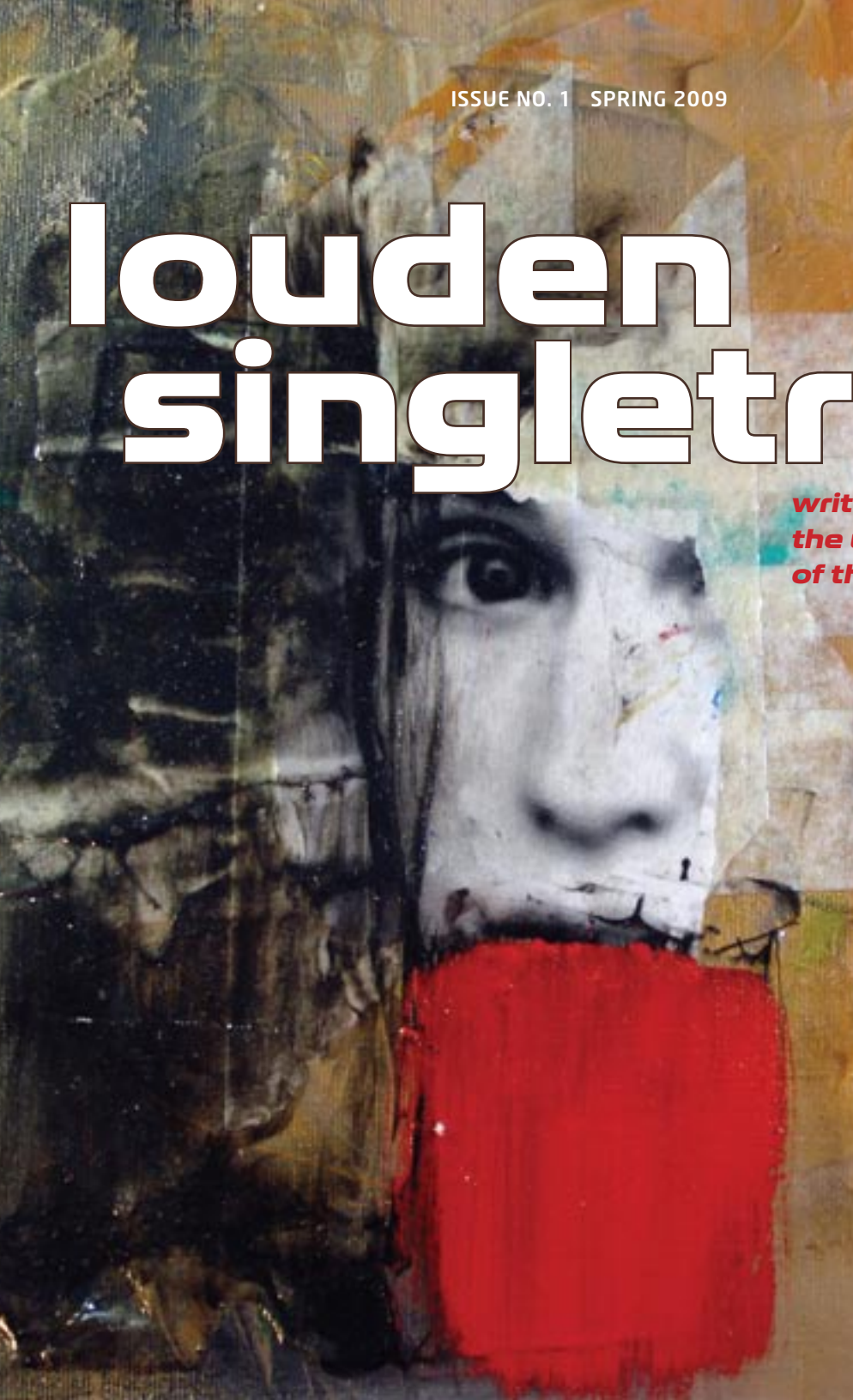


ISSUE NO. 1 SPRING 2009

louden singletree

*writing from
the university
of the fraser valley*



louden
singletree

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louden singletree

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Student Layout Editor Miriam Huxley

Cover "Self-Portrait" by Jennifer Shepit

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Design & Production Elaine Littmann

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a note on Issue 1

Welcome to Louden Singletree's inaugural issue! We're excited to have a vehicle to celebrate the varied writing coming out of the University of the Fraser Valley, including fiction and poetry, memoir and academic prose from students and faculty alike.

Louden Singletree will be a yearly production, providing a much-needed showcase for these admirable creative endeavors. It's run by student volunteers at UFV for each step of production, from submission readers to editorial boards and layout design. Students get an idea of what life at a literary magazine is like—demanding, exciting, frustrating, challenging and rewarding. As with any ambitious project, we've had bumps in the road along the way, but we are extremely proud of the finished product. With this project, we see that we have a wealth of talented writers at UFV, as well as an ever-expanding community committed to seeing the arts thrive. And thrive it does in the pages of Louden Singletree.

Read on and enjoy!

Andrea MacPherson

RAY DE KROON

the valleys east of vancouver

*“. . . and / sometime / we may go back there / to the
country of our defeat . . . / but it's been a long time
since / and we must enquire the way / of strangers.”*

– Al Purdy’s “The Country North of Belleville.”

Wetlands and grasslands
of Matsqui Prairie and Ridgedale
where spotted Holsteins low.

Old fences
with rusting barb wire roam through blackberries,
twisting and copulating on the edges of
low spots
— seasonal sloughs once — rerouted and drained,
now housing blueberries and cabbages
and timothy hay that the horses love.

Mt Lehman and Glen Valley,
nestled snug among steep ridges of maple
across from Thornhill
and Whonnock.

And Sumas Prairie, with the rushing Vedder
dyked and drawn straight like copper wire,
cracked rigid by the chiropractic hand of man.

These are the places where the Fraser once stretched in the
spring,

its lazy vacation after a cold winter.
Prairies now, dotted with barns and cement silos
and the great blue Harvestores,
driven down deep like titanium screws
to hold a man’s farm in place.
Out of the way and forgotten places,
small chinks in the armour of the world.

