

solids, or, *strike-out* (a suite)



rob mclennan

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cover image

detail from a photo taken in Minneapolis in June 1934. Source: U.S. Information Agency

for Stephen Brockwell

it is not that complexity is overrated, but it is overcomplicated;
it is not that obscurity is too obscure, it's that the underside
grows grungy if it isn't exposed to a change of air;

it is not that the language is exhausted, it is that we run down;
it's not that the edge won't cut anymore, it is that the cuts are
getting thinner;

it's not that art is artificial, it is that the artists get outright
seditty; it's not that literary reputations are not inevitable,
it's that they are invented;

not that theories are not beautiful, but that they are feeble;

– *C.D. Wright, Cooling Time*

Or people passing

on the other side of frosted glass,

a woman at the opera is talking in her sleep.

Once there was a man who sang in his sleep.

Four out of five living things are insects.

– *Cole Swensen, Goest*

Merit in poets is as boring as merit in people.

– *Wallace Stevens*

montreal

I would through me, then, begin

I keep dreaming of living alone

three apples & the bay city rollers

I need the distractions to carry me alert

the four horsemen of ottawa cabdrivers

~~the women of all cities break my heart~~

at the end of practice I begin

autobiography

the child of some & the father of one

a blue squall intercepts me; scream

the whole of the mountain invasive & changing

a sunlight lothario; as a dream ~~eatches~~ intercepts sleep

when all numbers past & to come; two ~~eats~~ for flinching

in my sleep, I; bake beauty flesh out of bone

train

the form of the enjambment is open

through fourteen sleet, a wave of nausea clouds

I sit well above the station

corollary colours; rain on the window

tracks

~~she talked abt the boudoir in advance~~

the puddle on the sidewalk meets the fact

I want the mud to know how to settle

I am the silence that disturbs the ear

the traces of the art subsides

solids

the water in the cup bends w/ me

the fence at the back of the farm is an illusion
between trees

two fingers of rain is an accumulation
the day measures

my father in his notebook reminds me

~~my father~~ in the last place I was looking

house

in the mud in the field it grows

a two car garage w/ no landscaping

every poem talks to its own architecture

tokyo

I berate the form as unreliable

a line & string; releasing slip-knots scattered

if love can be qualified; a practical solution

~~cockburn sang, I never can sleep in yr arms~~

would that I could memorize the earth

I have left this fraction of ~~ontario~~ behind

striations

I have been diffuse all day

the frog in the blender is the joke that refuses to die

the seat by the window is luckiest

I am in danger of shortly

if I told you, would your wedding ring

am I going on amount

tinker

the colour of the sample does not need to match
the open paint

when he started to write, saul bellows
removed the letter s

all the pink houses ~~in st lazare tingle~~

in the heavy rain; I had to leave my bicycle
by the bookstore

what does the water know

the last place I ever

abated

as she wrote, sonar ping on the porcelain

the weight of the paper mill stench is sometimes
too much to bear

between exposition & the act of the hand,
the beer behaves badly

when are you thinking of disappearing?

each to their own, the anatomy of settings; you cant
rush the perfect

from international bridge

reading wallace stevens

the bright mess of colour in the florists where brockwell
buys flowers for his wife

