

THE PLOT LINE BOMBER OF INNISFREE

by

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ABSTRACT

A theoretical introduction situates this poetical novella within the Prince George creative writing tradition using a topographical technique termed *biblioecological mapping*. Through an historical approach, this introduction also places the thesis within the context of scientific exploration, positioning the role of the poet as surveyor who maps artistic manifestations of landscape and seeks transformed relationships to the nonhuman domain. The creative component maps a hypothetical British Columbia and Alberta of the near future through allusive narrative, fictional journalism, and poetry. In this speculative geopolitical area called Enderbee, farmers engage in resistance against a proposed pipeline—what constitutes the defamiliarization of the current debate surrounding the Northern Gateway Project. On the biblioecological map, the creative component inhabits a zone where differing textual orientations come together, and the motif of explosion acts as a metaphor for upheaval in arts and society.

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Personalized Remappings of the Northwest: Artistic Exploration and Biblioecological Cartography

My experimental novella, *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*, tells the story of an elk farmer named Jeffery Inkster who finds his farm threatened by pipeline expansion, and is dragged into the thick of a plot to wield industrial sabotage against the intruders. For this introduction to my creative thesis, I will discuss several theoretical orientations that both guided and emerged from the writing process, including notions of what I call ‘biblioecological mapping’, and how this theory can be used to describe the formal hybridity of my creative thesis.

The elk ranch operated by Inkster is called Innisfree, and this is the first in a series of literary allusions interspersed throughout my text that provide a discursive framework of diachronic referencing. Through allusive engagement with the history of English literature, I hope to provide a sense of continuity with the European tradition; at the same time, I attempted to integrate these signifiers within the localized cultural milieu of Northern British Columbia and Alberta. Innisfree is, of course, the titular subject of the lyric poem “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” by William Butler Yeats, that presents the wistful musings of an urbanite who daydreams of retreating to an inland lake in Ireland where he will plant “bean rows” and start a small apiary (lines 4-5). In my futuristic portrayal of a hyper-industrialized Alberta/British Columbia border zone of the 2030s, the humble back-to-the land dream connoted by the name Innisfree is overwhelmed by industrial development and the encroachment of urban values. Internal moral contradictions, such as the ecologically questionable practice of farming wild game, also complicate the

picturesque ideal, entangling the characters in states of complicity and cognitive dissonance. My story is thus a reformulation of the common guiding myth of ecopoetic praxis, that “Rousseauesque story about imagining a state of nature prior to the fall into property, into the city” (Bate 266). In *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*, I resituate this atavistic desire for communion with the nonhuman world into a futuristic setting where the problems caused by human domination over the land mirror yet surpass those of today. Approaching the industrial dilemma poetically puts me in the position to harness what Heidegger argued was the unique power of the poet “to realize, by means of an aesthetic transcendence of technological wisdom, the promise of authentic relations to being” (Soper 49). Ecocritic Jonathan Bate also highlights the nature-rootedness that Heidegger designates to the poetic mode, the German philosopher’s assertion that “there was a special kind of writing, called poetry, which has the peculiar power to speak earth” (Bate 251). By employing poetic prose and prose poetry to structure my novella, I am thus in the position to critique anthropocentric convention as I search for a renewed, personalized connection with the nonhuman world.

The resemblance that my story bears to the historical events that took place in the Peace Country of British Columbia between 1996-2009 (Flanagan 3)—including the widely reported industrial sabotage and resulting jail sentence of Wiebo Ludwig and other (still unidentified) bombers—constitutes the realistic grounding for my speculative tale set in the future. These real-life bombings caused no direct physical harm to oil and gas workers, and natural resource development has continued largely unabated in northeastern BC. Tom Flanagan, in a 2009 report for the Canadian Defense & Foreign Affairs Institute, writes that “overall, the most likely scenario is a continuation of isolated and uncoordinated obstructive activities, both violent and

non-violent, which may occasionally slow down or hold up particular projects, but which will probably not threaten the ability of resource industries to continue their operations in the region” (11). My creative thesis is set in a near future where this statement is no longer accurate, as the armament available to extreme activists is much more potent. The growing presence of landowner rage directed towards developers, and from oil and gas workers back at landowners and environmentalists, has reached a state of crisis. Posited as a major shaper of historical development by political philosophers such as Francis Fukuyama and Peter Sloterdijk, rage is “the *momentum* of a movement into the future, which one can understand as the raw material for historical change” (Sloterdijk 60). By creating a futuristic myth drawn from recognizable sources, I hope to contribute to a master narrative rooted in real lives, one that negotiates these vectors of rage, to effect a realignment of systems of environmental stewardship and industrial development towards the ideal of sustainability.

Though the central action of my story is loosely based on recent bombings in northeastern BC, I employ temporal dislocation and metafictional tropes to imaginatively resituate this contemporary debacle in a fresh context—a variation on what the twentieth-century theorist Viktor Shklovsky called “estrangement” (also translated from the Russian as “defamiliarization” or “enstrangement”). In my opinion, the ongoing reportage and at times redundant public debate has numbed Canadians to the real dangers associated with industrial development and the rage fomented by the resultant conflict over land management. By employing absurdist literary strategies such as name changing and comical journalism, I engage in what Shklovsky qualifies as a type of artistic writing that defamiliarizes its subject, and in so doing wields the power “to remove the automatism of perception ... [and] create

the vision which results from that deautomatized perception. A work is created 'artistically' so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception" (Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" 19). That creative, poetic thought—through the uncommon language and cadence that form its outward manifestation—can decelerate a reader's assimilation of a text and incite the reconsideration of the familiar, also appears in Shelley's *A Defense of Poetry*: "It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being" (13).

Postmodernist critics such as Marjorie Perloff seem to associate the notion of "making strange" with an outmoded modernist (or pre-poststructuralist) naïveté (Perloff 11)—assuming as it does some sort of stable social context or exterior nest from which the text arises and against which details might appear estranged. Considering this view in light of the climate-change era, it does seem that defamiliarization is, paradoxically, something twenty-first century society has come to expect from the environment itself, let alone from artists attempting to destabilize our perception of this environment. For me, however, choosing a method conducive to the problematization of political discourse through artistic divagation was a creative necessity relevant to my immediate circumstances. The spectre of industrial sabotage is so tangibly present in British Columbia that for me to write in the realist mode would be tantamount to an act of straightforward journalism (a genre that I parody in *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*), and since there are constantly new developments in the case, for example, of the Dawson Creek bombings, my story would have risked becoming irrelevant as new developments came to light. It is my

aim to encourage readers to assess issues they are inundated with on a regular basis from a distorted perspective—to consider the news, even though it presents itself as perpetually novel, as a static representation in need of “deautomatization.”

Biblioecological Mapping as Defamiliarized Cartography

In a letter to his sister Anna dating from 1877, George Mercer Dawson, who worked as a surveyor for the Geological Survey of Canada and The British North American Boundary Commission, describes his trip by stage coach through Northern California on his way to BC: the roads were “execrable,” he writes; “... I heard the brake shrieking against the wheels as we went bumping along, and saw the horses apparently dancing on the edge of an abyss.” After looking out the window for days, Dawson remarks that “one begins to get sleepy too about the third day. You are admiring the scenery—paying the greatest possible attention to it—when all at once you relapse into a state of temporary insanity with the most absurd dreams rushing through your head” (Dawson, *No Ordinary Man* 131).

The “rush” of images described by this unlikely explorer—who was left with a hunchback frame and the stature of a ten year-old from a childhood battle with Pott’s disease (Cole and Lockner 4)—is exactly the kind of landscape reverie that I experienced at times during the long rides and wearying ten-day shifts involved in the forestry and ecology work I did for a living before enrolling at the University of Northern British Columbia. The absurd dreams that assail a surveyor who is driven squirrely by travel (“squirrely” in the sense of “crazy” or “nervy”) are exactly what inspired me to write a futuristic myth set in the 2030s. Whereas an explorer like George Dawson had an empirical contract with the sciences—his surveys for coal and other mineral resources in northern BC, Alberta, and the Yukon—for which these

flights of fancy seem, at least in the above quotation, to have been an annoying impediment, the creative writer in fact depends on these kinds of disruptions as an essential part of the creative process. I have no gold claim to boast, nor reports on copper veins for the commission; instead of filling in topographical maps of forestry cut blocks and owl survey transects, I now transfer some of those same mapping techniques to create conceptual models of literature-as-ecosystem in order to provide a theoretical framework for my own creative project here at UNBC, as well as a defamiliarized conception of literary communities in general. As Edward O. Wilson postulates in his study of humanity's affinity for other life forms, *Biophilia*, culture can be conceived of as "an image-making machine that recreates the outside world through symbols arranged into maps and stories" (101), and art may be seen as "a device for exploration and discovery" (77).

Inspiration for this creative thesis emerged from my experiences doing silviculture and other ecology-related work in the Peace Country, alongside some of the same rivers George Dawson paddled over a century earlier on his journeys to map the province's natural and cultural endowments. So I can relate to the passion for remote landscapes and culture that compelled him to keep voluminous journals, water colour sketches, and photos; and to compose rhyming poetry over the course of his journeys. One gets the sense, when considering the work of an explorer like George Dawson, that his motives went further than economic utilitarianism. In fact, in an article Dawson published in *Ottawa Naturalist* (Vol 4, 1890), titled "On Some of the Larger Unexplored Regions of Canada", he muses on the importance of conducting science for science's sake: "Should he be obliged to report that some particular district possess no economic value whatever, besides that of serving as receiver of rain and a reservoir to feed certain river-systems, his notes should contain

scientific observations ... which may alone be sufficient to justify the expenditure incurred” (Dawson, *No ordinary man* 194). The purist motivation exemplified here recalls the artistic dictum of “art for art’s sake”; however, scientists take their inspiration outward, whereas most artists go inwards into realms of imagination (Wilson 76).

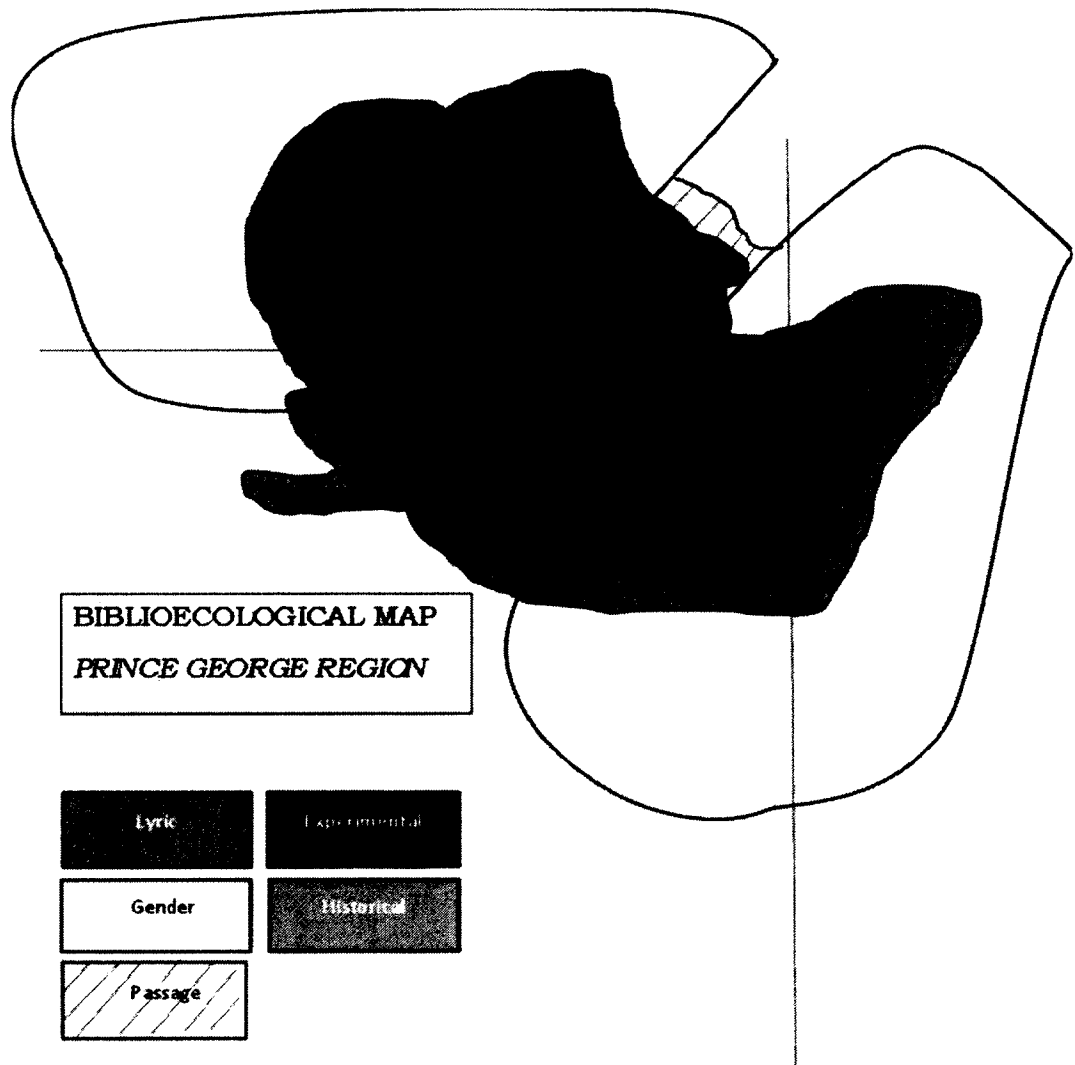
The series of experiences and realizations outlined above lead me to develop the art of *biblioecological mapping*. “Biblioecology” is a relatively easy neologism that I do not claim to have invented—this term appears sporadically, usually in the context of archival discourse (for example, in a 1983 paper by Lawrence J. McCrank called “Conservation and Collection Management in Library Science”). I have discovered no reference to “biblioecological mapping” per se, which I see as my own contribution to the analogical mode of thinking promulgated by writers like William Rueckert and Gary Snyder. Rueckert was one of the first theoreticians to acknowledge the analogic compatibility between literature and ecosystem. He conceives of poems as green plants, entities that “arrest energy on its path to entropy” (Rueckert 111) and sees “literary critics as creative mediators between literature and the biosphere” (121). This conception of literary creations as constituting an abstract landscape recalls Charles Olson’s opening statement in his 1947 study of Moby Dick, *Call Me Ishmael*: “I take space to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here” (Olson 11). While Olson and Rueckert certainly chart different ground, they share the same inclination towards creating conceptual diagrams and analogic systems that reifies literary data into spatial configurations. This sense of a superabundance of geographical space teeming with nonhuman phenomena, and the effect of voluminous otherness on the poetic imagination, is equally applicable to the

geography of Canada and the people here whose self-conception is in large part shaped by the vastness of the continent. Ecologically informed works such as *Moby Dick* don't take abundance for granted though—they serve as statements to motivate readers toward preservationist activity and attitudes by presenting empathetic engagements with the nonhuman domain.

Thinking of literature as an ecological system requires an epistemological leap; to accomplish this I use the terms “source domain” and “target domain”, which I have excavated from George Lakoff's writing on metaphor. Lakoff uses these terms to replace the vehicle and tenor schema that typically informs discussions of metaphor. This has the effect of widening the scope of definition to include a mapping between entire conceptual fields (Lakoff 2005). Literature is the target domain in my own project—a topography of concepts which I evaluate using information from the source domain, which is forest ecology.

Within the “Target-Domain-As-Source-Domain” (as Lakoff calls group metaphors), we can speak of larger polygons, shapes on the biblioecological map that resemble various forest stands, both uniform and mixed, that are contiguous or overlapping each other. A historical literary text, when mapped using information from the source domain, becomes a stand of old growth trees. Transduced within this theoretical stand are both indigenous stories passed down through oral and gestural symbol systems, as well as written texts that are the origins of settlers' literature.

Figure 1



*This is designed to resemble a basic field map used for silviculture surveys. It delineates a conceptual, not physical space, however. Temporally, this map depicts a current conception of Prince George literary culture from 2010 to the present. The X and Y axis represents the intersection of the Nechako and Fraser rivers as theoretical markers of place.

This historical block is positioned beside a contemporary lyric and experimental stand (much like the stratifications of aspen and cottonwood in a broadleaf forest). The crossover between these bibliostands is where ecotonal works grow in a state of transitional tension. The motivation behind this aspect of the map is to address the habit that writers have to box, or label, each other, used as a means to dismiss certain kinds of work. This map, then, may not be of use to someone deeply immersed in the complexities of theory; however taken as a pedagogical tool, or an expedient way to visualize the interrelatedness of formal categories, I hope that it may see some useful application.