And Clayburn Village, with the red brick
and the old general store selling licorice to children

boarded up as Abbotsford exploded,
converted to a post office
and then the funny old guy who smelled of pipe smoke
selling antiques, and curios,
and tea.

Finally closed.
Good now for nothing but sketching.

Ours is a history spread thin
like scant butter scraped over a rich loaf
a flood or two, perhaps,
and a snow-storm
when the busses were stranded on Vye Road
a crepe paper past
concealing some mysterious coffer.

I remember the old willow my cousin and I
would climb

near the shoulder of Townshipline Road
across from the Vanderveen's place,
a ragged little patch of nowhere.
Perhaps a lone Sto:lo stood there once
in some Autumn
not so long ago,
after the waters had receded
and standing on the soft river bounty
he surveys Sumas Mountain
floating above the haggling grasses.
We wonder about this sleepy old rock
lounging in the middle of the Fraser's spring bed,
dragged
down from the far north
by some Herculean glacier
ninety-thousand odd years ago
and left forever nudging
the belly of the river.

RAY DE KROON

contemplations of a bar of soap

I still remember those original moments
When I was delivered from the black box.
Sharp white light pounced upon me
Like frantic neighborhood children
Chasing the ice cream man or balloons.
And then her nose was pressed up gently
Against the concave curve of my smooth belly
And I suppose my scent was met with approval
For I was laid gingerly on a porcelain bed,
Reclining among tiny flowers of pink and lavender.

I recall the first time
Splashing under a sparkling faucet,
Revolving in soft, undulating hands;
Once I managed to slip from their grasp,
Sliding deftly in the wide white basin,
Giggling and squealing from side to side
In a game of tag or catch me
If you can. Playing hard to get
And she stroked me to a rich lather
As punishment for my naughty crime.

The black hands came later,
Thick as stumps and rough, coarse as bark.
Left me retching in a clotted pool, stagnant clumps
Of grease and filth where I wallowed for days,
Mired and stained with a pale, swollen belly
Till quiet fingers rescued me.
Haunting memories, though all traces have since
Vanished from my smooth, almond skin,
A dirty, contaminated, secret shame,
Tainted like tuna, or passionate lovers.

Recently I was left just slightly askew,
My slender nose jutting out over the bed's lip
And I gazed for the first time beyond the periphery,
A nervous journey outside safe boundaries.

Exploring a world beyond comfort's threshold.
It was then I beheld the green marbled chunks
Hardened and grasping the bed's edge
Like the gnarled roots of a desperate shrub
Clinging to the sheer face of some chasm.
I was not the first to rest in this porcelain graveyard.

And so I came to realize my peril,
Became keenly aware of the transitional nature
Of life, poignantly conscious of small changes,
Forever fretting about a nick where her ring catches me
And how much more vigorous she rubs recently
And I begin to resent those soft hands.
I am become thin, oh so thin,
A sliver of my former self
Fearful of becoming lodged in the drain,
Or of breaking in two, or melting away

For ours is a connection so thin,
A fragile thread, a ghostly fibre,
Of the musty tapestry of the world.
We are consumed with a desire to remain,
To leave a legacy for future generations,
A small portion caked on, permanently
Etched on the great porcelain bed
That it might never come free
And so we must be urgent and deliberate, lest
Opportunities are washed down the drain.

RON DART
skagit valley

For Curly Chittenden and all those valiant for the earth

They gutted the gorge and valley
decades back.
Villages and homes are now gone,
decaying, down, done.

Dams 3 levels high climb,
like giant cement ladders, up
up the Skagit Valley, pump energy to
Seattle. Seattle City Lights smiles
with pleasure, pleased. Ravenous
suburbs are well fed.

They turned north in the 1960s
to add a 4th level, a higher dam,
a reservoir for more energy.
They turned to the True North,
north near Hope.

Our forests, trails, streams, soil
were to be sunk, buried alive
under a graveyard of water.
All would be ruined and rot,
decay, dissolve, disappear.

Hearth and home, kith and kin
saw writing on wall, read script
well. The stored energy would,
predictably so, go south to the,
as the Sto:lo say, hungry people.

A small band of alert, attentive,
in tune, in touch ones, felt the
groan, grief and anger of stone
slab and soil, trunk and stream,
limb and leaf, root and rock rim.

The small tribe gathered north of
the 49th, fought many a battle, won
in the political trenches a hard
victory, restored hope to beating,
living things.

We, this long summer solstice day,
turn south from Hope, drive down
dust thick Silver Skagit Road into
Skagit Valley. We hike through dense
forest east of Ross Lake to time tried
rocks by water's edge, near razor sharp
and much fabled Kerouac's
Hozomeen

We down good Okanagan wine, feed
on fresh baked bread, remember under
blue canopy such silence and *quies* has
an exacting price. Day star now bends
low in the west this fading, fleeting day.

We will soon enjoy the gift and greeting
of the dusk, alpine glow now strong on
glacier white peaks above. Sizzling white
embers will soon be our warmth, pine
boughs our rough hewn mattress. The eyes
of the night are ever thickening. They tell
an ancient and much longed for tale.

Then, we will awake and return, this night
of a Hunter's moon behind us.

RON DART
déjà vu david

*Have ever you heard of the Land of Beyond,
That dreams at the gates of the day?
Alluring it lies at the skirts of the skies,
And ever so far away.*

– Robert Service

Dorothy accused Earle of pushing the dying David
over the
rock face.
Earle denied the charges.
The epic poem is a fiction,
is it not?

There are some who have spent years on the white
towers and ancient sentinels,
rock slabs and inviting summits.

Some have seen bodies fall like rag dolls down
unforgiving jagged rocks,
finally impaled by the spearhead and
fang of time carved granite.

Some have seen friends buried alive in avalanche
snow cement, transceivers, probes and
shovels of little aid,
bodies, finally, frozen and unfound.

Some have lost friends down crevasses when ice axe
failed, anchors pulled out,
belaying to a safe place was but the deepest of all
desires.

And how do those who have had to cut the rope of
their dearest to save the group live ever forward and
onwards?

