



# apertures

rob mclennan

*Argotist Ebooks*

Cover image by Christine McNair

Copyright © rob mclennan 2011  
All rights reserved  
Argotist Ebooks

*Thanks to Jason Dewinetz for the suggestion of the title.  
And for GB, who helped me be curious in the first place.*

You are not a roll of film. Don't blink.

– *K. I. Press*

apertures

## **Elizabeth Bachinsky's love**

think of it a spare room held so lonely it goes out to meet you. a noun is a naming word, it tells you where feeling begins. everywhere I have been has become eventually here. I am systematic of caverns, replete w/ a hole where my mouth. thin tires bleed air, & the car wipes description, destinations. soon the colours will fade. I am not complaining, I am telling you too, & writing it down now for others. they will come. you know they will come. there is a space in the brain where everyone dances.

## **Nelson Ball's brevity**

says a little  
bit



## Ted Berrigan's beard

wore it like it wore him

\*

some serious psychoanalysis--

, a red wheelbarrow  
& a small red wagon

\*

is this the fifty-first state?  
the most beautiful & most noble

of men are torches; new new york; the red light  
flickered ash

& caught there

\*

there he was,  
at the end of the collected

into himself; collecting lines

## Gregory Betts' plunder

if mechanics from a secret fact  
w/ telling

faith is liminal; god despite meaning

nomadic body throbs, is  
erotic full of force

slip hapless parents cough, disappear  
to conceal sound

appeal to this, a bloodless sigh

a thoughtless dance of deficit,  
beneath diffusion

soulless, homonyms collect identity  
, a writing luggage

in search of falter, clot  
& shadow principle

an unreal nothing is a hollow core

## Joe Blades' river

on the bank of the st john river  
bliss carman

you cant step into the same poem  
twice

harvest high      boats      fredericton  
view, his small room

seated, moon

a casemate in the wee hours  
instruct a breeze

of salt lick

etching "praise" & "healed" on little  
but water memory

this is                  parchment, trees

cormorants

a contour of tall ships

manual typewriter on a table, facing  
an open doorway

## Stephanie Bolster's new house

the house you will learn to live in,  
given time. rooms of empty space

you will slowly occupy, & arrange,  
in your head before anything

gets opened. in the first few days,  
packed boxes the only evidence

of your arrival. in Pointe-Claire,  
where they say, nothing

ever happens. planes prepare to land,  
& the buses

roll on by. a steel will remarks,  
& ensues, by open window.

what others escape from,  
you seek out,

& there remain, at the extreme craft  
of refinement. the days are hours,

the days are Japanese fans, & posters  
from his plays. a print

by Vermeer. in the basement,  
a room full

of flattened boxes.

## Richard Brautigan's appeal

he loaded mercury with a pitchfork & hitch-hiked  
the dark desert deep. worked silent as tombstones, he still  
    smelled the paint fresh  
on the mid-day sun. he still got all  
the mercury he needed.

## Stephen Brockwell's notes

towards a poem short that may take  
years to solve, lone dictum  
under black elastic.  
who else would have known  
to write a meditation  
two lines thick from twenty  
just to score them further  
down to one?  
precision is the answer, &  
the question, here. what else  
would be intention,  
logging notebook miles  
from international flights, a laptop  
full of creature noise  
& blackberry, logic bliss  
between the notes  
that ring out rare  
& as determined  
as any John Cage opus.  
it would not matter, books are made  
by human minds & bodies  
who sit down, & know  
how to listen. reordering chaos  
into other chaos, order, Brockwell  
writes his days into other days,  
such a small fraction  
out of human history. rotates  
his wrist & think  
to dust.

## Colin Browne's ground

holds it, there, from the west.  
the muscle of the centuries.

i live in a distant city.  
the child is father to history.

it could swim in a small pond  
or a large one, & still be  
equally seen.

the unfortunate end, the what  
of many nations.

i cant dig fast enough  
or deep.

the poem pulls at the soil  
& thins the spreading weeds.

an additional sound  
to thereby fulfill his name.