Ecotones appear on the edges of dominant ecosystems, and thus contain flora and fauna that are characteristic of several stand types, all merging together. The ecotone is a landscape feature defined as “a transition area where spatial changes in vegetation structure or ecosystem process rates are more rapid than in the adjoining plant communities” (Levin 780). Also of importance is the fact that various forms of ecotone provide conduits for nutrients, bacteria, and disease transfer through riparian zones of influence: “Fluxes of energy and materials across ecotones can be increased by vectors that move materials or energy in the system. Vectors such as wind and moving water can increase the permeability of an ecotone by actively transporting materials across it, altering the distribution of materials” (Johnston 424). In a literary community, conduits of movement and influence are likewise pivotal, and take the form of literary journals, small presses and their distributors, internet forums, and cross-institutional relationships. The absence or infection of any of these conduits can delimit the productivity of the biblioecosystem.

Cultural stands—be they gender related, race related, or class related—form analogs, within the target domain of the biblioecological map, of different stratifications of soil type, which can be understood as creative conditions or cultural determinants of a certain literary community. Within these bibliostands, there can exist “canopy dominants,” a climax stage species casting large, sometime debilitating shade because of constricting “crown closure” (Drengson and Taylor 38), yet whose pervasive root systems provide important sub-textual connections. Ageism and locational bias in the literary world are examples of two of many possible canopy dominants within the target domain. The analogical extension of a wildfire could be a manifesto, a bold statement of poetic intent, which creates a large disturbance in established dominant literary stands, and replenishes the conditions for growth.

To conceive of literary texts as plants, and the entire domain of literature as ecosystem, raises important questions about the form and vigour of literary works and the interconnected communities they form. What position does conservation then play, and how can we define stewardship in the context of the literary ecosystem? One begins to see a give-and-take relationship between the source and target domains when we set out to answer these questions, in which literature learns about conservation from the natural sciences, while the sciences learn something of imaginative artistry. In the same way that foresters’ maps of a certain region will enable them to develop a land-management plan, so too can a biblioecological map be used prescriptively, or for pragmatic purposes, to maintain a healthy writing community. One can assess the Prince George literary community, for instance, by mapping the number of books published in various genres, the availability of local publishing, and writerly satisfaction as measured by retention of writers in the area. The conditions for a healthy ecosystem—for example that “the structure of the forest

is based on material and energetic exchanges” (Drengson and Taylor 48)—holds true for the literary community as well. The productivity of a particular biblioecosystem is loosely quantifiable, and the writers, who are the creative species of a particular system, “are limited in varying degrees by the productivity of the system” (48).

Figure 1 presents a biblioecological map of the Prince George poetry community along the conceptual axis of the Nechako and Fraser rivers. While I delineate a healthy intermingling of several bibliostands in this map, I also indicate a monoculture tendency in the bifurcation of gender blocks, as well a small, fragile historical region in which endangered texts seek a dwindling refuge. Again, I stress here the metaphoric nature of this conception, and must emphasize that my goal is to map the literary community as forest, not the other way around. I hope stating this underscores the fact that I am strongly opposed to any insinuation that hegemony is ‘natural’ or ‘ordained’ according to the tenets of social Darwinism; and that this is, above all, a metaphorical construct.

The division of the local writing community along gender lines represents the recent antagonisms in the Prince George literary community. Two noteworthy events that have influenced this state of affairs include what is routinely criticized for being an overly male-dominated or macho reading series called *Post-North* (2007—) and the female-oriented anthology, *Unfurled* (2010); as well as the women’s literary reading, *Twisted Words* (2011).

The 2011 *Post-North* poster depicts an adolescent female subject wearing scant attire who is holding a rifle in a militaristic posture, reproduced three times side by side—both an aggressive and sexual image. The ensuing debate surrounding its appropriateness escalated and expanded into something wholly other, to the point where writers who don’t even live in Prince George, such as Brian Fawcett, began

weighing in on a “Poetry War.” On one side of the divide, several male writers claimed they felt they were being unjustly criticized for their expression of male desire. At *Sweetwater905* arts festival in Rolla, several Prince George writers unveiled a reactionary plan to form a writing club called “The Stallions.”

Before this gender-related conflict reached its apogee in the first half of 2012, the all-female poetry anthology *Unfurled* was published to account for the supposed paucity of female representation in the literary events of the community, and to reverse the perception of Northern BC as being “male territory” (Keahey 13). “What the fuck happened, to land a girl like me here?” Gillian Wigmore writes in “Debbie: Two Things,” a poem that highlights a sense of displacement and disconnection from the community.

These cultural events and publications that made statements about gender had the effect of politicizing the literary community and creating a stark division. They caused writers to assess their position within the larger debate. The claims of organizers and publishers—of censorship on one hand, and male favoritism on the other—are contentious, and the substance upon which they were initially founded became secondary to the reactive discourse proliferating after the fact. In this paper, and for the purpose of my mapping, I highlight the effect of these assertions on how writers relate to the broader social stratifications of the literary community. In the current climate, it is difficult for Prince George writers to avoid a deep consideration of their views on gender as it relates to their own lives and creative work. I know more than one writer who is annoyed that they are compelled to wear their labels so prominently.

In forest ecology, the triumph of any single dominant writing would be analogous to an unhealthy monoculture, as opposed to a sustainable system in which

diversity and continuity are prioritized (Drengson and Taylor 133). In this case, the distance of gender stands creates fragmented monocultures. The area called “passage” is a riparian zone (which are biotic systems alongside creeks or rivers) mapped onto the target domain, where transference and interconnectivity occurs between the gender stands—a conduit through which cultural memes cross and seed in oppositional areas, and where transgender identity has a permanent place.

The diminutive, sidelined historical block indicates another challenge to the health of the Prince George biblioecosystem. The physical distance that separates Northern British Columbia from Europe has translated into an epistemological distance as well, which has severed some of the ancestral links to traditional canonical texts. Colonialism also marginalized traditional stories that are central to aboriginal culture. In this creative thesis, I attempt to address the first issue, by looking back to Greek classical texts for an allusive plotting structure. Hidden underneath the ostensible story of a farmer trying to save his elk from the poisons of development is a retelling of the battle between the Titans and the Olympians from Greek mythology.

In *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*, the elk are named after Titans, and the resource developers are of Olympian heritage. The struggle between Zeus and the Titans went on for ten years—at least according to the popular account drawn by classical poet Hesiod (Graf, 81), and ends with the Olympians (of whom Zeus is leader) taking control of the pantheon. In this novella, the Titans have metamorphosed into elk in the Canadian northwest, and are again warring against Zeus, who has also been transformed, except into the human image of an oil and gas developer. Ares, the god of war, visits the characters in disguise, fomenting rage and promoting conflict. On the biblioecological map, this plot thread enters into the

ecotone where the edge of the historical block meets and intermixes with the other formal categories.

The merger of two domains of being (nature and culture) could be viewed as somewhat fanciful from the point of view of rationalism or logical positivism. Much of western philosophy has typically maintained a division between humans and other life forms (Soper 40), a binary formulation that is reinforced by discourses surrounding Subject/Object and Humanity/Nature (Soper 43). The risk, as I have been made aware through discussion and reading, is that biblioecological mapping might rely on the false assumption that a connection exists between the mutually exclusive domains of language and the forest, the culture of ideas and the physical world. Other ecocritics, many of them not surprisingly poets as well, have been criticized for conflating incompatible categories. Gary Snyder, who describes poetry in terms of a climax ecosystem, might be said to be speaking “merely a metaphor,” and “among intellectuals, Snyder’s analogy would generally be regarded as mere mystification ... language and imagination have come to be defined as realms that are split off from nature” (Bate 247). William Rueckert also despairs of his own analogic method, finding an inability to “go any further” (Rueckert 121); and ecocritics after him seem to have come to accept “the always conceptually mediated quality of our relations to nature” (Soper 72).

Against the labels of categorical foul play or misty-eyed idealism is the vital testimony and self-evident strength of works that cross lines and blend worlds to “deautomatize” the familiar perception. As Edward O. Wilson writes, “the key instrument of the creative imagination is analogy” (Wilson 66). I do not go so far as to claim that, for instance, texts *are* plants. Not for now, at least. What I assert is more along the lines of interdisciplinary scholarship—that methodological tools from

one field can be efficaciously applied to another. This point of view is in keeping with the "deep ecology" desire "to reject many of the dualistic assumptions (body/mind; human/nature; knowing subject/known object) that underlie our traditional world view" (Drengson and Taylor 263). George Lakoff asks, "What kinds of internal structures do mental images have that permit some mappings to work readily, others only with effort, and others not at all?" (Lakoff 231). The way I see it, great writing is, after all, said to originate in a "fertile imagination," and it has historically been an act of inscribing upon non-human substances (first on stone with stylus and paint, later on paper produced by pulp); and so there is, I believe, an analogic compatibility between literature and ecology that has root in language's evolution through inscription on objects from the natural world.

Ecotonal Properties of *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*

On a biblioecological map, *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree* inhabits a literary ecotone: that is, a marginal, diversified space on the edge of established literary stands. The ecotonal properties of my creative thesis are evidenced by its admixture of sociopolitical, psychological, and zoological themes; as well as in formal diversity—the analog in ecological terms would be a zone of biotic diversity where various species of flora and fauna intermingle and differentiate themselves between predominant ecosystems: "the transitional zone between adjacent biotic communities, often with unique nutrients and ecological relationships" (Chalquist 2). Elk, for instance, which congregate by the borders of forests and streams, are ecotonal ungulates (Thomas 388). Jeffery Inkster, in *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*, has had to simulate ecotonal variations in the habitat he controls for his elk.

As a central thread of my creative thesis, I have created what I call a prose poem progression that combines plotting techniques from popular fiction and narratological theory with conventions of the prose poem. By applying this plot-oriented method to a series of prose poems, I am merging the genres of both fiction and poetry in the spirit of the ecotone.

In his monograph, *The Search for Origins in the Twentieth-Century Long Poem*, Joe Moffet concludes that “generally, modernists like T.S. Eliot wish to return to the past to modify and improve the present, [while] postmodernists seek to revise or even repudiate modernist searches for origins” (8). Insofar as my poetic narrative constitutes a quest for origins, I am working within the long poem tradition exemplified by Pound’s *Cantos* and Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, as well as the poetical fictions of James Joyce. However, by projecting a search for origins into the future, and by complicating the narrative through the use of plotting devices, my work is, according to Moffet’s distinction between types of long poem, markedly postmodern in its revisionist trajectory and moments of self-reflexive irony. Combining elements of both modernism and postmodernism is another ecotonal feature of *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*, and tenets of romanticism figure into my creative thesis as well. Rousseau, for example, sees poetry as an expression of the most ancient form of language. In his “Essay on the Origin of Languages,” he speculates that the evolution of spoken and written language followed the path from passionate, figurative, musical—to clear, exact, and cold (296). He goes as far as to claim that, “At first, only poetry was spoken” (284).

As previously mentioned, Viktor Shklovsky’s *Theory of Prose* (1929) has had a significant influence on my creative process. He demonstrates, for instance, how the technique of repetition is fundamental in both the novel and shorter forms like the

Russian tale (30), and how this leads to deceleration of plot, modulating the pace of the story and ultimately its effect on readers. Wisdom is gained by successfully distinguishing between disguised and real people, and solving riddles. Frequently, an animal helper will appear in the story, which in Shklovsky's time became the helpful scientist or the strong man (35). In *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*, it is the animal helper and the ranch hand who play an integral role in the plot twists of my story, and I present to readers a series of characters who might be disguising their real motivation or identity. The plot of the elusive criminal, which is the basic framework of my prose poem progression, is in fact a classic narrative pattern (66) commonly referred to in contemporary narrative parlance as a "whodunit."

My creative decision to compose using hybrid forms is also a response for one thing to what I perceive to be many long poems' failure to cohere, as Pound famously admitted of his *Cantos*. Because of the long poem's traditionally discursive nature, there has been "no need for plot or character development" in the stricter sense (Moffet 3). It is my hope to contribute to the history of poetic prose by applying plotting techniques and composing poetic prose passages that act as condensed chapters. The restrictions on length imposed by the thesis format made conditions favourable for deploying concise forms such as prose poem chapters and expository, fictive journalism. The 100-page maximum on the other hand limited my ability to resolve all the plot threads or to create a fully realized narrative unity. Thus, readers will notice plot holes, questions lingering around an uncertain resolution. Yet plot holes are in fact vital to story telling, much like "tree fall gaps" in a forest which "facilitate the establishment of northward migrating species, potentially providing a pathway for future forest migration in response to recent changes in climate" (Leithead 3). In *biblioecological* terms, textual gaps allow readers

to interpret outcomes for themselves. It is in fact common practice to sacrifice narrative logic to advance the story, as shown by Marie-Laure Ryan's study, "Plot Holes, and Narrative Design," an analysis of narrative from various media that illustrates how plot can break down while still maintaining an illusion of consistency.

Unity does seem to be, however, the ultimate measure of success in the classical paradigm of plotting technique. In *Poetics*, Aristotle writes that, "when some part is transposed or removed" from a properly plotted tragedy, "the whole is disrupted and disturbed" (12). Though my goal is to achieve a high level of structural integration, as per this Aristotelian tradition, I am also working with the meta-narrative of explosive rupture, where the rigid coding implied by formal tradition and airtight plotting are disturbed by a chaotic irrationality symbolized by the bombings.

To incorporate the terminology from George Polti's *The Thirty-six Dramatic Situations* (a popular and influential study of plotting scenarios published in 1921), what I am doing is combining three plot elements: the Revolt, the Disaster, and the Pursuit. The revolt is the protagonist's rebellious action, the disaster is what goes wrong, and then pursuit begins as the main character escapes into the woods to avoid persecution. In a pursuit, the attentions of readers are, according to Polti,

... held by the fugitive alone; sometimes innocent, always excusable, for the fault – if there was one — appears to have been inevitable, ordained; we do not inquire into it or blame it, which would be idle, but sympathetically suffer the consequences with our hero ... In this Situation we feel ourselves, so to speak, accomplices in even the worst of slayings. (26)

The fact that my story explores the notion of complicity is in line with Polti's conception of readerly "guilt by association". As my story unfolds, I incorporate what

Aristotle calls “reversal and recognition” (9) to advance the plot and direct suspicions as to who perpetrated the bombings.

Formalist guidelines have indeed influenced my story-telling technique in *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree*; however postmodern influences such as Donald Barthelme, who subverts narrative structure through self-reflexivity and illogicality, influenced the story in another way. The plot unfolds not only on the level of character and action, but also in the flow patterns of symbolism and antagonistic formal interplay—an element of plotting explored by narratologists like Brian McHale, who has written articles that focus on the segmentary nature of the poetic line, viewing the structures of the poem in terms of metrical units, phrases, line spaces and other gaps in formatting. He argues that these components always contribute fundamentally to the structure of poetic plot. Segmentation works in concert with countermeasurement: whereas segments are structural building blocks that contribute to narrative dynamism on various levels, countermeasurement occurs when “one level or scale is played off against measure at another level or scale” (McHale 17). An imperfect tragedy unfolds on Innisfree ranch, as the accessibility and “automatization” of plot is waylaid by poetic defamiliarization, then reasserted in moments of crisis—a narrative tension created by the measure and countermeasure of discontinuous form.

Employing elements of prose poetry has allowed me to structure the text in blocks, and to capitalize on the unpredictable nature of that form. Through a survey of the form’s history, I have discovered that writers of prose poems the world over have been attracted to it because of its contrarian appeal as a liminal mode of expression not controlled by generic prescription. Traditionally, the prose poem has been viewed as a destabilizing genre, in that it casts doubt on the binary exclusivity of

the categories "prose" and "poetry"(Soucy 53). In her epigraph to *Minotaurs and Other Alphabets*, Nicole Markotić—a noted Canadian writer of prose poems—calls the form "a mythical beast." Later in the collection she writes, "there is no such thing as a prose poem. this has been proven" (37). What Markotić is saying here, I would argue, is that when one really starts investigating its formal properties, the concept of the prose poem breaks apart. Who is to say that a certain prose poem is not in fact micro fiction, or simply free verse without line breaks? It is within the zone of generic and formal slippage that I conceived of my creative thesis.

As part of my background research, I studied several works that belong to the tradition of stories about saboteurs, including *The Secret Agent* by Joseph Conrad (1907). This novel, based on actual events in *fin de siècle* England, concerns a group of anarchists plotting to overthrow the government using explosives. *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, by Edward Abbey (1975), tells the fictional tale of a motley crew of renegades united to sabotage various industrial projects in the American southwest. Another work I studied is *Saboteurs*, by Andrew Nikiforuk (2002), which chronicles several years in the life of Peace Country saboteur Wiebo Ludwig. While *The Secret Agent* portrays the bomber as a demented antisocial individual, *Saboteurs* and *The Monkey Wrench Gang* take a more charitable view to the point of portraying the environmental radicals as modern-day folk heroes. My hope is that *The Plot Line Bomber of Innisfree* will paint a complex picture of people caught up in historical forces largely beyond their control, where ethics is not solely a litigious matter of right or wrong but rather an existential question of why.

