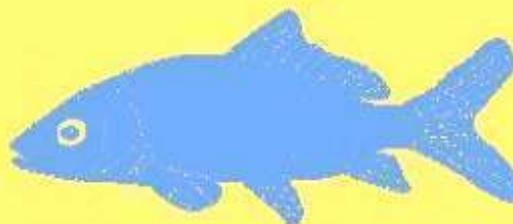
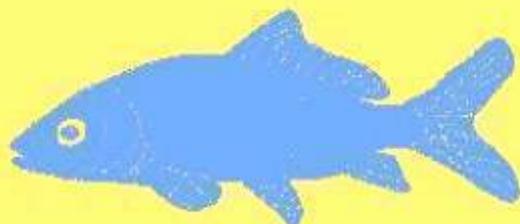
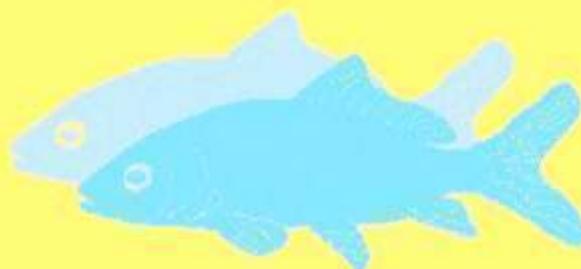
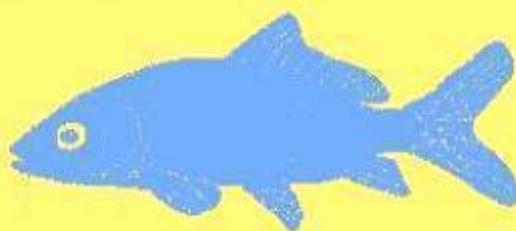
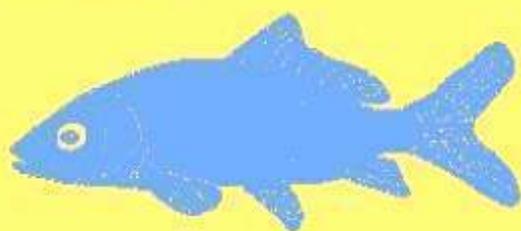


TEN



Trevor Abes
Peter Taylor

Sonia Sarkar
Jason Haladyn

Ben Murray

nether / fortnight 10
July'11

Cover Image: *a carp rush* by Francis Raven

netherprint.wordpress.com

12, Savitri Sadan, Moghul Lane,
Mahim, Mumbai-400018

Authors retain individual copyrights to their work

ISSN 2231-4792

Sonia Sarkar / One Poem

The Engagement

Ribbons unspooling across radiators
Fragments of tulle drifting in fountain water
They crowd in on the too small benches
Shiny with polished mahogany and doubt
Hardly a space for the onyx sheep
Who showed up with felt marker on his face
And pieces of holiday candy in the crystal bowl
That gets gift-recycled through the community

As the music blasts,
People bray their names over and over
Crane necks to see them strut their way forward,
Hands and resolve melded
Into one delirious line drive
Fleeing from the altar so that nobody will be able to see
The barely visible string of life that pervades the air
And makes inactivity the active thing to do
Disbelief stretches like a sweater wall, as wide as it is thick

Break us away from our own words,
They say, and we will stoop to stealing yours,
From underneath the bowed hem of the Christening dress
You made us wear for you 10 years ago.
Together we will run up our own plastic debt
Wave and feel tall amongst the inflated museum exhibits
Sweep remaining troubles under the rug
And proceed with our own hazily determined business.
We'll age into our own improbable sense of importance.

Sonia Sarkar is a 22-year-old Austinite currently working in Boston, Massachusetts. She works as Chief of Staff to the CEO of Health Leads, a national health care nonprofit, and her work has been featured or is forthcoming in Urban Confusions, Right Hand Pointing, Pothiz, 32Poems, Pyrta, Cerebration and Thymos Anthology, amongst others.