Dorothy accused Earle of pushing the dying David
over the

rock ledge.

It was just a poem and fiction Earle insisted.

Some spend days at memorial huts and cabins where
memories of soul friends will not die, wondering about
the Land of Beyond.

La Lotta Continua

HILARY TURNER

atonement

*How long, how long till spade and hearse
Put to sleep my mother's curse?*

She took one fretful swallow of old age:
She twisted and grimaced.
And made up her mind that
There would be no decorous lingering;
She flung herself into the arms
Of a hardwood floor and didn't get up.

They kept her body alive long enough
For us to wonder and feel blank.
A breathing body without a person inside
Is not much to batten on. You start looking
For gadgets and wires. How does the trick work?
But doctors and conjurers don't have to explain.

It was a muddy time of year.
A pipe burst on the lawn; mud seeped
Into my soul and threw a party in my lungs
Till everything I breathed on stank
Of old injuries, double binds, and blackmail.

And then without warning it was
Seven hearts, doubled and redoubled.
Vulnerable, without a hope in hell,
In tears of rage, you make your choices.
You play the measly cards you were dealt.
Everyone knows you're going down.

Easy for her, she'd been cuddled in a melodrama;
In her shapeless poncho she'd suckled a mystery;
An enigma had turned her hair yellowy-white
And her speech slow and slurry.
She'd had every concession.
Only one officious clock had ticked against
A timely solution. Ah, but she knew better.

What was the point in arguing?

Well, there it is, a painful perennial truth:
While mothers are busy making sons,
Daughters make themselves.

HILARY TURNER

the night we flew

I get you back and we're heading home.
We climb up to the top of the Queen of Nanaimo,
Up where the smokestack is and the white wire gratings.

It's a billowy night and my full skirt
Acts like a sail, tugging me forward.
Sultry air; cool wind. High summer comes with
A surge of relief: no one owns the world.

We dance, and the wind makes me feel new.
Our cold cheeks cover warm flesh.
And you—you are new; you're only two.

I pop you up on my hip and
We point and laugh at the radiant moon,
We tack with the clouds in their heedless flights;
We dip and bounce like the waves.

Better than bounce: we romp and surge,
We spin and zoom
In the beautiful windiness.

HELEN HOGETERP
make our love mellow

The thermostat's hit forty,
And the afternoon is still hot —
But so are you, and so am I —
Kissing, pressing, pulling...

You discard our clothes in moments,
You kiss me fast,
You kiss me hard,
But honey you're moving too fast.
Honey, it's too hot for that kind of love.

Slow it down darling,
Take your sweet, sweet, time,
Your touches teasing feather-light.
Let's make our love mellow.

We were sweating before we began,
I can taste it on your skin,
Feel it trail down my back,
Sticking me to the sheets...
Honey, it's too hot for that kind of love.

It's too hot to make love
Like the first time we did,
Movements swift and rough,
Kissing as if we were starved.

Now let's make it like love:
Tender and temperate,
Let's make our love mellow
Because darling,
It's too hot for that kind of love.

HELEN HOGETERP

the play of light on water –

brilliant Father Sun

or dim orange streetlamps
(a human creation)

reflects, diffuses, shifts

as water below moans, moves,
ripples in the scattering wind...

flows, tumbling, fumbling

downstream.

Tide turns, breathes —

- inhales...

- exhales...
(as a deep sleeper)

with Lady la Luna,
the Moon,
heaving her breasts
as reflected
in Water.

SUMMER PERVEZ

exile

Dedicated to Benazir Bhutto / In Memory of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

The problem with double displacement is that there are no options to return. You leave one home for another, unable to return to the first—chiefly for political reasons—and when that second home fails you as well, it also becomes a place that you leave and cannot go back to.

I long to return home, to Pakistan. Ten long years separate me from the land of my ancestors, the land cracked in three by the English, a land which is now governed (chiefly on its Western front) by an insidious neo-imperial force that has colonized the mind but not the soul of the nation.

I have seen this before.

They came to into the land in which I was born —
oil-rich, wealthy —
at 4 am on August 4, 1990
with their sand-dune coloured uniforms,
their American guns, planes, and tanks.

They lied to us then.

No military tanks stood at the northern border,
and I watched as bombs fell into my backyard —
as our windows shattered,
we stumbled,
gas masks in hand

(women in abayahs forced to run homeward,
skirts hiked up to the knee,
baring forbidden flesh).

They lie to us still, and I fear the future fate of this land that still courses through my veins, my lifeblood, my original home — one to which I have never truly belonged, and now can never belong. The voice of democracy is silenced here.

SUMMER PERVEZ
revolution

For Benazir

The heart hurts,
and the pain is one I have never felt before.
My hero lies dead
as the nation mourns.
We grieve internationally,
and this event ties us together in mourning.
Suddenly, we are unified around the globe.
The devastation of this loss
is too much to bear.
The failure of democracy
is too much to bear.

I sit here silent as academics
speak of useless things
while the politics rage on, relentlessly.
I feel inside me
a new revolutionary potential.
For you have been my hero
with your bravery, your courage,
and your daring... you are a martyr.
But the voice of democracy has been silenced
yet again.

How many martyrs will we have?

ASHLEY BOIS

the devastation of alic

She knew she had been where she was,
She knew it better than she understood.
So Alice stood up to leave,
She went to gather all she'd need,
A hollowed satchel,
Its gutted innards made clean.
She would collect the necessary,
Once she had gone to where she was going to be.
Alice is ready —
And it's off she goes,
Off she goes.

Her friend had a lover that couldn't forget her,
Each meeting met and stated
"I remember you."
All at once unforgettable,
Her face licked pleasing.
Her deified impact had made the entire,
Holistic ephemeral
Strive and stutter to her path.
Though when she turned back,
There was merely the world
Being just the way it ought to be.
Developing into something remembered,
Embracing limited manifestation,
She became a statuesque fantasy,
And the patron Saint of anything-possibly.
Unbound by telepathy,
She merely said what they wished they had.
The potential had grown reality,
And she was remembered for her contorted being.
Her formed humanity.
Alice is everything —
And it's up she goes,
Up she goes.