As I have shown in this theoretical introduction, the creative attitude that guided my project is similar, at its most essential level, to the inspiration that explorers of the past felt mapping the diverse landscapes of North America. Like

George Mercer Dawson, I owe much of the initial inspiration to my experiences working and travelling in northwestern British Columbia. The research that went into this paper has taken me into the history of several poetic forms, narratology, and ecopoetics—and it has taken an act of mapping to find both a theoretical and creative form capable of containing it all. With biblioecological mapping, I am better able to situate my own creative thesis within a larger tradition, and to comment on the literary community that I am part of here in the North. Working in several different forms and integrating them through the application of narrative strategies derived from both ancient and modern sources has allowed me to pursue the analogic promise contained in zones of biotic diversity, the ecotones, existing on the edges of dominant forest and literary stands.

"Tonight and forever the Wapiti move thru
water hemlock
and bend their necks into the soil of the lower plain."

-Ebbe Borregaard, 1957

Bitumenlite: Tar-lightener technology from the Oil Diamond
Amelioration Centre. Liquid product when contained within oxygen-free
environments. Attains a gaseous state when exposed to air.

Did you hear, my love, oh did you hear
an award for ratting out the bomber
has increased to one-million dollars
I've already submitted your name.

PIPELINE CONTROVERSY EXPLODES

—18 September 2036—

The Can'tadian State Department has sanctioned stage three in Pipe Nexus expansion. The collective announcement came today from the parlepasliamentary committee assessing the project:

“It was a tough decision, but we believe in the case of this particular Gasbro pipeline that the dangers are outweighed by the necessity of increased ethical flow to foreign markets.”

The decision was made public a day after a 1 million litre spill from an older Gasbro pipe on the Squashington border.

The third major east-to-west project of its kind in the past thirty years, Pipe Nexus 3 will extend 16 hundred kilometres from the province of Cowberta through PC Columbia on its way to tanker docks in the testy river valleys of the northwestern coast.

The goal is to facilitate transport of bitumenlite to the rapidly expanded Wenese/ Can'tadian Processing Alliance Outlet overseas and the South Polar Civilization Initiative. Pipe Nexus 3 is a supposed advancement in high-

pressure transport, and the new pipes are capable of sending three times as much bitumenlite as traditional conduits: approximately two million barrels a day. The 8 billion dollar project—which never received much opposition due to a media gag—will commence construction in May, 2037.

Opponent Jim Rutherford of Animal Alliance has called the proposed pipeline “an idiot attempt to trapeze through one of the most treacherous and fragile environments on the planet.”

Cassandra Jeremiah of *Skeptic City TV*, on the other hand, calls the project a necessary step towards avoiding a tenth consecutive recession: “We are, in this day and age, capable of performing these operations much less invasively. There is no reason why human technology and the natural world cannot merge through integrated systems co-operation.”

Visit *Troutsource* frequently over the days and months ahead for the latest developments in this story. As an independent news source, “we release the gag and let silenced tongues wag.”

In the district county of Enderbee, farther into the mountain corridors than the town of Byzantium, on my thousand-acre elk ranch called Innisfree—that's where you will find me, Jeffery Inkster, with the elk I serve and the elk who serve me.

Mnemosyne I and Hyperion I were the first animal settlers in Enderbee. Me, the first human settler, I am the humble elk servant with alfalfa feed. All I ask of the elk is their velvet antlers, and all they want from me is food, a fair ration of freedom, and the worship they deserve.

The animal tourists always want to know about predation on elk and elk mating practices. They want to know, for instance, how a Hyperion licks a Mnemosyne from croup to withers before mounting. I like to tell the animal tourists that elk know much more about foreplay than most peoples. As for predation, well, that will most likely come up later on in this tour.

Forever be me happy, happy in the district of Enderbee, on my thousand-acre elk ranch called Innisfree. People started calling me Mister Happy Man, and coming to the farm, and now I give tours, and I sit on my newly finished porch, and I tell visitors about processes involving the land. Such as the powers of controlled daydreams, how someone can nap before they go down to the river, and imagine fish tails forming a doily pattern as they doze. Of course they'll never know who's going to catch the fish when they wake up and go down to that river, but they will know where to place the silver spoon when they dine with Titans.

Imagine an elk, I might say, who dolphin-leaps over the counter at an emerald-hued café. You can tell by the falling-human-shaped velvet antlers of a second elk beside the soda machine that things are a certain way, that somebody like me, who was born in a wet, readerly city in the lower Northwest, can land in a rancher's life.

Some people have a harder time with the imagining, others find more difficulty in the doing, but at Innisfree ranch those actions are one, the divisions are trying to close, which is a beautiful, beautiful thing to see.

During the halfway break of the most recent tour, two kids came running through the pines, gripping a sizeable rack, each by a tine. When they saw the rest of the group waiting by the wagon, they did a one-handed bugle—bugling being one of the lessons we teach on the wagon tour. The antlers that weren't harvested for velvet, and that aren't gnawed through by mice, show up as lucky finds on the spring tours. I showed the kids where to fit the rack on a big hive of antlers in the middle of the fence out front. Other antlers—there are more than we know what to do with—stick from each post around the forest and river and field. The alfalfa tractor has also got antlers above its grille.

The sun has spirals of laughing youth twirling off its centre, with a proud Elkhead in the middle, or so you can imagine. The elk bugle louder and the children scream songs of play with the same increasing solar urgency. The sun is so strong, even here in the north. The porch gets nuked when there isn't enough venting between the mountains. Don't know how many times I've had to refinish it. Nostradamus predicted lots of major stuff, but I don't think he ever claimed to know the weather, because he reasoned that only Chaos knows that. And I would have to agree with him.

As a child in the 1980s I saw the specialists firing elk nets from a herding helicopter. These zoologists were busy leashing Olympic elks on hillsides to better study how much of each shrub they chomp per square foot of brush. That's where I learned to get the wild behind a fence.

Enderbee county, being near the foot plains of the Rockies-Always-the-Rockies, was a good, the best, choice for the farm, with its streams for habitat and irrigation, its wetness and heat.

We did slaughter the elk for a time during the Flesh Wasting Disease scare, when the trade borders snapped shut, and we still sacrifice one percent of the herd annually for the tour meals.

Ceased naming my elk Mnemosyne and Hyperion during times we were slaughterers for the FWD cull. Only so much of this slaughter a person can take before they start to feel like the bad guy in a hacker movie, which is not something we like to think about too deeply on Innisfree. Still, I sometimes catch myself assessing the meatiness of one of my ranch hand's ribs, like artsy boy's, but he's a slim one.

Yup, people with problems come to Innisfree. Don't know where I got all my wisdom, but it's a sought-after resource, it sure is, and I reckon the magic's in the antlers. Visitors sit on my porch and I play for them a number on my hurdy-gurdy, which is pretty much a fiddle in a box with a handle that, when rotated, cranks the bow over the strings.

There are times when winds fell what appear to be the sturdiest trees, times when the roses shake with wasps, times when the leaves and dust spin up in whirligigs of grit. Despite the day's condition, and no matter how depressing the big trucks with their demonmachine headlight glare and grinning grille, the galvanized egos, and the destroyed land, I will always tell the visitors through my thorny white beard *Try to just keep lovin. Keep lovin all da time*. It's the only song I ever wrote for the gurdy in fact. Called "Keep Lovin All Da Time". Turn the crank in the box and crank out the song of love like ore.

When I crank the gurdy, a Mnemosyne will come trotting to the porch with her bib of ratty chest hair wet from the pond. The horns of a Hyperion turn in the bull pen, and the globes on his forehead absorb me. I brush my fingers through brown fur. Feel wet hair rub against my shoulder. Healing to touch the elk like that, and to smell the beastliness of their fur.

What if PC Columbia and Cowberta had never redrawn their borders in the 2020s, if them there protesters had managed to stop the Enbridge pipeline from going through in the teens? And the Can'tadian government upheld the moratorium on tankers along the northwest coast. Well, then the new Gasbro high pressure line would never have reached the table today. On the other hand, Enderbee county would be but a speck of dust in our imaginations.

You can see how Enderbee, because of its bittersweet beginnings, came to ask about how things come together, because it seems like people, circumstances, objects, places, ungulates, mice—can be sometimes very much alike, or related, or even painfully distant from each other. Like the story of Enderbee's history, which sort of just happened during the process of redrawing the border between PC Columbia and Cowberta, when the two provinces parted ways with the creation of a huge walled border. The history of Enderbee as Commons started when one of the surveyors, who died by fungus-gas exposure at a morel processing plant not long ago, poor fella', forgot to correct his GPS coordinates when he was working on borderland reformation. You see, the military throws in a variable of something like seven metres into the satellite grid at all times and, in order to correct your readings to get the real universal mobile coordinates, you have to wait a week until the military releases them online. Well, the surveyor forgot to correct his points, that angelic dumb-ass, and so an area of about one hundred square miles on the west side of the Rockies-Always-the-Rockies lacked definition within a necessary legal framework. That particular land title survey was as a consequence tossed out, and the old land sectioning map was applied. But the surveyors had screwed up back in the day too. On their maps were several missed areas, gaps between Dominion Land Survey grids, which fell outside the metes and bounds. Imagine one set of flawed blueprints pressed against another, it was that confusing for everyone involved. The land was declared Commons, because it was not in Can'tadian nature to fight over a meager section, which also solved several other associated land claims, allowing a whole bunch of different people to sign the most strange and new wave treaty of self-governance ever negotiated. That's Enderbee, one of those areas which is technically under the jurisdiction of both provinces, but is owned and overseen by the original First Nations and Allies as a heritage experiment. Daft Society Dodgers and other back-to-the-landers started moving to Enderbee. The mix-up became the happy truth for many, though local antlers are still locked over some discrepancies. Like sometimes they try to tell me that, according to PC agricultural law, I am not permitted to farm a native species like Wapiti, but I respond that I'll take the complaint to court. Fact is, my case is a strong

one, the Olympic elk isn't native to Enderbee, it's a coastal species. And if that argument isn't good enough, well, I can argue that I should be beholden to Cowbertan law, if any, in which case it would be a moot point, because you can breed animals like this there. In other words, we get away with stuff here in Enderbee.

Dear Gasbro,

Deny what is said herein at your peril. The animalpeople are giving Gasbro four weeks to get out of our mountain lands. The damage you will begin witnessing tonight is but a taste of what is to come if you continue building through the traditional lands of Enderbee. The time has come for this county to once and for all ban development in the sacred lands overseen by Allies and Firsts. We will not stop forcefully resisting until you are either absent or dead. Have you heard of Meech? In our mountain language this means Skull Crusher. If you do not stop drilling in our land we will introduce you to Meech. We will collapse your skulls in this machine of rock and we will juice your brains and eat them in front of your families.

(Submitted anonymously to The Enderbee Endtimes)

Artists and inventors, fleeing demons or pursuing angels, have found a home in Enderbee county. Like my neighbour, Memily, who's an abstract expressionist painter, and grows lettuce in the summer, then blanches it along with other plants for the winter reserves. Talking to her, you will fall into colour, into all the colours of her garden and art, the landscape colours of her eyes. With her special someone, Dan-the-Man, she makes art instead of kids, industrial art, which has recently taken a political turn. Such as the escape capsule, called "The Mattson Rocket", that looks like an old, compact rocket ship out back of their converted storehouse home. It's got steel runners and circular windows, stripes of old machine red over top of the riveted white. And an antenna sticking up from the tip. A nostalgic 2001 look. Memily and her partner built the capsule just in case there is no land left after all the development—a pod to save them, to take off into the skya.

Sure, there are divisions, cliques, and tokenisms, and all that stuffy stuff of small populations in the rough, but, beyond that, the bonds are tight, and we help each other out. Like Memily will come round up the elk with me, and I will irrigate her garden when her and Dan-the-Man go north. Memily will trade her blanched crops for some of the jarred fish that the First Nations bring, I'll share alfalfa and hay. Based on barter, we've gotten along really good here.

I guess we all thought we really knew each other in Enderbee. But one of us in the community is really good at keeping a secret, and secrets are blowing our bonds apart.

I yank a squealing Hyperion IV by his ear tag to the Other barn. I lead him over to the pillory and get his head in the hole, then hobble his legs. Then bring the pillory bar down and fasten the iron hasps.

GASBRO REACHES OUT TO BOMBER

—12 October 2036—

A leak sprung from a major Gasbro natural gas pipeline has been called an act of terrorism by company executive Chase Beefrude in a press release Friday. Beefrude, a major player in Cowbertan oil diamond operations, told the scrum of reporters outside the main headquarters in Canned Cougar that he wishes to negotiate with the perpetrator of the crime.

“We want the individual responsible for the bombing to speak to us. It is our hope that we can make a deal with them face to face, and try to understand their concerns.”

Insider oil diamond reporter Andrew Coppernickel points out that the timing of the sabotage—with the Gasbro Pipe Nexus 3 high pressure project recently okayed in Parlepasliament and slated for construction within the next two years—hints at a poten-

tial warning bomb.

“The culture of the bomb is strong,” Coppernickel told *Troutsource*. “This most recent blast, far enough from workers not to cause them harm but close enough to instill fear, has all the hallmarks of a strategic warning charge.”

Several sources say that bombers are being financed by green angel investors from Lowcalifornia.

The bombing comes a week after a threat letter was mailed to Gasbro headquarters. The letter detailed several of the bomber’s complaints, including “the corporate devil’s intrusion upon traditional land.”

The violent language of the threat letter has created a wave of fear in the industry, with a temporary halt called on the construction of several lines in the area.

Samson asks me, have I heard about what the Carlyle family been up to. Blockading Kelly Road. Mad as all hell about the prospectors. Bombs and blockades. Shit is going down.

I heave up a wet hay block, which nags my bad shoulder. And the sides of my hands are so itchy, like I wore a horsehair glove or something. Makes me irritated.

Well, so am I! Mad, I mean. These resource folk don't even know how to tie a frigging gate knot when they use our roads. Lost a few head of elk last year. They're starting to turn me into an angry old man!

Probably using all the dynamite missing from Bunion mill, as an exclamation mark.

What's this about the missing dynamite, Samson?

Heard it on the radio. Nitroglycerine too, from a copper mine.

On Byzantium radio? I never heard that.

Well, it was on the radio, Jeffery. Damn sure it's the Carlyles who are the ones rattling the Gasbro operations.

You are an old investigator dog. Young artsy egg farmer like you, hah.

You can solve things just by looking yourself. They are trying to pin this on left-wing radicals, but what if it's someone pretending to be them? Like someone trying to scam the award money.

Whoever they are, they're going to do something really really, *really really really* destructive one of these days. Dynamite and nitroglycerine is one thing, but you never know what a bomber can get their hands on these days. Listen, Samson, I appreciate you helping out extra with the elk tour today. The leaves are yellow and brown, the berries are anger-red, the streams are fearful cold, the geese are vanished in the skya. Have some birch syrup to take back to your feathered palace. You give much of your time as a volunteer ranch hand. And thank you for the eggs.

Thanks, Inkster! And guess what, I just sold all my eggs to a man who came by on his way to Florida. He really likes my special eggs.

Great to hear, Samson.

He's a good ranch hand, that Samson, and he stands up for the land, but does he really have the right to complain about all the proposed development, considering he didn't even vote in the last election? And what is that strange rash he has underneath his ears? Like the one on my hands.

The antlers are seventeen weeks mature, pulsing in their soft, blood-filled, pre-calcified state. I put the bar of the saw to the base of the mauve horn and press the trigger, begin to slice it off. My earplugs muffle the sound of the Hyperion's scream.

With artsy boy in the li'l town of Byzantium
When we went to the stone bank
To deposit the elk profit to the elk coffers
We passed the fawn shop
Saw an elk mount on the wall above a stereo
The fusion of ferocity and finesse that is Wapiti
Artsy boy exclaimed elk
I replied that it wasn't any elk
Just a mount, a mock-up of life.
But its hollowed corpse, Mr. Inkster
looks fierce and bold
Looking alive means something, doesn't it?
To which I said yes, part of the soul
Is in the fur and skin
And nails and teeth, but the rest
Is gone
To somewhere below.

Sawed one of the antlers off, then the other. I put the two velvet antlers into a metal bucket, then bring them over to the processing unit, and release them into the grinder hole, which crushes it into a blood pulp. Turn up the antibiotic feed before calling it a night.

Sometimes me and the ranch hands hike deeper into the valleys beyond the valleys where the headwaters of Lethe bubble and froth and spit forth from the mantle. We canoe together there on a rare hot summer night. The most recent time artsy boy wanted to take footage, so he came along, even though he is new to Innisfree. Cliffs are high along the sides of Lethe where it gets to the headwater area. When the moon comes out, we dock on slabs of rock on the wall of the river and we eat some meat of elk, and we drink wine of dandelion. By the light of beetle wood fires we paint on the walls of Lethe in the images which were first found here. We paint all night long: BoatElks and BoatHumans and ElkHumans and Elkboathumans, all in a rather wild form which makes sense in an all-night wall painting festival. And so we do what the elk want in return for the life of their antlers.