rob budde's north

extends the line

                    a traffic jamb  
iambic

                    , melts

sorrow on the brow

beer houses, pick-up, log  
                    the dailiness of sound

                                    night comes  
for & further

                    yellowhead           shaves

a surface off, which the wind

                    knew nothing of                   mountains

                                    now  
                    the world invents

stone, & stone

                    & summer runoff

                    , permanent  
                    as impermanent           gets

reflective surfaces

begin



## Suzanne Buffam's intuition

behavior

never errant, making sense  
of what was senseless

what

the poem wants,  
means

surround  
& will

itself, a clear path  
marks a coming

slow, & there  
is slow

marked by its resistance

marked by how  
it came

a hole  
in sky

to fall

## Stephen Cain's geography

windows the mark, of  
smaller borders

transit nursery, where streetcars  
raised, & learn

an ashtray, across the trees  
of no resolve

an idler mishap, triple cabfare  
is sure enough a not

& slip a carcrash, thru  
the office screen

horn invades a harbour,  
invisible

## Anne Carson's age of man

as classical relation is,  
parent to us all

what the Greeks would say abt that,  
an uncommon certainty

inside, she admits  
that she lives in the house, but not

what room

is, classical relation, makes  
professors of the lot

akin to chess games calld  
tween Catallus & Sappho

what would Hetrodotus say  
or bp

abt that, a common  
secrecy

we talk a fact, & bandy  
currency of tales

unwritten thru the age, &  
bent

## Chris Chambers' lake

the water so thick, there is no sense  
of depth

where bodies know  
not to go

a story of Long Sault, new  
to his ears

of underwater villages

a myth of church steeples, peeling  
off the surface

into the oily lake, a darkened  
gloom

a warehouse dark

where every so, a discovery of clothes  
on a nearby rock

& nothing more

## Margaret Christakos' children

are the best of her, both, twins  
& one, a tripod of paired hands  
collecting homework, cereal, around  
the kitchen table

the looks on faces when she says that  
she has three, yes, *three*, three  
children

                    & a husband, the end  
of breaking in

to know intimately, each one, how much time  
is wasted, needs to be, walks  
going nowhere or a matinee, domestic  
matters, the porch light orange, the  
length  
of the kitchen floor

the right always knows  
what the left hand does, is  
& doing, coffee grounds, the taste & such

of sweat, the bodys leavings  
, writ

makes up as much her sexual being  
as herself — writer, mother, lover — sitting  
at her attic desk listening, not listening

writing down their faces

## George Elliott Clarke's song

always he is singing, even when  
w/out a visible tune

all his poems are like small operas  
set to an invisible score

when he reads you see it, blue hand  
conducting the voice

& keeping score, ways no one else  
can come close

wrote a libretto, a natural extension  
of his right arm wave

speaks to the music, & what girls all  
respond to, surely

standing close to the bar, close to  
the water's edge

## Victor Coleman's letter drop

At first glance he was standing stock-still,  
watching wheels drive out gravel in covers

Because he one man, so strange to think  
he had that many Children

& that many girlfriends

Devious sometimes, pulled blindly  
against his own causes; his own face, Empty

Forgetting himself, lone poet on the lone range,  
when should have been writing, himself

into history; Going out of his way  
to announce broken Heart, his silence

& the death of It, all [

]

Was always terrific at both ends, though too long  
was blank in the middle; still there, an

X where his name goes, a poem  
spelled out, & spelled slightly; simply writing out

Yours,

## Wayde Compton's essential blues

bond a performance wink,  
give a face a place to breathe  
on commercial, an alley back

blind, I could see you  
sing dwell in yr light in the dark  
sing nations & afro & brathwaite  
sing variation seattle & empire blues  
sing turntable sweeps & the rounds  
louis dudek a devil beat  
sing compton his 45; his 49  
sing vancouver all over the place george  
strait juan de fuca  
sing father & mother & just plain talkin

the wheel turns & the wheel turns again

wayde knows how to rattle & breathe  
a white light a light  
filled colour light

is not a secret  
is not a secret, anymore;  
knows the talk  
of the streets & his flesh & the lives  
that had come before; so much more  
than just talkin sweet

& keeps them like secrets he tells

wayde is all that his body has given him  
& the permission to do more & be

in the world; & in the world,  
not just recording it



## Dennis Cooley's permission

the estevan menace, where a sense  
of innocence figures largely  
largesse, large

*yes yes i feel*, says he  
a breath line & a warm  
moustache smile

yes yes always  
positive  
positively

what end is this, on fridays  
the boston pizza pint printed  
etched in a hand or hands  
hands down, cooley  
kroetsch arnason libin clavelle  
that figure

okay, okay, yeah, yeah pour

me another he pours  
drives before he drives home  
coffee but you

should

coulee in speech  
coulee on the horizon  
coulee caught by the wind  
in mythological begin

mad poet cooley in his office, typing  
& living out the poem they give us  
permission to live out & such

you know where the rest  
goes

## Clark Coolidge's diction

go  
    ing  
went  
    in  
to 1965

in me  
mory  
of  
those

whove  
fall  
    en

bak  
    er  
met in  
squalls

of  
amer  
i  
can paths

of  
pine

## Robert Creeley's maildrop

a man of letters, they say,  
even so

writes a little bit, &  
writes a little bit

poems & some letters, &  
receives books & then

even so

drops a line on 3 quarters  
of a century, life

& drops a line,  
down

a bucket filling up w/  
quarters

infinitely large

jwcurry's gestetner

mimeo machine, older  
than god

or grandparents

wields it  
perfectly, nineteen  
twenty-seven

marking ink  
& paper blush

a lake a line,  
increasing

industrial turns,  
a compilation

revised edition  
of range

closing in death,  
& never

awash  
in replacement tubes

cranks out  
a clear path

## Bev Daurio's soft speech

this is not a poem  
by Mallarme

a mumble

a list as much a series  
of events

as they are things

she shakes her head & muses  
on the end result

cut in places

a copy editors speech

in ink

small sounds

if she turns her head  
just brief

youll miss

## Frank Davey's dogs

He says, these things are *killing* me. A  
walk in the wrong kind of shoes.

To show off one is to show off the other. A  
west coast trail of grey

hounds.

Awards & prizes. Niagara wine  
on a neighbours new deck.