Jason Haladyn / Two Poems

Intaglio Landscape: 20 x 12 (fences or doors)

The clock reads 9:25
Walking on a path into the town that is alone

Did I mention the clock

I cannot see the exact time
Reading like words cast onto the surface of rough paper
Folded as time that has been used and is now being put away
Folded up like a map that fits into a child's back pocket

In the book I have set aside space for notes

Within the margins landscapes grow within landscapes
Miniture worlds that live in the very frame that frames their world
growing within the blank that is beyond the boarder
growing within the the frame's frame

In order to focus on the moment at hand

Space must be left
space must be left for the landscape to grow

A corridor of inkless paper seperates the world from the frame
Many walk over this liminal space like stepping over a stair on a staircase
Caught up in the momentum of movement that has forgotten its way

I got lost once on my way to the frame store

Lost amongst dirt roads and views of the mountains in winter
Lost between two words in a rather hefty volume of Piranesi's work
Sleeping at a bed a breakfast at the side of the road
It was made of stone heads and log wooden fences

Sorry I meant doors

Intaglio Landscape 223 x 220 (bird and house)

she scares away the birds
hysterically groping the air with her foot

swatting the winged creatures away

as the wind ripples the paper in its frame
improperly matted

disproportionately darkened in the extremities

of the rolling hills
of the houses interior

curved doorways and circular logic
mimicking sculptures that function as chairs

stacked precariously

all proportion lost in its mass

black lines on an off white surface
crosshatched telemetry in the lower left quadrant

almost squared composition

the house is unlike

any bird in flight
any symmetrical historicization

collected like artwork in a museum
brass sculptures that scare birds

prints of feet precariously swatting the air

Jason Haladyn's poems have appeared in numerous journals and magazines, as well as the collections Crave It: Artists and Writers Food Anthology (Red Claw Press, 2011) and Nuit Blanche: Poetry for Late Nights (Royal Sarcophagus Society Press, 2007). He has published a chapbook Convulsive Hotel Dreams (Trainwreck Press, 2008), and two short poetry books, 12 Bulls (Blue Medium Press, 2010) and 17/13 (Blue Medium Press, 2007).

Peter Taylor / One Poem

Watching Gliders at Dusk

for Don McDonald, 30 Squadron, RAF

The silhouettes wheeling pinions
silver twilight in a ballet of wings.
Tow-planes draw fresh dancers from the field,
unhook at cirrus, trailing
filaments of afterbirth.
Day explodes her final blazed crescendo,
lifting pirouettes
above a rose-strewn stage of evening.
Spiralling through coda,
the gliders alight
on a tense instinctive whisper of air.
Night shuffles to his feet, curtains the performance.
Sleep is no fit ending for those who fly.

*Peter Taylor has published *Trainer*, *The Masons*, and *Aphorisms* and his poems have been published in seven countries. *Antietam*, his experimental verse play, won honorable mention in the 2010 War Poetry Contest in Northampton, Massachusetts. He lives in Aurora, Canada.*

Ben Murray / Fiction

Hide and Seek

He was saving taste for later, but otherwise all his senses were engaged, moments of boot against hard-packed dirt, pant and swish and occasional caw, the waft of pines, ground-level bloom and the glimpsed blue between canopy green.

The trail was all theirs, their vehicle the only one parked back at the trailhead, the last man and woman on earth.

The rhythm of the stride. Up. Always up, until the always down, the breath's reward, the knee's punishment. Follow that ass. Janey led, that ass tucked into khaki shorts a shade lighter than her burnished brown legs. His eyes torn between natural beauties. He wished one eye could focus on that shapely rear, the other on the Harebell and Paintbrush which bracketed their ascent. He tried it for a few seconds, cross-eyed under his white Tilley hat, but soon gave up, smiling, pleased with the silly attempt.

Janey slowed long enough to point to the ground, where a cluster of Woolly Pine mushrooms sat to the right of the trail, the largest a good foot long. He knelt down to touch the spongy surface, laying his hand flat upon it, his hand filling a fallen, pockmarked harvest moon, communion with the risen fallen in the sun.

"Take a photo."

"With your hand there?"

"Yeah. Scale, encroachment, connection. All in one shot. Go for it."

Cal looked up as the Canon replaced her face, his bionic woman kneeling down next to him, readying the next digital click. Her long dirty-blonde hair falling forward as she set up the shot, he got a whiff of the shampoo she always used, a scent of lavender which smelled artificial there in the montane forest, even though she was a stickler for natural ingredients.

"Okay, enough lollygagging. We've got another 10k or so to the pass."

She knew he liked it when she used words like 'lollygagging,' as if the two of them were occupying an alternate time stream, where such archaic terms words were still the norm. He felt stiffness in his hamstrings as he got up, telling himself for the umpteenth time to do stretches before the next hike, the unremembered reminder until the next after-the-fact.

"Yay. The first switchbacks." She turned back to him, grinning.

Could the world's hikers be divided into those who favored the gradual, prolonged punishment of switchbacks and the more direct coronary-inducing straight up? Janey liked switchbacks, calling them delayed gratification. Cal begged to differ; if punishment was in order, he'd rather get it over with sooner than later.

Switchbacks. Switchblades. He theorized that any word with the word 'switch' in it involved some measure of pain. Hmm. Switchboard. Switch-hitter. Another theory bites the dust.

