my forehead about to fall on your nipple is the purest poem.

R: Yes.

Bill McGillivray's Antique Rifle

I know what you're
about to say. "What's with
the guns?" It isn't that. This
thing couldn't fire
a hired hand for not
showing up on time.
See, the screws that
hold the rifle butt to the —
I can't remember what
it's called; you're going
to have to look that up
[tang] — gave up on this
old single-shooter.
Maybe my old man
tried and failed to
make a hunter of it.
The point is we always
believed it killed
someone, probably
in the Sudan.
We could only guess
what happened. My dad
was too young to
go to war, fifteen in
'45. But his
old man was old
when my dad
was born — I'd say he was born
in '88. Too old
for the first war?
We'll never know. We
think it was his brother's gun.
He'd never talk
about it. None of them did.
People say they were

afraid to share
their feelings. That's
not it. They just didn't feel
a thing by the time
they had time to talk.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 9

Illuminating

myths pre-

dominate

anthropology.

Crustaceans

and chinchas

settle

in the centre of the delta,

unwept.

Letter from South Florida

Please, Maria, fill my Paxil prescription
and keep the receipt; you will need to claim it.
Even in the utter dark of this shack,
the stars of a summer evening scream at me.

When I empty the teapot on the scrub
the black leaves nourish beetles, worms and rats —
and vermin invite pelicans by the dozen.
Please don't send me another box of tea,

send silver nitrate swabs to cauterize
my bleeding nose. My shirtsleeve reeks of blood.
Maria, you can forestall the panic
when a pelican comes, bringing the news

of daily violent death in the small print
of its parasite-infested wings. Maria,
send a fountain pen with a sharp nib
and a bottle of ink to mix with my blood.

Mark Bradley's Truck

Come on outside and
have a look at her.
She has a big block
V10 with 500
horses ready to
rip a rubber mile
down the 407. And
talk about towing.
She'd tow the
Titanic from the ocean.
I don't have
much of a boat — a twenty-foot
lake cruiser
with a pair of Evinrudes.
I'd like to get
Philip on water skis
again this summer.
Last summer I pushed
too hard. He took
a couple of rough tumbles,
but plenty of him
wasn't black and blue.
And I think it made him
a stronger swimmer.
Well, of course
he had a life jacket on!
[The chirp of keyless
remote entry.]
Have a look at the
leather in this thing.
I have to tell you,
I could fool around
with Terri in these
seats. They're heated too.
You feel so high up

in the driver's seat;
if buddy tailgates
you or cuts you off,
you feel like you can
drive right over his car.

Untrained Machine Voice Recognition: Corporal Jensen

The front lines of eleven and one
to end of our sons and daughters.
Into somebody comes from what will
the last summer. As that for some time
to work in bonds are intact.
And terms were
someone comes as no one
to one that are well in one of many.
Other income of two to four
and walked up to
and I was the first of all types
of the Saint André to one tie.

Ingredients for Certain Poems by Al Purdy

Wild Ameliasburgh grapes
 crushed by two hundred pounds of fifty-year-old Al
wild Penticton yeast
 from apple boughs and vines
 from the old man's feet
imparting more fragrant fruit
 than any brewer's yeast a poet might buy
Roblin Lake water with a hint of mercury
 and fourstroke fuel
 unremarked like any minor hazard of the 1970s
a carboy with a rubber stopper
the sickness of poems
sickness of scenery
he will never say a word about

Cachel, Roblin Mills, Belleville
 villages of recent early history
 strung together by
 water from the roots of Algonquin tamarack
 to the leaves of Mont Royal oak
substituting their names for a national mood
 that eludes all but the last rhetoric of lists
 the droning cadences of tavern cusses
 because a man said
I am no man because this is not a country

Ripe, subsidized Saskatchewan barley
 malted in a union shop in Hamilton
ten-foot East Kent Goldings
 harvested by the rough hands of Scottish labour
 compressed into a handful of aromatic pellets
a sachet of dried yeast or
 a tablespoon of bread yeast from a kitchen jar
some wort-filtering device — a sieve, a clean pair of drawers
 a misplaced stocking of Eurithe's
a covered pail in the kitchen
alcoholic tastes for forbidden women
one can't use
developed at great expense

Montréal, Winnipeg, Vancouver
 cities careening into speech
 hammered together with
 iron on the anvil of the Shield
 through fields of maize and barley
 past coulees, cattails and purple loosestrife
homespun whatchamacallits and invasive handles
 coiling themselves under the tongue
 symbionts infecting the language
with the rare disease of an authentic voice

the gift of a wife
with a name even Rocket Richard in his skates
could have wrapped his laces and a song around
the Rocket would have found breath on the bench to sing

Eurithe, seuls les tendres mots

m'échappent parfois.