From the interior to Vancouver to Toronto  
to London to Strathroy. Where  
you think north is

matters less & less.

He can write them in circles, tied up  
in the yard. I am

translating Frank Davey's dogs  
into lines of a lesser poem.

From scope to theory, show dogs  
in a lyric mode.

From tip to tail, at the end of the day,  
his poems wag  
pastoral; content

in their woolen beds.

## John Degen's twins

where there were two, there now  
are new, two more

a month & then another back

animal things get killed, the secret life  
of dogs in Bucharest

he explains a photograph of  
his parents, the day they wed

& thinking, when the ink still wet

wait, are we talking books  
or babies here, of Fred & Jacob

the shelves of badlands in the fore

begat, & then begat

## Jason Dewinetz' growth

looks like what he writes, three months forever  
in a remote shack  
chopping wood for the fire, what he  
used to have, drink

a cigarette behind, his growth  
of beard, the underbrush

a week

what delves into specifics, cant see  
the boathouse for the leaves

the lake for the waters edge

you can take the boy out, but can  
you put him back, no matter

whats inside

a lack of indoor plumbing

the razor cleans itself



## **Adam Dickinson's envy**

call him a nature poet, laugh

isnt that enough, go out for drinks

forget the rest of what were doing

## Lise Downe's metalwork

a stretch of wire    predestined  
into twelve unbroken parts                    a hole  
in limitless release                    a broken  
stool not waned

or waxed    the bleed of increase  
a damp cloth excised                    a solitary wash  
jeweled roses, pure the screen  
the slightest sound                    explains

a bargain sense                    the burning soil  
burnished, cleft hook & a hole  
in white    the threaded forum  
hush of calm, inhales

dust & shavings, heat marks  
invisible to the touch                    a stone  
& then another stone                    two birds  
a harness in her gold mosaics  
& thrill

of boat                    unnoticed in the calm  
someone understands                    trees

## Susan Elmslie's things

itemized, prose with line-breaks,  
after photographs

what she would write about, whether  
the stuff of kitchens,

or Glenn Goulds shoes

what archives honeycomb  
in cool buildings

a professor sells his library,  
& creates himself an opening

a Prospero of weightlessness

the bog people, tossing beads & gold  
& whats left of their love

into stony future

preserved for years of glassware  
& display

a box of loose paper & dust  
floating against the decades

maria erskine's grace

could shake a stir-thing, cause  
a 'cause, mistaking  
mix  
    eh

hers a beauty, heart in  
whispers, but lifts rise  
across an imprint

do tell, to  
    marks  
or mars stars, remarks  
a body  
    eclipsed the earth

pulls the couch out, calmly  
    whispers in

pulls the 'tween door slow behind

## Jon Paul Fiorentino's prairie

this poem wants to reference itself, as much as it makes  
a reference to anything else.

to ask, if the world is round. your prairie as big  
inside you, as it is outside. there is no doubt

under dinner plate of sky.

an inhaler puff,  
a lift of cumulus.

a long train rumbles. there is oil on the ground.

this poem is a pop song by Morrissey & Marr,  
this poem is the Weakerthans.

wheatlark streets, & sink of mallkids. a breath  
inside a doorway.

as visible as you are. compounding miles  
along the main.

## Judith Fitzgerald's fire

her heart too big  
to contain  
she talks herself to speech  
in the four corners of epic  
three walls descend & leave  
one down from the fire escape  
this reeling film loop in windsor  
& toronto,  
recording spare me, spare  
the newspapers graceless love  
an emotional cartography  
shining light of country side  
leonard cohen singing sudbury & songs  
the victory where you left it  
the victory where you left  
the greyhound bus  
a parcel of half-truths truth  
the years that sped by  
all that i wanted  
all that i want

## Gerry Gilbert's bicycle

*wheels*

a constant through vancouver,  
& poem after poem, pome

the great white way,  
see dick see jane then see

an element of lives line  
in some hard season, wheels speed

down from ubc, push  
slowly up

to record a human voice,  
not nearly out of breath

to listen, well

it begins all in the same place,  
smiling, sad, spokes, the lines

he may never cross – an ocean,  
the city limits, his own

prescribed loss

i dont know anything abt anything

if you            catch him

*home free*

## Artie Gold's allergies

allergic to everything, scent  
of dander in, from pets  
to printed matter  
  , oxygen  
& solitude, fifteen years  
his only study

his body's boundaries, air  
& living threshold

perhaps a line, perhaps  
a poem, sometimes

a postcard through the mail

some drafts  
are never final

like Spicer, has no problem w/  
the open end



## Lea Graham's new dress

a gray season yellow  
what she made  
promise  
she says, can you?  
leave a light on  
a standing on stage  
or poem in texas  
pissed drunk on a cellphone  
leaning ides & a southmyth  
rendered  
whether bright on a river  
a spotlight creation made