Janey's ass was now a switchback ahead, and he forced himself to pick up the pace. He saw some scat strewn across the trail. Ungulate, probably deer. Little oval pellets he had to fight the temptation to pick up and feel, vestiges in the man of the boy his mother had christened 'Sir Tactile,' shaping bits of spongy white bread into perfect little spheres, sticking fingers into cooling loaves of bread and cake, further mashing mashed potatoes with his fists if no one was looking. Years on he would learn what the word 'tactile' meant, using the bequeathed name in romantic roundelays. "My mom used to call me Sir Tactile as a child," murmured into the hot ears of girls as he copped feels, their budding breast flesh and silken bottoms as soft as dough.

"Shit!" he hollered.

"What?" Janey turned in mid-stride.

"I forgot the sandwiches. Damn."

She waited for him at the top of the next switchback turn, backlit by the southern sun. "Are you sure? They were in that blue mini-cooler thing."

"I know. I left it on the hood of the car. Fuck. Chipmunk or gray jay food now." He'd caught up to her, the 'V' of her neck a sweaty horizontal crescent moon. Her belly was at eye level and he rested his head against it, staring down at her size seven battle-scarred Killarneys.

"Okay. Well, we've got ReBars, trail mix. Water. We won't starve." She tussled his hair, limp and wet with sweat.

Cal sighed. "I'm hungry. Go halfers? On a ReBar?"

"Sure. Here, grab one of mine from my pack." She turned around, offering him her back. "They're in the outer pocket." Cal had hoped they'd sit down for the snack, but apparently Janey intended to chew and ascend at the same time.

They continued on, the power bar enlivening his taste buds. Eight servings of fruit and veggies per bar, supposedly. Four servings right there in the three flat dark green inches he stuck in his mouth. He waited for a consequent electrolyte infusion to boost his energy, but the best he could muster was a kale-tinged belch.

"Nice."

"You're welcome. I'm waiting for all those electrolytes to light a fire under my ass."

Janey didn't reply, and he focused again on her bum, the taut thigh muscles below it. He felt his cock stir, and imagined taking her right there on the trail, roots and scat imprinting temporary tattoos on their exposed flesh, ravens stealing bird-eyed views of the action, the fraught, slippery moments of coupling, of potential discovery by other hikers, bears. They still hadn't done it outdoors yet, the planning for which would kill the spontaneity, he figured. Now was a moment, but he knew Janey was too intent on reaching the pass, another 'Premier' hike to check off in her guidebook. Maybe they could have a summit fuck. A celebratory summit fuck scant feet below the clouds. Bottoms up on the top of the world.

"Quit staring at my butt, you perv."

Cal laughed. "How did you know?"

"I know you," she said between switchback exhales. "The Buttman Cometh."

"Hmm, I think I missed that one at the O'Neill retrospective."

Janey chuckled. Their banter soon dissipated. They'd finally passed the switchbacks and had begun to ascend a narrow trail above the tree line, a glorified animal track along a steep talus slope. The air was getting thinner, and the trail seemed to be at a breathless 45 degree pitch. Janey trudged on, with little slackening of pace. He saw her look around intermittently to check on his own progress, presumably making sure he hadn't collapsed, a deflated bundle of flesh and hair and nylon.

The guidebook had described an elevation gain of 700 metres for the trail. Cal figured most of those metres lived here, in this tree-less, grey rock and boulder jungle. He paused, looking over his shoulder, back down into the valley they'd come up from, a naive artist's rendering of peaks, pines, and turquoise lakes abruptly sectioning off blocks of the landscape, colors and shapes seemingly oblivious to gradation or scale, a child's notion of the wild world.

Breathtaking. In all senses of the word. Cal turned around, looking ahead for Janey. In the open, sparse lunar landscape, the trail was clearly visible for kilometres ahead. But no Janey. Odd. She couldn't have gotten that far ahead.

"Janey!" His shout reverberated around the rock amphitheatre, his echo the only reply.

"Janey! Hey! Jaaaaneeeeey!" He thought of the open vowels at the end of her name, how the best pet names had them too, the sound carrying farther should one's Fido or Sammy get lost.

What the hell. She couldn't be hiding. She wasn't the sort to indulge in such juvenalia, as she'd call it. Besides, there was literally no place to hide for any mammal larger than a pika or a chipmunk. Her green t-shirt and shorts would be visible for miles in this monochrome world.

