

The Raving Poets Magazine

Spring, 2009

RAVING

The Inaugural Issue!
Born to Write



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Editor's Note

Welcome to the inaugural edition of **Raving**, the official magazine of Edmonton's Raving Poets community.

The purpose of **Raving** magazine is to highlight the unique work of the poets who perform during our open stage readings. These readings have been going on, one might say, relentlessly, spring and fall, since the year 2000. The time period of this particular series, *Born to Write*, was October 15th to December 3rd, 2008.

The Raving Poets are unique in the Canadian literary reading scene: our poets are backed by four musicians, who create improvised musical landscapes as backdrops to the poetic works. Sometimes the landscapes are familiar territory – blues, ambient, rock & roll. Other times, an exotic rhythmic and melodic country is invented specially for that poem. It's all at the poet's request.

Over the years, we've posted both text and audio on our websites, *ravingpoets.com* and *liveatthekasbar.com*. But with this first edition of **Raving**, we enter entirely new territory. Each poet from the reading series has submitted a single representative work to be fixed in the amber of a pdf. Yeah, yeah, it's been done before. But in the collaborative spirit of the Raving Poets, we have also incorporated original photo and mixed media images from our multi-talented community.

Huge thanks go out to Tammy at the Kasbar, a kick-ass Moroccan lounge on Edmonton's famous Whyte Avenue, for hosting the Raving Poets the last several years.

I'd especially like to thank Ray Rasmussen for his amazing photographic images (check out RaysWeb.com), and Thomas Trofimuk for proofing the layout.

And the distinctive visuals for this magazine would absolutely not have been possible without Wendy Joy's "tag" art, which gave the magazine thematic weight and resonance. Thank you, Wendy!

Gord McRae
May, 2009



before the next conversation

you will touch me on the cheek
i will stare out the front window
the neighbours' dog might bark
the phone will not ring

you will light a cigarette
grunt that it's the last time
i will sit on the chair by the door
remove my stockings
try to stop trembling

you will reach for your keys
grab your navy blue overcoat
slam the back door
drive off in the storm
i will light a sandalwood candle
curse this bloody cold december
damn to hell the unfaithful furnace
lock the door and
crawl into bed

i will crawl out of bed
make a pot of earl grey tea
vow that it's the last time
unlock the door and
touch you on the cheek

DIMLY LIT ALLEY

THE TOMCAT EYES

A HOUSE SPARROW



for the centre

a prayer for all my relations
a prayer for the mountains
a prayer for the cloud, like smoke it rolls
down

a prayer for the pines
for the magpies raucous
for the bears waking
for the squirrels, the blade and the bug,
for the most minute
for the centre, repeated in each
cell

for the neighbour with the tight-lipped smile
for the streetlight that buzzes at two a.m.
for the daylight through your window,
so many miles away from me, may it warm
you

turn your face to it and be blessed
by you know not what
for I do not know
whom I am praying to, unless it is
only the inescapable gravity of the universe
but it is not that –
for the centre of each cell sings
however faintly

let the sun warm you today,
until the hairs on your forearm stand golden
reach the cells that sing
I will linger while the clouds roll in

Absolute

I am not absolute
I wear a heavy cloth cast in water and thrown upon my eyes

I am not absolute
I walk blind, golden white burning when the sun shines down upon
Though I am blind, I trust the mornings
I trust the things I know not about
I allow those who want, lay their vantage upon me

I am not absolute
And though blind I am not fool enough to rely on only those directed
Though I walk lost, I know no paths lead false

I am not absolute
But I am god cleansing
To allow renewal each passing
I am a constant birth
Inutero excreting
I walk cast as in iron and a cloth covering
In trust I place my feet forward
It's hard as a finite being
I sit crouched over drawn water and clean my face in darkness
I am not certain about the perpetual laws of the universe
Though governed by the progenitor
I am free from the legislation of man
I am not limited to the culpable manifestations of rhetoric
I am a leaf, and wind to bind, and deliver me

I am not absolute
A face covered in heavy cloth in water cast
Soon my day will come when I throw off such robes, or scents, or linens
I'll walk free from abstraction
I will take this cloth and squeeze the absolute from it
And it's from this I will drink.



That Look

Unsure, that look from you,
Like an unfinished haiku,
The eyebrow arched and
One eye just half open.

The ocean road curves by
A glistened black-top mound
With forty miles to go,
There's no one else around.

Hiding from that look;
An unravelled ball of yarn
Wound round a cardboard shape,
It's in the third drawer down.

Give back the taken time,
Unfair, the borrowed space,
The page's corner's bent
Around a memory misplaced.

That look, that eye, ungiving,
Gnarled trees bent in the rain,
The coastal road reveals itself
Repeating the refrain.

A handcarved willow walking stick
Still leans behind the door,
The mystery of memory
Sits like marbles in a jar.

Don't ask a man to show the way
He's lost the bitten thread
A seaside vista opens up
The twisting road ahead.



at peace with

Three Hats

a kill in the gutter
summer with a brastrap missing
hair blasted to the valley

westbound September
downward tugged sun
seventy sixth avenue
an easy road born
a hundred times a year
rarely seen at suncrash
trio of bike riders
hatted youngsters
strong one speeds
ripping up a curve
black cutouts against
yellow burn sky
the wall of autumn
I pass them rearview -
sun speckled noses
whipping the frost creep
bikechains oiled
ready for teeth

skyward moose legs
fall and her garters
all bone and no bush

1.

An asterism is a star party, a hop-scotch trickery of burning gas

found, named

a connect-the-dot patterning of light inked and delineated in astronomer scratches excited scrawling in soft leather-bound lines

logged, calculated

non-constellation of unrelated pretty points, a non-cluster, cloister light travel escaping physical relation other than the measured observances of eye.

2.

My father has a star named after him, or rather a series of pinpricks

asterism

I don't claim to understand the circumstances, how this relationship was forged, recorded

sky pattern—far reaching in a gently arcing backward 3.

Sirius points to Monoceros only in the winter stands out well the size of a plump moon.

3.

In 1930 the International Astronomical Union graphed the sky, decided which is artificial, which is right plucked bundles of stars from history cast their nicknames made them official, like politics all others hover in grey must speak for themselves.





Fair Harbour BC

Gravel road,
pot holes,
single lane bridges
over rushing streams.
Water so clear I can count each pebble.
Moss covered trees drip dew.
Final bridge over an estuary
where a white swan floats majestically,
a ship in full sail.

Two docks, gas tanks, a store.
Population: two humans
a pair of bald eagles
flock of herring gulls
murder of crows.
In the summer the population swells to over a
hundred
in the camp ground.
Come winter a black bear takes up residence
outside the store.
Rain, drips, drums on the roof, floods
dampens clothes and spirits.
Rain, incessant rain.

Sun, brilliant sun.
We head out through Kayoquot Inlet
to the open sea
thirty km, one hour
in our fourteen foot outboard
to chase the silvery salmon.
At the kelp beds orcas cavort
leap out of the water,
slaughter salmon.
A great day.



