

EVEN IF THE LIGHT ON THE HORIZON
IS A FOREST FIRE I LOVE A PHOENIX

Shab-e She'r Set - November, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

acknowledgements	3
in the valley the colour comes	4
ideas fill the valley where the colour comes	5
the virus is the thought we are individuals	8
Toulouse's uncharacteristic heat	10
an almost religious flashfreeze of ingenuity	11
even	13
Festival of Fire	14
the surface of the pond	15
the topography of a breeze	16
all of language as braille	17
or is it this wide-eyed wasp	18
Tourists Like Us	19
I shall remember, on Seine's billowing waters, ¹	21
notes	22
whodunnit	23

As an interdependent being I gratefully acknowledge the earth, air, fire, water & aether; the North, South, East & West, our fish, insect, animal & bird siblings, the vegetable & mineral teachers, & the countless generations of Indigenous peoples who are stewards of the land that we live upon.

As a treaty person I acknowledge personal responsibility for the state of disrepair of those commitments made at & after Contact including the Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy/Silver Covenant Chain; the Beaver Hunting Grounds of the Haudenosaunee NANFAN Treaty of 1701; the McKee Treaty of 1790; the London Township Treaty of 1796; the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, with the Anishinaabeg; & the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum of the Anishnaabek & Haudenosaunee.

I recognize that awareness without action means nothing; & I recommit daily to, & encourage practices of, mindful relational repair in the myriad little moments of everyday life, some of which are humbly illustrated here. The work that follows would not exist without the active, mycelial communities of editors, publishers, curators, organizers, & hosts around the world who practice, as I do, belief in the arts to transmute what is into what could be.

IN THE VALLEY THE COLOUR COMES

fed to axioms i fell upon the earth and ran
to where when in the valley the colour comes

there is a deciduous solitude the whorl
of the novel describes

as cloud that philosopher turns the earth
in its hands tatters muttering One

full third of your life is spent getting used to gravity
Son fireflies in the forest like opinions

take their metre from lovers not Lethe
you are mistaken Run

IDEAS FILL THE VALLEY WHERE THE COLOUR COMES like
light bending about the ankle slick with sweat in the steam
room *is not meditation Hyssop, don't fool your self.*

Is breath, breathe, the room itself pulsating.

*Do not tamper with sensors. This will result in the termination
of your membership.*

Obey, oblige, conform.

Should I go to the beach? she asked.

I don't believe in "should."

That's a no then and emoji.

The spinach salad costs little more than the paper plate
ferrying it. Short talk on bargains.

Gramma was telling me about how the impossible guy
who hosts the movie night at the retirement home and paused
the program and took the remote with him to the bathroom and,
returning, resumed it, is also the guy who clears his chest in the
dining room she nearly threw her water through in answer.

I wonder what they would have done, she said.

Thank you for setting up my new phone, she said.

Thank you for giving birth to my father, I said.

With that, we went to a lunch we were already out to.

You're nuts, she said.

Heritably, I said.

We sit like that, with our secret pact, and it's nice enough to make a man weep.

Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. Means used are not important. To alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects.

She said she wanted to learn to meditate.

I can show you, I said.

Do you have time now? she said.

Is there any other time? I explained.

Wouldn't it be better if we meditated later—when you have more time?

No better, no later, I explained. *Sit comfortably.*

There.

Do your feet comfortably touch the floor there?

Not quite.

Put them on this pillow. How's that?

Better.

Meditation is a fancy word for breathing. It's just breathing. As you breathe in, breathe in; as you breathe out, breathe out.

Is that it?

That's it.

And we sat like that with our secret pact, and it was nice enough to make a man weep.

Honey, it isn't the drummer you love; it's the rhythm.

Drummer, don't confuse the authority of rhythm with the authority of man.

Partake, steward.

Okay. I'll be in this world.

There is so much to do. There is so little to do.

I think I hurt my liver a little with too much creatine. My pee said so, said approximately that. We inferred its meaning. And today at the café there was a guy somebody thought wasn't a god tied by a leash to the bicycle rack. His muzzle was mostly salt, peppered and whiskered.

May I have a muzzle, please?

How would you like it, Sir?

Peppered and whiskered.

Very good, Sir, and would you like anything else?

What else do you have?

His eyes like my ankles in the steam room, all light bending like a spoon there isn't.