Cal increased his pace, a slight panicky feeling apparently sufficient to power a second wind. She must have gone on ahead to the pass. It was the only possible explanation. In the real world of fifteen minutes ago, when the two of them had been close enough to one another to converse, it

would have seemed highly unlikely, if not an impossibility. Janey, while summit-fixated, always waited for him to catch up. Always. Even the time she'd forgotten her SLR on the ridge summit above the Opal Hills in Jasper, the two of them not realizing it until they were half way down. They'd made the torturous decision that yes, the damn camera and the photos stored on it were worth the slog back up to retrieve it. Even then-- Janey practically sprinting up the slope like a damn Energizer mountain goat--she'd waited for him.

Cal looked at his watch. 3:30. Five hours or so until nightfall. The certainty of time allayed his fears somewhat. Wherever Janey was, it would be 3:30 too. He trudged onwards, part of him marveling at his newfound store of energy. He wondered if it derived from the same wellspring that mothers drew upon to enable them to lift vehicles to save their babies. Panic. Adrenalin transforming regular folk into temporary circus freaks. Watch Crisis Man race up the mountainside, pushing Sisyphian boulders of worry and panic before him.

"Ja-ney!" "Jaaaaa-neeey!" The echo bounced off sedimentary cliff faces, risen oceans turned to stone, expressionless, Lethean.

He cursed the rocks around him. Janey had the cell phone. He made a mental note to always make sure they both had phones from now on. The reception would doubtless be non-existent up here, but at least there would be the emotional crutch of being able to keep trying it.

Cal stopped again for a moment, his heart pounding from a combination of exertion and rising anxiety. He could hear little but his own breath, a wheezy, quickening pant which brought to mind the ailing black lab brought into the clinic the week before. The imploring, trusting eyes of the dog had haunted him since, and he saw them now superimposed on the face of his Janey, lying broken somewhere in this universe of stone, a Raggedy Anne amidst the scree.

But no. He'd see her. He'd be able to see her had she fallen. Where the fuck could she be? Cal thought now of her dislike of childish behavior. It was one of the things that had initially attracted him to her. She was so different from him in that respect. Now he fervently wished she was a master practitioner in the game of hide and seek. Please God, let me count to ten and find her somewhere, somehow having hidden herself in this no-person's land. Janey covered in bits of loose rock, only her smiling face visible above her pebble and slab garb as I take this next step up, upwards, to see her lying there giggling, laughing, living, breathing.

Come out, come out, wherever you are.

A sudden tremor in the air above. Cal looked up. An eagle's widescreen wings unfolding, gliding directly above him, maybe eight feet away. Sky alive. Cal was stunned. He'd never been so close to one in the wild before, and as anxious as he was about Janey, he watched, mesmerized, as the golden eagle receded into the distance, He'd heard it first. He'd heard the great wings conduct the air before he saw them. Cal felt both miniscule and infinite in that moment, harboring his own

perspective and a kind of reverse angle bird's eye POV. Its eyes had been hazel, like Janey's. The eagle had been close enough to see the color of its eyes.

"Janeeeeey!. Janeeeeey!"

He longed to share his mystic eagle moment with her, and he felt frustrated, angry almost. How could she have missed the sight? What was the point of racing up mountains if it meant missing out on such things? Cal checked his thoughts, part of him still evidently hoping she'd done just that, raced on ahead without waiting for him. Janey behaving like...not Janey.

Fuck. He was hungry now, and fatigued, and he could feel his left big toe chafing against his Zamberlans. He continued the upward slog. Pre-blister signs, so many signs indicating a rest was due, a rest against some sun-bleached slate slab with water and trail mix and moleskin to restore muscle, tissue, skin. But he kept on. Janey must be up there, hurt maybe, who knows. She has to be.

The height, the exposure, the silence, was beginning to get to him. He felt an acute loneliness, so intense it brought him back to his childhood, wailing in a shopping cart, imagining himself forgotten or abandoned. Cal squinted into the distance. He thought he could make out the trail summit now, what must be the pass' high point. What looked to be an inukshuk wavered there, silhouetted against the blue sky. Rock and sky and trail and no Janey.

Cal stood there rooted, looking ahead, then behind into the barren scree below. A pika's whistle pierced the silence, the first sound he'd heard aside from his own labors since the eagle's slicing of the air about a half an hour before. He tried to locate the dun-colored fur ball, scanning the slope where the sound had seemed to come from. Often heard, not seen, the pika's whistle of warning? greeting? an emanation from hidden declivities in the rocks.

Cal felt like falling to his knees, saw himself fall to the precarious path, doubled forward and weeping, his prostate form wracked by sobs in a twisted riff on a prayer of supplication, refuge in the rhythm of the Word. But he kept on, this vision of himself so vivid he almost believed it had occurred. As real as anything these last few hours.

