

***i started  
to wear night***

By

Donna M. Kristjanson

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Department of English  
University of Manitoba  
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**I STARTED TO WEAR NIGHT**

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**DONNA M. KRISTJANSON**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree**

**of**

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*...for Ray*

*for Diana and  
for Megan*

## table of contents

the end	4
body im,age	5
volun,teers re/requested	6
an/other voice	8
just a seco nd	9
Murder of the Canadian	13
i meant lament	16
blue clouds white sky	18
ode to spring	20
the cane	21
residuals	22
on the street where you live	25
body, without organs	30
buns	31
i/dea	34
good/night kiss	36
Finding Models	37
furnace	39
song	43
birth of a tory, sorry	45
dignity	46

Elsie 48  
By What Right 50  
    recipe 52  
    Car-ride 55  
Anxiety Trust 57  
    Nightclothes 59  
    what was said 60  
poetics, a pretentious poem 62  
    just his luck 66  
    Pony 68  
    Co,worker 72  
    shifting is what 74  
the high heeled kind 83  
    In/sist 88  
The Poet Introduces His Work 89  
    taking inventory 94  
    i hear voices 95  
    just a second 97  
    lesson 98

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the end

death/bed my father said believe  
the children they always  
knew and he lay their breathing  
heavily slower slow  
er sl/ower gray skin mat  
ching his gray wisps of hair ma  
chines beeping ever slower he real  
eased you us with his  
eyes once in his life he had  
a fine moment cur  
tains a/round an audience of  
two just me and you no  
show no fans no degrees no a  
wards now at seventy  
your life might  
begin i'm sorry



## body im,age

i started to  
wear night  
gowns aft  
er the first  
baby was  
born my body  
fine (the books  
say you'll feel  
un desir  
able) af  
ter all slee  
ping naked started  
the whole  
thing any,way stre  
tches kicks shifts of  
pos,ition the  
naked,ness  
stayed the  
same but after  
birth well  
that's diffe  
rent the baby  
cries and its cold  
getting up un  
gowned in the  
night

## volun,teers re/quested

women who would be willing to discuss their experiences of menstruation are requested to serve as volunteers for a project on women's views of menstruation and premenstrual change the study will form the basis of research for my doctorate in medical anthropology

hello mom how's your day have

the interview will take approximately 2 hours i will conduct it at your convenience and discuss the nature of the project fully with you

you had the decency to die yet i'm

i would appreciate it very much if

you decide to relate your  
experiences to me women's views of

waiting for something else once up  
on a lifetime there was a mother who

menstruation and premenstrual  
change are of the utmost  
importance in developing  
a more comprehensive under  
standing of menstrual

loved her  
children no tell me

cycle variations

if you are a woman  
18 years of age or  
older who would be  
willing to discuss your experiences of  
menstruation please  
contact me at  
the following

## **an/other voice**

*we 'll save  
money by can  
celling bus service on  
sundays people can just  
take their cars says her  
worship the mayor*

the people of  
winnipeg right/ly apprec/iate this  
voice of reason this fiscally  
responsible app/roach to the  
bud get here in  
the christmas capital  
of canada

and it'll cost you to/o  
see the animals  
in the zoo

just  
a  
seco  
nd  
*i'll*  
*think*  
*abou*  
*t it*  
you s  
aid *i*  
*reall*  
*y will*  
and i  
belie  
ved  
you  
for a  
fract  
ion  
of  
the  
seco  
nd t  
hat  
i am  
to y  
ou

and  
the  
cotto  
n ca  
nd  
y  
web  
circl  
es  
ever  
tight  
er a  
roun  
d my  
arms  
they  
are  
stuck  
to  
the  
side  
s of  
me  
and i  
can't  
move  
can't

brea  
the  
a  
nym  
ore  
and y  
ou s  
mile,  
reac  
h out  
touc  
h my  
hand  
and  
ice  
my  
hear  
t and  
i t  
hink  
i  
have  
met  
greg  
or not  
charl  
otte

in  
this  
web  
yet i  
look  
in  
your  
eyes  
for a  
flick  
er of  
a seco  
nd  
that  
you  
are  
the  
seco  
nd  
not  
me



## Murder of the Canadian

ever/year  
the Bombers  
they pull one  
out of the  
hat the  
blue & gold  
comes through  
pass one over  
the goal  
line for the touch  
down final  
score maybe  
even the  
grey cup  
they've got  
heart  
eh?

Him too  
true lover of  
poet/ry  
out can  
adians us all  
quiet self  
e/faced  
passes one  
passion over the  
line a

mazes him  
self a gain  
a few in  
ches may  
be a  
p(l)ause

re/presents the  
best in all of  
us mind  
ful of i  
deas body of  
heart

but this year the  
hat em  
pty the comm  
unity players  
can't pass  
the Empire let a  
lone the referee

the line  
breaks  
the cup not em  
pty gone  
to an other  
place  
and the ?can

adian th

ere's no  
gold in his  
blue eyes  
either

## **i meant lament**

part of me wishes i were more  
ethnic so i could  
rebel but then the part that is  
what they call ethnic is ice  
landic and they're all  
rebels by  
definition (according to a norwegian  
friend of mine -- and  
he looks like a viking so  
how do you rebel from  
a rebel group -- i guess  
you need a  
cause /sorry i couldn't  
resist

but here at home finding  
place speaking voice -- if  
you're not careful this can sound  
like an evangelical epiphany (that sneaky  
tongue/ speaking my story hasn't  
been particularly ethnic at  
all in fact that ethnic thing has been kind  
of embarrassing i mean if you're french  
you can be a great  
lover connoisseur of fine  
wines and pastries and all  
kinds of culture

stuff if you're italian well  
you've got art and empires and  
even if there is that god  
father movie there's also michel  
angel/o me well i get  
a combi nation of hag  
gis and hungikjeyt and maybe  
hardfiskur and skyr but  
i can say islendingadagurinn  
passingly well and i'm thinking  
that snow white herself  
made the disney  
empire now there's cause  
for reason