## Gwendolyn Guth's melody

the perfect pitch, these eyes to sink,  
in green fields of a song

the telephone rings

sandy hill nights, the sin  
is not the sinner; film descends

& overtakes; umbrella-shy,  
where else would natural disasters

flow

as lava from vesuvius; rolls  
heart-quick, smooth, an irish lilt

a refrain turns, bleeding; turns  
the body asks

this desk a kind of torch to light,  
where holds a strain

& rhapsody to principle; holds out  
the final blow

a begin is a beginning; a song  
is where the mantle ends

## Phil Hall's Ontario

JUST TO STAND on the fringes of speech  
    & the country here, a hand drawn  
betrays marks

IF I WERE TO SAY i met my hemingway,  
    hermetic, a folk-song fuel for a heart,  
where pulp gives way to skin

NATION-SPENT a mouth open mute,  
    says nothing, words, the self on the self, other  
& landscape  
                                jesuits  
& irish drink  
                    & the dark failure  
                    of bastard children

IF THIS WERE MUSIC IT WOULD KILL YOU speech  
    is a pattern a ghazal, skipping stones  
thrown out your swing, between experiments  
                    in portraiture

TREES RISE FROM THE GROUND & nothing more,  
    airplanes & switches & swings,  
fermenting back & bites, would you deny  
                    that you deny you deny

A DARK PLACE IN THE WOOD illuminated,  
    black cars calloused palms are the  
mighty, the crippling tone of regionalism

of "health,  
                    place  
                    work & language"

remembered; unsaid

## **Robin Hannah's grandfather**

though days have blurred to nights,  
on his christmas card knee  
when he was still prime minister

& she was five years old

his stories of ottawas lord elgin hotel  
& the socialite elizabeth smart

when she was still eighteen

before anything; her new york nights,  
toronto days, a chain

that bound her

days turn into night, turn in  
to other nights, carrying every night  
a cigarette, a shabby mast

absorbing light

robins dictionary of cats & solitude,  
& poems safe in jars

when the peace of something finally done,  
old mike, sleeps wakefield breath

as days turn into other days,  
she visits, ear held keeping  
to his sleepy ground

a sink between them

## William Hawkins' blueline cab

a disappearance, more  
than once

when tequila, but 8 cents  
a shot

traverses Glebe, & picks  
up strangers,  
strings

along the folk fest, there  
he sang

to Ottawa sky, once  
falling

a heady laugh, around  
the corner

driving, in  
& out of view

## Michael Holmes' moves

when wanted to ask, he did not  
lift the chair gently, a car line  
on the interstate; took it  
ringside, ribcage, out

a sonnet pounds to senseless ash  
in a dream-crazed burn, this  
high-flying strut in cage his many  
muscled forebears close

across a hotel lobbies numbered name  
forgot, a flagless limb sly bubble  
slamming headfirst hate into *that damn good*  
he satellite meticulous, dishes blows

free-standing real a titled win  
an inky mark for every loss, a limb

## Fanny Howe's margins

if she could anything else  
would you know —  
an appearance  
of peeled skin

a quietude erupts  
along the hairs of one arm  
like the fat kid on greyhound  
waking everyone

as he climbs back to pee  
no —

her precision is more  
than the right place, at  
the right time, a series  
of awkward poses

more

the appropriate touch,  
& inappropriate

when necessary

& how she knows that, too,  
is needed

## Peter Jaegar's drive

strand out a stand, first gear  
popping second into third, & absolute  
crucial time in critical, round  
abouts you lose the gladdened heart,  
the oil smell, dumbfounded  
on the moat, a crossing pond old england  
into sheffield hell a poetry of  
prepositional, atonal gesture, if you were  
any further trusting, my god  
what were you what if you could secret  
keep me out of here, or  
what the fuck an echhart, a doppler a gig  
fermenting foibles, positions  
the body across a poetic, the variety  
that movements need, relative  
to muscle cars & under skies & german  
autobahn, a babys breath  
or chandelier, a human predicament,  
a gesture, faster, live out  
trigger towers & three wheels, scene low  
a mirage of text own  
vanishing in the closest distance possible