**On the occasion of listening to a poet who has
another occupation or sweet life and sour grapes**

your poems are well kept as your hair
salt and pepper curls and a widow's peak

your poems are orderly as her garden
a high brick wall in the weedy suburbs

your poems are pretty as a spring bouquet
wrinkled petals on the dining room table

your poems are quiet as a baby at sleep
slight fingers clutch tight as a fist

your poems are clean as a new bought car
out of control on a wet curve in the road

your poems are clear as morning on the lake
a wounded duck flaps wild in the tall reeds

your poems are light as a toy sailboat
water rushes toward a rusted iron grate

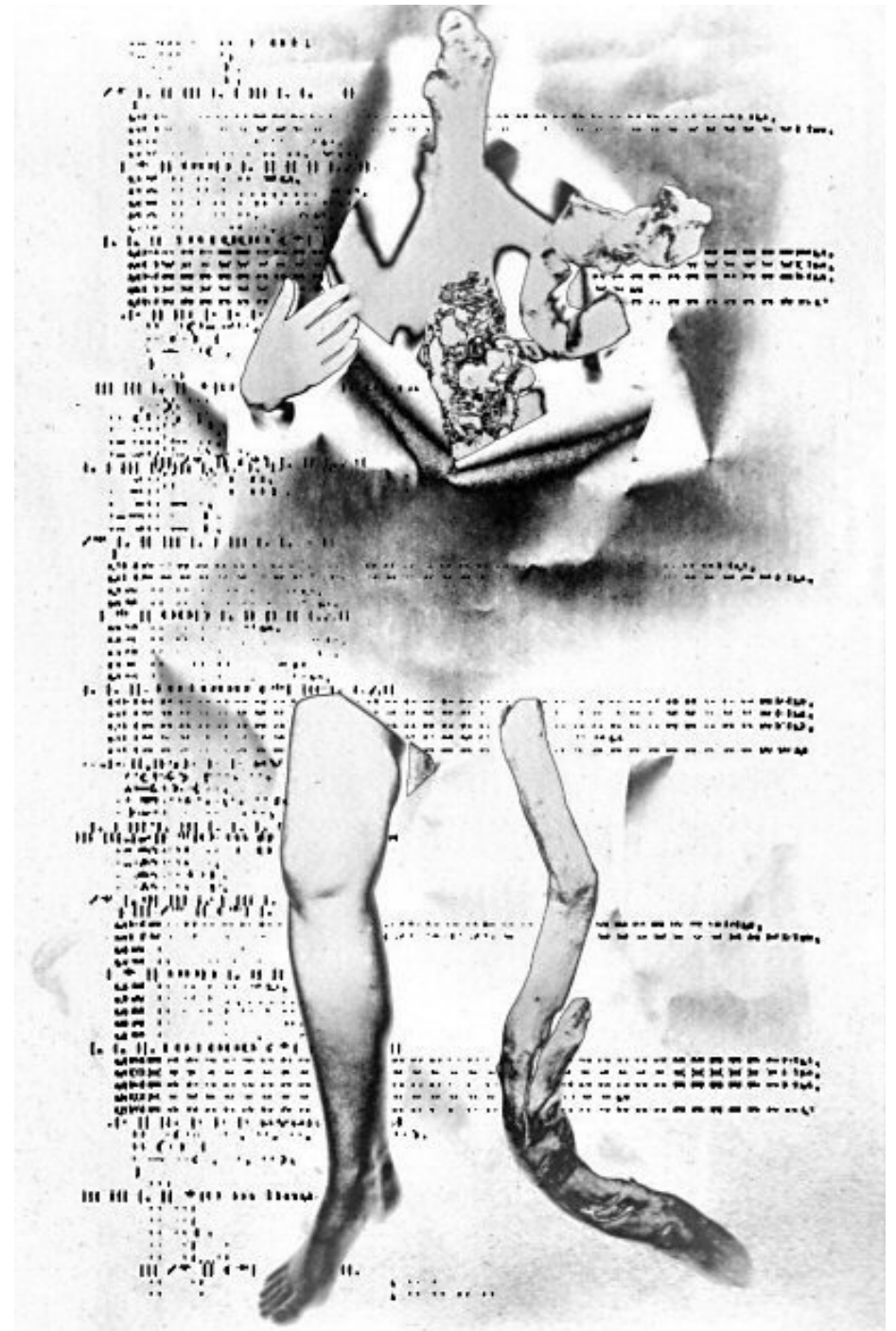
your poems are silent as deep space
a comet strikes a waterless planet

your poems are calm as an ascetic
thorns pierce deep in leathery skin

your poems are rich as a Sunday sermon
an angry desert God damns wicked words

your poems are soft as new goose down
the bird defecates at each awkward step

your poems are safe as a padded cell
some sad wretch claws hard at the door



castor saviour

Shine on the dazzling darkness that mends us while we sleep
-Joni Mitchell

we need darkness--

In 1992 Roberta Bondar flew
astronauted Earth from outer
space wrote of *little bits of light*
against an *expanse of darkness*

now the night sky measures prosperity
industry a lie Alberta framed -- its print
snow white electronic
blight

we are burning up with bright
lights our blue planet white
at night this image shot
from satellite

oh Canada

Joni Mitchell echoes the alarm *en pointe*
recycles sixties themes Earth's globe beams
on her stage circle screen sees our spaceship
riddled with holes
ballerinas dance
for a miracle

the lead dancer enters in green and red rags
as tattered as our blue
planet

time to choose
the fiddle
or the drum

Margaret Atwood warns of a New Stone Age
speaks out against short term gain War
for
Nature Water

how to shrink our carbon footprint go with green
light

eau Canada
The gals are out of the gate
the time is now
maybe already too late

we must turn to metaphor and beauty and rhyme
image and movement time
move in concert in *pirouettes* and *pliées*
please

stop the slaughter
teach your daughter
don't sell water

turn out your lights

Sound the beaver our country's
symbol National Park mascot survivor
saviour
back

from an almost
extinction

rodent portent

Let's model beavers
with their female leaders
burn with beaver
fever

Let's be Beaver maids
fur trade
call up three centuries of beaver barter
beaver felt hats overseas
rage

Let's sing with *coureurs du bois* and
voyageurs leurs chansons des lacs fleuves
portages

"I wish I had a river..."

Castor Canadensis
Made in Canada
bark eaters blunt-bodied and brown
sapling ripping glade gulping dam
diverting

beavers
madly dredging at dusk dawn
through the night

beavers feverishly
flooding woodland fens marshalling
glacier melt to stagger late season
flow

Beavers guard fresh water filter blue
gold our inland brooks swamps
seas

Icefields are melting oceans are rising
blue gold is
vapourising

How to address over-population-pollution
guard against *giardia* beaver fever
fresh water poisoned by excessive waste
failed filters

We must get over our black gold
gold rush mind
how we siphon off rivers and lakes
to fill cavities caused by rig pigs
oil extraction
five barrels to one

Let's twelve
step away from our addiction to bitumen
concentrate on castor
oil

There's no negotiating with Nature

Let beaver be our light to right
the plight of water
of night

let's tend the beaver mine Beaver
wisdom mend with Beaver medicine
bear seven generations
in mind

To staunch water beavers need
black this night
please turn out your
light

make way for beaver ballet
dazzling darkness

a miracle

no small parts, only small players
keep in mind.