Lisses sont ton nom et ta peau.

Ils ne m'échapperont pas.

The fermented applejunk of Bordeaux grape skins
poured into hand-polished copper stills
half a forest of oak
split and kiln-dried in a warehouse at Nevers,
strapped into barrels by the Union of French Coopers
a stone walled cellar under a dilapidated chateau
where booze can age in the damp for years
water from god knows what European tap or spring
to dilute it for a simple bottle of imperfect glass
a label chosen for clarity not elegance
the strands of an existence
outside the
never-finished sentences

Pangnirtung, Galapagos, L'Anse aux Meadows
habitations for exotica, sea fringes
whispered together on a thread of
air we learned to fly on
with sandpiper, eider, monarch
monikers no more strange than here for strange places
where Medusa's children coil their thousand serpents
turtles bask and dry their shells
and the wapiti gather in vast numbers
not to be named by us, but to graze

Fresh peat dried in the rare highland sun
 (at least one bog must entomb a mummified
ancestor of clan Ross
 a patriarch who shambled out of the fog
 and stared up at Aldebaran muttering a Scots drinking song)
Isle of Skye barley threshed by a farmer
 with his eye on profit and a kickback bottle
a hundred times more water than will make it to the cask
 water to steep the grain for germination
water to soak the sweetness from the grist
the strangeness of sediment
from the last bottle
pockets of the human swept into the mainstream

Truva, Samarkand, Plains of Abraham
 sites of text and artifact, parchment and shard
 woven together by the burned black
 ink of scribes and presses, and the black
 blood of blubbering heroes expiring on the sand
It may be that until we write into our history
 the names of three thousand coolie railmakers
 (whose remains the crows and foxes
 scattered across the prairie)
the words of this country will not find us

the gift of a wife
with a name even Bobby Clarke in his box
could be inspired to eloquence by
the boarding bully could be moved by tenderness of sound to sing
 Eurithe, for your name
 I drop my gloves
not to inflict pain
 but to love

Remote Memory Invocation

Nor is it the ape mimesis who speaks from the tree
ancestral

— A. M. Klein, “Portrait of the Poet as
Landscape”

Karikura Sees a Blackbird

On my way to the village, I saw Karikura
standing in a field, looking up. I asked him
if there was something I could help him find.
“I am seeking nothing. A moment ago
I walked from the village. In a moment
I will walk to the city. I saw a blackbird
fly overhead and I am waiting for the darkness
of its image on my eyes to pass away.
There, it is gone. Will you walk with me?”

Peter's Mutt

Here Austin, here boy!
[Barking.] Down boy, down!
Better company than
you-know-who.
Be quiet, Austin! For
Christ's sake, shush!
I only wish he'd
learn to shut his yap.
If I stuff his Kong with
ground beef, that'll
keep him out of my
hair a few minutes.
There, Austin, go get your
Kong and lie down.
I'm glad you mentioned
the dog. I don't know
if I'd have given
Austin much thought.
But there's nothing like
coming home to his
tail-wagging kisses. He'll
sit by my feet
when I'm watching
television. Sometimes
we get tied up in knots
because he follows
me around the house
too closely. He's snapped
a few times at me for
tripping over him.
He loves to fetch in the
field across the lot.
Sure, he's a noisy
barker. So am I!
What's a dog supposed

to do? That's how he
gets what he has
to say off his chest.
He barks. He's a good dog.
Neighbours don't mind
because, ultimately,
he and I are friendly.

Abandoned Roses

Do not tell me the rose is a symbol of love,
pure and aromatic.
Do not tell me the rose infected with the worm
is a symbol of love defiled.
Show me the ungerminated fruit of the rose
fossilized in sedimentary rock.
Take these roses, real ones, they declare
that I despise you.
Look: I have written the word hate
on every petal.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 10

A

kayak,

no

rudder,

a sprocket,

no plank.

Track

oleander,

quince and the

wind's flexure

in the greenwood.