the deep coral hue of montreal
cannot be sold or bartered

the list of other people is ~~very long~~

triggers

she breaks my heart by name

where one thing further into & immediate

I dont remember anything abt the shore

will anyone remember that phones had bells

when you begin where do you begin

I am noting the submission of small mercies

my love changes & I would not have it fixed

rereading robert creeley

the woman in the diner is too long

the coffee less bitter with a cinnamon touch
in the filter

~~I suffer these breaks~~

I can only suggest so little

~~I can only suggest so much~~

comfort class

in the future would be called economy

love is a dog on a small brown hill

there is nothing I could breathe right now to tell

something

sometimes there is nothing else to do but fall
& ~~wait to see how you land~~

she points her finger to the dog outside, & the van
w/ the unusual colour

have you seen one of those before

I am looking at the quick of medieval entry

I am a ~~project of dirt lost roads slowly~~ waiting

solar eclipse / ~~lunar eclipse~~

the sun is stronger ~~than the moon~~

I am learning the radicals ~~of carpentry & food~~

I am beginning to see the complexities ~~of love & the ease of re-entry~~

ones enthusiasm is infections; ~~hindsight 50-50~~

I am beginning to understand ~~some~~

at this speed, the train ~~punches holes in the air~~

adjunct

I know nothing of eden but the ~~lack~~ of parties would have probably
killed me

I am looking back on eating an apple

the conductor is clear as the sky

the texture squeaks of the curds on my coloured teeth

everything credits to a lack of understatement

poem (~~three dog night~~)

I stand a urinals chance away

we fall in & out of step

the dog at the end of the street barks at nothing

who am I to suggest

the house is ~~much bigger than~~ the shed

a corollary

the squeak of the cart is like a mouse

the tension that pulls us apart ~~& holds~~

I am studying the window the horizon

a buddhist phrase of corn is not profound

I am destination more than I am willing

I am left w/ song & water paving
~~the same ground; covered~~

fire

proofing it right

the sequence of events is critical

if no the fire or the smoke or the trees

the speculation of time is question

these clouds thumbtack the hard moon

I am standing in the barn at seven

~~everything is not all right~~

the city

thinking squarely in the face

I ~~passion~~ trees; I ~~heart~~ the moon

exposition is not clear reason

the silo at the edge of barn as
old as I & crumbles

the city remembers bees

beauty squarely in the eye

could never ~~look me in the you~~

house

at some point it was a good idea to put the couch out

the house in glen robertson the hill stands

tim hortons coffee fresh as the ice

he says, when in rome. . .

