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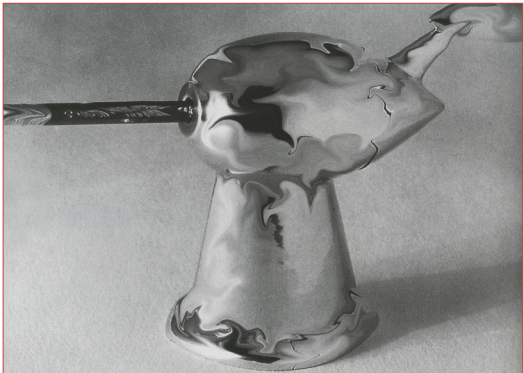
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Editor's Note

Last year we introduced themes to *carte blanche*, with a spring issue on crisis and a fall issue on obsessions. This spring, we opened the call for submissions to anything and everything, to give our writers *carte blanche*, as it were.

You may roll your eyes at our word play, but we are quite serious about our name. The act of writing begins with a blank sheet of paper and ends when the writer's imagination has been captured on the page. Where we go, how we get there, and what we find on that page, is all up to the writer no matter the subject.

In this issue, a surprising number of these explorations take place near the water: Heather Davis tries to return to the beach of her dreams, Alex Austin carries us into the Californian surf, Caitlin Crawshaw wades through jelly fish in the Indian Ocean, and Kara Sievwright's "Wrecked Woman" falls (or is pushed) into the sea.

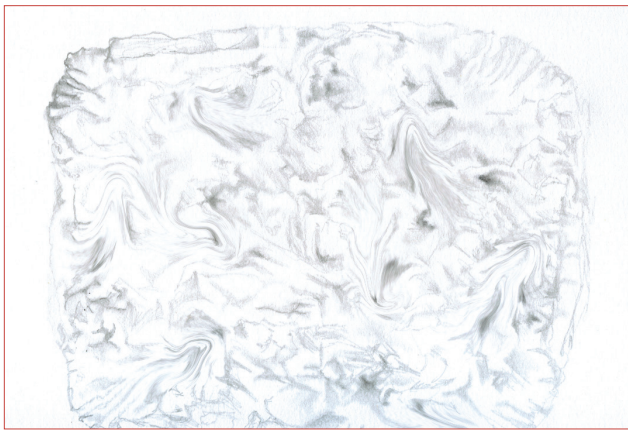
We invite you to embark on a voyage of discovery, watery or otherwise, and follow our contributors as they take us to places unknown and familiar. We think you will enjoy the journey.

Maria Schamis Turner, Editor

Sundays with the Pastor Gone, My Father Gave the Sermon

Emily Grise

I couldn't bear to watch him but couldn't
not listen, so I'd squint at the gold cross
above the altar so hard its light splintered
across my eye. Its crosshairs twisted and
grew and shrank their brilliance as my father
spoke the words of struggle and sin and love
despite. His voice muscled against
the stained glass, then broke so small and tender
I felt it like a single hair down my throat. He knew
when to cast a net and when to pull it in. Congregants
sometimes forgot themselves and applauded
when he was done. He'd have to usher
at the sanctuary door after the last hymn sent us forth,
shaking hands and refusing praise: *You have such a gift.*
I always enjoy listening to you speak. You know,
you may have picked the wrong profession.
He would squirm like an animal in another animal's
teeth. My mother's handbag held the keys
to our Volvo and I'd filch them while
she stood, wire-smiled, by my father
so I could slip to the parking lot, wait out
my father's accolades from the driver's seat
where I wasn't allowed. I changed the radio presets,
sweat in the sun made cruel through window glass.
I yanked on the locked steering wheel and roared
engine sounds like I had anywhere urgent to be.



The Warmth of Steel and Snow

Chris Chew

He says he hears it. His ear is pressed against the cold, smooth metal of the rail. I reach into my pocket, pull out the scope and place it next to the M1 Garand on the sleeper ties in front of me. I see the back of his head as he holds his breath. His hair seems dull, no longer the jet black of his youth. Several gray strands poke out from the mass of black. He sticks his hand in the air, pointing his finger.

“Wait,” he says. “Wait. There.” He lifts his head off the track.

I kneel in blue utility pants, and I listen with eyes closed because this sometimes helps.