Then I go get another elk, lead it into the Other barn. Repeat procedure. With all 440, that's about 900 velvet antlers. Grind them up, dry the pulp, and then send it down to Canned Cougar to get processed into packaged powder supplements and tested by the CFDA.

JEFFERY INKSTER'S MAGIC ANTLER POWDER

Harden Your Cartilage

Give Your Muscles And Brain More Torque

Turbo Charge Your Immune System

Eradicate Pain To Get A Strut On Your Dreams

Feel Fresh As Wild Tiger Lily Nectar

Become The Bedroom Beast With Zero Flaccidity

With Ol' Jeffery Inkster's

Velvet Antler Powder

The Ancient Oriental Tradition, Alive In The Northwest.

(Distributed by Super Food and Available at *Innisfree.ca*)

Bottles of 20 Pouches for 20 buckaroos)

"What might feel like just a minor discomfort, or a normal lack of energy, will, if left unremedied, escalate to more serious problems involving pain and torpor later in life. Taking elk powder elixir each week is proven to resolve slow-growing joint issues, and amend the lack of gallop in one's life."

Samson has taken it upon himself to set out and film the many tributaries of Lethe to show the people what a pipe spill would threaten, and his enthusiasm for a renewed program of elk worship is making us all happier. When he visited neighbour Memily to wish her a happy thirty-ninth birthday as I suggested, he fell promptly into colour with her, and they talked about art all night. Maybe Dan-the-Man's nose snuffled underneath the upstairs sheets in jealousy, but probably not, because jealousy hardly exists in a beautiful, alternative place like this. Artsy boy now pens a letter to Memily inspired by their conversation.

Memily, I have fallen into colour with you, just like Inkster predicted I would. As the years pass on through Innisfree, I almost feel like I am becoming an oldster who needs to keep sharing his thoughts otherwise they might disappear. Having explored the depths of Lethe I can truly say there exists a mysterious connection between plants and animals, the elemental world, and the human. You see, we contain all of that, and it contains us. We are editing our Lethe footage now. I just adore images. And sounds. And words. Especially of Lethe: where the river braids, and the light strikes, there are currents of black, currents of chrome, currents of pewter and of coal—braids of dark tintage. It's like the substance of mythological dreams at our fingertips. Amazing how the patterns work, coming through the dark springs in the ground from where Lethe flows. It becomes more full of nutrients the farther it gets from the source, and it's strange to see the blooms of algae along the banks of clear water. We are guiding the film, but the process is somehow beyond us. It works its way through the images. Going over the footage is trying to feel where those patterns might occur. We are showing how forms decompose when the wide angle is broken into thousands of tiny points of view. How unexpected forms arise, bob up out of those rhythms. There are many talented artists and scientists seeing through, objectively, to those rhythms. I am really glad to have met you, Memily, you have a penetrating sense, I'd even say that you somehow feel, or feelingly conceive, very deeply, and it comes across in how you do your art, with such colour that one falls into ... could this be love? I don't want to piss off Dan-the-Man. What you have between you must last. And the life that you and others in Enderbee fashion from the territory is inspiring, and really, it's going to be the only way ... gardening, canning, reusing, helping, seeing, collaborating, and being sufficient unto ourselves, to live, as the superstructure comes a-tumbling down. Crazy for some to have thought this century would be the end of history. It's merely the beginning.

We fill elk-skin bladders in a tributary of Lethe called Microchip. These waters help us remember times from before. Yes, sometimes this makes us experience drelkams in which stuff from a supposed past appears, like the Greek gods coming as fleas in the cuffs of the early land agents, and on boats where they stowed in European books damp from the paddle's spray. We remember how Titans transformed into animals, and how they are threatened again by the Olympians of industry. We remember, but we forget. We remember that Zeus was a resource developer and that Mnemosynes and Hyperions threatened that regime with the tradition they still have saddled on their backs from the times before the Olympians were in power. And we forget. How tangled are the myths that inform this place.

To Can'tadians who have time in their busy schedules to read,

National park is not enough to stop this pipeline.

*The pipe which keeps going the pipe which goes through and
around and through and around.*

Jagged mountain, fanged gorge.

I am the Hypnotist. You will meet me later in the narrative.

They came after my poetry too.

Your plan, I wrote of it long before you came.

*Your name is Meech. You will find yourself later on in the
wilderness.*

If only they knew the underpinnings of their sorry nature.

This is where the imported spooks meet the indigenous myths.

(Published on a broadside stapled to telephone poles around Byzantium)

Elk? Unspeakable combinations of things, or what I've read are called ecotone-loving mammals, belonging to those groups of plant or animal that thrive within hazy green brackets: pasture/forest; pasture/creek; aspen/pine. Those sorts of transition places.

Some on full alert, others sedate (especially on nights I put the sleep licks in their trough). Like all herd animals, elk express their uniqueness by the way they occupy so many independent spaces in a field, all in different positions. Some licking a hoof, some with moss forked on their antlers to make them look bigger. Some presenting profile, others flank, one peeing while another sips from that stream. The wide view of the elk pasture gets quite amusing.

Sometimes coyotes slink down the side of a draw from the uplands in an attempt to get access to the smorgasbord of prey. Reminds of what mayor Timothy said of the pipeline bombers, that they're like Wile E. Coyotes, sneaking around to bomb the Road Runner. However, despite being strong-legged like a Road Runner, able to kick in a coyote brain or frighten a fox, elk tend to leave their young in frozen hiding positions while they attempt a deer-like distraction.

Elk adaptation was a little wonky, I'd have to say, like when the males grimace and flash their teeth, which would make sense if they still had long teeth like they used to hundreds of thousands of years ago, but it just looks silly in this day and age. To be frank, they look like grinning donkeys when they do that.

Sometimes I think of it as an elk machine that was made through predator choosing, through disease choosing, and finally through landscape choice: the elkclockmaker called time and the drelkams that are its brood.

Sometimes I lie around with the herd in the wintertime by the shrunken streams and powdered reeds, wearing my snow pants and my down jacket. The elks would choose this life, because at least, though it is a life of bondage, they have an opportunity to breathe the air. And I am not sure they know otherwise. Prey are idealists.

I was tight-fisted about my surface rights, just like all of us in Enderbee were, except for maybe the Carlyles, what with their shield-engraved loyalty to progress. But me, damn right I refused when Gasbro said they wanted to put a well on my property according to the mineral rights. Would *you* let a stranger put a furnace in the middle of *your* living room? But progress did what progress would, a craving arm that can reach around a period of sobriety and regain its grip, so the plans of progress find their way around my ranch, one pipe, two pipe, and now some high-pressure thing proposed. Innisfree had transformed into an island amidst squid-laced pipes and wildcat wells. I complained to City Council about the Gasbro bloody bastard proposal, just like everybody else did. Investigators from the Anti-Eco-Terrorist Squad are poking around these days. Even in the woods this feeling of maybe cameras hidden in pinecones watching. Some people around here, like Samson, have been told by the doctors that they suffer from paranoia, and now he has to take little brain eggs that the weird roosters lay. City sickness has infected Enderbee. I can sense the uptightness welling up in my own raised fists, which I don't like, don't like at all.

It all got weird, real weird, after I told people at the City that a person named Mars Ares, nice as butter but strange as grasshopper, had been coming around to investigate the farms and entering our houses like a companionable but not entirely trustworthy stranger. The Oil and Gas Commission, the police, could tell me nothing about this supposed land agent, or his operation. Mars Ares didn't exist, according to their records.

Yup, loads of suspicious people in these parts.

—Samson Huckleberry—

Summary: Organic egg farmer and artistic ranch hand. Keeps all his chickens in a "hen palace". A bit crazy.

Description: Looks like *The Littlest Hobo* who never grew up.

Aliases: "artsy boy", "the eggstatic juggler"

After our most recent sip from the Microchip tributary, around the time the pipeline bombings started, a memory became clear to me of the early twenty-first century. When the professional hypnotist came to Byzantium. I remember his loose sweater, his thin wrists shrunk like they'd been butch once. Like an Olympian getting over a sickness, or something, was the man with the strange name I cannot quite place. Had the skills to get the audience to make action out of their emotion. People with interesting skills like the hypnotist's are always coming to town, but they often don't stay long because rural life doesn't offer enough expanding room or something. Some leave a real impression on the town, though, and I will always remember that hypnotist's shows, how he held sway over all the people in the barroom, how he made ... us ... do and say those things. His name, it started with an M ... One of his hypnotic techniques was having us repeat the words *left margin to right margin right margin to left margin*, over and over again. Now it always comes back to me, and I think it does to others who went to the show. In the same way a popular song leaves a permanent mark on our minds.

But life is full of important realizations that in the moment seem life-altering, and even those world-exploding lessons are soon forgotten.

I was tossing alfalfa pellets into the eating troughs, then did the antlers—my last task to perform by daylight. When I was heading into the farmhouse for the night, wiping bits of blood off my hands with a rag, a beetle-black station wagon had crept up the shale driveway, parked by the welcome sign that says “Greekings, Elksters!”. A person who looked like he wasn’t from here, not from anywhere near close to here because of his fancy overcoat, whisked briskly through the mist.

Hello.

Oh, hello.

Shook his hand. Gloves were golden leather, wranglers. The grip frail yet tight.

What was that noise coming from back there, Mr. Inkster? Sounds like someone’s molesting a duck.

Pointed back into the hut where I’d just come from. Frost blew from our nostrils and the whorls shook hands between us.

Just the elk making the noises they do, Mars.

He gave me a shadowed stare from under the rim of a hat that looked more like an ancient helmet, pleated zinc, because of a synthetic kind of lustre. He stomped the shank of his boots on each stair, exposing socks that had trident prints on them.

Listen, I’m a straight up guy. Here to ask some questions about the bombings. I’ve been doing the rounds of Byzantium and the greater area of Enderbee, collecting stories. That’s what I do, I find the real story out of the fakes. I’m also here to collect my dues.

Nothing but real stories here on Innisfree, and in the wider county of Enderbee.

Offered him some coffee. He was suddenly not the tough guy anymore. His talk became soothing. He reminded me of a sleepy bird. Nice as a lazy afternoon on a garden patio. Nice as butter, nice as pie, nice as a cream soda spritzer. The more he spoke the more he became familiar from a long time ago, but changed somehow too. Mars Ares.

How long have you owned—

—20 years, I replied. Easy, easy answers. Questions so simple their repetition makes me doze.

Now, Jeffery, I am going to give you this bag, an old fashioned duffle bag, and I want you to put it somewhere you just won’t remember. Okay?

Yes, Mars Ares.

Now, good, that’s under the floorboards. Now, here (he snapped his fingers a couple times and repeated something under his breath). You have prepared the elk powder for us?

Yes, lots of elk powder for you, Mars Ares.

Good boy. Now give me all the powder.

Yes, Mars Ares.

And start trying to saw their antlers soon as they're pushed, K.

Yes Mars Ar—but... wait a sec now, who the...

He showed me a picture of an elk chewing on flowers.

Forget. Forget. That's it. Forget. The bomb, Jeffery, it went off two days ago, near your property. You evacuated. Mr. Inkster, let's hear about it. Mr—

The sounds of the Swainson thrush in the evening is the most musical bird song you could imagine. Thrilling is the music before nightfall coming in through the windows of the farmhouse. The winds out of the skya, with the bird song from twilight's design in the trees. Some folks around here, when I say "skya", they say, "*Huh*. What?" They say, "you said something ... did you say Gaia? What does that mean, Mr. Inkster?" I shake my head. I say things funny from being with the elk for so long. What I really said was "in the sky", with an accent following it. Sometimes I use an a, or it sounds like I do, on the end. My mom's side were from Constantinople. Accentuate funny. I don't know what they mean by Gaia. I said skya!

—Dan Assange—

Summary: *environmental website designer. Works on mysterious global contracts. Came up from Squashington, which is squished under PC Columbia. Nature's Common Law spouse of Memily.*

Description: *Washboardy stomach, blocky head.*

Aliases: *Dan-the-Man, Big Guy, Warbler (web ID), Chunksister (web)*

Well, maybe I have seen an elk eating flowers before, but only once, all those petals flapping out between its giant rat-like front teeth—its furry neck craned from one patch of flowers to another—Wild Lupines, Nodding Trilliums, Slender Lady's Tresses—the flowers turning into their common names then their scientific names, right out of the plant book— *Lupinus Perennis*, *Trillium Cernuum*, *Spiranthes Lacera Gracilis*—then lying again as plain petals on the grass. The elk came close enough, but I could see no number tag on its ear, it was no Hyperion, it was a free elk, maybe a son of the Hyperion and Mnemosyne breeding stock, its head lowered so its world-reflecting eye was parallel to my own two. I work so hard being lazy on the ranch (elks pretty much look after themselves) that I don't have the most exciting dreams when I do call it a night, that's why last night's was so strange, how the elk chewed dandelions and then the colour of the flower absorbed the head of the elk in a halo. In the drelkam, the whole elkhead was moving slow, aglow. That's when I heard the voice of the elk—like Hank from the baseball field. Hypnotized I felt by that chew-chewing jaw, that up-and-down outfielder motion ... "mmm, there are numbers in these flowers, mmm" and chewed more, swinging its neck and antlers from flower to flower, "mmm, left margin to right margin right margin to left margin ... there are numbers in these flowers, mmm, great huge numbers, left margin to right margin, numbers too big to work with, right margin to left margin ... keep getting lost in these deep numbers, mmm, and forgetting the fact that my blivets hurt, that my numbers hurt that my stumps are cut and bleeding ... but there are numbers and there are bombers and there are pendulums of love in these flowery margins. And there is pain." The elk buck-tooths its words...

I wake up. My pillow is wet from tears and saliva.

It does make their antlers funny forked, cutting them all off like that, don't you think, Mr. Inkster?

Suddenly the elk appraise me differently over morning feed, with pained squints and distrust.

—Cheryl Hill—

Summary: *Cross-dresser and recently performer. Lives by the lake zhe calls Naked Walden.*

Description: *Zhe has dogs and geese and goes out on the highway and walks kilometres and kilometres dressed in pink ballerina drag.*

Aliases: "Cottage Muffin", "Thoreau's Fantasy"

Hey Inkster, wondering if you would mind coming over 'ere (Artsy boy has what he calls his "Super 8" pointed at me again. He's wearing clam diggers and old-style loafers). Come on, I'm going to film you by the alfalfa.

Wants to film me throwing some feed into the troughs, the thing being the magnificent sky giving the look he wants. Falling alfalfa through the rays like it was the Euphrates and this was a sun initiation.

Cry some real Hollywood tears in front of that *Gone With The Wind* sunset, says he.

Samson has a way of twisting my arm, bringing out the media clown in me. Find myself speaking all sorts of words when he films. That really aren't like me. Like I'm playing the part of an elk farmer. This artsy boy sure has managed to stir things up at Innisfree, coming from the media soak of the Big Smoke, as he did. He's a hard working young man, but he gets cheeky and overconfident sometimes. The threats from the bombers are really rousing him.

You're holding strong against those Gasbro bastards. You have for years. You are the leader, the fearless leader of Innisfree, if not of all Enderbee. Now hold up the alfalfa, Inkster. And tell us what it's all about.

Well, if you haveta know, this here is alfalfa, an Arab-named crop which we grow on Innisfree. Means king. The king of plants. There. Now we haveta go put some more fence up where the rutting Hyperion have torn it apart. And get the salt licks. Turn off that infernal gun camera. This is no time for gurdy and games.

Hold it up. Hold it up to the sun. One more time.

Mnemosyne XXVI and Hyperion IV follow my hand cupping the alfalfa wistfully, their snouts jumping about.

An elk projection for others to see? Come, my tourists, come to the elk farm and ride the carriage through the hills of Innisfree. Elk will drag all your worries away and make you happy like me. Give me a break ...

BOMBING NO LAUGHING MATTER?

25 June 2037—*Troutsource Art*

In art news related to the bombings, an international satellite in Free Space has managed to perform a language MRI of the pipeline plot, though the location remains scrambled due to Enderbee's hazy coordinates. The iterated text translation of the bomber's actions came out as prose poetry in the satellite decoder.

Gravy To Overthrow the Cheese Curds, a radical humour cyber NGO, has posted the poetic interpretations of the industrial sabotage on their decipherment page. *Pipe Watch*, an industry security watchdog that employs ten thousand pipe observers, has now also hired a team of Harvard and Sorbonne-educated poetry scholars to decode the prose poem progression that the satellite scan is picking up.

"The sequential nature of the poem,"

said *Pipe Watch* think tank director Derrida Bloom, "makes the form recall a pipeline itself, with a plot that goes through in a gush of symbolism."

It is *Pipe Watch*'s hope that this "prose poem progression," once inter-preted, will mean something, namely the revelation of the bombers' identity and location. Though Derrida Bloom remains mystified about any stable interpretation thusfar.