instinct my critical song; ~~my failed life~~
~~as a montreal go-go dancer~~

thighs out to ready; heart the wind

I am as procedural as stone berth

harkening the telltale thump of heart all
roads lead to

no more oldies; stop playing that *middle*
of the road shit

I am dead outside

religion

the merit of association is punctuated

I heart & the world hearts me

brockwell laughs at aphids, not aphorisms

I am the other way around

the tree at the top of the hill is a red line

a suggestion of birds overwhelm

the water is think & reliable

if being afraid of the arc needs a bite-light

how trudeau used words

I am not abt to confuse presidents with prime ministers

dont you know ~~w~~here I am

resorting to the resort hotel ~~I am~~

half of the time the only living boy in the national capital ~~region~~

to strike is to be undone

the 60s; I missed our camelot by three

the door opens dust ~~a run; a pirouette~~

american fiction

most ~~original~~ circumspect & searching

where the ~~incident~~ instance of history
might occur

the old moves have been appearing in
disguised forms

a member or affiliated orthodox

I am poetry as poetry

I am writing this so ~~rob-melennan~~ can understand

ontario

a lode of bloodstone load

I sing long about california; a shakespeare of light

the fridge magnet will endure

I am; we just sound ~~good~~ enough

bottom on the act of words

I am singularly ~~nature; natural~~

the divine orders from here are always

a lake a line a lode; a stone

the thin line the radio brings fresh water

the middle years

to stop for a while & let life take care

the differences are between us on the cape

the slow will have of sky; ~~the slow will have of~~
~~wind erosion~~

a skilled hand will still love you outdoors

I am looking out the best available

note that the notebooks ~~for catalus stop~~

I am brethren to ~~the breath line~~

critics & deniers have said

modern gothic speech

a line of difficulty track reported birds

a concision as demotic

I am a club a temple stone

in the sun am human literally

sinking the metonymic ties that bind marriage

she would love that tool of tongue

an adaptation of ~~maximum~~ lost human assets

is remarkable to conjure

bicycle music

I dont like things whose inevitability works against me

the hour is too discursively clear to be representative

I have nothing left ~~with which~~ to locate the precise moment

the lock; the resonance; the strongest sense

where is speaking under; spring

the fucker that stole my bicycle

a walk a step can bear its full rhetorical weight

tenure

to hold, he says, the high note

I am ~~but~~ a character from her lips

the novel answers little; if mozart ~~is~~ really dead

a wage or a symphony

after five days, the shrine for the five who died
in the somerset fire

w/ description & exemplification, the bounds
of her own

a translation made of pleasure; graces

seagull

foregone, the practice of ~~above~~ outside

raised flash on its matt red square

a french fry in a parking lot or strip

I am idle beside kfc; the ste lawrence river

through the mcluhan of odd noises

screech of tires & of air

I pick myself up on lift lift flow & soar

looking in at metaphor

garbage day

bag of bullets missed the morning mark

I am heaven in the line

the last time you were even here

the apartment we drank in

orange porch the step light

when size doesnt matter as ~~much~~; collect the shards
& glue them back together

my earlier assertions were like artifacts

I was searching for a stage that could enact

logic

a spell that veers closer to homage than grainy irritant

hold the practicalities haunted by his gesture

blue eyes astonished; one verbal gesture

the new hydrants invite no comfort

laundry

a string of acts that together resemble composition

quarters along open-door lines

~~in the fields of pine~~

~~I am~~ historically across the page

what seems workability; what seems previously dying

walking for a long time understanding

as a moon might have tipped ~~been moon~~

there is always a season

capital

held the inquiry growing disappointment borders

~~a trite~~ ever blamed for ownership

the birds sing restless through the trees & sun

the monarchy a coffin nail parade

to help build a nation; I am baking bread

wrote letters to my little deaths for years

a floor plan of days & basements & minutes

if it takes a village ~~takes we live~~

~~the differences between votes & voters; parties~~

one hundred & three

latin

a dog in hindsight even more

what memory creates; the blonde girl I like

I am a blank page & a dream; what matters is what
we instill

I admire her body ~~composed of unfinished canvas~~

dead grandmother my a steel trap mind

a hole; some brief remark; an island

cannot be liberating, translators ~~liberally~~ extend

so far he made some broad points some

pictures

a photograph of a man

contrary to what we enjoyed just then perfection

the goddess was ~~only ordinary~~ meadow

between the drumming & the ear, a great relation

black & crumble white

I am hot & animate; there is no difference now

my first line was a rose

& ~~she~~ was consistently good & soft & only because
I was curious

the metaphysics is already ~~bothering sympathy~~

7-up

the sibilant kiss

from kingston to la chine, rapids ~~rapidly firing~~

gone away the forgotten thing emits ~~asphodel tones~~

I begin w/ something pound says in his notes

the grocery store fire was not their fault

her ~~differences~~ diffusements

my body permeates the tambourine war

I am short by nature, long by design

~~I am~~ a literal construct of ~~here~~ wrongly suggests

a ~~drink~~ partly set himself up initially

lemons, blackberries

what the hell are we doing? (question)