In the bed of a girl who breathes deep
And exhales forever,
Fastly informed of a melancholy mother,
Permanently miserable
To sustain the essential ornamental complaint.
And the girl still exhaling
Extends perception through limb,
And wraps wisdom about Alice's middle.
Made relational,
Designed connections,
Alice is reshaped into what circumstance requires her to be.
She knows the mother,
And what it is to be kin
To a girl that loves and loathes but always breathes evenly.
And friend made daughter,
Is nurtured by the necessary other.
They rage against biology
And become what they-the other needs.

And once upon a loud drive
Alice had felt like a child among children,
Self disparaging and trite.
Reconciled to appreciation,
Alice reframes what she sees.
And in splendid, urgent youth
Everything is immediate,
Everything is intensely, exhaustively visceral.
And nothing is anything but unique,
Nothing but all things are free.
Spent and heaving children
On an ascent to gluttonous balance,
Falter on utilitarian moral authority.
This is perfect.
These are the children led to knowing defined by romance.
Yet everything broke jagged
And Alice was forced to peer through the in between.
And with the smallest, frightened and delicate eyes,
She saw that the moon too, was being just what it ought to be.
Quivering pupils dilate and breath rasps itself thin —
This tragic life —

She merely a child among children!
Alice is constricted —

And it's in she goes,
In she goes.

The haunted, hunting moon
Led by tendril perceptions of relation
Betrays her, the sun, and itself
Through perpetual-always reflecting allegations.
It lights eerie in antiphonic compliance
With music designed to inform
The merits of wisdom,
And how sadness is

Lonely joy,

The death in hilarity and how fancy steeped reality deep and too far to catch.
Alice's face flickers dark and then washes serene,
Better then, blind and remaining unseen.
The compulsive, impulsive nervous system that pumps that blood into those veins, flesh
reactionary and decidedly free of shame,
It's thought that makes a sight that ought not to be.

Alice is reflecting a world,
“Framed by fearful symmetry”.
Convolute visions of night-scape tremors
Apply themselves to land and the mind
Tired enough to see the super imposition.
It's only another unspent reality.
And Alice plays wind,
Throws herself to be the ground and sky.
Alice is molecular-
And it's round she goes,
Round she goes.

May 4th — 24th, 2005.

ASHLEY BOIS

stretch, then pull in again

The breakneck insistence
of earth's fecundity:
The fact that it bears repeating its own forms
 (which waste away)
with vivid intensity as it immodestly
vaults straight from gray.
A preternatural breed of scheme
that can make us want
while it continually taunts and retracts.
While it takes us away
from (ourselves
and) what we knew ourselves to be.

How it conjures up a visionary scene
that over months flourishes
(blossoms tilt taut to favor the light
and leaves grow verdant
mounting the scene and
high-stepping through a slow mitosis
they coat the world haphazardly),
until it crumples into itself again
(the leaves curl up to their stems
and blossoms drop their leaves weak
from the fatigue of beauty and
the relentless strain of sustaining
their own weight for the sake
of the wandering eyes that may
stray their way and hesitate
to pull away from what they see).

She uncurled herself for me once,
let her limbs stretch and flex
she arched and bent
her furthest points to meet
and touch a foreign bit of self,
until all at once, luscious

in all of her liquid elegance,
she pulled her face to her knees
turned her lips sideways
stared hard through one harsh eye
and asked me to give her
more of me.

The steady roll of piano fingers
on piano keys, the lift, the lift
the lift and seize of the perfect moment
that high-note moment
that lift you by the ears and hold
you panting stoned moment
as piano fists rain missile bangs
on piano keys and shudder out the sound
of a winsome war waged and won
for the hearer's attention and dedication
to move musically in the moment.
Then soft flow, trickle low
the piano fingers make
the piano keys leak delicately
as the sound weeps itself away,
pulling into itself again
leaving the listener in the shock
of the air silent in its reverberation.

The breakneck insistence of human longing
how it wants what it can't see
until it is seen. How it finds
all the best of life in fragility
while it howls against the
quaintness of its own mortality,
the eyes designed to linger tenderly
on anything that renders itself
delicately. The soft moan
as it disappoints itself
when something is gone
because they loved it
because they knew
it would end.

SUZANNE KITTELL

mes mots sont plus beaux en francais

je ne suis pas sûr
mais je pense
que tu m'as entendu
dans le bruit de notre silence
ce que j'ai dit
ce n'est pas important
mes mots étaient petits
et je ne les souviens pas

translation:

I am not sure
but I think
you heard me
through the noise of our silence
what I said
is not important
my words were small
and I don't remember them

SUZANNE KITTELL

this mood has nothing to do with you

The past few days have convinced me
That my heart controls the sun
But the moon knows all my secrets
So my will won't come undone
I've lost a limb but gained a soul
Where a battle wound used to be
My phantom arm still itches
But my shoulder feels so free
I keep these pages filled
Lest I forget my scars
And the Beatles teach me peace
By the light of makeshift stars

JORDAN FORSYTH

good dream

Out looking with lanterns,
but goodnight;
there is no sky,
only a dark pressure,
as if the pitch sky of sleep
had crashed down into
a cellar of dreams.

And then the dark
crowds all desire out
into the light,
which cannot hold these things,
each ray an infant's finger,
a grasp that is there and is not.

Soon eyes open,
the search is suspended,
left off in all its painful intricacy,
like an inchoate city;
panes of glass stacked clear
next to thousands of buildings,
metal shells stretching into the night
like fingers in a handshake
never to be consummated.

JANET VICKERS

the workshop

We are sitting in an empty bath reading poetry
Composed of many anonymous voices.
I don't know the others but there is clarity
In our purpose. Everything here is white.
I am expecting my daughter because her words
Are on the front page and I am moved
By the sudden wings of grounded birds
By the lack of vanity in the spotless room.

Later we are in a sparsely furnished hall.
The chairs are like the ones we had in school.
Here is the opposite of a shopping mall.
Each of us mixes seed in our own brown bag.
I understand that this will be our diet
And I wonder if we'll have enough water.
We will suffer diarrhea but it will pass
Warns the gentle wise facilitator.