I’ve been here many times before. As a boy, placing pennies on the track, hiding in the brush as the train sweeps past, his hand gripping the back of my shirt as I laugh and launch myself forward, the suction pulling me in, my face inches from the fury. Later, in my teens, feeling the M1’s wood giving warmth back, like two people holding hands. Looking down the sights under cover of the Ghillie suit, through the blur of the massive train’s wheels at the soup can on the other side because he had said all the movement and violence of steel on steel was how it had been. You must shoot through it, he had said, as he rested one hand on my back, the other on my chest, feeling the rhythm of my breathing.

We cross the culvert and move to the edge of the brush on the other side. We find our spots, two ancient depressions in the detritus under a canopy of new growth, and we lie in them as we always have. He pulls out his binoculars. They hang around his neck now as they do in every picture in the box in the closet of our house. He hands them to me and I look down the track.

“About a mile,” I say.

“Ok. Check your mark now.” He moves behind me and reaches into my pocket for the glass. I can’t see him but I know he’s looking through the scope at the soup can on the other side.

“Three clicks,” I say.

“Three,” he says. “Yes, three’s about right.”

I adjust the elevation dial by three clicks. The dial is warm with the heat of my fingers. And I think this is how it must have felt when he made the same adjustments in Bastogne

under heavy mortar fire, the dial hot to the touch no matter how cold the day or night.

I hear the train and I know we’re thinking about the same things. I imagine the height of the freight undercarriage and the radius of the wheels. I think of the distance between them. How far ahead of the opening I must aim in order to clear the wheels. Which cars to avoid. How far behind the diesel I must start. What the chemical and fuel cars look like.

He taps me on the shoulder and hands me the scope, then takes the binoculars from me. “Here,” he says. “Today’s the day.”

Today is always the day. He has been saying this since the day he first let me hold the M1, five years after he had returned. I would hit the mark through the train, he would say, and that day had come a year ago. At 400 yards through the train, looking through the scope, I had made calculations of trajectory based on bullet drop, windage, and the caliber of the round.

He had left in 1942 a late-riser but had come back getting up at three every morning. There were things to do, he would say to me and my mother. They wouldn’t do themselves. And on mornings such as these he was here setting up his son’s classroom, passing on the only knowledge he had and that he thought worth passing along. It didn’t come in words, though words were useful for such things as *pass the butter* and *where’s my wallet*. The only knowledge of any importance came from experience and betrayed any attempt to transmit it through words.

He did, in fact, speak of the war and there were stories if only to satisfy the curiosity of those who hadn’t been there. The stories of Baker Company were never hidden from his children in any deliberate sense. There was no hush or mindful silence in the spots where one might expect a narrative. He was matter-of-fact about the characters he served with and of the missions he went on, and neither relished in nor underplayed the drama of the details. But there was always a sense that these were not the whole story. And the story, the real story, was something less of characters, drills, formations and strategies. Less about anything of prescribed,

scripted war, and more of something else entirely. I felt it whenever we went shooting, like he was living it. And when he looked down the sights he shifted his manner of speaking, his voice more monotone, his words, measured, monosyllabic, like they were expensive. And the longer he looked at his mark – a soup can, a sign, a block of wood – the more his breathing seemed to grow shallow. He didn’t smile when he shot but I knew within that moment he knew some measure of satisfaction.

As he looks through his binoculars down the line, I take the M1 and rest it on its now unfolded bipod stand, then disengage the safety.

“Here. Get ready,” he says quietly and he looks down at my setup. “Forget the glass. Sights only.”

I remove the scope then press myself hard against the ground and spread my legs further apart. I line up the rear and front sights with the mark, which is 200 yards distant across the tracks. I can’t quite resolve the fine details but I know it’s just a soup can, as it almost always is. It’s preserved after each outing for posterity. Riddled with holes from past triumphs, then retrieved and stored with the M1 like a troubled couple, temporarily reconciled if only to share the matrimonial bed. His own bed lies empty after he awakes: his wife, my mother, having left on a cold winter morning not unlike the present one for reasons I can only guess. I have only the one story, his, and I suppose that is how it will remain.

I have never made the mark from so far away using iron sights alone.

“I want to use the scope,” I say but I make no move toward that end.

“Just relax. Trust the sights. Breathe.”

The train arrives and fills us with its noise and smell and punches us with a sudden, massive displacement of air. I feel it as the Ghillie suit lifts off my back in the suction that follows, only to be held down by my own body’s weight. There are no words, now, not just because none would be heard, but also because taking the shot is all that is left. *cb*



Physics

Gillian Sze

What falls from the sky
is still deciding what it wants to be.
Something like rain, something like snow,
the streets mottled with wool caps and umbrellas.
Nevertheless, St. Catherine is soaked.
I hang my jacket, the added weight: proof of indecision.