Nicole's Children's Happiness

I was starting to say —
but don't interfere
with your subject. [Laughs.] This
won't sound natural.
You asked me to talk
to you about three things
that are important
to me. But I can't
think of three things, really.
Something comes to mind
that's not concrete,
my children's happiness.
But I'm not sure that's
something you would find
of interest. Alright.
I hope for my children's happiness.
Pardon me? You were
thinking of something
I have now, not something
I'm searching for? Ah.
Well, I should say this,
anyone who owns
something, an object
exists at a
particular moment,
but it always comes
with some uncertainty.
You might break it.
You could lose it. You
can be far from it.
I agree it's a more
abstract example,
but at the same time,
I think it is something
that I have. And it's

something I hope to have
in the future.

I speak of their happiness
as something

I have, but it's something
they have, and that

gives me pleasure. To
have something that isn't

ego-centric pleases

me. It gives me

a sense of connection

to them and it

gives me a feeling

of warmth. It makes me

feel that I've fulfilled

my role as a mother.

Winter, Montréal

I have decided to move
to Madagascar
to learn to dance as they
dance with the dead
in silks as bright as any
bird of paradise
to lift the dead from tombs
and dress the corpses
there are many dead I want
to dance with before I die
and dress in silks
hoping to be asked to dance

not to escape the hectic
pace of unemployment not to
embrace the radiant
heat of eternal summer not to
exploit the plateau's
exotic spices not to
bathe along the thin
blade of the blond coast

Randomized Oxford Exploration 73

Look,
alphabetical
cabs
in Newfoundland!
An automotive
weekday
hoax or
the 'morrow's
trip for two?

Corporal Jensen's Old Time Skates

I won't wear these skates
for local league games.
I'd be shamed off the ice
or break an ankle.
Recreational
players take their gear
damn seriously,
like they take the game.
Let's say I want to
hip-check my friend Wayne,
knock him off his blades
over the boards and
into tomorrow.
Not enough support
for follow-through in
these old fashioned skates,
fine as they must have been
back in the day.
No plastic, but leather
softened by the years.
But they're no showpiece.
They have longer blades
than the best skates do
today so they fly
over the ice. Years back
a January thaw
made our yard a pond.
February we
skated in the dark
on a backyard rink
flatter than new ice
freshly shaved by the
Zamboni before
the first drop of the puck.

Hyperbole for a Large Number

Not the hair that you or I have touched,
but the follicles all lovers' hands have raked
their fingers over, that number so much
greater, say, than all the teeth from speechless

mouths that the fish and birds now
perceive as stream and garden pebbles.
Not the breath my mother exhaled
since mud filled her great uncle's lungs

at Amiens, but all the breaths of children
put to rest since Iphigenia's sacrifice.
Not the drops of blood that have fallen
on all the battle theatres of spring,

but the molecules of water the sun
distilled from them — enough to weigh
a shirt down after patrol, enough to resurrect
a face from its evening mask of ash.

Not the number of stars that burn
and burn out like eyes, but the number
of particles that give the stars their fire,
must exceed the number of our crimes.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 41

Fierce converts
baptized
in the Seine
with steins of tea,
raised
in the arrondissement
dialectic intentions.

Nicole's Abstractions

I'm sorry that the
only other thing
I can think of is
another abstraction.
I'm sorry for thinking
so abstractly,
but I find these things
most significant.
I'm thinking of things
that tell me my partner,
my husband, is happy.
For me it's very
symbolic, it gives me
harmony. It's something
I need to live without
suffering. If things aren't
harmonious in my
life, I suffer
badly. I prefer
to avoid suffering.
When I see that my
husband is happy [*content*]
with his life, warm with me,
and playing with the children,
I sense that harmony.

Helium

O hello! O helios! O helicoid!

O by-product of the fat sun's
proton-smashing furnace,
you dissipate in space
stripped to the ions;
your double-plus positive attitude
spins off all the negative iotas!

O helmet! O helix! O Hellas!

O hangover of the heavy metals,
wafting from their nuclear decay
like a libation from the pores
of a serial libator, you add
an octave to the voice. Collect
surplus electrons from their orbitals!

O Helvetica! O helter! O helicopter!

O masquerade of methane,
natural gas ratchets the pressure
up on you, pushes you underground
where only a handful of Kelvin
can chill you out to siphon you off,
the cream of gases!

O Hellespont! O heliotrope! O helve!

O prisoner of polychromatic latex spheres,
lashed to a child's wrist like a horse to a post,
give a kid a lift, a hair's worth;
your commerce with heavier gases,
their low rate of exchange
will slowly bring him down!

O held! O Helen! O help!

Three Short Poems by Karikura

River Reeds

These reeds conceal a crocodile.
They are so sharp they slice your legs.
Listen to them: the wind has turned them
into harps. Perhaps they were cranes
who practiced stillness so long
they recall only how to stand and sing.