A wealthy man in an ageless raincoat
Spills his seed over the floor and I
Ask him not to do that and sheepishly wait
For his angry rebuttal which doesn't come.
Later I turn on a tap and the water is brown.
He approaches confessing he brought
A tank of live lobster purchased in town
Before he set off in his private jet.

But the wise woman will not let him share
His luxurious gift or eat it himself
While he takes this privileged course here.
I imagine desperate red claws crammed
Underwater in a small holding tank
While he hopes he can persuade the leader
Not just to change her mind but to thank
Him for his generous offer.

ERIN DUGDALE

for sarah

The sun rises and sets on our
Eternal springtime.
Bathe naked in the dusk,
Let it cleanse you of all
Your worries.
Be the freedom.
Be the consciousness.
Trust is the most favored player.
Always have it on your side
Then realize that there
Are no sides.
There is only one;
The great window into
The birth place of
inspiration, of the
soul which has no
desire other than
its breath.
Here is our unity.
Take no action to join me
In it for you are already there.
We hold hands beneath
The sun, even if our hands
Do not touch.
We are the lips, eyes and hearts
Of one another.
Let there be beauty.
Peace was what I asked for
And it was given to me as a name,
As a calling, so that I will not
Be blinded by idols and falsehood.
My name is the gift I offer
The land, your name is the gift
You will offer your children.
Names are the one in every

Form of its being,
And the one is inside all of us.
There is no rush for manifestation,
Let the sun rise and set
Calmly, taking in its moment
Of illumination.
Watch the light, it is your freedom.
Nothing strays very far
From the source.
Even in your deepest sadness
You are never alone,
I am with you.
This world is with you.
The hearts of every
Man, women and child
Beats the same rhythm as yours,
The divine gift,
Beyond the name,
Beyond all existence,
Is our connection to the place
Where we are born from
And the place where we will die.
The sun knows us eternally
as its lover,
know that we are all lovers
waiting to be awakened.
This path lives in purity
as it is both the prayer
and the answer.
But above all things
as small as it may seem,
all we need is gratitude.

VIC CAVALLI

deep purple live

When I was 16 I saw young Mozart
At a Deep Purple concert. The hot crowd
Was a pulsating blanket and the loud
Ear-bleeding roar and throbbing tried to part
Wolf's glued on pink woven wig. They started
"Highway Star"—the bass kicked in—he cowered
At the sheer vibration, then seemed to bow
As if aching with a wound in his heart.
Amadeus snapped and shook it all out
As the strands of the band fused and cut free—
"Nobody's gonna take my girl..." yeah, BOOM, tight,
Can't be no tighter. He started to shout
During the organ solo and screamed FREE!!!
As he collapsed into the white strobe light.

TREVOR CAROLAN
an asian state of mind

Orientation means knowing where the Orient is - R.D. Laing

WE DIDN'T THINK MUCH ABOUT ASIA IN THE VANCOUVER AREA DURING THE FIFTIES. EUROPE was our cultural home. At school we sang anthems to the Queen, saluted the Red Ensign and the Union Jack, and were obliged to mumble a Protestant version of The Lord's Prayer. Europe was the curbstone of history—*English* history—and we learned the scarlet spread of Britain's dominions blanketed a quarter of the globe, including Canada from sea to shining sea.

On emigration in 1957, my family settled in New Westminster. Prosperous folks lived atop Massey Heights or overlooking Queen's Park, where as youngsters we danced the Maypole each spring. Portuguese and Italians lived in semi-rural Queensborough and along Burnaby's Trapp Road with their roadside ditches, nanny goats and—in autumn—heady odour of fermenting grapes. Greasers drag-raced there on Friday nights, and kids drowned in summer off the log-booms or were miraculously saved from the Fraser River's treacherous eddies.

Maillardville's French-Canadians—at that time the only group with hyphenated status—worked mainly in saw-mills along the river and were good boom-men with their long peavey poles. They were Catholic, so our Irish crowd mixed with them and the French moms introduced us to omelettes after our First Holy Communion. Feelings were still touchy about Germans and Italians but CKNW regularly played foreign songs like "Sailor," "Volare," and "Dominique." Religion remained a powerful force, and it was often church-hall dances that permitted immigrants to waltz across old antagonisms.

All along the Fraser River from Mission to Steveston, big house-parties were where the action was. These were golden days with sailors invited up from ships in port. The sailors brought Barbados rum and passed out coins and stamps to us kids. On weekends, they loved to kick a soccer ball around and we'd swap letters with our favourites for months after they embarked for Liverpool or wherever. Parties though were like the U.N. with Danes, Swedes, Basques, Aboriginal neighbours and Yugoslav refugees invited: everyone mixing and courting. Kids piled into any space not used by the grownups.

We'd sneak up the stairs to peek at what was going on. The country and western music and Elvis would be bouncing from the Hi-Fi and our mothers would be swinging the sailors. The priest would be in the kitchen near the whiskey and our dads poured drinks. Sooner or later, we'd be called on to show everyone how to dance The Twist, then they'd shift us downstairs again with sodas and that was how we learned what it was like to be grown up.

The Royal City back then had just one Afro-Canadian family and Mr. King was a popular Little League baseball umpire at Moody Park. There were a number of Chinese families who mostly kept corner stores and restaurants, and a smaller number of Japanese. After-school cartoon programs

and comics of the time maintained lurid images of Asian otherness. Relations could get tricky.

New Westminster once had a thriving riverfront Chinatown. Among the city's first archival photographs are those of a Chinese in Manchu pigtail and his family outside his hand-laundry. In my boyhood another pervasive Victorian image lingered though, of tubercular Chinese coughing on poppy resin. Oddly, during the Sixties the place to score smack in town was a non-descript Chinese café near the river, and nowadays addicts head for the Skytrain station near the corner of Eighth and Columbia, pretty much where the first Chinese lived. It's a tangled old rap.