The horns of snow trucks disharmonize
and someone else laughs, senses a poem.
Any minute now is my new repetend.
Any minute now for the water to boil.
Any minute now for the mailman.

No mail in a week and I am certain I don't exist.
Loneliness, once the enemy,
has since become acceptance.
It blusters in and as I get older,
becomes easier to identify:
a hand palpating an imaginary organ
that joins my heart to my stomach,
qualms to lethargy.

The shorter afternoons
and the forced optimism of my daily horoscope
make me seek approbation.
Today's reads:
Your job is to maximize the moment.
Quit judging yourself.

I pass an alley
and a voice from somewhere above me
calls out a curt *Sorry!*
I don't bother to look up.

What falls from the sky
is an apology
belonging to anyone who can hear it;
singing, *A woman left lonely will soon grow tired of waiting,*
a voice spread through that takes its time to dry.

Q & A

Gillian Sze's second book is *The Anatomy of Clay* (ECW Press, Spring 2011). Her debut poetry collection, *Fish Bones* (DC Books, 2009), was shortlisted for the 2009 QWF McAuslan First Book Prize, and her poem "Like This Together" won the 2011 3Macs *carte blanche* prize. She co-edits *Branch Magazine* and teaches creative writing to youths. Gillian is currently pursuing a PhD at Université de Montréal.

You can read Gillian's poem *Physics* from *The Anatomy of Clay* in this issue of *carte blanche*.

carte blanche's Greg Santos interviewed Gillian Sze by e-mail in April 2012.

What drew you to poetry in the first place?

I would say that it was the combination of black marks and white space. I still find the form arresting at a very fundamental aesthetic level: how a poem looks at first sight, the leaps from line to line, the breaks, the position of words.

You're originally from Winnipeg but currently live in Montreal where you're pursuing a PhD. How does place influence your writing?

Any creative act requires one to be open to everything: the sounds, the smells, your fellow drifters, and no doubt the surroundings. Place is just another opportunity for catching moments and affects: to feel dislocated, or at home, or nostalgic. I needed to carry the idea of my Winnipeg in order to write about home – and I also needed to leave it. In my first collection, the spectacular space of the museum and art gallery dictated the ekphrastic mode of *Fish Bones*. I would say that place is more palpably felt in *The Anatomy of Clay*, where everyone in the urban landscape (recognizably Montreal and Toronto) is a spectacle.

The poems in your first full-length poetry collection, *Fish Bones*, were ekphrastic pieces sparked by visual art. You are also the co-editor of *Branch Magazine*, a national magazine devoted to showcasing both literary and visual arts. Can you discuss your interest in combining the different art forms?

In general, I like leaps between forms and genres. In my final year in high school, my calculus teacher allowed us to do a final project where we approached any math topic of our choice in any way we chose. So I went down to the art room and worked on a painting of the Archimedean spiral. But an interest in the combination between the textual and visual started, I would say, as early as children's books. It's a visible engagement with language that I think gets lost when we grow up and start reading novels that have no pictures. The visual seems to be a natural place to turn in poetry.

Fish Bones was a delight to write as a creative thesis – there was no way of getting bored, no way of exhausting the method when there was always a new art piece with which to start, always a different angle to see the beginning of a new poem.

My friendship with Roberutsu, a visual artist and designer, was crucial in our founding of *Branch*. He is both a friend and collaborator, and our conversations over the years naturally turned to creating a public venue where our main interests dovetailed to become, we hope, a fruitful, and exciting project.

Branch Magazine is exclusively an online magazine. How do you think the Internet has changed poetry and the literary arts?

Accessibility. Everything is just available and easily accessible. We encounter so many new and amazing artists, writers, and ongoing art projects on the Internet; reciprocally, *Branch* has a far-reaching audience. Since our debut two years ago, we've received 11,000 visitors from nearly a hundred countries. The numbers are nuts. Needless to say, with the Internet, all art forms experience an increase in sharing and exposure. This can be great but some may argue that there's the downside of increased mediocrity as well.

How does editing a magazine affect your own writing or vice-versa?

I see editing and writing as entwined activities, but editing and evaluating others' work is a different game than editing and revising my own. It's hard to be gentle with yourself. The work isn't safely insulated when it's yours. But I always enjoy reading what gets sent to *Branch*. I'm sure all that reading is doing something to my head and, in turn, something to my writing.