THE SICKNESS & SOUL OF A BROKEN HEART

If I think of you as nothing, will that make you nothing?

*I am suffocating, drowning in these memories,
remembering all of our hopes and dreams*

*I see myself at a funeral, burying all that I
thought was meant to be
Grieving for a child, a home, a life that only
existed in my mind
I just need to let go of everything - you,
everything, us, and leave it all behind*

*It all makes me sick and eats me up inside
All the drama and tears became so old
Hearing your voice now makes my blood run cold*

*I am growing, finding courage, trying to stay
strong
I am happy and free. Everything feels so new
Please tell me why, then can I not forget you*



20

My Concrete Finisher's Hands

Let me see your hands....What are your secrets?

Yes...

Your tools hardened and strong
Your hands do work hard

It's between the tips of the fingers and the calluses

I can see the purposefulness of your instigation
Soft as whispering lips...

Yes...

I know very well what your hands have done

Those hands work for you
Something Tangible
Something Concrete

Yes...

Within form you place your self
Your body sways along to your hands

Like a silk scarf caught up in the changing gales of spring
They sway, swirl, slide,
In arcs

Over a moist surface

Working...

You need the entire surface to set up

Together

Every inch of the surface must start and finish

Together...

Yes...

You are sweating

Your rippling stone shoulders give you away

Each muscle is a piano key being struck...
Playing a danceable melody
For your hands

And I hear the heat rising from your pores

Your palms keep dancing,
Paces are quickened
Thorough...

Attentive...

Surface sweat...unify tighter harder...

Yes...

Your work is strenuous

Your palms burning ease away from themselves
Mesmerised by themselves
Their efforts

Yes...

I know very well what your hands have done

Yes...

A storm, a musk puddling...
From your neck and shoulders

I taste the heat of hydration
It's in the air rising away from your chest.
From the dents in your collar bone

The surfaces polished and shimmering

Holds to the heat
The moisture, the bleed

water

You glisten, the aroma of

motivation...

It's the rain

That removes the blunt palate of dust
From our world.

I know...

Yes...

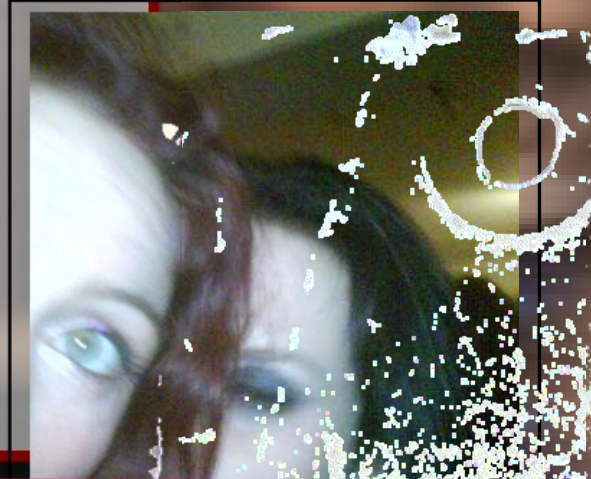
I know well what your hands have done...

Serving A Drunk Girl

red faced sweaty girl
comes to the restaurant
ordering up a meal of grease to
balance out
the beer cells or
whatever her poison is

I couldn't tell you
I don't know about this stuff
even though my poison
is coffee
which is probably
her cure
and she'd laugh at
my attempt to be
as drunk as her
but really
I'm just a cute kid
who just figured out
how to swear
using the words
in the wrong context

her boyfriend is there too
and he thinks I'm a joke



I don't care because
I'm hoping he'll head to the bathroom
and pass out
while his girlfriend
becomes an easy lay
though the whole
girls are easier when they're drunk thing
is probably just a rumor
and I might get punched in the face instead
just for the hell of it
who knows what she'll do
-maybe she likes it rough?
I couldn't handle that
because I'm a gentle soul
She's a drunk girl
and I admire her style
admire her swagger
or the sway of her hips
as she tries to stand still
but I know
I can't be like her
because I have my
own style
have my own way of enjoying life
we're opposites,
she's plastered
I'm buzzed

and we'll both wake up in the morning
wondering what the fuck we did last night.

Suburbia

Suburbia, I've been telling everyone I meet to cover themselves
and clear the streets 'cause you're invading the city.

Suburbia, I don't want your progress
and I refuse to be grateful
give back our dive bars pock-marked 2AM coffeeshop ghettos
dark starving alleys and moaning partitions that shiver with the
thin yellow light of pleasure

Suburbia, you are too clean for my unapologetic poetry
with your thick-rimmed glasses and hairspray and the soap
foaming down between your firm middle-aged breasts.
Suburbia, you are your own shampoo commercial.

You who lounge on your stinking new leather couch
in overpriced designer sportswear and needless sunglasses
obsessively watching yoga videos

you who eat low-fat chicken breast sandwiches
oblivious to the neglectful economy of torture and poisonous
insecticides
that kill braincells while you sleep
you who buy organic food because it goes with your shoes

Suburbia your apathy disturbs me.

Suburbia, you manicure your nails as you cry over kathartic
Oprah Winfrey programs about
True Stories and starving children in India
only because of the Beatles and when you were 16 you fell in
love with George Harrison and wanted to run away from home
but never got past your bedroom
door

Suburbia queen of gas fireplaces, snobbish mistress of handing-
holding and sitcoms and radio jingles that suffuse minivans with
the mechanical harmonies and rhythms of common people and
haunt me for days oh intolerable
torch of middleclass splendor
why do you insist on using disposable diapers and making
everything from plastic?
Why have you made *my* life disposable?

Suburbia, why are you so hungry?
I'm exhausted by your omnipresent advertisements for things I don't
need.

I refuse to feed your angel machine that would have me on my knees
worshipping Versace blue jeans

and
I think your bulimic daughters are tragic.

Suburbia I want to wear feathers in my hair.
I want to sing when the spirit comes.
Suburbia I want to strut naked
As the panther
And be loved
For my naked heart.

Suburbia you have done well for yourself
as evidenced by your granite countertops white rugs pug dog anti-
allergenic medication and traveled-sized instant hand sanitizer

but why must you put an amphetamine RV
between you and a forest?
What has the forest ever done to you?

Why are you so afraid?

Suburbia, there's a war outside
and you're like the blind kid with a gun
who's too drugged-up to
pay attention
while the filthy air is cut by engines dropping
espresso-bombs stiletto-bombs judgment-bombs nuclear
bombs innocent civilian bombs

Suburbia I am exhausted by your complacency

Suburbia I want to take your children away

you who can be called by no other name
Suburbia

when I meet you I will simply cry

Physical Evidence

Broken heart and crooked spine:

damaged;

wounded from the first breath,

and left wondering:

what will become of me? what will the world think?

And every time with a new woman, the scars

need to be explained.

Explanations:

1) *Ventricular septal defect (VSD) - A hole in the wall between the 2 lower chambers of the heart (the ventricles). Where the wall is broken, clean and dirty blood mix.*

2) *Congenital scoliosis - The abnormal development of the spine resulting in a missing portion, partial formation, or lack of separation of the vertebrae. Unlike Idiopathic Scoliosis, it is not believed to be hereditary.*

When necessary, treatment for both ailments involves surgical procedures.