Around 1961, a new kid called Sarge showed up at school who was older than the rest of us. He came from India and couldn't speak a word of English. The principal told a group of us to look after him and we did. Sarge was exotic. We did our best until the novelty wore off, but by then Navdeep, a Punjabi girl everyone picked on, was appointed to help him. It seems odd that we should have regarded her any differently, but some kids got tabbed as outcasts—we hoped it wouldn't be us next—and to our discredit as fine young colonials we never let them forget it.

Navdeep never seemed to hear a kindly word. Things changed when she threatened to kill herself. Then tried to. Our thoughtless jibes came screeching back with a seriousness none of us had known before. Suddenly we were talking to authority. They let us know that we'd been proper little shits. Inside we all knew that anyway. Somehow

Navdeep just slid away afterwards. Sarge faded too, straight for the mill. He was already fifteen or sixteen by then.

No one ever talked much about Asia in those days. We only knew it as beat-up and flattened like Japan or Korea, or communist like Red China. Just the Kim Sisters singing on Ed Sullivan and maybe frozen Chow Mein from Woodward's food store once in a while. Then everything changed one day.

Along came The Beatles.

CASSIE SILVA

alive

“Ain’t it good to be Alive...to feel the sun strong against your face...”

AS THE STRAINS OF THE POPULAR SONG BY EDWIN RISE FROM A PORTABLE STEREO, THE circle of volunteers awkwardly shuffle their feet and stare at the ground. Our tears glint in the flickering light reflecting from the candles each of us cradle in our palms. Except for the gravel crunching under our running shoes, and the occasional haunting loon cry and lapping water from the nearby lake, the night is silent but for the music. The campers in the nearby cabins are fast asleep, exhausted from another busy day of kayaking and rock-climbing. We watch the flame being passed around the circle from volunteer to volunteer until all candles are lit. We’ve all attended the training sessions, read the provided manual, and submitted pages and pages of certifications—but no book or piece of paper can fully prepare you for the rush of emotion working at a pediatric oncology camp invokes on a daily basis. Camp Director Dave Mackenzie solemnly speaks to the group assembled around him.

“These candles represent the light you’ve brought to these kids’ faces.” The flames flicker and dance, creating murky designs on the faces of the people I’ve been living with for the past week, yet am only truly getting to know at this moment.

“Your light, like your candle flame, never diminishes, no matter how many people you share it with. It just grows stronger.” He asks us to reflect on the accomplishments our kids have made this past week. One little boy made it to the top of the rock wall, another swam in the lake for the first time. These might not seem like momentous occasions without first being put into context. The little boy who made it to the top of the rock wall had lost his legs, and was supported by dozens of new friends helping him edge higher and higher. The one who dove happily into the lake for the first time all year was finally allowed to get the port in his chest wet. A little girl who lost her hair to chemotherapy felt confident enough to attend the dance last night without her hat, and told everyone within earshot that she “felt beautiful.” A teenage girl with leukemia was asked to slow dance for the first time. When tucking in one of my tiny campers that night, she whispered to me that she had finally made her first friend.

“Ain’t it good to breathe the air... another spin around the sun...”

Their lives are as fragile as our flickering candles and can be extinguished by nothing more than a strong gust of wind. But they are also fierce and consuming like fire. Their enthusiasm for life burns and spreads to those around them the way flames lick at dry kindling. Dave speaks again.

“Let’s take this time to remember the kids we met last summer who weren’t able to return this year.” The air is thick with the unspoken words. “And the ones here now who won’t be coming back.” I look across the circle, and am shocked to see one of our lifeguards, a self-proclaimed

tough guy, shaking silently, tears streaming down his cheeks. He is crying, and as if his tears have given the rest of us permission, we each allow ourselves to as well. I have a new found respect for these people of varying backgrounds who come together and give up weeks of their own lives to clean toilets, paddle kayaks, bake cookies, and create unforgettable final summers. We lean on one another for support, as if we've finally been let in on the secrets of the universe and they are too significant for us to handle on our own.

Tomorrow, when I am woken up at an unseemly hour by a pyjama-clad munchkin jumping on my bed, begging for a canoe ride through the early morning mist, I won't tell her to go to back to sleep. This time, when handed our "worms and dirt" dessert at dinnertime, I will toss my fork away with disdain and join the six year olds as we plunge our faces into the gooey mess in search of the elusive gummy worm. My tomorrows are just as uncertain as theirs, and they've taught me the importance of living in the moment.

We set our candles down gently in the gravel and step into the lit circle they help create. We hug every new friend, even those we never took the time to get to know before tonight. Each time a new pair of arms wraps around me, I am squished into the damp cried-on softness of another coat, as we sniffle comfortingly into each other's shoulders. I love them for what they've each done for the group of kids we communally adore. We blow out our candles and walk back to the cabins where our bald angels sleep, arm in arm under the stars, recharged and ready to start fresh tomorrow.

"Ain't it good to be alive..."

DAVID THOMAS

gravity

FALL IN VERMONT. NO, LET ME START AGAIN: AUTUMN IN VERMONT. EVERYWHERE I LOOK, the hand of the Almighty is evident. If only I had my camera (I say this every day), I'd shoot a set of postcards without taking a step off my veranda. The trees are ablaze with colour as if all the energy of the sun absorbed through the long summer has finally exploded into light: golds, reds, yellows, oranges; the oaks and maples, elms and aspens burning in harmony, a symphony, each leaf playing out its last breath of colour before it dies. Moment by moment, nature chooses those who have shown their full palette and gravity delivers them safely to the ground. Children collect the lucky ones, marvelling that they have veins and 'fingerprints' like their own, and iron them under wax paper as gifts for their mothers. Tomorrow. I'll get those shots tomorrow. Right now, work calls.

I fly night mail for Vermont Express. We're a FedEx partner and do charter on the side with a couple six-seater single-engine Cessnas. I've been with the company for three years, the last two on the Navajo, and tonight is my last night. It's a great plane, don't get me wrong, Jeff's gonna love it, but starting tomorrow, I'm gonna love the Metro. No more fighting winter weather in a piston-banger; the Metro is the real deal, the main machine. You know the specs: takes off like a bat outta hell, climbs through the weather before the ice gets a chance to gang up on you. And if all goes according to plan, one year in the right seat and I'll make captain—then, Hello American. Good morning Captain. Thank you, Captain. May I get you a coffee, Captain?