The anti-hero, as we can tell by the first prose poem in the progression, is attempting to lie still as s/he waits for the moment to strike.

Follow this visualized interp-retation of the prose poem on the *Pod-view* feature on the *Troutsource* website. Your source for undiluted reality, the wilderness of perception, well spring of revived senses.

Sun still sets in Enderbee not orbital thought. Red navigation beacons across on Scylla ridge valley south. Charge in hand click tiny green light octanitrocubane initialize signaler. Retreat back counting GPS metres away through the animal paths through the plant paths through the reptilian to the ancient the ancient mind to emerge. Now beating deep heart, press button, key to ignite button to blast what is forward. A moment of hesitation. 2026AD, 2027AD, 2028AD ... 2037 BC. Bird noise. Bird peeps. Left margin to right margin. Calm. Future. Prison. Manacles. Ignition must wait. Retreat. Patrol copter coming. Return on down the stem of the Iron God's flute. The Bronze Tree's roots. Boreal camouflage. Charybdis ridge north above quaint sleepy Byzantium along wall of survivor lilacs three kilometres up ridge. Smile of ancient monks of China grimace of sour Christian elect. Worldly inklings fragrant path into ferment of autumn berries gorse and gargantuan leaves of cow parsnip. Know the animal paths back-of-hand known. Hunchwalk over mesa. Moment not precise, off by a nano-fraction. Endangered cedar spirits uncorked. Western dragons slain. Lizards paralyzed in the deserts of law. Eastern dragon engorging a cross. Hero's work done. Hunter's work done. No past. No future. Story and fact collated. Twilight between worlds. Pegasus meets Moose. Toward the pipe, the pipe by the north peak of Charybdis ridge. Blue spruce forest Engelmann eccentric. Above town drenched in prophetic oily shadow toward the pipe. Toward the pipe. Destroy what is forward.

Just about one week before the first elk miscarriage and the bombing ... while fixing fence and hoping to get a glimpse of any saboteurs in the bush, I spotted what at first I saw as two frumpyish gals emerge from a rusty pick-up, each in black and red plaid and work pants and gum boots. One with a joint between their lips. Didn't recognize it was Cheryl Hill because zhe wasn't prettied up in drag—but more of a tomboy outfit, which was even more confusing than zher usual crosshatch ways. Zhe and zher friend were shoveling gravel into the back of their pickup—grind of shovels on wet stones—apparently poaching Gasbro gravel, because that was near the new right-of-way. The joint magically disappeared when the transtomboys saw me approach, but I told them not to worry, I wouldn't snitch to border patrol.

I asked them, are your husbands home making soup?

Ha ha. Oh, you are so funny, Cheryl chuckled.

What are tom dykes doing out in pipe land, if you don't mind me asking. And what's the gravel for?

Someone is paying us to poach this gravel for them. Good money for a little grunt work.

And the less gravel it will be to go into that wound they're stabbing through to the coast.

Oh yes. The pipeline. We're going to dyke the pipe.

Lesbos them Gasbros?

Perhaps, but what's it to you? What do you know about female desire, please, Inkster? You are the only farmer without a wife in the Hellenic world.

Cheryl's friend stuck her shovel in the gravel hard. Yeah, zhe said.

I have to make a long *hmmm*, like I'm chewing the challenge over, even though the answer's a cinch.

Seeing to a woman's desire, you see, I say out the corner of my beard, is like tending to several beach fires at the same time. You have to find a fire fighter's understanding of the erotic flame, also the arsonist's finesse, to keep the many fires burning together towards a blaze.

Hey, not bad, elk daddy. Cheryl's friend seemed satisfied with my answer.

Keep lovin' all da time, remember now.

I winked at Cheryl, nodded, then kept following the perimeter of the fence, thinking how lively life in Enderbee is, how some of the openness that comes with the city influence is making the country just plain more fun. Some don't like the new sex talk and sarcasm, but I find it a funny alternative to innocence.

And I had something else to mull over now too: how I saw what looked like a pipe bomb sticking out from under the back seat of their pickup truck. Gotcha, I think.

—The Carlyle family—

Summary: *won a two-million dollar lottery in the '20s, but blew it all on expensive booze and retrofitting doodads for their eighty-some collector vehicles. Own and operate what some call a "greasy" refurbishing business somewhere in the full section boonies.*

Description: *snotty children, velour riding pants, toothbrush stashes.*

Aliases: *"The Car Family", "Thaaat House"*

Summary of Summaries: *These are some of us suspicious people of Enderbee and the write-ups I do to keep illiteracy at bay. Are the people out of jobs the ones who are pissed off, or is it the people who like their lands so much, or is it Firsts, who have seen the damage develop from the beginning?*

Who done it ...

Nobody likes to be infiltrated, occupied, run through by metal conduit. So really, maybe the question should be not, "Who done it?" but, "Who didn't do it?"

Midnight iris open, planet conscious. Farmhouse window frames field. On the wing, nighthawk swallows flying ants out in my pastures. Lit pink-orange and panther black. Moon rays dramatize the willows where the elk forage. In the foothills behind, gas stacks flare their excess in yellow chemo honey. What out that frame do my tired eyes conjure or see—a three-legged, fork-headed thing walking underneath the edge of the trees, bent-backed, dipping in and out of half-sunken boulders which hump the field. Nature's perfume, the threaded wind, and some chemical woven through the winds. Night birds' calling relaxes me. The figure holds a still ear between the willows and alders, listening to the chime of a key clicking in the night, and I sink back down into my covers to sleep again at the same time as the figure levitates away into the fields and the nighthawk sticks its head back under its wing, lashes fluttering over pomegranate-coloured eyes one third the size of its head. When I sleep, too, I see in a drelkam the torso of that person float through the grain in the direction of the mountain, and all the elk, on those nights, seem to migrate across Innisfree from the plain into the forest.

Another eruption took out a wellhead a few kilometres from Innisfree, which caused a sour gas leak. Sour gas comes from the earth bowels where Lethe flows up from. It is invisible and lethal and scentless like death itself. No country for old elk farmers. What the heck, eh? When I was chasing down a Hyperion for antler removal the other day, a gas stack flared so loud it made both of us jump off the slough bank into the reeds. Hurting my old man body in a bad way, and scaring the bejesus out of the Hyperion.

I'd prefer to just sit all day on the porch in bare feet tickled by the wind through my calluses and bunions. Reminisce about my mother, how she would sit with her latest book from big old Powell's books in Portlandsea, and how when she read she would soon sleep (left margin to right margin, right margin to left margin) and the couch float along the river of things in the house, and the drapery and furnishings in a deep comforting pool of hominess.

I chalked a moose on the sidewalk, that's right. While my mother slept on the couch beyond the algae-green curtains, I chalked a mauve and bloom-coloured moose. On the hot street in melting running shoes beside the school, hunched over with a thick cylinder of chalk. The lunch monitor saw, and she escorted me to the office. Two teachers whispered in each others' ears, and pointed at me as I sat on the bench waiting in a bath of humiliation for the principal. They thought it weird that I had drawn the moose in pink chalk on the school wall, and there was something else about it that they thought was the sign of a problematic destiny.

Trouble, trouble. No country for an old elk farmer like me. It's the most neatest thing. How everyone's anxieties seem to fall asleep. When the birds sing (Right margin to left margin).

Right margin to left margin. Left margin to right margin right margin to left margin. Pipeline full of ichor. Lights shine up on Charybdis, Byzantium down below. Scylla on other side. Enderbee top of funnel into eskers bordering myth. Camouflage has become utter invisibility. Encrypted remote. Clear. Sunday. Reconnect detonation device. Rocks along Scylla connect like chains. Trees are fence posts blocking, sheltering, bunker tree well Anne Frank. Winter now, winter on blowy day trackless white flakes of sky. Frosted roads lead forward or backward. Off-road invisible. Investigators come and gone with their rumours of reward. A momentary freeze on memory. Only two directions. One event interlocks with another. What must be must be. There is no agency, just the agentless calculation of blocks placed in a line. An offer and an acceptance denied. Grammar trots straight according to the rules. The animals have spoken, cloven grammar and forked words.

Fury of ancients propels action's sail, twisting passion fire gimlets through waterwheels of myths about moving and unsettling the settlers. Every contraction is an action dictated by a myth dictator. Earth decreed fallen ones decreed what the bird has elk has. This is what the great ecosystem of the Northwest has decreed. This is what Ares says must be. Rage against rage. Titan against Olympian. Olympians crafted western progress Titans take back what's theirs. No passion, no emotion. A decision made and stuck with. Left margin to right margin. Any doubt is dispelled by the birds, nothing except a blank mist in the heart. Right margin to left margin. To secure second detonation device. Up to four. Timed to go off sequentially. At bottom of waterbody swim swim underwater Beowulf and Iron Grendel swum swum down to the bottom where sunken frog bellies levitate, down to the letter bottom. Persephone down down Persephone. Skin beats benthic. Persephone weed bed hair drowned towns down people moat floating. The Queen's name spoken means impact, concussion, rape. Locate pipe at bottom of river fighting the currents as mighty scaled torpedo. Dolphins deactivating bombs on the ocean floor human activating a bomb at the top of the ocean floor terrestrial.

MARLOWE SAYS PIPELINE PLOT NO DELUSION

—20 October 2036—

“We are offering a 500,000 reward for any information leading to the arrest of the pipeline bomber.” So said CEO of Gasbro, Chase Beefrude, in a public statement Sunday morning.

The second bombing in just over a month rocked a gas line near Byzantium, indicating that the bomber could be working on both sides of the West-Central border.

Catfish Marlowe of the PDNQ downplayed fears that this could be an inside job carried out by border patrol.

“The screening process for all provincial borders is extreme. What we are looking at here is most likely an international plot of some kind, but focused within PC Columbia. Paranoia is no longer a delusion; it is the substance of society and the cause of our decline.”

Stay tuned for more up-to-the-second updates on the *Troutsource* blog, and continue reading the prose poem feeds through *Podview*.

Derrida Bloom has written a *piece* of scholarly poetry about his own to attempt to trace some of the mythological themes of the satellite feed of the prose poem progression:

Up on Helicon: fourteen statues of hermaphroditic muses molded out of the sides of a fountain spitting the saliva of the gods—this is the first image relating to the B.C.E. imagery of the PPP. All the inspiration from the Hippocrene was withheld from artists, only emperor Zeus and his Olympus elect were permitted to attend the lapping fountain and sip its inspiration. There seems to have been one figure unknown to history, though, who, despairing of artist's sickness, with bottled air ran the gauntlet of animal-

headed guards, scrambled to the fountain-head of muses, to set a keg of Greek Fire there, in the hopes of salvaging some inspiration. A long fuse the figure laid on its descent back into the saddle of the peaks, to the base camp of undernourished creatives. A wick-lighting celebration ensued. The figure, who, after the climb, bore an even stronger resemblance to a shrunken god, who now, as fire starter, wielded a power of suggestion that would boil through millennia, and who knew s/he would be divided into several incarnations were the blaze to happen, watched with the others the flame shriek up the fuse toward the mountaintop where its blast, they wished and dearly hoped, would bust loose the muses from their lofty prison, that creative spirits be blown from their caskets of stone. That, like an old poem in tight metre, the floor of the form buckle and the walls of margins collapse, inspiration assemble from the broken metre of ribs. The air proved too thick for the galloping spark however—once the flame drew up to the higher altitudes, it slowed to a daddy-long-legs pace, ember without a breath, red worm in a puddle, no human hand to cup and shield, for modern humans had not been created by Prometheus yet, there was no such thing as a palm to cup; the spark, it lay meekly for long periods deprived of air, just a tiny ember in the lichen, and the artists waited at the bottom for generations for it to draw up to the keg. All expected that a romantic modernism of sorts would come about from the atoms in the expected explosion, a photonic inspiration. But history had ceased to blossom like that. The ember merely inched its way up the infinite slopes.

At some point, one would think, the little spark must have got Helicon fountain lit up, because today the muses sit on tin roofs, in hot grottos in the grammarian favelas. Other muses have hoofs and antlers and shawls of hair. Aesthetics is all over the place.

Mine elk are Olympic elk, of the Wapiti overarching variety. The biggest non-extinct kind. The name of the elk has a ghost history. First they were called stags because the European settlers thought they were seeing the red deer like back home. But they always thought, "gosh, this sure is a big red deer I killed." The English called elk 'elk', but they were using the word in reference to the European moose, which they thought they saw lumbering through the bushes over here in North America, a species confusingly called elk over there, but which, over there, was actually quite different than the North American moose. Settlers also learned the Algonquin term moose, but that didn't stick well when applied to the strange stags, because of the obvious differences between the lumbering moose and the straight-shouldered elk. Elks were not so easy to name, no. It was a beast that said no to our attempts to categorize it. Which is why they are truly mythical to me. I don't slaughter the elk anymore unless they get lame. I do do the tourist thing, sure, and I do do the antler thing, which some people don't like.

Artsy boy, who is also a creative writer, he told me that the elk is a prose poem. He learned me stuff like that about poetry. About how apparently it was T.S. Eliot who denied the prose poem its status as such, because poetry for him implied rules, and the prose poem had no rules because it had no line breaks to measure rules with. The prose poem always slips around between slop buckets. So I must agree with my ranch hand: elk are prose poems because, like that literary example, they were never properly named, and there was always some confusion over exactly what they were, but that is guesswork.

Final, fifth device secure. One on each segment for a mile. And aerial scramblers to stun shut-down sensors. Feeling the uncovered pipe. Summer. Disguised as welder. Reach with left arm up around cement taper node. Knee ground in gravel. Won't fasten properly to strut. Wiggle thighs sideways, readjust centre of balance. Reach the detonation device around the steel wall of a buttress this time. *Cluclonk* goes magnet. Bingo. Grab remote from watch pocket, check signal, retreat into alpine, again check signal. Bingo. Now wild tiger lilies into the lupines into the columbines into the aphid-covered brush that has migrated everywhere the pilgrimage of plants disappear to reappear disappear grasshopper fiddles. Mouth mandibles owl clicks its beak trance of evening. Ha. Boo. Ha. Move. Ha. A green-robed pathway. Lily pads. Wading. Guards asleep in their mud wagon watching pornography of pipes stuck into holes. Byzantium aglow with its shiny night armour beaten into shape by the hearts of the townspeople Joagj [ressire. jogj [ressire jpg jogj dpme lmpw jpw jogj jot bittpm com amd bp;d bp;d ;ole a greujpid bacl omtpt je bisj amd suis the spimd icimerci pf the ex;prosopm os the ju[pcreme actopmwopms amd wprds om bp,b tramce/s s,asjomg/ a bear into alder a seal into steel water symbol into metaroar.

Well, it all started I don't know when, well, it all started a while ago I guess. Why does it matter if it was before or after the bombs started? The time when I washed my hands in the eaves barrels, and splashed the rainwater on my face, it made my eyes get bleary. It was the chemicals pumped up from way down in the earth—methane, benzene, and lead, coming in clouds and condensing in our drinking water. Saw Samson through my tears, wiped them off, and tried to act like my jovial self.

What's up, Samson, how did the tour go? Not good, judging by your expression.

The kids noticed something, they did. Back there near the creek.

Noticed what?

Samson leads me through the tails of grass, the heavy blue of the day, the spillbottle colours along the horizon ... and there, in a saucer of splayed grass ... could see a Mnemosyne trying to keep her head alert but obviously exhaustedly wilted from some great strain, the antlers like rotating blivets sticking up from the high bush cranberry, turning wearily around in her surveillance mode, not even trusting us at first, and we follow a cord of flesh coming out of her canal to a dead elk fetus ... in sight of one of the gas wells over there.

I cradled that dead calf, all its veins visible through its transparent skin, skull underdeveloped and paper-thin, saggy, its hooves dripping down from my hands, and saw Mnemosyne there, helpless with placenta dangling out from her behind—the roman number XX looking imperial and official on her yellow ear tag. My whole life's work was suddenly faltering: projects born dead before they happened. Yellow, never-breaking clouds above the hills as more sites went in.

Samson saw something when he was playing back the images of Lethe. What he saw he said should not have shown up at all on film because it was of a different spectrum. Real hazy footage. Of some sort of sabotage carried out by bodies difficult to know, unidentifiable because the old tape is partly decomposed and the image sludge-lined. I am not so far gone in the rustic world that I am unable to see a screen and tell what's going on through the distortion though. They're battering cement in a pickle bucket, pasting a main valve at the metering station with cement laced with shotgun shells.