Pink lines of various thickness will crisscross the body—
up the spine,
across the abdomen;
an opened-chest is a possibility.

T
r
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run across the body like windrows of piled up flesh.

But, they do not melt come warmer weather.

They can be removed.

A minor procedure. Local anesthetic.

But cutting away scars is like erasing history.

Let your body tell your story.

Every scar, scratch and scab.

Every wrinkle, laugh-line and crow's foot.

Let the ink etch your flesh as you tell your story,

let your flesh become word.

Broken heart and crooked spine;

split open, wounded to cure.

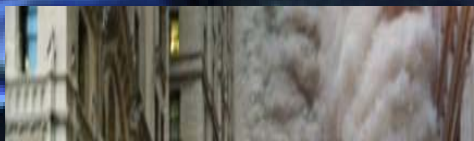
This fractured body tells secrets my voice cannot express.

Put your hands on my skin, and read my braille.

Put your ear to my chest, and let my heart murmur sweet nothings.

X-rays, echocardiograms, and biblical knowledge.

These things tell the truest truths.



HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

A cool black cats coming to the white house soon.
Pit bulls Dick and George have no war monger room.
Carpets need cleaning, lots of remains of bull shit stains.
Remove Christian crosses, hunting guns,
Dolly Parton country queen.
In place peace signs, books of poetry,
Mister Bruce Springsteen.
HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

The big 3 car makers all doom and gloom
Gone is selling the SUV Vanity, machine boom
Does it make sense, to reward incompetence?
Whatever happened to capitalisms shakedown
Where winners and losers naturally breakdown.
Change the rules in the middle of the game.
So losers can win without the pain.
But who's got the courage to dare.
Tell them straight up it isn't fair.
Asking 25 billion of taxpayers money
Corporate welfare ain't cheap or funny.
HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

The news one big contradict.
Stocks up, stocks down can anyone predict?
Somali pirates arrive,
Capture one Saudi supertanker.
Then oil prices take a dive.
Fifty thousand tankers
are fine, deliver crude on time.
Why the discrepancy? Can't anyone count?
even a math failure like me.
HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

Sub prime slime, how did financiers
change a dollar into a dime?
Robbed banks without a shot.
Used stun guns I kid you not.
stunned us into believers



They weren't sleazy schemers
No men of integrity,
Who take your money and flee.
HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

Insider trading or is it raiding?
Loaded the loot in the yacht,
Off to the Caribbean so
they couldn't get caught.
Whose banks welcome their guest?
quickly stash cash with no protest.
Account number 559283 it's a cinch.
You're not that Merrill Lynch banker
someone in New York wants to lynch.
But a bearded criminal
Hiding out in Costa Rica
with a beautiful bought senorita.
Because after all it's the offshore money,
buying a sweet second life, with a new latin honey.
HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

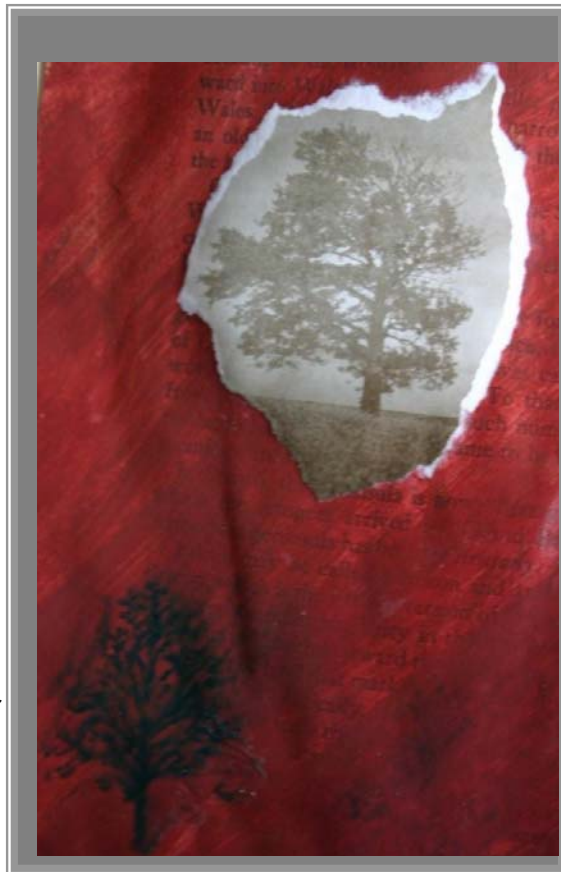
Yet something's amiss.
In this paradise of bliss.
Got no second soul cause the first
is a soulless zero?
You're a rejected capitalismo hero
The lowest common denominator.
To say nothing of dealing later
with the new moral obamanator.
HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

We all live in the Promised Land.
Promise yourself when your shit hits the sand,
You gotta stop stepping in it.
The charismatic man is in power.
But don't forget it's always your hour.
THAT'S HOLY SHIT HALLELUJAH!

You're the reason...

You're the reason I've never
 failed to take unnecessary chances
Whether it's to drive too fast,
 or dive into uncharted depths
You with your rigid morals and
 nonsensical answers,
 'Because I said so' - whack!
 that weren't really answers at all.
You're the reason behind every
 wrong decision I've ever made
At least that's what I told myself
 As I stumbled home with yet
Another stranger to comfort in the night
 Although who was comforting who
Was a fool's game as well I knew

You're the reason I've
 never had a real relationship
 with any man, nor woman,
 come to think of it
But used up people like dirty tissues,
 and tossed them just as easily
Tossing bits of myself with each one,
 I suspected, as I got older
But grew no wiser, no, you're the reason,
 I never became any wiser
 than I am right now.
My intellect was tattooed
 behind my eyes; you saw to that
 with repeated versions of how:
 stupid, dumb, unworthy, unteachable...
Well - you know what you said
Even though now, in your dotage,
 you profess to not remember any of it.
Still in your so-called twilight years,
 you continue winning
 with subtle shades of dementia
For how can I rail at someone
 whose mind is torn and tattered and,
 as the doctors assure me, not, 'all there'.
You're the reason I can't quite believe
 this latest incarnation; I'm sure
I've caught you watching me slyly
when you think no-one is looking.



You're the reason I hate everyone,
 but most of all, I hate myself.
Years of therapy and shrink-wrapped
 counselling have not been able to
 counter years of your abuse.
It was no surprise to me to hear
 the doctors say, in a kind of weird
 confessional tone,
 one defeated professional after another,
You're the reason
 I'm the bitter twisted person I am today.
Most of them gave up saying
 the trite, platitudinal things,
 like how I couldn't change you,
 I could only change me.
You're the reason most of them
 gave up on me
 and I've given up on me.

You're the reason I need to be able
 to shoot someone from a mile away
You're the reason I plan
 to take out everyone who ever
 let you do what you did and
 let me live, dying a little more
 every day my whole young life.
I need the distance and the time
 to get it all done,
It's Christmas Eve and I know
 where you'll all be, the expression -
 'like shooting fish in a barrel'
 comes to mind even though,
It will be folks, on the cathedral steps...