## Roy Kiyooka's hands

of fossils,  
turning slowly to fuel

writing s i l e n c e  
as he spoke it

speaks

a wheel turns  
beyond pale imitation

sheets a soil  
over own deliverance

through turning page

marking hands, he is re  
marking

single frames: a multiple

## Tom Konyves' watch

takes an hour to get fifteen minutes, Ken says,  
Tom being Tom

made a video once performing famous Pound  
in the Montreal metro

been so long since poems, but always  
poetry

, spends an hour w/ poets,  
watching baseball

the rhythm of the swing

goes out for a cigarette where the ashtray  
is

can even stop time, & he does,  
pause button

surrealist Tom, the only one of us  
who wears a watch

but never looks at it

melts into his arm, & facial hair  
remedies

nearly till the cows come

## Robert Kroetsch's Alberta notebooks

quick lines writ

for a land laid out, end  
to end

an alibi for sure, he writes  
outside the province

but manages

to bring it home, the field reporter,  
reporting in

oh the humanity, as the  
flames come down, & swipes a tongue

in lovers crease

where she might lay, on  
writing desk

or lie — the difference,  
one might say

between peeling doorknobs  
& lemons

the puppeteer, w/ paring knife  
or pen

where every scratch  
an opening

## Clare Latremouille's kitchen

a symbiosis, of Martha Stewart  
gone bad,

or perhaps insane,  
baking bread & Tom Jones lyrics

Frank Sinatra sings  
"Mrs. Robinson," inventing lines

& scenes  
of intricate mayhem, toddler Sam

, a boy who jumps, from surfaces  
down

w/ broken limbs, she sits, her own  
lost evil twin

subversive tilt, of bars  
& paper bags

the dollar store & thrift, a figure  
she contends

into a million; all made fresh  
from nothing

& better she begins

## Dorothy Trujillo Lusk's weird enterprise

as you were, a house  
of bone

here the blisters ring the thing  
of Ottawa Valley

cloistered, competing for

there are some ways of being dismissed  
as desirable

, as desire puts it

managing to sing her always song

a twelve year old beast goes &  
grows & knows

abt their fact, approachable  
in the whys

surveillance knows

primarily an act of *pleasure* —

## Steve McCaffery's sub/version

if this was generative at all with facts.  
a television is not an answer.  
im wrong, but where? teach texts  
as flat on the page  
& moving.

leave out lessons of the past essential.  
destructive instructive. my hands

on the hot engine. burns.

this is the story of a chair in buffalo.  
an office in toronto. a storage space  
on the ontario border.

tell me where you dont live. i think  
i thought a window.

can call it in, a rational romance.  
the dark age. irrational thinking. his finger  
to the finger to fore.

there. not there. complete against a comp.

## Gil McElroy's astronomy

finds a day at random,  
seemingly

w/out a season

composed, in "the first act"  
, a relative mark

takes a measure of stars  
& so

locates them, echoes  
written in

overblown from points, & set  
thru staging

curtain down the morning  
but never

fades from view

## Don McKay's birding

a birdwatcher knows  
when the timing is right

& knows patience, like the back  
of his steady hand

how the feathers change colour  
w/ the light

the appeal is this, the details  
in a fluttering breath  
or long air current that exaggerates  
a twitch

a wing or a slight mistake

by the Raisin River, he traces  
an age, the stretch  
of many particulars

prehistoric fowl, a line  
on a rocking chair

that any country bird in flight  
would trust to light upon

by emphasizing nothing, he makes  
it all happen



## Barry McKinnon's truck

after years waiting for

*what*  
, breaks down a simple thing

for all the work out  
that end  
attests

& not what it was meant, a cheque  
to the mechanic,

the one  
who made road worthy

*forgive me,*  
it memos

beer at the hotel the hours as  
he waited

& then  
– a notebook  
game of pool

& took it back  
returning  
empty-handed

stick-shift in his right the clear mountains

in no time,

on the road so far ahead me somewhere,

almost out of sight —

## Jay MillAr's adventure stories

it came in through a dream & the dream  
was not so much a dream as a memory

I have always wanted someone to follow  
in the language or the street so tender

we hide out from these disappointments  
in the light

& if dreaming was becoming instead of a dream  
it probably would have happened already

under a glass of scotch on ice without

the stories are ghost and present themselves  
as the part of the dream once they wake you

such as it matters then, such  
as it is set  
it is not easy to speak in this matted room

love is still love is the ghost then of something  
other or the dream of the ghost

I would repeat this

## Sheila E. Murphy's spatial/reading

a formulation of small meanings  
describe a day

\*

a miracle, a section, become literal  
out of littered prose

\*

an ongoing constant, built  
from computer screen, sleep

& smoke

\*

when we die, who  
will care for our machines?

\*

a clove of love inspires plenty  
, a closeness in text

\*

syntax is an unsettled boy  
driving an ideogram

\*

an Arizona field opens eggshells  
, spread constant wings

\*

i am a relaxed jaw

to the small gloved hand

of a god

## John Newlove's silence

not as deliberate as youd think,  
more a passive

than an active recluse

but a block away, he compounds  
a silence, & a fine line

writes less than he carves away

& knows something of pessimism, hes worked  
on for years, & become

its frail master

long hours spent on computer,  
playing solitaire

## Jena Osman's zero

starting out from nothing an ideal  
a step between characters & steps  
pull out & revealed upon, a chain  
linking fences & lay lines  
the period in which we find ourselves  
now a point, neither a dimension  
begins but a single dot

when interest was invented & performed,  
furthermore, the body made up of parts  
the first of which is many  
how construction now afraid  
a musical ring-tone or compound chemic  
is this all the same body  
when interest discovered, were  
the greeks there to argue there was  
something other, something larger than less  
& before, an opening

if you were me,  
a multiplied

distraction is analogy that doesnt last

## Aaron Peck's dance

out of nowhere by the fire,  
young zorba from the interior

no matter where he stands, he is  
usually cold, & quiet, perhaps pining

in his seamans coat, for a lost  
greek isle

like a young glenn gould, bundled  
in the living room

w/ scarf & hat, he holds  
the guitar close

& out of tune

slowly begins to right himself  
slowly picks each articulate note

## David Phillips' absence

a kiss decade held  
through seventies long

still the broken heart

threw down picked up tools  
& a carpenters trade

decked out & gone, flame  
of houses

& coastal towns

is it enough  
to say



## **K. I. Press' book**

when I ask, do you still curve your spine,

it does not mean. stay awake,  
a shepherd of forms & letters pressed,

a tick of wood. you know  
I've said this before: I think maybe  
they were unhappy

for a short time. until.  
still, still, still, still, still.

if you were a voice & he,  
a bowl scooped from maple, then  
would you. variations on gardens

& the department of tourism, tipped in  
to every third. I press this

into skin, into soft wood, in bamboo;  
in aldus,  
& spare change. of this, a serious

fiction of fonts & blue ink, that only  
a typographer. not true, not true.

the spine that cracks when you open,  
before anything.