Maybe she's gone over the summit and down to the other side. Cal knew this too was highly unlikely. Back at the hostel the day before, they'd closely perused the topo map for the area, determining whether or not that could be a return option. The lines and numbers said no. A precipitous drop of some several hundred feet just north of the pass, the only way down aside from the way they came. A climber's cakewalk, a hiker's suicide run.

The inukshuk was indeed an inukshuk. Heart pounding, chest heaving, body and brain feeling open and raw, Cal made the last few leaden steps to the summit. A small ridge, maybe twenty-feet across. Windy. Barren. No Janey.

Exhausted, he sunk to the ground, pulling off his knapsack and casting it aside. Grabbing the Nalgene water bottle from the mesh pack net he took several swigs from it. The wind rustled his hair, cool against the heat and sweat of him. It picked up, even as he lay there.

"Janey! Jaaaaneeeeey!" The wind swallowed his shouts whole, swallowed any potential echo.

"Please God, Buddha, I don't fucking understand. Where is my Janey? Janey..." His voice trailed off into a sob, and he saw her as he'd last seen her, her face just visible as she turned back to check on him, half of her body already poised to continue the ascent.

The wind was fierce, and his jacket shell rippled, ballooning up like a sail in a squall, his Tilley attempting take-off, the cord tightening around his neck. Cal could barely hear his own cries of anguish over the rush, the roar. He thought of having to go back down now, back down the trail into the valley, into the land of lake and pine and root. The effrontery of calm. Returning to the car. Without Janey.

A shimmer in his peripheral caught his eye. Something small and shiny beneath the inukshuk, a bit of paper moving with the wind. Cal heaved himself up and walked over to the stone marker, kneeled down and removed a rock weight holding the paper in place.

Cal let out a gasp of recognition, of shock. Held up before his tearing eyes was a photo of Janey, a photo she'd shown him once of herself at ten or eleven, standing before a dramatic backdrop of peak and sky and cloud, her face displaying the proud look of achievement he knew so well. Janey reaching the top, Janey at the summit of the pass.

Cal dropped the photo, staring out at the identical scene before him, the very same backbone of peaks, taken from the same vantage point by the inukshuk. He watched the wind pick up the photograph, suspending it a few inches above the ground. It hovered briefly in place for a moment, and he reached down to retrieve it, but a sudden gust blew it clear off the ridge, over the chasm facing north. He walked over to the overhang, peering over the edge, but he couldn't see the photograph, only the sheer rock wall beneath, how it curved outwards into a moraine, a million feet below.

"Janey!" He heard his voice shout out her name one last time, into the howling void. An echo or the real thing, he didn't have a clue.

*Ben Murray is an Alberta, Canada-based writer whose debut collection of poetry, *What We're Left With*, was published in 2007 by Brindle & Glass (Victoria, BC).*

Trevor Abes / Three Poems

La Belle Époque

There is a storm outside, “witnessed” as tornado spittle,
And I’ve just read a novel about a man whose
Heart attacks him while watching television. So,
I’m listening to Countronious Rex, and writing about that man,
Instead of trying to find comfort in The Family Channel.
He was a childhood friend of the protagonist;
They lost touch long ago, and there he went
At 32, my age plus nine; but, today
My father drove to Whitby,
My mother is with a friend,
And I am alone in the apartment with
The realization that I still fear death.
How to do away with it?
This bit of whiskey, and this smoke I can
Now type with while holding, make me
Want to be an expat in 20’s Paris
Who dreams of living in the 1890’s,
Ignorant of the black sky over the party.

A Friend's Funeral

Olivia: lies about her last name, says it's Green,

Because she thinks she's funny,

Loves liver curry, sports a frog toque,

Podcasts urban myths while eating same,

Wearing same, does not cross her legs,

Prefers knees side by side, does have

Green in her eyes, laughs without thinking,

As one should, is into

Old things now, which makes her new,

Like The Duke and Mingus bass lines, writes

How people really talk, and talks in perfect

Grammar to throw people off.

If you write of me when I am not,

Use the present tense, she told me once,

Jokingly.

Olivia

She is Green of name, eyes, and hair,
A layer like a field of grass
Over flesh returning to the Earth,
Never first, but aware that what is lost
Will be picked up by someone later
Down the line, a closed system,
A realized version of the words worth
Decaying a little faster over,
Because there are more important things
In life than living a long time, like
Her mother's liver curry with cardamom,

The context that comes with it:
A table of nodding heads, merged for an hour,
And therefore unable to leave, or think
Of something disagreeable to say
To feed their displaced normality.

Trevor Abes is 23 years old and lives in Toronto. His poetry has appeared in Ditch and Wordletting.