Morrisville Municipal Airport is just down the road and I'm there in less than ten minutes. Jeff's already onto the pre-flight. He's sharp (I trained him) and it doesn't hurt that he grew up in the hangar. He's the son of Jake, our chief mechanic, and has been paying his dues washing airplanes and working the ramp since he was about fourteen. He got the big break last year with his first real flying job. He's killed himself proving he's ready for the next step so we're all pretty excited about today—especially his dad. I think Jake himself was working on the plane just this morning. It'll be Jeff's first revenue flight as Pilot-in-Command on the Navajo. I'm just here for moral support. Chief Pilot's orders. Actually, I think the chief just wants to give me one last ride in her. Too funny.

"You're on your own, big guy. I'm just here for the ride."

"Yeah right! You so already miss it! You love this plane"

"Sorry guy, I got bigger loves. Start getting used to me being gone."

Static: "November Niner Three Two Alpha, you're cleared for takeoff, contact Center one nineteen three, good night."

"Three Two Alpha Roger, nineteen three, goodnight."

It's the same drill every night. File the flight plan, pre-flight the plane, wait for the cargo to come from town, loader up as the sun sets and take off for Boston. Jeff's got the gift. He got the feel of the Navajo easily and knows the drills inside out. Still, I never take-off, even when I'm flying commercial, without running through my own emergency checklist. Exits? Emergency equipment?

Contingencies? Call it a trust issue. Checklist complete. It's all good.

Jeff advances the throttles and I feel the acceleration of her two engines drawing the craft forward and pushing us back into our seats, six hundred horses drinking up two hundred pounds of avgas an hour, turning it into speed and altitude and noise. Inside, the red glow of the night-time cockpit light casts shadows on the panel. The smell of the leather upholstery is long since gone with years of ArmorAll treatments, but the feel never dies. Above us there are stars but no moon tonight. Below, I imagine the trees, autumn trees quietly ablaze in the darkness. I wonder why it was in for maintenance—I hate being a test-pilot.

Jeannie and I went to a “marriage enrichment encounter” a couple weeks back. I didn't want to go and had called it a “Close Encounter of the Forced Kind.” She told me if I went she'd love me forever. I said, you already love me forever, and she said, I'll love you “forever-forever.” Raymond and Cynthia, our “encounter guides” told us to take time every day to envision the other. “Paint them in your mind, sculpt them in the fresh clay of thoughts, dreams and fantasies.” Give me a break. When we're not together I'm flying and that's hardly an appropriate environment for envisioning fantasies. Let's envision maintaining track and altitude.

But today Jeff's flying. I'm just here for the ride—may as well sculpt. I lean back in my seat and close my eyes. Jeannie, Jeannie, Jeannie... her eyes are, well, they're darkish and eye-shaped. Duh. Her face is... roundish. Ghaa—how do they do this? She has blondish, brownish, kind of reddish hair. Kind of like a faded fox. Foxy.

There was a momentary shudder. Eyes wide open.

“Did you feel that?”

“Oh yeah, I felt that.”

Four eyes on the engine instruments. RPM: check; manifold pressure: check; fuel flow: no, no, no. The left engine's fuel flow is double normal. We've got a high-pressure fuel leak!

“Cut number one! Cut number one!”

Jeff executed the checklist: Firewall Shutoff: Closed; Fuel Valve: Off; Boost Pump: Off—but even as he finished, an orange-red fire had erupted from the left engine's cowling. This can't be happening. Of all the pages of checklists and thousands of practise drills, the wing fire drill is the simplest: GET ON THE GROUND.

“Go down, go down!” Jeff's hands are on the controls—my eyes are everywhere.

To land immediately is the only available course of action. And, if possible, try to blow the fire out with airspeed on the way down, but get to the ground, any ground before the blow-torch heat of the fire melts the inner structure of the wing—all just aluminum—and it buckles in flight. The best pilot in the world can't fly with a wing gone.

“Ten thousand, nine-thousand five, nine-thousand feet, come on baby.” The clock-like hands of the altimeter wind slowly down with the lethargy of one trying to run away in a bad dream. Jeff nudged the airspeed up to 200, his lips moving—I wonder if he is cursing or praying but there's no time to dwell on what or to whom.

“Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! Navajo November Niner Three Two Alpha. We've got an engine

fire—emergency descent... we're sixty miles out of Morrisville direct Boston... descending through niner-thousand, we're going down. Niner Three Two Alpha Over."

Eight-five, eight thousand, seven-five. The flames have engulfed the entire left nacelle. Jeff pushes the speed to the redline, 236 knots, his eyes fixed, his bloodless hands white from gripping the yoke. The air outside is screaming, clawing at us. Six thousand-five, six, five thousand-five, five. It's completely dark below but the ground should be about 1000 feet above sea-level. I do the math: 3000 feet per minute descent rate, another four to go.

"We've got just over a minute." Instinctively, simultaneously, we check our watches—Swiss Aviators never missing a beat.

All the checks were done once or a hundred times. By now our MAYDAY may have been phoned to Jake who, alone in his hangar surrounded with books and tools, would be as helpless as we in navigating the night. There is nothing to do but wait and stare ahead into the consuming blackness for a glimpse of the ground that would be our salvation.

It didn't happen as I had imagined. The tank didn't blow with a Hollywood fireball: there was no percussive boom; the wing, with a sickening sound I'll never forget, just tore off and disappeared above us, a waterfall of fire trailing in its wake and a muffled cry from Jeff: oh Jesus, no Jesus no, Jesus... his lips keep moving but I can hear nothing. We had so much speed the aircraft didn't start to spin, rather just began to slowly turn like a leaf falling from the sky. There is no procedure for this. The controls are dead. The time for drills and checklists and Swiss watches has passed

Above the screaming wind I close my eyes and begin to sculpt. I'm on the veranda again, looking out at the trees. I love autumn. I don't have my damn camera again. Jeannie joins me, her eyes charcoal, her hair fiery blond. I breathe in her sweetness and feel her soft face with my fingers, sculpting her as if she were clay. I should have done more of this. She smiles. I love you. I love you. I have a tear in my eye.