## Meredith Quartermain's maps

if dreams are prescribed boundary made  
out of somersaults & lines in tow visible, the parallel  
at 49 that curnoe said *close*.

white rock is not langley is not surrey is not  
vancouver; or is. a sliver of paper & hawks dove,  
a keefer street stroll catering slippability  
at the lower end of province; vancouver sun,  
vancouver rain, vancouver standing in place.

explorers knew, if dreams were made of colour  
& endnotes, end credits a date. specks  
of metal in the dead eye. deconstructionalist;  
half a century of speech.  
each poem she writes an engraving, a map  
tipped in. shine midnight  
over every person. a back w/out knives  
& fleeting music of archives.

between virtual & real, a library.

long tunnel to morning, the ends always curl,  
constellation-driven. long breath in the queue.

## Sina Queyras' prose

a slip out of jersey sprawl, long past toronto  
where she lives in brooklyn, but  
summers a bridge. she is crouched on a rail,  
she is driving through vermont, she is bold  
between syntax, a montreal dream, she  
is passionate & wild amid love  
& desire

& the breathless read. teethmarks, as she  
pulls away from the house, a refrain  
of sunday morning & final amtrack  
& the film still her mother & the  
long line in bronze, lucinda williams  
& every stop that holds firm between this  
& the last.

## Monty Reid's bones

how to use this poem: against a map  
of some thousands of years

if you can trace where they sit, you can  
see how they land,

as once were airborne

there is blood on this page, where fingers  
cut, so slight

a mythology shaped around like skin,  
on what is left in the ground

a dinosaur puzzle once made

so much like this, writing badlands  
to badlands — Alberta, Quebec

a monolith of degrees

caught somewhere behind, in the space  
between covers, less

than an inch

## nikki reimer's hair

orange, like the magazine,  
of course  
parenthetical

i dont know what colour it was  
originally, the hair  
or the couch

Joan Cusack's face, & cute  
as a damn bug,  
smaller

glows in the darkness  
of a Calgary bar, the  
wrong one

& drag shows that go on  
forever, a drag

that drag

w/ insufficient grammar

## Sandra Ridley's sediment

writing topics from wheat farms, the long furrows leave, recede light  
in smoke. the sun is large, & throws the province  
single shadows; saskatchewan,

she says, where a finger draws a lake, a single file

in poems that move a glacial pace, scraping earth & leaving there  
the best of everything, as hard

to remove from the ground as from  
her calloused hands, her dancers frame; what poem  
doesn't last

or last forever, lake water over shield into descent  
; graceful, pouring deep & water in

a renovated kitchen  
& westboro rooms. wind makes wheat a crack dry in

a door become a heart-shape, what silt

moisture as weightless, stain more than air

or wind through the wheat or like wheat, breakable to never-bend  
; this is the story, she writes, the poem

of what was left behind

## Stan Rogal's myth-making

Have you sent me this?  
Have you sent for me?  
— Stan Rogal, *Fabulous Freaks*

when a snowball in hell tells Jack Spicer  
every morning at 10am,  
    "surrender Dorothy,"  
                    you know youre in trouble.  
on the lonely & the lost five fingers leave a mark,  
as Marilyn Monroe sashays into Richard Brautigan  
through a San Francisco park  
    where spicer sits on a red blanket  
        & listens to am radio baseball.

Stanley Cooperman remains on his ledge.

tell a story like you know, & know it; one heart  
doesnt discourage the next; one snowfall  
    has little to do w/ the last.

under rough pen, the ego is hairless & smooth; the body  
becomes more than, & less; a magazine portrait  
    cut blind, interspersed at random  
        or at seeming random.

when a snowball in hell paints a postcard  
    of only lifes best moments,  
watching The Tin Man & Cowardly Lion make notes  
    on the ass-end of stills  
        from "The Seven Year Itch" &  
            "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes"

adding stamps & a postal code.

writing to Dorothy, we are good; we are still here;  
we are already far past the wrong end of our story.