THE VIRUS IS THE THOUGHT WE ARE INDIVIDUALS the thought we are individuals *is* the virus *is* the thought *we are* individuals *is* make the impermeable sanctity of the self great again wealth forgetting all but self i have to tell you yes the thought we are individuals *is* the virus i was walking by the very geese seem to have i'm sure it's nothing serious but forgotten how to migrate standing like steer in the overhyped grass amid the sort of snow build up the river its referred countenance sidelong pinnacle gymnastics of light ducks seem to prefer turning like recall i was wondering about the manifested of it as this radical white individual inclined smallpox folk the western world must have longed for escape to city hall the hill a pimple and taut white apex a static quo installed as all get out refusing to example we i holiday want this photo to be absolutely massive involuntarily overwhelming towards the united states of your contemplative grandmother sitting by the window the stop-gap electricity run down illustrious president bullshit wrought it's *we* or *none* of us where has what the geese have forgotten gone let's consider broadening the palette verbally a little bit seeing a little bit past the us them binary bullshit people the river is Washington

on ton on ton on ton on ton of polypropylene involuntarily
listen carefully claim to be individual then breathe you are
linked together with forever is in your lungs when you think
us them when you think us them what is in are your lungs?

TOULOUSE'S UNCHARACTERISTIC HEAT brings seventy grandmothers' begonias from the house to the balcony out of season.

AN ALMOST RELIGIOUS FLASHFREEZE OF INGENUITY

phone rings phone rings phone rings phone rings
and we're speaking now of his image instead of the cliff joe
listen everyone thinks they have a very squeaky handle notice
joe it's the hinge of the old neoliberal door hanging tantamount
to firewood wants to burn welding techniques've gotten so bad
joe we must imagine with sufficient momentum driving to the
cliff and suspended dismantling the old car over the chasm
and in an almost religious flashfreeze of ingenuity
reassembling constituents into a bridge over yes joe yes we can
-nibalize the doors driveshaft handles glass tires smelt the
engine joe extend this momentum from unholy end to pretty
beginning we're into the twelfth here it's the early stages of
this virus pal and your calling imagine all the people walking
the bridge over the chasm just imagine you filtering advice
from the effective into strategies or joe we burn the door.

EVEN if the light on the horizon is a forest fire I love a phoenix.

FESTIVAL OF FIRE

Komorebi: a Japanese word that describes the phenomenon of sunlight filtering through trees and creating shadows on the ground below.

The path to the temple, thronging with people, is flanked with pines.

The dead do wink at us. It is their mischief.

Literally *tree leaks sun*. Mottled light; breeze shifts like the weight of the limbs of a polypedal body made of eddies torqued concentrically horizonline Tai Chi in silhouette and San Francisco. Spooky action at a distance.

Tree shadows catch a man like a fish in their net. Release him.

Penelope said *I think sometimes it's the place*.

Love as henna. Wash, rinse.

Where?

He was a man so on the go it seemed as if a dotted line surrounded him, his presence always provisional.

Were I a pine that tall, I'd branch vertigo, capillaried light.

Believe, exhale, repeat.

I think it was honestly the place.

How would a physicist explain twilight succumbing to dusk?

Sound of runners. Suburb scrub; a dappled afternoon.

Photon sparsity, I guess. *Scatter*. Something about the coastal imagination — *Be here now*.

Sound of a passing car.

Be here *now*.

Be *here* now.

Where?

From the road along the path to the temple steps, thronging with people, stand ten-foot pyramids of pinewood.

Soon, in ceremony, they will be lit.

Infernalizing vertebrae — Hyssop.

Chakras — *Hyssop*.

Root to crown, the baffled king, *this* is celebration of the harvest. This is letting go.

Upstart crow.

This is letting go.

Bow wherever you stand; wherever you sit, bow.

THE SURFACE OF THE POND beside the woods is so still it looks as if the monastery forgot its hand mirror in the reeds. It is so still. A dragonfly lets its lately risen stupor drag across the surface like Rapunzel, out of bed, rubbing her eyes, if the polished hardwood of her room at dawn were seamless boards of mercury unzipped by a vagrant tress, wowing the woods, the leaves of grass gone Dionysian, sparking their lighters into the concert air and an acid-headed hipster lifting her splayed hands to the starry tarp above thinks *We introduce the metaphor of rivers to a pointilist conception of history and dissolve.*

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF A BREEZE, the four-dimensional topography of a breeze learns of the obstacles it embraces as it goes. Among the obstacles—call them dance partners—are the clumps of leaves, spacious in their imaginings, bereft in shadow or resplendent in sunlight, baffled uxorious, incanted over a fence. *Komorebi*. A fence connects as it divides. It says, Here, two bodies meet. We enact the meeting in ritual with pinewood, tapered brethren, lattice, arranged in a country square dance of nails and knots like eyes. Observe, every fence always a bridge. There is no combining one thing. A man and a woman and a blackbird are one. We walk the uncut hair of graves, that carpet of bridge, that cuckoo's cry. He set aside thirty minutes each morning to do his life's work. Then he had to get back to the living.