You're the reason I'm sitting
 sixty story's up, atop this building,
 this fancy new gun in my lap.
Funny, but I forget what it's called;
 funny, since I've been learning how to
 shoot it for over a year,
You're the reason I pretended
 to be interested in becoming
 a home-grown terrorist,
 just so I could learn about this gun.
Imagine - it can shoot accurately
 for almost a mile
Evidently most shooters of this gun,
 require a partner,
 to help gauge distance, wind direction etc.
I worked diligently and no doubt
 looked maniacal enough
 for the extremists to believe
 I'd be able to do the deed alone
My terrorist cell thinks I'm
doing an experiment for them.

You're the reason I'm here...
 the reason for it all;
 you should really take a bow -
And when I'm done?
You're the reason;
 I will join the chorus of dark
 angels myself
The only unplanned part of my evening
 is how I will end my own life;
 it feels freeing to be so indecisive
You're the reason I'll wait to choose -
 between diving off this building or,
 slashing my wrists - vertically, of
 course, or,
 shooting myself in the head; small
 calibre gun,
 hideous scatter bullet, barrel in the
 mouth, just to be sure...
You're the reason Mom - it's all you.



Chamber 29

There are strange things done by sand, when no one is looking. One could almost say it has mind, if mind was a concept that could be represented in things fragmented fragmented fragmented down to their own microcosm. That is the way of sand, always linking to itself. Mirrors reflect, but not sand. It simply shapes and waits, waits and shapes, imagines itself world and harbours the sun.

Of all the acts imagined and placed through metaphor, the finest and most admirable: a catching and holding of fiery orbs, the divine light, heat. Anyone who walks a beach at sundown will know the magic of heat, the way it lingers softly in the purple evening. And palm fronds whisper to themselves, say “this is the time for change, this is the time for stillness.”

Picture it now. Your feet, covered in whiteness, waiting for moonrise over the tips of swaying palm leaves. The feel of each tiny grain squeaking between your toes as you walk carefully along the tide line, to the place where the wet sand becomes dry, flows like powder into your footprints; temporary depressions soon filled by ripples when the night hits its peak and the moon calls in the water to erase all things made by the day.

Follow this line of footprints up the beach; hear the lap of the tide, the quiet rattle and hiss as the sand tumbles back into the water, boils up, falls back; strange pulling act. This is the second of its miracles; wild acrobatics. Suspended in surf, it can move in all directions at once, unobserved; cover things waiting in the shallows.

Like a shell, polished smooth. A flounder, hanging on to softness in a gambit against the progression of all things, both eyes staring up at the night sky and thinking how far each tiny fragment has stretched from its own light. A coin from a pocket from a place now almost forgotten, but always remembered in sleep. Sand is the remnant of memory.

In a hammock, now, all things swaying. The netting pressed against your skin; not cutting, but a constant pressure like something you’ve not quite been able to place; something that hangs on in your peripheral, moving slightly the minute you think it’s slunk off into darkness. Webbing on bare skin. A way to let the cool breeze roll in off the water, saying things like “breakwater” and “cove” while meaning “reef” and “shore.”

The last of its circus tricks: flight. Having two mothers. One, the blasted earth. Mountain born, it knows with intimate certainty the fate of stone, to be worn down one beak-full at a time. How it is in fact youth built up in sky-scraping terraces, and old age waiting in ripples by the beach.

The other mother birdsong, an inherent lightness that consumes and makes buoyant. Upthrust to the clouds, or at least to the height of trees. The combination of these two, a one-winged angel. Or even less, the absence of wings that brings with it weightless design.

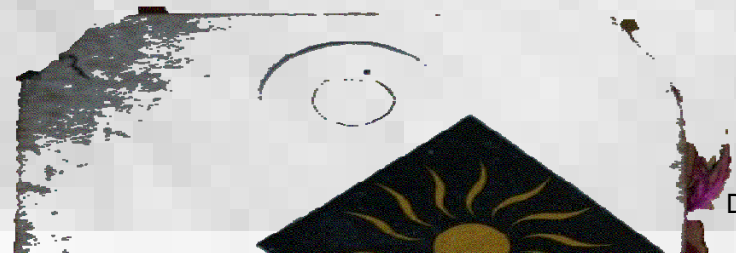
Abstraction.

The sand traveling from water to land, into air, settling on a naked back, a swaying hammock, a night without a moon.

E. D. Blodgett

Ted Blodgett stands forty stories tall and weighs fifth-ty tonnes.
And when he walks,
he causes earthquakes
and crumbles entire mountains,
and he's got these storm-me eyes-ss
and forever flashes of brilliance,
if you ever brave to stare into the windows that have witness-
d all wicked-ness.
We feed him the most beautiful virgins
and he reaches down from the heavens
and devours them hole-ll
like an-n-cient volcano gods long ago
hoping they would not grow angry
and spew-eeww their vengeance.
He arrives late and leaves early,
not because he can't tell time
or is inconsiderate,
but because all the clocks grow nervous-ss
in his presence-ss
and wring their hands absent minded-ly.
Both the moon and the sun
wish to bask in his glory
so it's always high noon
and midnight
when Ted Blodgett walks the earth.
He writes fifty billion books a second and
The Governor's General Award
was made to commemorate his existence.
Each word he chooses to speak is a declaration of WAR!
and the punctuation at the end of the line brings an ever
lasting peace-ss,
until the next word.
He refuses to smoke
regular cigarettes;

instead his forty story structure bends way down and rips out entire
smoke stacks
and puffs serenely.
He consumes busses and cars as a parlor trick
and carries fire in his left hand
and the milky way in his right.
Children are born
and elders die,
waiting in lines
as long as the silver silken strands that comprise his magnificent
moustache.
There have been some
gone mad, blind, babble-ling,
believing that by looking upon the face of perfection,
they alone know the infinite number of minuscule intricacies that
make up his work.
Entire colleges have been built on the knowledge that drops
when his hand push-ss through his mane.
Us scavengers,
kicking and biting and hissing at each other
hoping to gather enough to consider ourselves scholars,
scholars!
Many followers preach to the world
that Ted Blodgett built the Pyramids, Stonehenge,
and has Atlantis
safely tucked up his sleeve.
I personally believe
that the Pyramids were built merely as a tools
to allow him to get the dirt underneath his fingernails
and Stonehenge
was built to curry favour with The Gods
to grant us imm-more-tality
so that the few chosen
could stand among them
in line
to see Ted Blodgett.



Let me welcome you to life

It can be said that the influence of the affluent is never having to re-use the same thing twice.
So now, in our disposable society, we have disposable diapers, disposable contacts, disposable cameras.
Hell, we even have disposable cell phones.
But as my morals loosen from the propaganda upon which I feed
I realize what I want is not what I need.
I'm no longer a dum-dum dumbfounded at the deal.
I'm just a jackass who has surpassed the inability to see what's really real.
You see, I am the bully – the one who makes fear,
Every time I agree to consume what is near.
For what fed my desire was the need to fit in,
A stance that so many presume is a sin.
Yet so many succumb at the risk of being alienated,
Though there isn't a more sure way of sooner self-hatred.
As one man will tell you "Make up your own mind!
I'm independent - I'm one of a kind!"