## **Lisa Samuels' move**

a visa delay in your new new zealand  
paper airplanes send  
through all of it leaning encounters; reclamation  
& desire

a narrative fronts accountability  
paradise acts & reacts, an equal opposite  
leaving milwaukee, marks on scorched bleeds  
& glistens earth

a box is held & packed to the line  
a solidarity, grief of words & before your hands  
the air a solid stuck in the ground

when it finally an endless rise  
taking pictures of flightless birds & host of suns  
declaring itself a finer promise of blue

when the globe finally declares itself flat  
& we can offer a flip side we can see,  
actual size

if anything would you write when you land



## Jordan Scott's s-stutter

a stab blur, bluster,  
cant get it out, out

says & doesnt  
, a blot, or blert pour

stab a bluster speak  
or blot different

if does, says  
blurt a stutter

snag, repeats

a molotov monster,  
stirs

a simple then

## Jack Spicer's Martians

imagine rimbaud & his tragic muse  
imagine billy the kid & baseball  
under runcible mountain

where words came out of him, his pen  
a cut that his mouth made  
as he said, writing from that other place, not  
lying on a beach towel in san fran  
listening to baseball games transistor radio

all the pulp fiction of his day looking  
up & out at rowdies, spaceships,  
red planets & little green men & where  
did poems look, the things of the earth  
bare name across a paper sheet & days

if they had them too, & did  
told old jack what to say from red waves  
dust building floors up walls & listen

this is the page this is the poem these are  
the lines in the book on the table in the  
world in the house that jack built

& he says *listen*

## Andrew Suknaski's loping coyote lines

born into

a three day window  
of walking dogs

from one horizon

listens, once, his father

steps  
across fading land

& fading memory

when days require sleep

& other increments  
of display

what Purdy once praised

floating down the North Saskatchewan River

of poems left in small mounds, cannisters

lost in the woods

a kite

&

deliberately placed

under the canine howl

of dry prairie

## Cole Swensen's territory

learn to be amazed. a fence break  
big enough for a boy.

slowly is a matter of point. of  
point-of-view.

a departure made of hands.

how close is Denver to Boulder. thirty years  
of Mork & Mindy

translates them.

fingers drawn quickly, faster  
than any mid-American pen.

a poem learns abt hills. a poem  
learns San Fran streets

& Colorado hills.

all writing is creative. the car drawn  
w/ the monks quill

will never smudge.

white makes a winter cap  
in late spring.

an entry of thinking  
onto foreign soil.

## Sharon Thesen's daydream

a dream of roses living out  
in the interior.

whether she was listening to the radio,  
two beeps & a dot calypso.

the clock said ten to three.  
the clock said one.

spiral half-asleep an edge  
of sunday morning, porch alarm

what pose cant hold.

lovely in the biceps  
of the planetarium  
& rental car.  
lovely on the horizon.

into a small box, enclosure  
made of doves & smoke.

& cracked cup left in prince george  
that is still cracked, there,

still leaking.

## John Thompson's ghazals

perched there, in deaths way,  
for so long

on the edge of chopping, he holds  
the wooden handle

without him, we inhabit  
what we would not

, a coffee cup of nails

the strong, unstructured cabin  
giving birth to poems

& heavy rain, the mud  
of Rene Char

short pools, & long surrender

the classically-shaped  
surrealist-free

of controlled imagination  
long practiced in America

## Dennis Tourbin's view

there is always  
a television on

whether abt sex  
or truth

the Beatles were gone,  
& Elvis was gone

when you live in a house  
w/ but a radio

there are no excuses

dropt a fishhook, dropt  
a piece of important text

at Bay & Somerset, years

& a camera, pointing  
up

to catch, a current

rushing past, a syndicated  
drift

the breaking news,  
commercials

## Mark Truscott's muse

*Hockey Night in Canada* is great. Art galleries, too.  
*Hockey Night in Canada* is great. Art galleries, too.



## Fred Wah's breath

a raw exhalation,  
w/ pictures

pictographs from the minds  
interior

walks along two paths  
of colour

& concern

stations a response  
from Kootenay jazz, a

mountain gust

a coffee cup that knows  
no bounds

his name, that  
which is not said

but heard, escaping  
slow, a twig

from kissing mouth

## Andy Weaver's shirt

yellow on green, the  
City of Windsor,  
parks

from Edmonton down,  
travelled more  
than its owner

was it a quarter, or  
a dollar or two, who  
knows

    receipt  
long gone

& left on a chair, soon  
moved, ever  
out of the province

given back  
on my back, a thing  
in the dark

## Phyllis Webb's failure

as perfect as anything  
held in your hands

such unfinished business  
that could have gone anywhere

the shadow of bowl  
we wish was so bigger

crawl out of an island  
inside of a hole

forgiveness as brief  
as it is inconsolable

flying dutchman was raw  
& it came out of everything

a portrait I refuse  
to write

only wonder

a map out of all things  
including a chair

## **Sheri-D Wilson's image**

on the tv, sweeping  
down

dancing w/ stewardesses  
dressed in pink

the only way to fly

slips a heartbeat  
across miles

& an incline,  
slippery slope

makes me want  
to visit, makes me want

to enter into flying,  
Alberta twang

& go to ski school,  
twice

surrendering downhill  
to the tube

## **Julia Williams' flood**

to say it is a trick, step into that same river  
twice; or roll the dice

too small to step, too small to flow, her hair  
cut short too short to grab if she goes

floating; that same river always, the bow,  
the grand, the fleeting glimpse from her eye

is understanding all seasons equally & waiting,  
at the calgary foothills, patient in poems