~~what the hell are we doing (statement)~~

imparting a centretown speech, a lower
town lore

the bridge that yet does not exist

~~I need to see the daggers and the shore~~
a formal elegance

~~the fourteen ways of looking at a wander~~

ex libris

too much visual

how can they wander when they ~~don't~~ waste time

a centre of slow learning, ~~learning~~ through

mimesis down a flurry hill of ~~leaving~~, leaves

he talks a math of traditional replete

I am the symbol of forgiveness; man vs. man

I am social against your body ~~hair~~

a less of the preoccupied man; ~~as hegel~~

mis-remembered

a theory of blind classicism

the kingston trio fries when conley goes brock

I am remembering nothing of the above

paternalia

inside against the roaming trees

~~what was her name before she had the baby~~

it is then for what sake that it is

~~the deepest part of the body is the inside~~

a simultaneously arrived what

~~I step over the smell just to get there~~

now I am starting to fall behind

~~I am want in the foremost~~

bearings

~~where she has to go to get hers~~

hammered down w/ a scrape uncharacteristically cool

this is the framework that stays sat in my neighbourhood

mornings begin to modify my goals; perhaps

does the ground beneath you sing, I wonder

where my mythologies adrift, I am covered

painted pure like discovery; a prosody hand

strategy

to be undone; an eastern ontario state of mind

dying slowly; I am killing myself midwestern

blonde bombshell ~~in the fore~~

autumn thoughts react to spring elements ~~& dynasties~~

in the original, a chinese character does not exist

in newspapers expected but not given

in ~~the heart of~~ an empty field

caged

small, for this is the way we expand all inherited traditions

~~I am neither heroic nor fashionable~~

~~inhaling from a hard white tube~~

the wind is not a detail

composition

radio where I learn my everything

the red mailbox ~~outside the dead pub~~ no longer in use

this is the key to describing all arbitrary affect

the boredom is fascinating; overdone

I will ~~not register my imagination~~

after sunset

the impossible moon rises to replace the impossible sun

~~if these words were always yours or mine~~

the ice cube releases heat as it melts in the glass

I am a false map ~~of desire~~

how can it be that the shadows are gathered

fenceline

~~the block that holds the park, thin hints
to instigate construction~~

I am at the end of subject matter

between the river & the glass reflects

Id like to address the demands of writing

~~Id like to address lung capacity~~

like a phoenix her poetics greet

symphony

the repetition is a constant vigil

hold your hands to take the jellybeans from the
vending machine

two wrongs dont make alight

it dont matter what you did

justice spins like car wheels overturned

~~I needed~~

~~I told them what I loved & why~~

discursive

it is all too far to bring the world out as it is

when am I going to make the fray

~~three dogs decide~~

~~the unruliest of birds~~

~~the writers festival forgets~~

~~her children I have never met~~

a tactile displacement

writing leads writing to only

an eventual screenplay

today the doctor wants to know the score

it was in the dream

a call from orlando while youre still young

I keep dreaming of living alone

if I knew my words once filled & fashioned

I call her miss atom bomb; I call her
blonde bombshell

~~a humble icon of further imagination~~

I think singing must be in beautiful cellars

Notes:

solids, or, *strike-out* (a suite): this collection was written rather quickly, & started during an overnight trip Ottawa poet Stephen Brockwell & I took to Montreal in early April 2005 to take in the ECW poetry launch. I spent much of our transit immersed in American poet C.D. Wright's *Cooling Time, An American Poetry Vigil*; so many thanks to her for simply existing to write such a collection. The book also has to thank the City of Montreal, and the perfect poems of Artie Gold. Much thanks to Brockwell, Jon Paul Fiorentino, Jennifer LoveGrove, Alessandro Porco, David McGimpsey, John Lavery, Brian Sentes & whoever else happened to be around for our foolishness.

The poem "american fiction" was induced by a letter written by Louis Zukofsky published in the Zukofsky issue of *The Chicago Review*. The first italicized line from "bicycle music" is from the poem "I have been thinking a great deal" by Montreal poet Artie Gold, originally published in *before ROMANTIC WORDS* (Montreal QC: Vehicule Press, 1974) & later in *The Beautiful Chemical Waltz* (Montreal QC: The Muses' Company, Inc., 1992).

some of these have appeared previously as an above/ground press broadsheet, & in *The Argotist Online* (argotistonline.co.uk, UK), *Plantarchy 2: a new journal of poetry & poetics* (OH), the chapbook *WESTFEST, poetry stage* (Ottawa ON: Apostrophe Press, 2005), & in the anthology *Decalogue: ten Ottawa poets* (Ottawa ON: Chaudiere Books, 2006). thanks to all the editors/publishers involved.