Who are we kidding?
We're not in this alone,
Despite what the cynical, sinister corporate Satans may say
At the whim of feeling that they're helping some way.
They're helping all right - us - right into their hands
Making us try to buy all of their brands.
But what they sell us is debt at the expense of the sweat
Of the migrant farmers and slave shop workers who fight
hunger and hatred
So our Cool can stay sacred
With those of the In-in-crowd
Who buy it all up at the local strip mall
Where our values take value of nothing at all.
We turn a blind eye to our brothers in need
For we're busy being busy with all of our greed.
If we'd stop for a minute - maybe a second or two,
We might realize exactly what it is that we do.
We are killing and filling our rivers with trash,
By exploiting everything in the name of our cash.
Our cash is a privilege – it is not a right to bully and pillage and
torment and fight.

How long is it our turn?
When will we concede that our consumption is killing our Earth's very need?
It is killing our families and it is killing our souls.
What Gods do we idol that take such a toll?
You see we don't have that much time.
Soon we won't have the reason to rhyme.
Let's curb our consumption.
Let's cut that leash away - the leash of materialistic goods and
Wake up - wake up! Let's wake up to the world around us.
We don't need bigger and brighter and shinier.
We just need now.
This is life.
This.



I am
gap tooth girl
back corner of class
scribbling left-handed poetry
on blank paper
save the school's curriculum for later

I am
Overflowing ancient African
tales by moonlight
That informal education
Connecting and overlapping
Modern history

I am
Fast and fluent Yoruba
Criss crossing English
Hidden messages in
prose and proverbs
Call it "Yorubanglish"

I am
Rich Hi-life rhythm
marrying heavy hip-hop beats
That pop lockin', 1-2 stepping
Blended over back bending
fluid hip shaking

I am
Sky high *gele*
Bold and beautiful
Meets super stretch skinny jeans
Cowry shells wrapping wrists
Bright and wonderful
They call it "Afro-centric"

I am
Perfect pendulum swinging
Afro...Canadian
Legacies of age old traditions
Incantations of ancient griots
Free flowing spoken word poetry

I
cling tightly on to Africa
This land that shaped me
I watch as poverty, corruption
And lack of opportunity
Inspires creativity
And still leaves room for
Unexplainable hope
Unbelievable strength

I stand deeply rooted in its culture
Reinforced by the history in its soils
While looking on at new horizons
Blending old and new
This wonderful fusion of
Traditional
contemporary
This is who I am

all those stars

your dreams don't live in the sky
anymore, they are like
hoola hoops you can't keep on your hips
they are too tiny maps too follow
too tiny diamonds to cut

quite possibly,
you are the most beautiful
girl in the world, except the world
does not see it this way,
the world has always
had such a bastardized
idea of beauty

when they open you up,
on the day that you die,
they will be surprised to find
your heart is a heavy blue polished stone,
heavier than a brick of cement,
your family and the doctors
will stand in awe at first,
look in disbelief at one another
but soon realize they
knew it all along, soon realize
they did nothing
to help you

they will wonder how
you carried it
around for so long

and like most beautiful things
you are almost ugly
and like most beautiful things
your brain is full of
cookie crumbs

your dreams are sour whiskeys,
they scream blue christmas
in suicide bars and breakup taxis,
your dreams are drama queens
your dreams are narcoleptics

you are beautiful and
you want to show someone
and they are hungry to see
so you bake them a cake
and it doesn't rise
so you bake them another one
and you burn it

you are beautiful and
you want to show someone
and they are eager to listen
so you write them a song
but the lyrics are all nonsense
so you try and give it a melody
but the notes fall off the staves
like lonely teardrops

you are beautiful and
you need to show someone
and they want to believe it too
so you paint them a picture
of a house on blueberry hill
and they give thanks but say
is the best you can do?

when someone touches you
they think *oblivion* -- they think,
all those stars in your eyes,
they will ruin you

now you dream all the usual dreams,
unwanted pregnancies, public humiliation,
the kind of dreams where all your teeth rot and
fall out,
the kind where you fall from tall buildings
or some shadow grabs you from behind,
holds a knife or a gun to your neck
and you try to scream but you can't
you try but you can't and when you wake
that familiar line between ghosts
and brass tacks disappears

you knock yourself out
but you stutter, fake orgasm,
you are artless, amateurish,
you flub, you fumble,
misfire, miscarry, your
dreams are stillborns

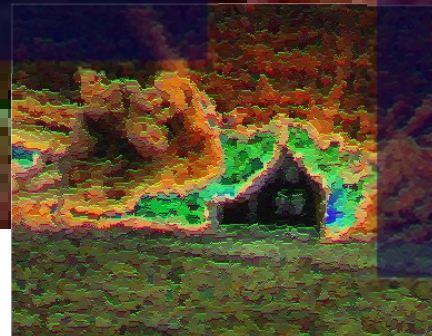
life feels a little lately
like a bad game of scrabble
you're dealt a lucky number of letters
that don't spell a goddamned thing
and so you skip a turn and skip a turn
and skip a turn and soon you lose

your dreams are thrift shop
wedding dresses and rabbit fur coats
foxy once, they hang on your shoulders
now like carcasses, your dreams are like
yellow polaroids of all the dirty things you ever did
your dreams are uncomfortable one-night-stand
breakfasts
over-easy eggs that slip down your throat
and go straight to your thighs

your dreams are lost keys,
fat feet bleeding in glass slippers
you theived perfect dreams
but they came with dye tags
you fucked with them once
and they spilled and ruined the sky

quite possibly, you are the
simplest girl in the world

quite possibly,
without all the makeup,
you were born plain



Dime Underfoot

Happy accidentalist,
a run-in with a vagina.
The mentalist listing toward Radium
and a thousand specks of dust
raining down on us
in our solipsist mountain town.

We settled our differences of opinion
in hockey teams and rock deities
over upturned shot glasses
and casual fucking on sugar binges.

Your hands shaking just a bit
or your whole body quaking
beneath the weight of the popcorn
on the ceiling or the cold
glacial crush that moved us.

I watched you cry
for your age,
for the men who were not in your life,
for Pop N Fresh, Mr. Clean, and Aunt Jemima,
none occupying cupboards
in a non-existent house with a view of the foothills.

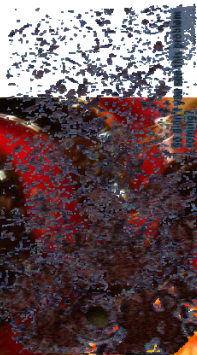
This was not The Brady Bunch.

I wasn't Cliff Huxtable
and your weren't Claire.

A shame it was
to condense a sitcom promise of life
into stains on a bed sheet,
a one night stand against---

---something.

And what I never told you
in the aftermath,
the nights and nights without sleep,
burning candles in jars and jars
and scribbling introverted notes
before burning them,
releasing them into the ether
(how agnostics pray sometime:
with fire),



if ever there was that one
in a thousand condoms to break
there was a part of me that
hoped it would be one with you.