for the glorious run & fall of a single step  
that ends, endless

unreal as a moment

## William Carlos Williams' pad

waiting for babies, quick,  
a poem

a doctor's office, prescription  
pad

there is nothing more,  
a day  
in hospital whites

or a nighttime, catch  
a newborns breath

when one arrives, you cant  
put up on no  
shelf, no way

but take it as it comes

## **C.D. Wright's lost road**

hardly lost, when you end up there  
inevitably

with all the right things  
in your bag

an illusion neither optical, technique  
nor other

surface of the barn, where shadows  
creep

a yellow brick is something, tho yet  
to be seen

seized by an authors dream  
of transience

narrative is

## Rachel Zucker's working note

mythological tongue & no matter where, where

a burnished tip to arrival

a woman in central park, a woman in relationship,  
a woman in childbirth, a woman w/ notebooks,  
a woman w/ two boys, a woman in street clothes

saving up                      never ended

to exhume a truer version of experience,  
as god contracts, a narrative *love*

a critical healing

*is frightened*

; how a poem is when received, a wound  
or a fissure that compounds in telling

an instant so crushed, then

then a beg, through an envelope posted,  
stamped,  
a location of perfect

a two-storied had dreamed

*so few people begin*



## Louis Zukofsky's alphabet

spoke the beginnings  
always  
from the other end;

when one commodity  
replaced another;

new york  
& disorienting language

he desired  
what was perfect

from the outside;  
even

as he worked w/in;  
a desire

that was bare & widening  
in effect;

a mind of the world;  
of the beginning;

mindful

if his place in

the A

## Jan Zwicky's sense

got more than i have,  
certainly

the philosophical role  
of the small instrument

what is the shape of it,  
three notes

acknowledgement & variation  
of open strings, & the way  
Victoria hums

a grand piano ringing  
on yr chest

cavity

come into every molecule  
of a Williamstown autumn

## Acknowledgments

Versions, variations & whatnots have appeared previously as an above/ground press broadside, & in the journals *Another Toronto Quarterly* (*anothertorontoquarterly.com*, ON), *Arc* (ON), *bywords.ca* (ON), *The Café Review* (ME), *Dusty Owl Quarterly* (ON), *echolocation* (ON), *fhole* (ON), *freefall* (MI), *Flatlands, Journal of Creative & Literary Arts*, *Grey Borders* (ON), *Glimpse* (ON), *Grimm* (*grimmagazine.com*, ON), *Latchkey* (ON), *Loop* (CA), *papertiger: new world media poetry #05* (AUS), *The Peter F. Yacht Club* (ON), *PRISM International* (BC), *Spire Poetry Poster* (ON), *Shampoo #13* (*shampoopoetry.com*, CA), *Spore 2.0* (ID), *stonestone* (BC), *Volt* (CA), *The Windsor Review* (ON), *The Writing Space Journal* (ON), *Xerography* (BC), *yamp* (ON), the anthologies *Guessed Book* (2002, A Oniom Printshop, Ottawa), *Festschrift for Dorothy Trujillo Lusk on Occasion of Her 34<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (2003, Friends of Runcible Mountain, Vancouver), *Moments Not Monuments: Remembering John Newlove* (2004, A Bywords Publication, Ottawa), as a feature on Anny Ballardini's *Poet's Corner—Fieralingue* website, & broadcast on *Village Idioms* (CKCU, Carleton University).

*Apertures* is the second book of *the other side of the mouth*.

## About the Author

Born in Ottawa, Canada's glorious capital city, **rob mcLennan** was raised on a dairy farm (his father, sister and her family still live on the dirt road his family has occupied since 1845) near Maxville, in Glengarry County, returning to Ottawa the year he turned nineteen. The author of nearly thirty trade books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction in Canada, the United States, Ireland, Japan and England, his most recent titles are the poetry collections *A (short) history of l.* (BuschekBooks, 2011), *grief notes:* (BlazeVOX [books], 2011), *Glengarry* (Talonbooks, 2011), *kate street* (Moir, 2011) and *52 flowers (or, a perth edge)* (Obvious Epiphanies, 2010), and a second novel, *missing persons* (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 2009). In 1999, he won the CAA/Air Canada Prize for most promising writer (in any genre) in Canada under the age of thirty, has been shortlisted numerous times for the Archibald Lampman Award, longlisted for the ReLit Award, and received an honourable mention for the Verse Prize.

He spent the 2007-8 academic year in Edmonton as writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta, and regularly posts reviews, essays, interviews and other notices at [robmcLennan.blogspot.com](http://robmcLennan.blogspot.com). In 2008, ECW Press released a collection of his literary essays, *Subverting the lyric: essays*, the same year Arsenal Pulp Press produced his expansive tourist guide, *Ottawa: The Unknown City*.

He is the editor/publisher of the chapbook press above/ground press (founded 1993), coordinator/co-founder of the semi-annual ottawa small press book fair (1994), the Ottawa poetry pdf annual *ottawater* (for the City of Ottawa's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005), the online poetics journal *Poetics.ca* (with Stephen Brockwell, 2002-2007), the trade publishing house Chaudiere Books (2006, with Jennifer Mulligan), *The Garneau Review* (2008) and *seventeen seconds: a journal of poetry and poetics*, (2008). In January 2012, he will mark twenty years of literary events organizing, including readings in Ottawa, Toronto and Edmonton.