ALL OF LANGUAGE AS BRAILLE

i don't know what's on the other side

of that pine fence but whatever it is it is my neighbour

the centuries like stumps in a storm concede nothing

the difference between the glacialweight of a lockjaw solitude
and a tender sociability has something to do with steam irons

van goghs begging nickels of the city millipede

a poem is a borrowed fingertip, damp beach

they give him a hero's welcome (which is to say
they said nothing of his inevitable decline)

like teflon emptied of sirloins and just the smeared fat beads
reminiscing these modern syllables struggle to mean

i go, you stay, two moons

“OR IS IT THIS WIDE-EYED WASP, antennae slick, staggering away from the little entabled ramekin of maple syrup—*sirup d’érable*—to join the trio of wasps humping the remains of the *crêpe française* amid the despondent arugula? Latticed café in the Old Port overheard; the sky—*clouds seen through clouds seen through*—clouding in the syrup—enamoured—and across the cutlery, even—*devinez quel groupe vient d’annoncer qu’ils se remettent ensemble et une tournée de retrouvailles*—and even the insects here are engrossed amid one another carefully at a quarter of four—*who*—the twilight, her majesty—*mal-baisée*—soon to descend the cobbles—*transparency, Hyssop*—trailing a line with its abdomen—*descendre*—in which the local architecture is diffracted. Diffracts.”

TOURISTS LIKE US¹

The reciprocal adaptation of two separated times² wrote entertainments for the court,³ the wood remnants on her fingers⁴ a sagging woodshed to the right of the faded path.⁵ As if Highlander and Sheep are having a conversation and Plastic is in the bathroom.⁶ As if⁷ no one can say for sure when the Golden Age ended.⁸ “I had been greatly impressed by this (to me) new painter whose work had a clearness of vision and a fidelity to nature.”⁹ Which shows again the same rocks split into sharp

¹ from *Tourists Like Us: Critical Tourism and Contemporary Art*

² from pp. 79 of *Tourists Like Us: Critical Tourism and Contemporary Art* Ed. Federica Martini & Vytautas Michelkevičius

³ from pp. 144 of *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Music* Ed. Geoffrey Hindley

⁴ from pp. 30 of *Flesh of the Peach* by Helen McClory

⁵ from pp. 30 of *Flesh of the Peach* by Helen McClory

⁶ from pp. 47 of *Toy Dance Party* by Emily Jenkins

⁷ from pp. 47 of *Toy Dance Party* by Emily Jenkins

⁸ from pp. 41 from *The Comic Book* by Paul Sassienie

⁹ from pp. 55 of *American Impressionism* by Richard J. Boyle

pieces¹⁰ become one.¹¹ Which shows again¹² this knowledge can help you make the right choice for the next passage of colour.¹³

¹⁰ from pp. 69 of *Virtude e Aparência/Virtue and Appearance* Ed. Teixeira Coelho

¹¹ from “Is it fixable?” by Roxanna Bennett

¹² from pp. 69 of *Virtude e Aparência/Virtue and Appearance* Ed. Teixeira Coelho

¹³ from pp. 40 *Celebrate Your Creative Self* by Mary Todd Beam

I SHALL REMEMBER, ON SEINE'S BILLOWING WATERS,¹⁴

where a Roman judge framed laws for an alien folk,¹⁵
the banks, with folded hands, giving thanks¹⁶ my plate¹⁷

houses both the great and the so-so¹⁸ the¹⁹ deep suave wine²⁰
of²¹ Notre Dame²² after nightfall²³ with you.²⁴ A stranger

has no alternative but to construct some kind of intimacy
with some random place, and I have chosen this²⁵