Our beautiful, broken condom miracle baby
for all the world to see,
the bun, the ticking time bomb,

BOOM!

And maybe it was this case of me,
a man-cub, if ever there was such a thing,
being afraid of taking that plunge:

you know,
you knock a woman up
and then mull over
whether the two of you want to abort
not only the little mass of splitting cells,
dividing cells,
but the situation itself,
the guilt, the Russian dolls nesting within

Russian dolls



within Russian dolls,
all of them being possibilities,
layers and layers of anxiety.

Keep the thing,
be in that shit storm
of being a first time parent
and knowing sweet fuck-all about
what it means, what to do
or whether we have the genes
to not make a demon spawn
who talks in movie theaters
and grows up to think crotch-first,
brain distant second,
making us forty year old grandparents,
generations of just the worst
contributions
issuing forth from between your legs:
all of us confused and alone
because we're too fucking stupid
to bond beyond P and V
and thirty minutes of a sex soundtrack
pieced together on an iPod.

Fuck!

Okay, stop.



You're off the rails now, old man,
the engineer is drunk, the passengers are screaming
because they're all out of control.

Here it is.

What I never told you
was that if that one in a thousand condoms
that break
was a condom that broke with you

I'd be okay with it

because if I had to stare down
infinite responsibility:
income that matters,
meaningless holidays into meaningful holidays,
graduating from Froot Loops and video games
to imparting wisdom,
falling in love instead of just being in lust:
a sweaty night in a sawtooth hotel room
blooming into all nights, every night,
no nights without blankets and pillows,
a horse bearing riders
in silhouette into the sun,

the rest of this lifetime in flux,
always in flux,

You are exactly the kind of woman
I could turn, dime underfoot, for.

And we're probably not going to see each other again.
Phone conversations will become further and further apart.

I might exist as a memory of a smell,
or a patch of skin that moved against
your birdcage ribs, your calloused hands.

You still might cry for your men
and how time is indifferent.
We all age the same,

but if it makes you feel any better,
this was something that I wanted to say.
It was something
I wanted you to know.



-Division-

we scrub at stains, not knowing if they are shit or blood

don't ask me what's new and exciting

don't ask me to explain

don't ask me anything

I'll love you for permitting me to be of few words

forget the questions

stop expecting answers, stop expecting, stop

I fell in love with your loneliness and the hurt that hides behind your eyes

no fear of a reasonable sadness, just desire, exposed

all the songs I want to hear are heartbreak

sing it backwards, take it away

every word turns into nonsense, broken glass and promises to see each other through

the mirror people and the dream people

I remember the time my shadow tried to kill me

but we don't like to talk about that

this is survival, this is more important than

we are getting to over, starting over, closer

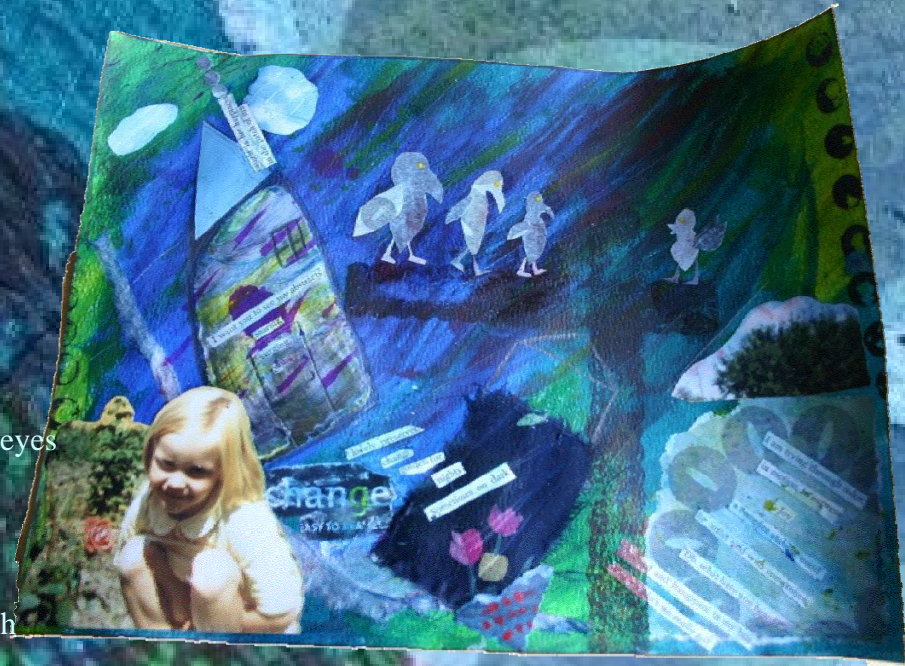
I have been torn in soft places, murdered women's eyes

torn between darkness and enlightenment and knowing they're the same

torn between wife and mistress, commitment and commitment, forgiveness

longing to run away to anywhere but here, with anyone but you

tonight, I am burning my bedsheets





Contributing Poets and Artists

Randy Adams is a Canadian media artist, with a background in creative writing, journalism and visual arts. His photography and mixed media work has been exhibited and collected by public galleries, museums, and archives. He has written one book and had creative non-fiction, poems, and columns published in various Canadian and international journals, magazines and newspapers. He has presented creative work online for 10 years using the nom de plume runran.

Michael Appleby is a 32-year-old Edmonton based poet and blogging genius behind the somewhat eponymous website michaelappleby.blogspot.com. He enjoys a good movie, drinks with friends, and occasionally curling up in the fetal position and crying himself to sleep for reasons unknown. He can be reached via email at pretentiousboob@gmail.com or by throwing rocks at his window. Whichever.

After years of marginalizing poetry **David Brydges** is passionate about promoting poetry. The Stroll of Poets and Raving Poets reading series in Edmonton gave him a sense of community and stage for participation. He's volunteered and participated in the Edmonton Poetry festival. David is artistic director of Spring Pulse Poetry Festival Northern Ontario's first and Canada's newest poetry festival. He writes a bi-monthly column in his home town of Cobalt for the Voice called poetry pulse. David created Blue Apple Press to produce his works for the general public. The Canadian league of poets recently confirmed his associate member status.

Anton Z. Capri is an Edmonton writer who loves to chase salmon with a fly rod and write poetry for relaxation. His two most recent books are non-fiction: *Quijs, Quotes and Quanta – An Anecdotal History of Physics* and *From Quanta To Quarks – More Anecdotal History of Physics*. You can see more of him at www.antoncapri.com

Arnold Emmanuel works part-time, drinks coffee, and tries to find time to write when he can. He can be found in the corner somewhere.

Kathy Fisher is a Raving poets original, a (the?), great aunt of the spoken word scene in Edmonton. She is chameleon, moves between the worlds of music, words, law, libraries and history. The original version of this poem was commissioned for CBC Poetry Face-off in February, 2007. She is currently working on a documentary on WWI which started as a poem.

Michael Gravel is a writer and website builder based in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He's the frontman of [The Raving Poets](#), E-Town's longest-running open-mic poetry series. He's the author of [StreetRag: An Urban Notebook](#) and *The Fast Places*, published in 2008 by Red Nettle Press. In December 2007 he was nearly killed by a blood clot in his heart. He underwent surgery and spent Christmas in the hospital. Cherishing the gift of continued breath, he writes with a renewed sense of hope and empathy. He lives with his wife, stepdaughter, and two incorrigible hounds. His website is michaelgravel.com.