Your poem "Like This Together – Crisis" won the 3Macs Prize in issue 13 of *carte blanche*. Do you have any thoughts about this poem that you would like to share? Could you explain its origins?

"Like This Together" maps onto the late and great Adrienne Rich's poem by the same title. In terms of the process, I see it as if I had just tugged at a thread in her poem. I quote her lines ("A year, ten years from now / I'll remember this – / this sitting like drugged birds / in a glass case"), because in them I find something for myself, my own "this" to remember. I'll always return to Rich's version though. You can read it in her collection, *Necessities of Life* (1966).

The title of your second book, *The Anatomy of Clay*, is inspired by a passage from *The Aeneid*. How would you say Virgil's epic poem guides your collection?

I wouldn't say that *The Aeneid* was a guiding principle for *The Anatomy of Clay*. Like everything else, it took part in a convergence of influences during the writing of it. What else happened around that time? I was reading Virgil while I was on the other side of the world. I was traveling, so everyday felt unfamiliar. Furthermore, I wasn't sure what I was going to do when I returned to Canada. I was in a transitional phase – uncertain, restless, slow. I visited twenty temples in three weeks. I decided to cut out meat and followed the lunar calendar. And, for some reason, something stuck when I was reading Book VI, where Anchises explains to Aeneas the process of human reincarnation, the sinning body as "deadened and dimmed." I made an impromptu decision, moved to Toronto shortly after I returned, and finished writing the book.

Who are some of your favourite poets, and how do they influence your work?

There are too many to name, but off the top of my head: I turn to William Carlos Williams because he reminds me that the simple image is best; I turn to Anne Carson because she reminds me that "you can never know enough"; and I turn to Whitman because, hell, sometimes you just want to read about swimming boys.

Now that you've published two full-length poetry collections, how would you compare the two experiences? How is *The Anatomy of Clay* different from *Fish Bones*?

I worked closely with Jason Camlot (poetry editor at DC Books) on *Fish Bones* and Michael Holmes (poetry editor at ECW) on *The Anatomy of Clay*. David McGimpsey always told me that the most important thing when it comes to editing and publishing is to work with someone who really cares about the manuscript and I've been lucky to have had that with Jason and Michael.

Seeing one's manuscript through is both exciting and exhausting. Susan Stanford Friedman puts it best when she describes the book as being "both you and not-you, a forever fixed extension of your passionate labour, but cut off from your continuing evolution." I look at *Fish Bones* now and it's very much written in an earlier stage of my development – and perhaps it's too soon to say the same thing for *The Anatomy of Clay*, but I hope I'll detect some difference, some mark of growth.

What's next for Gillian Sze? Are you currently working on anything?

I'm always trying to keep busy, so there's always a "next": – another poem, another manuscript, another issue of *Branch*. I'm involved in a cross-country multimedia collaboration that's coming out later this year. It's been in the works for over a year now and the finish line is almost in sight. I wish I could get into it here, but since the idea for the project didn't originate with me ... I'll play it coy.

Alex

Austin UV 30 is the first chapter of a novel-in-progress. He's had fiction published in *Black Clock*, *Rose & Thorn Journal* and *Beyond Baroque* and has had several plays produced.

Brian

Campbell's most recent collection is *Passenger Flight* (Signature Editions, 2009). His work has been published in numerous reviews, including *CV2*, *The New Quarterly*, and the *Saranac Review*. His work also appears in issues 6 and 7 of *carte blanche*. In 2006 he was shortlisted for the 2006 CBC Literary Award for Poetry. Campbell lives in Montreal. www.briancampbell.ca

Chris

Chew is a technical writer originally from Ottawa and now living in Montreal with his wife and two children. He is currently being mentored in the Quebec Writer's Federation Mentorship program.

Caitlin

Crawshaw is an Edmonton freelance journalist and MFA (creative writing) student at University of British Columbia. Her articles have appeared in the *The Globe and Mail*, *Maclean's*, *Reader's Digest*, and others.

Heather

Davis lives with her husband and daughter near Sherbrooke, Quebec, and teaches creative writing at the North Hatley Library. She completed her MFA at the University of British Columbia in 2011. Now she is writing about travel (and couch surfing) around North America for a year with her family.

Alisa

Gordaneer is from Victoria, BC, where she writes poetry and nonfiction. She teaches writing of all sorts and contributes a monthly column about the arts to *Boulevard*. She's won many awards for both her poetry and journalism from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Foundation, and the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies. Her work has appeared in various journals including *The Malahat Review*, *Grain*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *Alimentum*.