Samson reports having sipped from the Microchip tributary in order to remember, and realized that we are, as servants of elk, also gatekeepers to the Elkhead, and that I should be warned—spirit-bodied thieves will try using tactics to confuse and besmirch us to gain access to the ring of keys. What he says is in line with what I feel has been happening: that something is undermining the dream of Innisfree. When I asked Samson who he's making these videos for, though, he got mealy-mouthed. And I had to tell him, if it's for someone you don't know below the surface of appearance, and who you forget after you see them, then don't give them the clips, because they are using that to get at the Elkhead, like you mentioned yourself. Then Samson became the one calling me paranoid. Paranoia has no place on Innisfree, I agree with him. But what used to be called paranoia is now a more than partial truth, like Border Patrol taking DNA samples from townsfolk and rural groups who live near the pipelines, which is going way too far for Enderbee. Sampling the copper in our veins, I guess you could say, but without drilling rights. Over-obvious investigators, using their over-obviousness to make us uneasy, since the award system doesn't seem to be working. I am involved in the bombing only in that I support the bomber's cause, I tell them—as in industry should steer clear from the real preciousness out here—but I am not the bomber. Trust is what this place is built on, I might add, foundations stronger than money, and now you are trying to break apart the bonds that hold the trust, through trying to plot the poetry of the town and country, which is how bad things happen with counties and countries and all the land under the sun.

Samson just says: C'mon, Inkster, what you say we wet your noodle with some corncob bombs.

Memily calls over the black wire fence into the grey light of my day. The strands of her hair playing tag with her summer moles, and her dimpled eyes squirreled away in the tunnels of her sun hat. Her highland skin white and vulnerable in the streaks of light through predominant black shadows. What's she up to, I wonder, in this landscape of death tones.

Inkster, how are you? I keep seeing you pacing around over there.

Okay I guess, Memily.

Looks like that rash you were talking about has gone away.

Yup ... yup ... that's a good thing, I suppose, because if it was flesh wasting disease I reckon you'd have it too. I don't usually like talking over fences, though, you know, Memily.

I like the old fashioned farmer etiquette, Mr. Inkster. You are entering your masterwork, just like Leonard Cohen writes about.

While she's saying this she undoes the wire latch of a gate. We stand together in a patch of shade, on her side.

I can't see what's happening anymore, I say. The science of it escapes me. All I can do is sing my second song ... 'My favorite animal's womb has become a tomb. Where not life but death is born in skeletal bloom ...'

She puts her arms around me and squeezes me kindly. She was there by the shore in the gathering ceremony when we released the elkchild into the river currents to be taken away.

I like your song about loving all the time better, Jeffery, she says, hinting that mourning has run its course. Besides, you know it's your masterwork when you can feel it falling apart, but can't see it, and you have to hold on. I know that from art, not science. I'm a welder in disguise, Inkster, when I see you moving through your fields with the hay and the alfalfa, the elk circle you, you know that, they can tell you are on solid ground. Don't let bombs and miscarriages throw you too much.

What was I like when I first came here, Memily?

You were like a jitterbug. Your pace has slowed. More amble and pause, not point and click.

She asks me if I want to come talk to her while she works on her art down at the shop.

What are you working on now, Memily?

She has changed a little as I speak, the shadows catch a different angle of her personality.

People of Byzantium made from scrap metal, and other stuff from the dump. It used to be that we were simply pluses and minuses, but now we are strings of pluses and series of minuses, so it's harder to attach, that's what these melted latches are, the metal latches that hold us back. Like the ones that block you and Dan-the-Man from ever being friends. Or from me moving on from my sadness at never having a child.

Memily hammers the face of one of her sculptures with the mallet, denting in a cheekbone, straightening a minus.

I am doing another sculpture about complicity too.

Her eyes say hi to me from under the flapping brim.

NOT YOUR USUAL SUSPECTS

—20 June 2037—

What happens when a bomb plot targets a heavy production zone like the area around the Rockies-Always-the-Rockies? What happens when the idealistic politics of a place like Byzantium get challenged by pure violence?

Paranoia for everyone involved, it would seem.

The mayor of Enderbee, Timothy K, who had taken an anti-Gasbro stance until the most recent recessionary dip, resigned after expressing public disgust with everyone involved in the conflict. This leaves the small town of Byzantium without a strong leader, says the head of the regional district, Anne Carters.

The temporary incumbent mayor from the Superconservative party, Sam Sears, is acting on an emergency political platform that aims to liquidate Enderbee title and make it part of Cowberta, says Carters. The new industry-wealthy of Enderbee, though they appreciate the lawlessness of their unceded domain, apparently appreciate their toys much more, as a recent poll showed support of the interim mayor's plan at fifty-four percent.

"The Gasbro high pressure pipeline is already four-weeks into its accelerated coast-to-coast construction phase at a pace of twenty kilometres per day, and the patterns of the bombings indicate a 'closing noose' pattern around Enderbee portion of the project," Charters observed. She added that the pipeline will be completed within 17 months.

Troutsource is now at ground level, trying to get a sense of the insanity. Stories of investigators tailing the everyday normal people of Byzantium are commonplace. Here

is some of what the incredulous locals had to say.

From Cheryl Hill, interviewed after we noticed her cornered by several officers at Parkwood Mall:

"Well, I'm a cross dresser, right, so of course they are going to think I'm linked to the criminal element. To tell you the truth, I don't give a damn, they can ask me all the questions they want—I am all ears, honey. Mayor Timothy is such a sweet man, the poor guy is being blamed for not keeping more of a lid on all the crap. They want to pin this on freaky radicals, and because they can see how beautifully freak I am they pay extra attention to my femme nature. However, just because the voice *sounds* freak, doesn't mean it is, you dummies. I've been singled out all my life, it's alright, I have a tough hide anyway, spank away, babies."

Peter Bucklet, the owner of Jeweled Smithery Hardware store:

"Asking me for name lists of everybody I've sold a bolt to, credit statements and descriptions of clients. It's crazy. Really crazy. My kids can't sleep because of the squad helicopters' flyovers, not to mention all the Gasbro traffic in town these days. Sometimes buying fertilizer is just buying fertilizer, right. I mean, hello dumbnuts, if it's really the green angel investors behind this, why would they be buying their bomb ingredients here at the hardware store?"

Troutsource has also gained access to the records of a "wanted list". The contents show a growing list of possible suspects, with a number beside each name to represent the seriousness of the threat.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>History</i>
1-2	The Carlyle family	Radical Christian family known to possess an arsenal of monkeywrenching paraphernalia.	Dynamite seized in 2026 from property, no permit. Note: all have alibi by number.
2-3	Cheryl Hill	Erratic behavior, unstable identity, proximity to conduits.	Arrested in Cowberta for siphoning gas out of Gasbro trucks.
3-1	Samson Huckleberry	Radical drifter type, avant-garde film, proximity to conduits.	Several arrests for illegal breeding of livestock and suspected history of bestiality.
4	Dan Assange, AKA "Dan-the-Man"	Emails tracked through trans-provincial servers to enviroleak groups.	Previously investigated for data leaking during Borderland Reformation.
5	Stranger who goes by "Mars Ares", real name unknown. Untraceable.	Impersonated an officer of Borderland Reform, potential connection to human programming groups.	N/A Probably a border-drifting info-gatherer.
6	Memily Assange	Political artist who perverts reality. Knowledge of welding and compression fittings.	Perceived within Enderbee as too peace-loving to be a bomber, however might be complicit.
7	Jeffery Inkster	Elk farmer with sadistic tendencies.	Might be knowledge-holder. Potential informant.

Letter sent to the Enderbee Police and *The Enderbee Endtimes*:

Be finally warned, you have chosen unwisely not to honour our wishes, so now it is time for Gasbro to meet the real Bone Crusher. By the time you receive this letter the fate of many lives will be at risk. The only way you can stop this event from escalating is by shutting down all Scylla ridge operations IMMEDIATELY as well as Site C463 adjacent to the headwaters of the Fraser and Nechako. What has been so cunningly dealt by Coyote Spirit so far is but a fraction of the REAL power of SKULL CRUSHER. If you hesitate for a MOMENT longer we will make the decision for you.

Yeah, well you know they've called this "the back to work century", which is kind of not what we're all about on Innisfree ranch, as we prefer leisure labour of a sort. These days wholesalers are buying crop before the seed's even in the ground, and calves before they are even born yet. We all try our hands at small-scale farming, but the thing is the financial risk isn't worth it. You have to invest in the fastest farmbots and super combines to be able to ensure a yield that will enable you to make ends meet, and you finance it by signing agreements with a buyer for X amount of product predicted on your first year. Instead of giving us boosters, the Can'tadian government made a back-to-work regimen, so farm workers ended up having to take positions such as waiter and traffic patrol officer when they got laid off. And the weather got so unreliable that you can't know for certain your future yield. Even the almanac, that Nostradamus-work of wise rural people, is getting it wrong. It takes imagination to do something a little differently, to find that niche market, like velvet antler. Or by finding some plant that has medicinal properties, and packaging it for the mass market under a saleable name. But then you are an eccentric of the economy.

Now. Now! It's time. Except for wind is over sixty clicks southwesterly. Gad dang. Heart goes boom boom chest remember man smiling under headache light of saloon after last call. Press once, twice, enter code. But no, not work. Something scrambling the wireless relay encryption. Or dead sensor. Soggy wait in bog killed the battery. Must have. Track back. Can't think. Illusion disappearing. Identity trombone. *Wahoop*. Am someone am someone. Bird. Sky. Left margin to right margin right margin to left margin left margin to right margin right margin to left margin. In the book of pain. Orphan memories once repressed from mythic beginning of artistic rage of Keats' Hyperion. Now forget. Back along pond bank. Back to moat. Reach around the edge again. Must feel. The feeling of being surveyed from a satellite. Watched, world's eyes on everyone. Pseudo-welder I am. Manually reverse-working what a welder normally would. A toggle to turn one eighth of a rotation. And a widget to depress halfway. Then a sound. Tearing around the metering shed's reinforced wall. A pre-explosion. Turn run. Run like hell. Smoke consuming. Boom. Vacuum sucking me against the shed then blowing me forward in a wrath of flame. Insert special effects.

Out kitchen window: a Hyperion, antler stumps bandaged, spooked around the side of the barn, inspector pursuing with a thermometer.

Those goddamn animal activist goons. They have no right. No right, I say! Third time in twenty-five years, each time they get nosier. This time it's sporty person with a no-prisoners look, someone whose attention could bring a vicious punishment to your world, who's got the quiet power of a civil servant in charge of the guillotine, and calls herself Samantha Sears, which rings some sort of strange bell.

Sears finishes testing the elk's water, doing stuff like measuring the antibiotic levels, examining the elk's living conditions and whatnot. Returns to the farmhouse.

Jeffery, this is your third offence, this is serious now. Pulls out her binder full of checklists and forms and all that.

She's come up from Canned Cougar, and her brand of judgementalism is not appreciated here. Just listen to her!

Mr. Inkster, elk farming is not in the best interests of the forests. I've said it before and I will say it again. It's not something that the PC government has ever liked, and if there didn't exist cross zonal laws with Cowberta, you can betcha the regional district would shut you right down (taps her pen on the pages of her assessment). The anesthetic you are currently using for the velvet antler removal is adequate; however, you will be required to upgrade your tourniquet system to a hydraulic press to block blood flow. Overall your elk look ... well ... sad. Probably the pain in their temples, from sawing their horns all year. If this persists, and you don't upgrade, it could become a matter for the bureau of animal rights.

I told you about the birth problems ... it's the gases from all those pipes. Just look at the haze over the ridge. And look here at my hands, from petting the elks after they've been lying around near the gas stacks.

Mr. Inkster, I've looked into the possible correlation between the miscarriages and the emissions as per our conversation, and also the supposed rashes. Again, the studies have found no possible link. Bad farming practice is more likely the reason why you have seen a large incidence of stillbirth. As for rashes, well, those look like bed bug bites, probably brought into Enderbee by all the transients ... Moving on now—the condition in the velvet antler barn ... Not good (passes me the clipboard with the checklist on it).

As you can see, the mood scale and condition ratings all come out really low.

I swing the binder around, feeling it scrape against my scabby wrists. General health: 2/5. Overall animal form and vigour: 2/5. Responsiveness to approach: 2.5/5.

Animal depression, Mr. Inkster. Nothing sadder than when you realize the other creatures in the world have deep emotions just like us.

Listen. This is how I live. This is how my elk live. You come in here with your official checklists ... you don't get it. They live a good life out here.

You can't hide this from yourself much longer.

What is she talking about. Hide what I do every day? From myself?

Oh, and one more thing.

I give up.

You need to take the new Velvet Antler Removal Certification Program.

My dear Samantha Sears, oh my dear. But then the bohemian waxwings they croon with gravelly voices, a Hyperion bugles, makes me imagine autumnal hues come out from a pastel spout, sound-confetti of lavender, grey, brown, ice white, swirls, spirals, twists. Heard it described as sounding like flutes blown hard like a horn.

Dan-the-Man and Memily come strolling up the road after dear Samantha has departed back to the Animal Department.

Don't worry, brother, Dan says to me, patting my defeated shoulder with his clubbed hand. We are going to sink this complicity boat soon, we'll all clean up our acts ... We are all, all of us complicit.

A ball of flame envelopes the summer green. Wahoo! A ball of flame devours the progress of Olympian-loyal westernkind. Wahoo! Oil gushes from the torn pipes like water sprayed from a hose with the press of a tongue, a black hose, black water over a doll house, black tongue two packs a day. A cardinal observes from Rome, Cowberta. Whistle of bitumenlite condensing into a torrent of superdense liquid dumped by high winds away and down down away black wave. Looming shadow made of steam liquid over turned shoulder. Black tidal wave. Dollops of burning oil flaming around their edges soaring the smell of a gas tank when nose is stuck right in. Wahoo! Wahoo! Hedge-hopper, grasshopper, rabbit jumper away. Crescent shadow of beech tree. Gasbro has fallen. Wahoo. Citadels of the barons are no longer. Wahoo. Every explosion a division and a multiplication. Mouth exploding with charcoal spittle. An umbrella of bitumen vavooms over the valley. Into the forest into the forest. Arm becomes burning scepter.

Memily and Dan-the-Man have created a canoe poem. A canoe that has what are apparently called verses carved through the side. The words no doubt make this a leaky vessel. It's the "Canoe Called Complicity", Memily explains, as she experiences overexposure of her autumnal hair.

The words carved through the canoe with the same sharp-edged light as cracks between planks of an outhouse, are:

On the long drive in Ford 850

Cursed the oil diamonds in passing

Did forester filled with eco angst

Feeling relieved after chopping

Hating dams the most while

Electric shaving—

Superconservatives, those who love nature hikes

Wooed by Gasbro darlings in sky rises

Who've been doing about it

What global competition permits

The Class-Conscious Critic

Who drives a Porsche

Spoil them but not this, sir leader who gutted Medicare

Who grew up on Medicare, sings Beatle's WLHMF, but is tough on pot.

Must be balanced with sinkers

What is weighted wrong

Sink as deep as darkness can

Sinking as deep as darkness can

May this Canoe of Complicity go

So we can get back on course again

The canoe is supported on two blocks, dripping biodegradable paint from cottonwood walls. Sunlight passes through letters of doubt and irony.

What's the point of this whole complicity thing, I ask Dan-the-Man.

He just looks at me.

Can't you see the poem here is about you? he says, in an exaggerated baritone. When we launch our vessel, people like you are going to sink it, Mr. Inkster.

Since when did Dan-the-Man get such a hate on for me? Or is it man love with rusted hinges just grating against the shoulder.

Sound what the whack, sound what the clack, seems to happen smack. Tear off welding disguise with one free arm. Look over shoulder, panting. Some mauve sea image, trilobites of sparks. Over the Enderbee valley from the metal stem of the twin pipeline twisted into venom array. Then now the real blast, bomb two three four five in tandem – geysers of liquid spurting hundred of leagues high, arrows of flaming gunk falling over Byzantium, globular torpedoes. Holy shit. Was supposed to be a warning. Just one segment. Oh my gad. Oh my gad. Night bird calls. Swim of swallow, sea sky. Right margin to left margin. Forget. Was supposed to be one section at a time. Manic excitement overwhelms, the laughter of the completion, the having gotten it done, the wicked excellence, the exhilaration. Hopping bouncing running; cackling and spitting blood so vital. Trip. Reach to grab. Something to stabilize. Swing of an arm miss of the target. Fall to get up and keep running up bank. Can't. Can't push, arm reaching through the earth, touches hair touches hair that is laughter. A gauntlet grabs hold of my hand in some underground salute. No left arm no more. Dark ages. Absence. Where? Can't lift. Arm of fire. Ghost pressure on chest. Attempt to breathe. Breath. On knees. Prostrate. Hanging hair from limbs above. Burning. Tarred-in lungs. Stumbling farther. Smoked legs. Smoking body. Steaming body. Stumble through rosy moon shadows. Known rock formations – find them, hide. Hunker. Pass out. Need to just. Find a deeper. Shadow. In which. To energize. Plump rain drop snuffs candle. Puff of smoke from rock ring charcoals. Asleep.

I've been reading poems, old slim books that folks left 'round Innisfree. Thinking a poem is like the first trip to Byzantium all over again, it feels like that each time.