Mantella Frog

The bright red mantella on the wet leaf
is like saffron, but only to the eyes.
Whoever disturbs this small toxic frog
deserves every dreaming moment
of his long visit to the infirmary.

Beautiful Things

Some seek it in the body of a lover,
others, in the handiwork of artisans.
Too many look into the mirror at it.
But it can be found in the voices and footfalls
of children who have had little time
to think about it. They run after it
with a net, gleefully, in the square.
They sing a song they learned at school
or from their grandmother. No matter,
they do not know that they are singing.

Corporal Jensen's Afghan Rug

I hate those bullshit
words. If you were there,
if you had done it,
they wouldn't distance
you one inch from guilt
or fear. Doubletalk
can't squelch nightmares
filled with body parts.
Honestly, we don't use
those words, they're for you.
We string together
chains of expletives,
the coarser and more
colourful the better.
People are dying there.
Sons and daughters,
mothers, fathers,
grandparents and fucking
family pets — dogs, cats,
goats — everything dies.
But some have the knack
for accelerating
their stumbling into
the last breath.
Taliban are masters
of it, I can
tell you that. We're not
blameless. We do what
we do. We're over
there. You're over here.
I don't think you can
grasp what it's like
to see a real severed
head in a yard,
or a foot in its

shoe. No amount of
training, my friend.
Maybe experimental
medication would be
the way to go.
The dogs are the worst
in a way. The dry
air makes their gums
recede after they're dead.
Their teeth show and they
look as if they were
snarling right to the last.
I'm off topic.
I was going to tell you
about the carpet
I brought back — I should
call it a war rug.
I wonder what they're
up to now — no, I
wonder if the family's
still alive.
It would be best if I
showed it to you —
you walked by it on the
way to the kitchen.
It seems to be a standard
handmade rug;
at first glance, there's
nothing too special.
But look at it closely.
Keep looking. There.
I can tell from your
expression that you're
starting to see it.
That is an AK-47.

Those are
Russian MIG jets.
At the corners
you can see hand grenades.
To the right of them,
rocket launchers.
And poppies, yes,
all bordered with poppies.
And camels, finally.
They were the best
means of resupply
when the Soviets
occupied their land.
Red's a common
colour for rugs, but
I have to think it's blood.

Raccoon

Bricks on the lid will not deter
 the precision
instruments of your hands
 any more than last week's
elastic bands
 or last month's pail of dishwater
protected the lawn from your
trail of bags and bones.

Green plastic bags should disguise
 domestic crimes from
neighbour's eyes,
 but with a nose tuned
like a reporter's ear to news,
 you publish across
 the tabloid grass
our unrecycled
newspapers, bottles and cans.

Untrained Machine Voice Recognition: Peter

Some were three, someone to tell them
what are the ones, were turned into the wind
not on a machine. Will now come a time
when it's one of the worse in: one 77 era
and winters of some kind of stuff
is not much time to us.

Our winners were sold out a long term.

If someone in one of the storm,
to win the men's one to the mission,
was to send a one in Russia,
someone else to arm Iraq
since 11146 hours of water.

And a whole will remain as an added
to the one who were signs and banners
were synonymous with some one thousand am.

Joanne's Vibrator

Hey, I was just kidding.
Put one word about that
in your book and I'll
sue your ass off.

I make a joke about sex
and poof! She's a nympho.
Do you always sweat
from your upper lip?

Look up. What's the matter
with you guys? That's it.
Turn that thing off. Turn it off
now or it's over.

Draught

Re-glaze the frame's cracked putty.
Keep the heat in and our socks off.

Tape it up with plastic. Cut the draught
and let us sleep in less than sweaters.

But save the old glass. Its pocks
and ridges make an accidental

prism for the winter sunlight
and spread its colours on our bed.

Randomized Oxford Exploration 54

The courteous
dotard's cleat
dares the
disjunctive,
jabbed
in the profligate
blackguard's
boot.