Emily

Grise is a native of Lexington, Kentucky. She earned her MFA in poetry from the University of Missouri, St. Louis. She currently teaches writing to college students and reads for several literary publications in the St. Louis area.

Jacqueline

Kolosov Her poetry and prose have recently appeared in *Orion*, *The Missouri Review*,

Under the Sun, and *Water~Stone Review*. She has published two poetry collections, most recently *Modigliani's Muse* (WordTech, 2009).

Sylvie

Massicotte lives near Montreal, Quebec. She has had five short story collections published by Les éditions de L'instant même: *Partir de là* (2009), *On ne regarde pas les gens comme ça* (2004), *Le cri des coquillages* (2000), *Voyages et autres déplacements* (1995), and *L'œil de verre* (1993) and seven young-adult novels published by Les éditions de La courte échelle. A number of her stories have been translated into English, Dutch, and Czech.

Ian

McGillis is a writer and journalist. His first novel, *A Tourist's Guide to Glengarry* (The Porcupine's Quill, 2003) was shortlisted for multiple awards. His forthcoming Montreal-set novel, *William and Robbie*, is named for the two idols, both named Shakespeare, of its adolescent protagonist.

Susan

Ouriou translates fiction from French and Spanish, edited the 2010 anthology *Beyond Words – Translating the World*, and is the former director of the Banff International Literary Translation Centre. Her translation, *Pieces of Me*, won the 2009 Governor General's Award for Literary Translation. She is also an award-winning fiction writer.

Emily

Paskevics is currently a graduate student at McGill University in Montreal. Her most recent publications include essays in *The Future of History*, short fiction in *Young Voices*, and poetry in *Bear Creek*, *Ascent*, *The Claremont Review*, and forthcoming in *Shorthand*, via *Diaspora Dialogues*.

Mark

Paterson's story "Something Important and Delicate" won the 2010 3Macs *carte blanche* Prize. He is the author of the short story collections *A Finely Tuned Apathy Machine* and *Other People's Showers*.

Martha Ailish

Moore is a visual and graphic artist based in Montreal. For more insight see www.marthaailishmoore.com

Maureen

Ranson (ATIA, LTAC), Calgary, Alberta, has a master's degree in French Literature. She edited *TransLit Volume 6* (Red Deer Press, 2004) and *TransLit Volume 5* (Red Deer Press, 2001), and her short-story translations appear in nine volumes of the anthology. Her published translations are *Maurice Dufault*, *Vice Principal* (University of Calgary

Press, 2006), a novel by Marguerite Primeau, *Scholarly Journals in the New Digital World* (University of Calgary Press, 2004) and *The Caveman's Calculator, Explaining the Real Meaning of Mathematics to Children* (Université du Québec à Hull, 2000).

Odile

Rollin first discovered the taste of citrus and the subtleties of spice in Morocco, the country of her childhood. The new and bittersweet awaited in West Berlin 14 years later and in France. Yet the strongest taste of exile, and the most lasting, came in Calgary where she began teaching in 1983.

Katy

Slany Churcher Katy has always dreamed of the sea whether she was snuggled in her cabin on a year long sailing adventure or just gazing at the horizon from her home on a small island off of Vancouver. After much travelling she has decided to settle for a while and is making art in Simon Fraser University's visual art program.

Kara

Sievewright is an artist, designer, and writer from the west coast who makes prints, drawings, comics, and books. She is currently working on a graphic novel. You can see more of her work at www.makerofnets.ca.

Ann

Sosnowski is a writer from Baltimore, Maryland. She's a poet and is currently earning her MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College.

Gillian

Sze see Q & A page 54.

Tom

Wayman Among Tom Wayman's recent books are a poetry collection, *Dirty Snow* (Harbour, 2012), a novel, *Woodstock Rising* (Dundurn, 2009), and a critical monograph, *Songs Without Price: The Music of Poetry in a Discordant World* (Vancouver Island University, 2008). He lives in southeastern BC's Selkirk Mountains.

Changming

Yuan is a four-time Pushcart nominee and co-author of *Chansons of a Chinaman* (2009) and *Three Poets* (2011). He grew up in rural China and published several monographs before moving to Canada. His poetry has appeared in nearly 450 literary publications across 18 countries including *Asia Literary R*, *Barrow Street*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, *Best-NewPoemsOnline*, *CanLit*, *Descant*, *London Mag*, *LRC*, *Matrix*, *Poetry Kanto*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Queen's Qtrly*, and *Vallum*.

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