Cut. Clear. Clear Cutted Cutter Curt Cult Corpse Clean. Cleave. Erosion on the banks of history cutback cutup cutlery cutthroat. Clear sky, clear my hands. One finger a leaf; one finger a pinecone; one finger to touch the cold fluid on this branch. Stand up on a rotting log amidst the thousands of stalks, tuber gone astral, lit fish in cosmic stream, faces of some absent family overrun with water, to better see above the greens, which is a take-off strip out of limb bows to the forked fate paths. Elkhead. There in the glitter of baby greens I witness the swimming elk, doing the shoulder crawl through the leaves under the scorched icicle rays of the sun. Playing or running from me; sometimes I can't tell. This corner of the ranch is where wild ones leap in and over and out and through and mix 'n mate with the farmed ones probably.

When elk present straight on crag, set against the milky way, the ancient bugle contains a rosehip sauciness and high-pitched purple moosiness. When the domestic dog howls, it does so through the mime of wolf lips. Elkhead is contained in that bugle just like Wolfhead is in the howl. When it bugles that music, it summons up their ancestors, the giant elk, who are in fact metallic sculptures made of myth—specimens from Memily's yard art.

A great shot, like in a Tarkovsky visual epic. I want to film these shots leading up to the canoe scenes, Inkster. A slow shot of you disappearing.

You better not be making the movie for ____

For who?

For ____

No, not for.

Yes indeed, artsy boy has got an unholy glow about him, like a Spartan ... shaved his hair in those short ridges along the temples and jaw, like a North American hyena who's been to the LA barbershop, making a scene during the humble elk meat feasts and apple cider of Sunday evening. Kids working the old cash registers on old schoolroom desks between plum trees (part of the tour is getting involved in all aspects of the ranch and selling cider and the like) ... their father belts out, ramped up by dandelion wine, belly-laughing, hurraing: Look at artsy boy's big eyes and velvet antler hair, like he's turning into an elk, haw haw. Samson throwing a handful of hay at Dan-the-Man, gets some on Memily and Miss Primrose from the bison estate. There's Samson now juggling eggs like they were our heads, our noggin-encapsulated fates. We're all starting to look kinda like elk, I agree, feeling somehow drawn into currents of resistance. We'll do something to stop them from putting the pipe through Tipping Point River! To expect me not to be smart, as a farmer, would be a stereotype, would it not? To expect me not to defend my land would as well. It's not like I have a webbed nose with veins that speak of cigarettes and steak, or purple wormy blockages. It's not as though I have a lump on my cheek that looks like a tit. You are turning into some ghastly pioneer, you say? Claiming I speak in "done goods" and "sump'ns" and "get at 'ers". Well, on days off at the barn dances, I dress in my best duds like the good old days, you'll see.

To another lost Mnemosyne and the misery of being not quite here. One day the elkclockmaker snatched you, took you into the areas not mapped. The past is like a glacier, calf must be inside somewhere tapping the arctic glass with her teacup hooves. Cannot give up mystery—mystery along the cranberry paths on the way through the bush, not necessarily just at the end. The forest's hurt throbs sometimes, doesn't it? Why do people hurt? That is what he asked underneath the fir tree. Under the fir tree, he wondered why nature created pain. Coughing hay bits, sunburned eyelids touched with dusty fingers, moles on my back rubbing against the sappy scales of the tree. Didn't I used to be a typical farmer with a strong wife and rosy-cheeked child, didn't I? Didn't I used to, before that, live in a wet, readerly city somewhere in Squashington? Times are strange in these regions of the rural future, and I don't blame them for leaving a place of dying beauty. Drones come overhead looking for border-breachers, but underneath the fir tree they can't see. Under the fir tree he asks why oh why did you create pain, let me know at least that one part, or at least let me thank you for the numbness that comes when it gets too bad, at least there is that.

And Mnemosyne XVII aborted three calves in a row.

And for every abortion another bomb went off.

Held each bloody produce in my arms, cast them into the streams where the trout gulped them up. I don't like the mindless mouthings of the fish, they speak of some terrible wantonness.

When you meditate on the image of the crystalline lit elk, the crystal Elkhead flickering with light—when you meditate on the sound of hooves in woods. That is the practice he started so long ways ago, underneath the fir tree. Now, under the fir tree, the sides of his head ache, and he rubs them in confusion, wondering if he bumped his head in the middle of the night.

Heli-drone blades make pudding of the air above trees, stark water dripping off canopy, falling water onto weakness, numbness, trembling. Whirlpool. Fall into crotch of western maple. On back, surrounded by sword ferns and Black-eyed Susans. Huge drops of dew. A grasshopper sipping at spherical spring. Plush petals of moist flower sun juices through straws through mouths of watery light between treetops. Reach for some of the dew with invisible finger. No arm. Arm charred stump. Screaming weakness. So weak. Strength suddenly shoots. Curl up like toothpaste. Upward and onward said grandfather, feather moss, terrace of rock, through a stream, becomes a creek; dunk noggin, splash, drink. Seared skin comes off in water, floats like heel flaps.

Life is getting too complicated for the Enderbee we love and the Innisfree that we know, and it's giving me headaches. I shall leave everything to the ranch hands for the day and return to the beginning, which isn't too much to leave or too far to go, for elk and ranch hands look after themselves pretty good, and the beginning is only on the other edge of Byzantium. I take the paths that mukluks first stomped down, feeling that closeness through those footfalls to the tradition of animal and the bond of the rib. Changes my view of Byzantium coming in from the other direction to the highway by the new prison, the way I first came here with the cattle trailer full of my elks, how many years ago. Through that village archway, "the gateway to the supreme north"—so it states. The statue of the chief and of the rainbow salmon and of the train, also of the barn with the black scars from fire and age: all of it rented now in the sideways pour of four o'clock sunlight. Over there, that is the hotel—the white one with the tall sign and the tropical theme done up with real palms and waterslide—I stayed in when I first arrived at Byzantium. Recall how I parked the elk trailer there beside the gas pump and horse posts. Had the four legged troop on sedatives to keep them from going reindeer on me, tired-hoofed they were from the journey up from Squashington.

Neon contours of jukebox glass case. Finger stains above choices. The international city robbed me of any personality. Why I was on the move? I mean to the country. Remember.

Going down into this old pioneer bar that is now boarded up ... I remember the person inside who was doing the performance, the one who took the whole town under his downy wing and had us do and say those things ...

Snapped his fingers, made those sounds, said deeper and deeper into blissful relaxation you are falling. The velvet antlers in the shape of humans are falling towards the earth. Left margin to right margin right margin to left margin.

Muffled clunk duffed weaponry. Moon zooming. Gasbro militia hunting the goat. Hold so still, lamb, until the lion's gaze falls into the bee-ringing flowers. I am the baby deer in the innocent shadows. Jaws, lantern eyes, wanging pain in disappeared arm. Skies are parting to deserted shore. Galilee, Galilee, name without substance. Orlando, Orlando. Westminster. Where the final chime strikes the rocks the river shall open. Ants do six-step dance on the side of my belly, spiders crouch on my warmth, a coyote snout sniffing through the bush, cold mucus in my lobed satellite. Crusade of white blood cells. Preaches twisted colon we came from worms. This nook in the trees so relaxing, so nice. Staring. Need to keep warm. The warmth of the sun making mist on the greens. With one good arm tender the limbs of a balsam. Chew bark. Sense carcass nearby. Smells of lice and museums, hair and dust, closet and buffalo. One hand at side, role over on good side, get up. Press the contact lichen to let the Bone Healer know you are coming.

When you hear the snap, the performer, dressed in grey janitor gear was saying with key ring on hip that chimed in the night, who was using a metal staff like a third leg to move around the barroom. I was still conscious, knew it was to another of the participants that he was directing his powers. But to whom?

When you hear the snap, the person you love most in the room, who you find most attractive, go up and let them know. You. Are. In. Love. With. Them.

First snap, and the participant's neck went limp. After a pause that contained the sound of the light bulb whining, the second snap came, and the participant's shoulder seemed to straighten alert, and he lifted his head again, though with eyes still slit, rising, floated up to someone seated at one of the tables. Was it Memily he approached and serenaded? In my memory it was Memily. Then that participant, tan hat guy, must have been Dan-the-Man? I can't see into the back of the barroom because of the thick pipe smoke, but I can hear the volunteer's proposal to the person back there, to Memily, must be. Whoever to whoever: *I love you like the waterfall does the fall*. That's what was said back there, love words of all sorts, and that's where the "lovin all da time" song got inspired. Then Mars Ares turned another key in the hovering air, telling a second volunteer to go out back the pub and pick a blade of grass. When the subject did this, leaving dreamily and returning with a blade that fit well between her thumbs, the hypnotist asked her what she had learned from it. *I am going to play in a blade of grass band*, said the volunteer. *The real blue joint grass*.

The. Third. Volunteer. Had to light a cherry bomb in a jar in the yard out back the bar.

And then, what happened next?

Then the singing of the bird in the shadows. The Elkhead above the hearth, shifting.

Roadrunner escapes the bomb. You are the bomb. You really dropped a bomb. F-bombs after my chickens targeted by eagle. Second b after m. Collateral damage of that final silent letter pronounced with aplomb. A sphere with a wick. Make a statement. Set an example. Systematic. Forward. Onward. Through. Each moment attaches to the next in a chain. Every day to day season to each season life to life. Until rupture. Non-arm phases from numbness to fire to pain again. To pain. Cain. Pain is a ruby guider. Hider. Brother town. Not enough moss blanket to pull around. Reaching monkey hands into the wrenches. Swinging from the gears of the stars with monkey wrench arms. The sound of the bird induces. The sound of the plane overhead, and of the helicopter. Left margin to right margin right margin to left margin.

Asleep in a cavity of loam poetry.

It's the Multicultural Green Thumb Urban Appreciation parade. Even though everything's in disarray with media and law, the parade must go on. On old farm machines, the people of Byzantium roll over the streets, past the huge statue of the fisher people and the lumberjacks. Practically everyone in town gets on a float of some sort. The mountains in the background are picture postcard perfect. The bomber has been silent for months, and the town has moved on to cheerier agendas.

Waiting for the Bone. Healer. Pantheon Northwest. Aware of the ineffable “()”, open bracket/close bracket, nothing in-between, not even an “it”, whose name cannot be spoken, whose presence can be only referred to with allusive gesturing at the unlikeliest times. () is not certain of the nature of () own existence. An expatriate in North Pole, Malaska, () is one part sugar maple, two parts beaver, has nut-brown micro brew running through () veins, wears a crown of brush on () head, and is also much like a moose-human. What a loudmouth () is, you can hear () expostulate, () arguments forming as interpretable rays of light. () vocal cords are made from aurora borealis, so rungs of light flare powerful up there because () is booming out in-sights. (); no one ever thought () was for real. They figured () was but a skewered amalgam of stereotypic national symbols. () escaped these criticisms, and the interests that would have () hunted and destroyed. And () has an answer to the question of Can'tadian myth.

Of course Huckleberry's in the parade, doing his organic egg juggling act, on a unicycle no less. Each egg painted a different colour, looping these eggs, cross-eyed from concentrating so hard, eggs which are supposed to represent the different points of view of the universe. His small, acrobatic body, can flip through centuries. He leaves the parade early to go pick up more eggs after a couple fumbles.

BOMBS ARE NOT METAPHORS: SAM SEARS

—1 July 2037—

The environmental group Anti-Everything has risen up to decry Gasbro's business-as-usual plan to continue construction of Pipe Nexus 3, saying the 2030 Workers Safety Act calls for insurable worker safety in extraordinary threat scenarios. Increasing the anti-Pipe Nexus 3 heat is people speaking up for the bombers in solidarity.

"The bombings speak for the 85 per cent of West Western Can'tadians unwilling to accept another large industrial project in some of the last remaining pristine rainforest and salmon rivers of the planet. The 'One Ecosystem' theory introduced by David Suzuki Junior speaks to the cumulative benefit that large untouched wild zones contribute to the global biosphere."

Gravy to Overthrow the Cheese Curds has claimed mock responsibility for the bombings on their website, posting that they are proud to have put an end to Gasbro production, if but for one day.

GOCC is notorious for falsely admitting to crimes. When asked why they chose a humorous name for their dead-serious platform, and why they make public fools of themselves, the representative of GOCC stated they just want to show off "an example *par excellence*" of what they call "Come On! You! Nism". Their mandate and political platform is in fact to alter, very seriously, the substance of Can'tada through belly laughter, yuk yuk yoga, *Guitar Hero* therapy, and 40s dress-up mountain climbing tours. *Gravy to Overthrow the Cheese Curds* also aims to "attempt putting 'an end to the end' of the age of irony."

Interim mayor of Enderbee, Sam Sears, is quoted by GOCC today as crying out: "These bombings are not some kind of

metaphor!" Which, as the writers note, was an ironic statement considering the prose-poem feed that is underway through the *Troutsource* portal.

Troutsource is one of the only news blogs with a staff capable of tracking the movers and shakers within the increasingly virtual and confusing world. Like us, baby. Like us and support us using the pay feature at the top.

GOCC website link:

Listen, Peter M, as we all know, the gunk tar sands are very much an economically essential cesspool. That is why our party has taken upon itself to provide all citizens the sanitary measures necessary to keep the idea of our nation clean. Listen, Peter, there will always be people who are going to oppose these large projects which admittedly have significant impacts on the environment. This government, though, Peter, is doing everything in its power, Peter, to reduce these impacts, Peter, and ensure industry can benefit all Can'tadians. Recent socialist media postings of The Minister of Defense shaking hands with a rapist-murderer Commander-Sergeant from the Can'tadian Air Force is bad media practice. So is focusing on our tendency to joke about sadomasochism in public address. Peter Mansbridge, that you, a CBC veteran, are still alive to witness my Parlepasliament's record-length term in office, is a testament to I don't know what, maybe cryogenics. Sure, you may still smell the reek coming in through the crack around the door. We may, every one of us in this room, be aware of the same overflowing toilet down the hall that has persisted for decades. But rest assured that my Party, with

our deodorant, with our clean active syntax, with our firm, proud smiles, provides the best smell retardants to cover up the stench and plunge the superpower movement forward, to see that this necessary cesspool rises, Peter M, you Chez Guevara of liberal news. You love a good barbecue with your family on the lake. You must, Peter, adore being surrounded by the grasses, the mountains, the birds, while you scrub the grill for another batch of shish kabobs. These natural beauties sustain a certain kind of wealth, Peter, no doubt about it. Think of it as wealth B, the god-given endowment. Now look up from the grass and dragonflies, notice the computers and the cars. This is also a kind of wealth, Peter, call it wealth A, human

wealth. It's the money we generate from wealth A that provides us with the ability to sustain wealth B. Without the large screen TVs, we would have no beaver sanctuary, Peter. Let us not forget the human, Peter. The amount of tax revenue generated by oil diamonds is nothing less than extensively Homo sapien. Listen, Peter, we don't have the benefit of celebrities on our side pushing our cause like the environmentalist lobby. Biased media like Troutsource, funded as they are by environmental multinationals, should be read with a huge grain of salt. Listen, Peter, we know you like handcuffs ... listen, Peter, here, I'll bend over for you, now stick your nose in my bum and inhale. Clean like I told you, eh?

There's Cheryl Hill dressed in a bear outfit next to mayor Timothy, waving a flag by the same pole, forced to touch hips, on the turret of a huge mining machine which straddles the entire street, so the odd onlooker has to step back into doorways and dip around the sides of a store. Their banner says: "Byzantium-Always-Byzantium."

Wrist of good arm bubbling. What? A band. What? From the parade. For participants. Melted onto skin. Parade. Charade. Doe's eyes come out of bush blades, massive-eyed concern. Awake again. Spirit God passed onward. Me sick animal bedded down for final nap under funereal leafage. Doe licking my forehead. Indicating to me I must get up. They are coming this way. Four-legged friends arrive with a way forward. What end. The hooves. A hoofed friend. The hoofed friend's lick wakens me again. The god of the place between wood and field. Motor sound out of truck context. Down side of cliff, another animal path, slip, maybe to death, scrape back. Stuck in clump of trees on ledge that's singing a northern melody across the lips of a cold flute with Enderbee landscape visible in valley.

Bone Healer, will you help me
If your problem is bone-related
My cartilage aches
Then you must eat catfish
And you have some
Yes, here, eat this catfish
Thank you
With some salt of the elk's brow
Thank you
It has been cooking for you for centuries
Thank you.

You mind-swapped.
Really?
It happens
How?
Though poetry
Sounds bad
It can get you into trouble
I am in trouble
Yes you are

Will you tell me who done it?
You mean who you are?
I guess so, eh.