¹⁴ from "Summer Evening" by Louise Colet

¹⁵ from "Notre Dame" by Osip Mandelstam via Robert Tracy

¹⁶ from "My Paris" by Jeet Thayll

¹⁷ from "Epicureanism" by Jules Laforgue via Steven Monte

¹⁸ from "Epicureanism" by Jules Laforgue via Steven Monte

¹⁹ from "Tarzan in Exile" by Derry O'Sullivan

²⁰ from "Goodbye to Paris" by Pablo Neruda via Alastair Reid

²¹ from "Buttes-Chaumont" by Robert Kelly

²² from "Notre Dame" by Osip Mandelstam via Robert Tracy

²³ from "Paris for Resident Aliens" by Gaël Faye

²⁴ from "In Paris with You" by James Fenton

²⁵ from "A life beginning" by Mahmoud Darwish via Catherine Cobham

forever-reaching-out-into-the-future.²⁶ It's hard, I know,²⁷

to²⁸ think²⁹ of³⁰ yesterday³¹ but³² baby³³

I have so much to do in Chile.³⁴

²⁶ from "No Disorder" by Henri Thomas via David Delannet

²⁷ from "Come here Alejandra" by Julio Cortázar

²⁸ from "Plan du Centre de Paris à Vol d'Oiseau" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

²⁹ from "Plan du Centre de Paris à Vol d'Oiseau" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

³⁰ from "Plan du Centre de Paris à Vol d'Oiseau" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

³¹ from "Plan du Centre de Paris à Vol d'Oiseau" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

³² from "A Third Thank-You Letter" by Marie Ponsot

³³ from "Come here Alejandra" by Julio Cortázar

³⁴ from "Goodbye to Paris" by Pablo Neruda via Alastair Reid

NOTES

“in the valley the colour comes” first appeared in *the correct fury of your why is a mountain* (Gordon Hill Press, 2021); “the virus is the thought we are individuals” first appeared in *six feet | between us* (McIntosh Gallery, Gordon Hill Press, 2022); “Toulouse’s uncharacteristic heat” first appeared with the 2023 League of Canadian Poets’ Small Verse Contest; “an almost religious flashfreeze of ingenuity” first appeared in *six feet | between us* (McIntosh Gallery, Gordon Hill Press, 2022); “even” was written with support from Kaaysá Arts Residency in Boiçucanga, Brazil in 2024; “Festival of Fire” was written with support from SaikoNeon in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan in 2024; “The surface of the pond” was written with support from Ørslev Kloster, Viborg, Denmark in 2024; “all of language as braille” first appeared in *there is no minor violence just as there is no negligible cough during an aria* (Frog Hollow Press, 2019); “Or is it this wide-eyed wasp” first appeared in *Human Voices Wake Us* (Rose Garden Press, 2024); “Tourists Like Us” first appeared in *the rules of grammar will not save you at the hour of your death* (with Roxanna Bennett, Baseline Press, 2024); and “I shall remember, on Seine’s billowing waters,¹” is forthcoming with *The Fiddlehead*.

WHODUNNIT

The point of the dewy web composed mostly of space and potential to which, in a fit of anthropocentric preoccupation, we might attribute, as if 'he' were the 'author' of anything, works of poetry, installation art, and film like *the correct fury of your why is a mountain* (Gordon Hill Press, 2021), *six feet | between us* (McIntosh Gallery, 2022), *in medias res* (Westland Gallery, 2023), and *mo(u)vements*. (Astoria Pictures, Rose Garden Press, 2023), Kevin Andrew Heslop is a crop-rotating transience through which the chapbooks *the rules of grammar will not save you at the hour of your death* (with Roxanna Bennett, Baseline Press, 2024), *Human Voices Wake Us* (Rose Garden Press, 2024), and *Can/adian Re/repair Stories* (with Dr. Alissa Centivany, Canadian Repair Convention, 2024) lately found cause to spring, and from which the books *The Writing on the Wind's Wall: Dialogue about Medical Assistance in Dying* (Gordon Hill Press, 2025), *First Do No Harm: Ten Years as a Death Doctor* (with Dr. Ian Ball and Robert Sibbald, 2026), and *The Writing on the Wind's Wall: Artists in Dialogue* [Guernica Editions, 2027 (Vol. 1) & 2028 (Vol. 2)], alongside a fervid array of works, composed mostly of space and potential, for the stage, screen, and gallery, are, as if, in temporary occlusion of the present moment, the future existed, forthcoming.