"Why you cryin' baby?" she asks. I can't answer but draw her into my embrace and we are one.

I'm so sorry, so very...

There is a flash of light. Then darkness.

DAVID THOMAS

battle cries

THE DRUM BEAT THAT HAD WITH THE RISING SUN UNITED US, DRIVEN US, GIVEN US COURAGE, can no longer be heard, the deafening reply of cannon-fire having drowned it out; the fifer, too, drowned out, his lungs filling with his own young blood, sputtering, voiceless, cut down by some mother's son: well raised, well taught, well cut; they'd sung the same hymns, played the same games, dreamed the same dreams of wealth and love and hopes come true—untouchable! invincible! we thought we were unstoppable but are now silenced, snuffed out with fire and lead, black powder and already-bloodied bayonets; never again to raise high the banners of boyish dreams, but instead lie, still, in the mud and the blood of this heartless wasteland, this land of the free, home of the brave; “Mamma,” one cries out to no avail, his last breath, his final strength spent, and echoed from all around, the swell of silent replies: “Mother...”, “Mamma...”, “Mammy...”—from the left and the right, the blue and the grey, the ranked and rank-less, the now setting sun painting each crimson—“Mother,” they cry, unknowing, not yet understanding that if she could hear, if she could reply, there would be but one voice.

ELEAH TURKSTRA

Broken Promises

TIRES SPUN, FLINGING GRAVEL WITH WILD ABANDON AS HIS BRIGHT COPPER CONVERTIBLE tore out of the driveway, perhaps for the last time... I stood there watching as dust choked my lungs. I wanted to say something, anything, to make him stay, to make him forgive me; I had given love away like pennies in my pocket, losing a piece here or there because I thought I didn't really need it, and now it was gone, and the only thing left was a bitter aftertaste—because of the dust, I wanted to lie, but God knows the time for lies was up—and the dark smear of mistakes that had followed me from one bed to another, glinting in and out of the night with broken promises, like that copper convertible through the trees.

notes on contributors

Ashley Bois is a student at UFV.

Trevor Carolan began writing for the New Westminster Columbian at age 17, filing dispatches from San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury music scene. He has been published internationally as journalist, poet and anthologist and specializes in East-West arts and letters. He has taught English at UFV since 2001.

Vic Cavalli is a writer and visual artist. His poetry, short fiction and art have been published in literary journals in North America, England, Australia, and New Zealand. Born and raised in Vancouver, he currently lives in the mountains of Mission, B.C.

Ron Dart teaches in the Political Science, Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at UFV. He writes both poetry and short stories.

Ray de Kroon is an English major at UFV. He focuses most of his creative writing energy on poetry and short stories.

Erin Dugdale is a UFV student in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. She has been at UFV for "quite a while," as she puts it. Her interests include photography, hiking, and history.

Jordan Forsyth is a 4th year English student interested in a strange mix of things including baseball, world cinema, poetry, rhetoric, and legal philosophy. He will be attending law school next year.

Helen Hogeterp is an English major working towards her Bachelor of Arts diploma. She has been attending UFV since January 2005 and has dabbled in several fields before finally settling on English. She is culture editor for UFV's student newspaper, *The Cascade*.

Suzi Kittell is a third year English major and Philosophy minor. She spends her free time writing for the *Cascade*, volunteering with the UFV Pride Network and until recently, programming a weekly show on CiVL.

Summer Pervez teaches English at UFV, and writes poetry when time or occasion permits. She is of Pakistani origin, but was born in Saudi Arabia and raised in multiple countries. Her family now resides in Toronto, and she herself moved to British Columbia two years ago, to join UFV's English Department. She is currently working on a book about the South Asian British diaspora.

Jennifer Shepit is a visual artist and UFV alumnus who works in a variety of media. She is interested in capturing individuals animals or humans in abstract or surreal backgrounds. Her work has appeared in group and solo exhibits.

Cassie Silva is in her 5th year of the Bachelor of Arts program at UFV, studying psychology and criminal justice. She works as a writer for Big Brothers/Big Sisters as well as a director, stage manager and playwright for Abbotsford Children's Theatre. She is currently working on a stage adaptation of Canadian author Kit Pearson's award-winning novel, *Awake and Dreaming*, for production in 2009.

David Thomas returned to UFV as part of a well deserved and much enjoyed mid-life crisis, and discovered his love for writing. After graduation, he entered the Teacher Education Program and hopes to inspire others. His family is his greatest inspiration even though they complain that all his characters... well, you'll see.

Eleah Turkstra is an English Major who has taken a number of creative writing courses at UFV. She writes fantasy novels in her spare time.

Hilary Turner teaches English and Rhetoric courses at the University of the Fraser Valley. Over the years, she has read and taught a lot of poetry, but has only recently begun to write it. Hilary lives in Mission with her teenaged son, two cats, and a dog.

louden singletree

And Sumas Prairie, with the rushing Vedder
dyked and drawn straight like copper wire,
cracked rigid by the chiropractic hand of man.

These are the places where the Fraser once stretched in the
spring,

its lazy vacation after a cold winter.

RAY DEKROON

The breakneck insistence of human longing
how it wants what it can't see
until it is seen. How it finds
all the best of life in fragility
while it howls against the
quaintness of its own mortality

ASHLEY BOIS

It didn't happen as I had imagined. The tank didn't blow with a Hollywood
fireball: there was no percussive boom; the wing, with a sickening sound I'll
never forget, just tore off and disappeared above us, a waterfall of fire trailing in
its wake and a muffled cry from Jeff: oh Jesus, no Jesus no, Jesus...

DAVID THOMAS

We are sitting in an empty bath reading poetry
Composed of many anonymous voices.
I don't know the others but there is clarity
In our purpose. Everything here is white.

JANET VICKERS