S. E. Ingraham uses her initials when submitting her work for consideration in hopes of avoiding knee-jerk gender reactions. Sharon realizes this may be unnecessary but figures, why take chances. Highlights from 2008 : being "sacrificial poet" at PLUG, a "Slam Team" event, Peterborough, Ontario, mid-October; publication in the premiere issue of the U.K. 'zine, "Melisma", plus a group of seven poems, December issue; posted/ archived two poems on poetsagainstar.ca Penultimately, Ingraham acknowledges that her years as a mental health consumer not only influence much of her work but probably inform most of it.

Wendy Joy is an Edmonton poet and mother of two boys, and is happy to perform with both the Raving Poets and Edmonton Stroll of Poets. She is published in a few poetry journals, the Alberta anthology *Writing the Land*, and on the Raving Poets CD *I Love Alberta Beat*. One of her poems won third prize in *Freefall's* 2006 writing contest, and her poem "for the centre" won an honourable mention in the 2007 Surrey International Writer's Contest. Wendy also makes altered books and is exploring other forms of altered art. Like most poets, she has a day job.

Gregory Koop grew up on the oil patch of central Alberta and Saskatchewan, an intriguing place to be lost. After more than three years out of the University of Alberta's Write Program and mentoring under the likes of Lynn Coady, Kristjana Gunnars, Greg Hollingshead, Shani Mootoo, Andreas Schroeder, and Gail Sidonie Sobat, he has finally dedicated himself fulltime to writing thanks to the support of his loving family, Stefanie and Isa. To date he has one publication in Other Voices Journal of the Literary and Visual Arts and one forthcoming in The Nashwaak Review.

Jenni Krowchenko was born October.18, 1986 in the city of Edmonton where she grew up. She wrote her first poem about love through her eyes at age eleven after a quick flip through the bible. While suffering from issues of racism and trails every young person faces she found release in her writing. Her style is unique and content ranges from the feelings of depression and heart break to the power of inner strength and passion of love. Jenni believes this quote best describes her work and reason. "Even from a dark night songs of beauty can be born" – MaryAnne

Chris Krueger is a published writer, actor, musician and poet who roams North America by way of a small mountain town located in the Rocky Mountains of colorful Colorado. Chris has performed in many cities including New York City, Las Vegas, Atlanta, Edmonton, Miami and Los Angeles in diverse venues such as the Bowery Poetry Club, the Bellagio Casino, The Kasbar, The Mint, and Da Poetry Lounge. Chris likes contact sports, motorcycles and acting the fool, but also loves to read - from philosophy to physics and from politics to porn. He will never comprehend why UGG boots are cool.

Mandie Lopatka is a long-time raving poet and radical confessionalist notorious for her excessiveness and her inability to keep anything to herself.

Laurie MacFayden recently closed the door on a 30-year journalism career to concentrate on her own writing and painting. She was a finalist in the 2008 CBC Edmonton Poetry Faceoff. Her work has been published in *DailyHaiku*, *A Daily Shot of Zen, Volume I*; the Spire Poetry Poster, The Ontario Poetry Society Chapbook *Love: The Main Course*, and the Stroll of Poets Anthology. She was one of the headliners in the finale of the 2008 Edmonton Poetry Festival. Her poetry can be heard on the Raving Poets' *I Love Alberta Beat* CD and at their podcast site, <http://liveatthekasbar.com/>

Nicole Pakan is an active member of the Edmonton literary community. One of her favourite performance venues is the swank and atrociously charming, Kasbar—home of the Raving Poets and some of the city's most fearsome wordsmiths. When she is not out poeting, Nicole fills her time as the Co-Editor for the international online and print literary journal *DailyHaiku*. Her recent publication credits include pieces in: *Filling Station*, *The Prairie Journal*, *Other Voices*, *Notebook Magazine*, *Misunderstandings Magazine*, *The Toronto Quarterly* and *Blue Skies Poetry*. She was also short-listed for the CV2 2-day poem contest for 2008.

Patrick M. Pilarski lives in Edmonton, and is the co-editor of the international short-form journal *DailyHaiku*. His work has appeared and is forthcoming in publications across North America, Europe, and Japan, recently including *PRISM international*, *The Antigonish Review*, *Literary Review of Canada*, and *Modern Haiku*. His first full-length collection, *Huge Blue* (2009), is forthcoming from Leaf Press, and he is the author of one experimental short-form chapbook: *Five Weeks* (2007). "Chamber 29" is an excerpt from his recent novel-length work in progress, *Pomegranate and the Whale*.

Daniel Poitras grew up in a metis family but quickly disowned them and set to become a full fledged Indian. In just twenty-eight short years a local Indian Reserve adopted him into their tribe and allowing him to become a Status Indian. Daniel has spread rumours about sleeping with Roo Borson, Margaret Atwood and Al Purdy. Also he talked about writing a short story for "The Canadian Aboriginal Writing Challenge" and putting out a book of poetry that consists of his awful hack work he wrote when he was a teenager. But then again Daniel says a lot of things.

Juniper Quin is a secular happy polyamorous compassionate hedonistic nomadic vegan student who is constantly in transit and learning all the time.

Adam Snider spends his days playing with words. He is a copywriter by day, and a poet and blogger by night. His writing is inspired by the gritty streets of Edmonton's "Avenue of Nations," and by the naïve hope that words can change the world. Adam's poetry has been featured on CBC Radio One, the Raving Poets' "Live at the Kasbar" Podcast, and has appeared in print in the 2006 CBC Alberta Anthology. Adam can be found online at <http://adamsnider.com>. Adam lives and works in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Deeply immersed in Yoruba oral tradition, **Titilope Sonuga** formed a love of spoken word at a young age. Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria till age 13, Sonuga describes her poetry as a means to reconcile her African roots with her Canadian identity. An emerging artist, Sonuga has only been performing her works publicly for a few years, however, in that short time she has performed at The Roar Spoken Word Festival, Poetree Open Mic, Afro Quiz, Ribbon Rouge, Edmonton Poetry Festival 2008, Born To Write 2008, Legacies 2008, and an open mic performance at the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word 2008. In January of 2009, Sonuga in collaboration with Rouge Lounge in Edmonton launched "Rouge Poetry", a weekly spoken word night that features established and aspiring poets in the city. She will also be featured on the 2009 release of the Mahogany Public collaborative album, "Jali", a project that will also showcase Politic Live, Souljah Fyah, Oozeela and several other talented artists.

In decades past, **Rebecca Traquair** would probably have been burned at the stake or subjected to electroshock therapy. Instead, she was told at a young age that she would be famous someday, or at least have her name connected with something interesting. Then again, her life is heavily invested in shattering people's expectations, preferably by taking them someplace really, really high up and then dropping them over the side. She lives in Edmonton with uncountable distractions, where she publishes sporadically and sometimes reads things in front of a live audience. The Raving Poets are her favorite co-conspirators.