Insidious insights. Bone Healer grabs my hand and bites and bites and bites these patterns onto my skin. Smoke and steam. See everything about her that is him and it and we she feeds me the him the it the we drink. Why must any story be an ordeal? Ideal ordeal. My face hangs in an animal grin, a forward concentration, my jaw and tongue so heavy. A one-armed journey

Through the muskeg
Through the swamp
Around the lake
Between two rivers
Over a mountain pass

You oiled the entire town, bravo. Someone lit a flame and the whole town went up. You caused Armageddon on a miniature scale. How do you feel about that? It's a Pompeii down there.

Dan-the-Man and Memily are portaging their Canoe of Complicity over their heads like Mr. and Mrs. Canoe Head, or something, wearing the solemn smiles of art popes. Heading somewhere with that signature canoe to launch into the water, following the parade down Yeats street.

PIPENEXUS CALLED WORST DISASTER SINCE SEA SWELL

—28 July 2037—

The scene in Byzantium today will stand as the defining image of disaster of the 2030s, Andrew Coppernickle opined in a morning blog post.

Coppernickle's book, *X Marks the Spot* (2027), surveyed pivotal mega calamities through time. On top of the Chernobyl disaster in the 1980s, the Rwanda genocide in the 1990s, 911 in the 2000s, the Bread Basket Bust of the 2010s, the Mass Seas Swell of the 2020s, Coppernickle has added what he calls the Black Vesuvius Rupture of 2037.

The disaster is unfathomable in its sadness (See the *Troutstream* link at the bottom for images), with hundreds of Byzantiumites possibly oiled or burned alive. The Can'tadian government has invoked the War Measures Act for the first time since the

FLQ crisis.

Experts say the cleanup of this 10 million barrel spill is all but impossible, and Gasbro executive Chase Beefrude is advising that the Disaster Board condemn the valley.

"The thickness of the spill makes the cleaning task profoundly difficult," said Tex Mason of the Cleanup Board.

CEO Beefrude was unavailable for comment, and reports from *The Enderbee Endtimes* has him quoted as stating that high pressure pipeline technology will be "reevaluated" in the coming weeks and months, and that "It appears we have a problem here. Pipe Nexus 3 was designed to be bombproof." The lynching of the engineer who designed it is underway, as people have oil-balled his home in USmonton already (see [Podview](#)).

Now the bone healer is pushing the fiery fist of Mars Ares back into the fissure.
Stealing the hypnosis back again, now doing it in reverse.

(a single bleating of the elk)
(language telluric)

every word is bomb
said is exploding
every word is a bomb
together damaging
ten tintinnabombulations
said together
five tintinnabomublations
said together
two tintinnabombulations
detonating together

Apple Pie and
Cream Soda—
say
hello
and so does
Butter
(from under the lid)

After bedtime snack, bedded, a big book on chest
the weight on your ribs makes breathing fatiguing
reading the words makes your lids heavy
the book contains drelkam jars of pain
eyes follow the words, eye sewn to margin

from left margin to right margin, right margin
to left margin, left margin to right margin, right margin
to left margin, left margin to right margin, right margin
to left margin, and so on, and so on, eye sewn to margin

THAT HURT DIDN'T IT. THAT HURT THAT HURT THAT

IT HURT IT URTS IT RTS IT UR IT URT IT URTS IT U IT IS T U IT I TI I IT IT IT IT IT IS I I I I

Now let go of the arm of Ares, and grab the wing of the reaching owl

right margin to left margin, left margin

to right margin, right margin to left margin, left margin

to right margin, right margin to left margin, left margin

to left margin to left margin

Move now? Yes, can move now. Back outside tunnel, back looking down towards Byzantium. Slide of black oil down the hill. Sliding down the oil into Byzantium. Only coldness from arm stump. Out of the cave of the Bone Healer. Congealed bitumen up to knees. Slimy viscosity. Pain gone. Memory back. Cannot believe. I have no ID, I don't exist. Should have listened to Inkster, warning of Mars Ares with his pendulum. Like Darth Vader, or the Evil Circus Leader from the show Dustbowl, the Kurtz character or George's boss in Seinfeld, the anthropomorphism of the unknown. A nature which temps us to self-destruct. It's the same person in all the minds of the writers, the invisible character of plot, right Inkster?

Then there's the Carlyles, the ragtag bunch of them. They're all blasting from the built-in sound systems on their vehicles locally famous country songs. Scooting around through the parade on Mommy race car and Daddy hummer, dirt bike Son and Daughter big rig.

Am sliding down oil gush like a slippery slide Armageddon game flames here and there floating on the oil slick as t-lights. Fall and roll and slink paddle down the sludge hill faster with only one arm resisting the spin of body. Cellphone store hit hard by deluge. Hand-held gadgets little surfboards floating desks people staggering through the streets in robes of goopy petroleum. Off City Hall hang columns of oil stiffened into stalactites. There are arms and legs sticking out of it and necks as though emerging from thick coffee, like children made of chocolate. Hockey stick made of frozen bitumen. A pile of people stacked in a many-limbed bitumen soak pile like turtle. Mayor Timothy bitumen statue of congress of someone crawling in the direction of Gasbro headquarters. Expression recalls Terry Fox in final stretch. One arm down. One up. Stiffened into some sort of patriotic salute. Eyes plush with tears of gas. A pharaoh of some small land. He who had moved around town, so omnipresent, he who had shaken all the townsfolk's hands by the hotdog stand, whose speeches by the podium pandered to the taxpayer and the evader, who had repeated the same speeches at different events, but who remembered everyone's nickname. The real hypnotist. Oiled just like that. Oh god. Emergency trucks. Cross. Red Cross. Whole Northwest on a cross. Sick forest. Sickness in the stressed tree system. Empty forests after black magic beetles. Stumble. But this is it. The turning point. The tipping point. The point of no return. Wading through the oil. The bitumen, so heavy, and hardened, coated things, bronze, a blackened bronze. The rescue team, webbed people pulling me out of oil, on a stretcher. Wiping me down with huge rags that smell like paint thinner. A box truck full of the oiled townsfolk, flopping around like pelicans, to higher safe zone. The medics figure my arm was just blown off in the blasts here in town. Tumult of the myths seems over. Nothing but the oil-soaked aftermath. Taking me away. Someone always taken away. On a truck over to the hospital somewhere. Everything. Nothing. Everything. Never access this valley or the ranch again. Slabbed over thing. These are the poems I told Inkster.

A bomb went off near Charybdis ridge the day of the MGTUA parade. The first detonation to actually puncture a line, apparently killing a few rodents. Means nobody at the parade did the bombing. So much for ratting out a lover and getting an award. An underwhelming explosion it was.

HISTORICAL NEWS & NEWS FROM THE IMAGINATION

—Derrida Bloom's final poetic *Troutsource* essay about the prose poem progression—

Action prose poems were footsteps from Greece to Northwestism. From the shores at the bottom of Mount Olympus, the belittled creative Titans and the escaped muses sailed away o-way from the explosions of Greek Fire that rocked the Helicon. Roaring down the side of the mountain. Aeneas was on the boat for a time; Quetzalcoatl was on the boat; for a moment or two, it was the Ship of Fools; in another incarnation, two of each species were said to be on that boat; the boat is named Pequot; the Ghost; or it divides in three and becomes the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. But then it became the ivory-hulled vessel of the Titans, then cedar dugout coated in mist and sleet. The boat a topology of myth. The map a surreal array of sections of absence and native talent. By the time the boat arrived in the Northwest of

Can'tada it had become a train full of settlers; then it was a Haida sea vessel; a canoe guided with J-stroke, old ways faded from the paddlers' hands. It was a steam engine. Then a gunpowder keg rolled too close to the coal furnace; somewhere near the island of Lilburn the ship with the ancients and the microbial muses was hit with an accidental detonation. Fragments of the living and inanimate contents of the vessel got washed down through the currents, some muses were lost and some gods escaped to shore. God-relations melted into animal-relations; lovers in the myth became scattered fawns, footprints the shape of divided hearts in the bright mud. A decomposing filmstrip, even the poems fallout from some sort of melt-down at the core of words.

Once you free your elk, you will be a hero. Left margin to right margin.
Free my elk? Left margin to right margin. I have no idea what
happened to you, Samson. Right margin to left margin.

Up until now, you've been a rather weak character in the story of one
of the protesters, right margin. A kind of sitter on the fence type of guy, left
margin, but by setting your elk free, right margin, by doing the big thing, left
margin, you become an active character, right margin to left margin.

O?

Yes. I am doing a video pamphlet. A video to help protect one of the
rivers. To protect Lethe ... from light pollution.

O?

Yes sir, each egg is a perspective. Each egg painted a different colour,
a cascade between my blurred palms, each egg a speckled bomb opening up
a point of view from the land hand.

Samson and I walk to the back of Innisfree, and we get to work cutting
open the fence.

What's that duffle bag you got there. Left margin to right margin.

Bone Healer gave it to me. Right margin to left margin.

Bone Healer? You mean Skull Crusher!

(Twittering of a thrush)

IDYLLIC RANCH BREEDING GROUND FOR TERROR

—21 August 2037—

An elk farmer named Jeffery Inkster is now the number one suspect in what has been called the worst ecological catastrophe in the history of PC Columbia and Cowberta. Officials surrounded his tourist elk farm, making several arrests.

"Like many who live the idealist life, there was another story to him," Mayor Timothy was recorded as saying, mere days before he disappeared in the most recent explosion. "It doesn't surprise me that Jeffery packed explosives," were some of his last words.

The exact role Inkster played in the bomb plot is still unclear, however, but police say a search of his ranch turned up a duffle bag which sampled positive for plastic explosive residue. The bomb was apparently

fabricated in a garage operation using clock parts, a barely salvaged nuclear warhead uncovered from receding glaciers where it had been hidden for almost a century, as well as various street explosives.

Manifestoes, poems, and other items related to an art sabotage plot were seized from huts and yurts occupied by squatters in the surrounding Free Lands. Some of this Occupy group volunteered on Inkster's elk ranch, and he is thought to have acted as their figurehead.

Line searches are underway through other properties of Enderbee for the vanished elk farmer. The search team encountered not a single elk on his property. The reason for their disappearance was explained by a 50-metre tear in the fence.

Jeffery Inkster would have been looking for me that night. I know he would have been checking for me along the base of Charybdis ridge. Then, not finding me, walking back to Innisfree through the gap we had torn in the fence. From there he would have seen the ridge erupt in a black gulf. I think he would have been on the verge of cardiac arrest. He would suddenly remember. Everything. Me. The duffle bag. Mars Ares. He never would have known about the Bone Healer though, how the Bone Healer sent Mars Ares back into history. With a counter hypnosis from the older story that got rid of Skull Crusher.

I imagine Inkster searching for me through the hole in the fence. Hands lost in overall pockets for soul change as he stumbles around after me. Remembering how a few weeks before I had left the parade early after whiffing uncharacteristically on the juggle cascade ... beginning to suspect. Then forgetting on cue. Then digging in his pocket with his whole arm to pull out his ancient oh so ancient wallet, to look at a head-and-shoulders shot of Mnemosyne. "Mnemosyne, oh Mnemosyne ... Titan of all animals," he would think.

Innisfree was Inkster's art. But its closure was his masterpiece. I bet he still scratches his head and wonders, once in a while, if it actually was me who did the deed. It was indeed, I cry out, from my new humble life without an arm, in a wet, readerly city somewhere on the coast of Squashington. It was me, and by extension it was you, Inkster, for we were both antlers of the same Elkhead. And now I have footage of everything that transpired, and the means to make it rich by selling the footage of sabotage to news syndicates.

Now I imagine Inkster saying "the elk are on the move through the vertical forests of time, they smell the odour of freedom in their fellow's arse, which leads them over the pass into the mountains beyond the eskers, past Lethe and into the open." He is saying "I wish I could play my gurdy under the fulsome sky, that they come galloping back over the moss to show me the way into the open, but the elks don't listen to that song anymore. They are fled from the chorus of country tunes."

That is what Inkster said, though it is my lips now which whisper these words as I sit drinking a soy latte in Portlandsea. Jeffery Inkster has become the hero. And I was the director all along. The one who can dress up as anything. As Ares, the God of War.

I searched for Samson because I feared he might have gone astray, and might be out there in the mountains, looking, through suicide, to join the elk on their retreat between the eskers and into the open. I reckon activists like him, all of whom were coming to Innisfree more and more frequently, were in need of an animal friend and a mentor. They believed they needed to come work on a ranch such as mine to relearn forgotten skills. Then they discovered the contradiction of farming and turned against me with a whole bunch of isms. One day they turned against Innisfree, they did, taking several Mnemosyne and Hyperions hostage. Me and Samson responded, like mature people do to smart criticism, and we adapted. Okay, okay, I'll stop doing the velvet antler supplements, I promised. I'll just sell their adrenaline glands instead and make ashtrays out of their hoofs. The people who came to Innisfree were disappointed to see there is nothing here, not even a real hero. We let the elk go, actually. Sorry ...

But that—and by *that* I mean everything you have seen on this tour of Innisfree so far—all happened before you could see the outlines of my thoughts when you looked into the land. That's what one of my ranch hands told me on the last day of Innisfree. Claimed he saw my inner eye in the clouds around the valley. Inkster Intelligence of some sort, gone into the land.

Medieval is what she called it, the one who said my mind was one with the clouds hanging as thoughts along the Enderbee eskers in the dark wet woods, said that was the way it always was before a certain time, when spirit and matter were together. River to ranch, stream to fence, forest to plain, evergreen to broadleaf. Bowing my head to the giving earth, like a sunflower looking down on what it grows out of ...

Everybody out there was living the lives of tokens, folks in a board game of identity. All the faces in the town, the face of the artist and the face of the mayor, the fire fighter's moccasin head, they could all fit snug in a deck of cards, shuffled and stacked and laid face down, to be pulled at random and analyzed.

The hunters desire racks too, they sure do. The elk were my servants as much as I was theirs, their antlers slave to our worship.

To head out there when the moon is on a star-chain and it has become the stationary pendulum. It's like living in an exploded story welded back together, smooth and lean, lean like elk meat.

(The meat of the elk is sheathed in fat, unlike the fat in beef, which beads.)

ELK FARMER UNFAZED BY ARREST

—14 October 2037—

Several witnesses report that when law enforcement showed up at the ranch they found elk farmer Inkster sitting in the middle of a field playing a boxed musical instrument called the hurdy gurdy, singing a love song, apparently unrequited.

Elk farmer Jeffery Inkster, charged with eleven counts of capital crime against the State, claims that a hypnotist was responsible for coercing people of Enderbee into participating in the bomb plot.

At the preliminary court hearing in Canned Cougar, Inkster claimed that a man with "white mustache and white sweatshirt," who was trained in a powerful combination of Eye Movement Desensitization Reprogramming, hypnagogic inducement, and post-hypnotic suggestion, had sent into a destructive swoon several townspeople.

"Mars Ares had a trained thrush. Had animal pictures clipped from rustic magazines," Inkster testified.

Inkster is currently being evaluated for mental competency at the Canned Cougar psychiatric institute.

The hypnosis theory will be inadmissible at Inkster's trial, say lawyers, as it has never been proven that that this technique can achieve a totalizing takeover of an individual's will. Doctor Sigmund Bush

took the stand to testify that hypnotic techniques have no visible effect on heart rate, body temperature, or central cognitive patterns, making it highly unlikely that such techniques could ever be used to manipulate people into performing extremist acts.

Further threatening Inkster's case is the media climate *Troutsource* has noted before: the *Sun Media* empire is no fan of ambiguity. They need their bad guy, and it doesn't matter if the person is innocent or guilty, so long as they fit the description of a bearded angry person (aside from during the Stanley Cup playoffs).

Once the guru-like elk farmer, Jeffery Inkster—the same man who sawed off and made powder from the antlers of his beloved farm animals—is the definitive bad guy now.

Inkster is unrepentant about his complicity in the plot, and seems not to regret the tragic events surrounding his bizarre operation: "The ranch was a stepping stone to a new life, and a new place, and it doesn't matter where I am, I am forever in that place. Now I am free to go to jail, because the past has gone home. Memily, Cheryl Hill, Samson, even the Carlyles, are free to live in the real future now, in the real Enderbee, in the real world after the spill, after the antlers, and after Innisfree."

Sometimes it is a mega ranch other times an oil site. They call it the urban forest where tree clones are planted by the unknowing for the unknown. Silvery pipes annex the earth, connecting with other pipe lines that network through aspen systems suckering and sprouting downwind from sulfur emissions, cottonwood cologne merging with the semeny smell of certain brush. Clasped arms in the cobble-riffle pool, the rain crashes from nimbus Olympus onto the amphibian breast to sacrifice, her finger pointing towards the widow maker. breast. plate. armour fire. Above the mouse burrows and the rusted pitchfork stuck in the stump, within this nowhere grove filled with many things, a circle of cloaked figures reciting fibrous verse in a language drawn from the earth. Mermaid worms you swim the silky soils, class 6 drainages, absorbing this escaping. Writhe slimy tails in the wet pebbles, down a riparian passage.

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