Nicole's Photographs

The last thing, I'll try
to find something that
isn't abstract. It's
interesting, you've
chosen to have me
focus on objects.
Depending on where
I am in my life,
I'd likely focus
on different things.
[Very long pause.]
I'm making an inventory
of my things.
I'm not sure we'll get
through this chat before
I have to leave to
pick up my daughter.
I'm thinking
negatively. I'm telling
myself this or that
is not important.
Not the house, I'm not
emotionally
attached to it. Do
you understand me?
Certainly not the kitchen,
I'm not fond
of appliances.
Clothes are important,
they're an extension
of me, but they're also
transitory.
Photographs of people
are important.
They may not be *the* thing,

but they'd be close.
Why? They let me
revisit positive
moments in my life.
I don't revisit
negative things.
Remember that I
avoid suffering.
Photographs let me
create new versions
of history my way.
Memory is an
aspect of recollection.
Looking at a photograph
is another.
When someone recalls
an experience,
it's never exactly
the one they see in a
photograph. Pictures
of my family —
my mother, my sisters
and my brother —
are important to me
now because I miss them.
And photographs of
Anita when she
was very small
make me think of certain
qualities she has. I
almost feel as if I can
crunch them [*les crocquer*]. And
photographs of Mathieu
when he was younger.
He was so open.

I have more access
to him in images.
I find him very
remote now — even
in recent photographs.
I also like
the pictures that my
husband has taken of me.
They let me imagine
myself differently —
through the eyes
of someone who loves me.
Speaking of memory
and photographs,
for some reason,
I don't need a photograph
of my husband to have
the experience
of his presence.
I simply imagine it
and I have it.
I have direct access
simply by thinking
about him. I'm not
the kind of person
who could arrive at
a definitive list.
If you want me to
come to a decision,
you'd have to give me
time to sort through
all the things I have.
And I don't think
we have the time for that.

The Bay of Fundy

the divine political economy of the sail
the relentless staccato of the hailstorm
the bitter sea salt of the flooded shore-house basement

the accelerando of the reverse Peticodiac current
the paradigm shift of clay under the press of flesh
the champagne effervescence of the landfill in July

the foie gras of the front yard's rusted Ford
the tactical pianissimo of the tomcat on the pier
the fragile stoicism of the flowerpots

the progressive taxation of the kittiwake spearing the marsh for clams
the chorus of the flock of petrel
the maderized merlot of the red tide

the counterpoint of mating butterflies
the injustice of the bottlenosed dolphin on the sandbar
the cervelles of corrugated tin oxidized on the duck blind

the steamed moss of the early morning spruce
the tenuto of the retriever gnawing on a tuna fin
the peer jury complicity of gulls pecking the eyes of discarded fish

the contrite apology of the admonished cod
the vibrato of the swallowing cormorant
the sun-baked crumbs on the crust of the clear-cut

the plodding crescendo of the tide
the agile spin-doctoring of the skipper in a gale
the puff pastry of the February snow squall

the pungent broth of nominally potable water
the de capo of the moon a few bars out of time with the sun
the hegemony of the sea

Karikura Translates a Song

When Karikura played fiddle and sang,
you thought the day would end in sunrise.
We loved to hear one Karikura song:

Bee lem ah la

Ee nay gó la

Bee lem ah la

Ee nay gó la

Hamari o no la ma

No goro o h'mo Allah

I asked Karikura the meaning of the words.
Karikura said, "The first verse means,
'My goats are gone.' The second verse,
'There is no grass left.' These are repeated.
The third verse means, 'I too may have to go.'
And the final verse, "Thank God for my fiddle."

The Last Eloquence of Uncle John

An orifice is a kind affliction
all relief and infection leave and enter. It is a door
revolving until our final breath or defecation —
but of that enough, for let me speak
of the baby to whom all portals give pleasure:
its, its mothers', its fathers'.
The poor dog has had a few explored.
Of the pleasure older children take through them
Aunt Rose would have me embarrassed to speak,
but of an old man's keen nostril
and of the exuberance of my digestion
I can speak until my lungs forget to breathe.

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From the moment we first learn to speak we are always using other people's words.

Stephen Brockwell's latest collection improvises on this simple idea of imitation. In The Real Made Up mimicry becomes a kind of cadence for an interweaving of transcribed speech, ironic song, jarring randomization, post-colonial irony, and blatant theft. An incessant, imitative dialogue shapes our neural and cultural networks — imitation is a source of power for any subculture, and the primary means of a colonizing process that should be seen as violent. But imitation is not a simple act of copying — at its best, imitation is accompanied by play, performance and re-enactment. Imitation is also a crucial human faculty — a talent at the heart of social being. The Real Made Up is itself made up of real and imaginary interviews with people off the street, of poems by others and poems from others. At every turn it is an attempt to revel in or escape from — an impossible task — the imitative traces of everyone else.



STEPHEN BROCKWELL lives, writes and works in Ottawa and other places. He is the author of *The Wire in Fences*, *Cometology*, and the Archibald Lampman Award-winning *Fruitfly Geographic*. He is co-editor of the online journal www.poetics.ca.

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