



GARABOND

design by Thomas Provost

2016

for Billy

A view requires time and space and a kind of silence.
You could never say 'look at that view' from anywhere but Highway 3.
A kind of silence like the silence of a salmon fillet sunset and
the commercials of an endless Motown station, places you'll never go.

Take me with you, you whisper to the power lines and windmills.
The powerlines quiver and bind the skylines.
The windmills don't make any decisions.

The flatlands are a tense that hasn't opened up yet.
They're a budding crop of tomatoes in April.
They're itchy forearms anticipating black tread of county bikes.
The flatlands divide and collapse like a bent metal fence,
they speak in the tense of retired power lines.

G A R A M O N D

poems by Norman Nehmetallah

On the tarmac of this morning
the politics of loneliness are that I'm indifferent to cats.
Old artifice gets repurposed like a hotel bathroom.
Every city is laid out like a blanket.
Every city is a grid on which to map the gridlock.

I make one revolution around the index finger sun.
I no longer want that to be that kind of understood.
It may be enough to invoke cadence and code.
It may be a crude awakening.
For once in our lives the no-smoking sign is turned off.
It must be enough to invoke cadence and code.
It must be enough to get older

Woke up this morning to fibres and photons—
sunlight and a pile of dirty laundry taller than a child.

Last night it snowed eleven inches but I'm not alive enough
to go out among frozen sidewalks and temporary mountain snowdrifts.

Pasta sauce hardens on the stovetop. I wipe away crumbs and beer
with the sleeve of my housecoat. Contemplate breakfast.

Learned to breathe in the shower today,
tucked in a warm envelope without edges.
She said 'all dreams lack a conclusion,' real serious,
and I thought about the chore of waking up.

God bless this place where no one speaks French
and if they do, they keep it to themselves.
Where they look at you funny if you do,
where they're going to look at you funny anyway
so when their heads swivel and their eyes gloss you over,
you're already looking.
The point is that at least somebody somewhere is laughing
in a language that I understand.

Far from the Appalachians, these mountains
gather overnight as the myth-makers intended.
These are mountains that we move with machines.
We're finally here, acres and acres
of powdered sugar, putty, melted
gold, tin foil.

I cut your hair tonight
before a full-length mirror that was left behind
with an upside down bouquet of dead roses pinned
to the corner.
I fumbled the second person just then
it writhes and slips from my tongue's fingers
and dives into the first. You weren't the first.
I'll parade your joke around town.
I swept the floor as you left because
I didn't want you to see me cleaning.
I wanted it to seem natural
like the clean that comes from colder weather
when we can't sweat and our heads are bisected
by winter's numb fingers.
How does this one sound?
Close to a dead ringer.

The clouds below us
are covered in scabs —
a sea of sheets succumbed to blisters.
Are we on the ground?
Can someone with a window seat
tell me if it's snowing?
I idled in the aisle seat,

just in case it wasn't.

One black and one brown shoe
Both filling up like doomed canoes.
My hair parts itself
every record CD tape skips
the talk show host has a stutter.

The plows came after dark
to deepen the blues, to dig
deeper grooves where cars
were cradled and rocked
from drive to reverse.

The plows came after dark
inching down the street in twos.
Blue strobes gauzed
the red pulse of
Christmas lights,
malicious in the new year's evening.

Faceless drivers sat behind fogged plastic,
hours after the cursing slowed
beneath the doors of our neighbours.

We sat down for dinner after
the winter dark had slipped over everything.
I knocked over the pepper setting the table.

The pepper scattered like a flock of black birds.
I left the paper on the driveway for the next few days.
I knew it'd be silent on the pepper and the plates.

Everyone has a place they fit
save a few sticking limbs that
skewer any passing accident.

I still don't know how to say without saying:
they blocked off our driveway to clear a path to the highway.

Tom finds a taxidermied bird under his bed,
wings stiff and lifted.
Cliff diving into Perry Priest Reservoir with borrowed Air Jordans.



There's a strip club in Brantford
with an ice cream cart by the door
& rooms for rent above
next to the train station.