## blue clouds white sky

dear

mommy  
bad thing hap  
pened again can  
you hear are

you listen bad thing  
crack in drive  
way filled home  
made ce  
ment stones fill walk  
slow one foot  
two foot rain  
bow striped run  
ners new ones  
little feet laces i'm sm  
art in kinder  
garden dang  
ling up one  
step back  
door o  
pen landing  
up one step two  
steps look  
floor around table  
kitchen grey wool  
jump,er white blouse navy

blazer crest of saint bar  
tholo mew pocket  
rainbow striped  
runners fuzz around

edges look  
black  
white turn off  
sound watch you  
can turn off down  
hall four forty  
agetime doesn't matter

back  
legs little legs a  
part bed  
spread pink with  
white snow  
flakes all in ter con  
nec ted  
look look  
see dick  
blue clouds  
white sky  
there there

## ode to spring

once i read in a  
book that promised *Ah!*  
*your students will write beauty*  
*fully if you let them*  
*write about the coming*

*spring*  
*it's such a time of*  
*rebirth and blossoming and*  
*everything being young and idea*  
*listic i mused*  
*that i would be real*  
*istic i decided i'd*

give it a try in  
april and my students wrote  
and wrote and wrote and i was  
so pleased with my  
self as i reflected with vivaldi  
a glass of wine (white and then  
I read

extended metaphors of  
sewage and toilets  
and quicksand and  
dust and muck  
and grey

i was struck by  
the real/ization

lots of book writers had never  
deeply felt Spring  
in Manitoba



## the cane

*it was just  
a little smack it didn't  
hurt* you say to  
me your eyes  
defiant look a  
way and  
the sobs of the  
child the one with  
too big shoes who  
doesn't even  
know she's  
touched  
you but  
your face  
shows  
she has

## residuals

how many times have you  
heard someone say i should have  
been young in the sixties and  
i'm sure that you can  
think of all the clichés (the  
good the bad and feelin'  
groovy

a couple of years ago i showed my students a video  
of woodstock -- we were studying  
media and documentary techniques, really --and just  
after country joe and the fish (one two  
three what are we fighting  
for we had to go down  
to the gymnasium for an ass  
embly don't ask me i don't give a  
damn where the provincial justice minister felt  
compelled to tell a bunch of fourteen year  
olds about the need for boot  
camps and tough punishments next  
stop is viet nam for shop  
lifting and well, my  
students bless their souls  
wanted to know what would this help  
them learn why public schools weren't  
good enough for her kids and maybe  
that's why she didn't get to stay  
in education and psycho  
logically they weren't fooled not one

little bit and  
i like to think that  
some of them  
understood

lately my husband has taken to  
taping reruns of the ed sullivan  
show the episodes when the  
beatles appeared

i met a woman last week who was  
in university in liverpool in the early  
sixties and now her kids are all  
grown up and she runs a  
bed and breakfast and a tea  
room in birtle manitoba now i  
know you think that sounds  
prissy and proper but you've  
really got to meet her. she's got  
grey hair and wears  
flowing denim jumpers and she  
teaches art and poetry and cooking and  
her husband looks like  
clint eastwood -- cowboy hat and  
all, but better looking with a kind  
face and gentle eyes and he loves  
roman and greek history and  
architecture. and it makes me think  
that empire has its good points

i wish she'd been my mom

did you hear that paul

mccartney is now a  
it's been a hard  
day's) knight that's  
my idea of empire

residual essentialism  
that's what you called  
it ain't it  
the truth?

## on the street where you live

i have often walked  
down the street from where we lived a family  
where the twin boys were hung by their  
but the pavement's always stayed  
wrists until they lost consciousness  
disobedience to the  
father not eating their potatoes  
a wetbar in their basement

to whom it may  
and a woman regularly cuts the  
lawn mower cord as she weaves her  
beneath my feet before  
way around the yard her oom pah pah  
husband singing drinking  
songs at the everyone piano in the  
basement he knows used to entertain  
the troops in the war i wonder how  
she broke her arm

for god's sakes get me  
in one house there  
was a woman who never

went outside in  
seventeen years and if  
a visitor came to  
the church on time  
all at once am i  
may concern  
the husband a pro/fessor put  
his wife in the bedroom so  
no one would  
see her it was  
a cultural thing

before i come i did  
tire marks across  
a lawn from where someone  
several stories high (knowing I'm)  
imprinted his impression of  
following the  
rules of the road

at the annual new  
year's eve party no one  
dares to make alternate plans  
i could have danced all night  
all night i could have danced and  
still have begged  
for more i could have spread my  
and done a thousand

things i've never liked pate or  
done before  
texture of soft cheese

the boy next  
door, the son who isn't  
gay fondles the  
little boy he babysits and  
the next day teaches him to  
play touch  
football and the beat goes

on the decor next door is all  
fake from plastic flowers to the  
stuffed dog i mean  
stuffed -- like in taxi der/my

once when my parents were  
away the man from  
1215 came  
over at midnight to lend  
us a magazine on window  
decorating my sister  
said no thank  
you

why can't a  
woman be more

like a man

pencil sw corner  
harrow united  
church i heard via the  
grapevine that you're  
interested in sunday  
school for your  
two daughters i would be happy  
to meet with you  
sincerely

just dropped by to give  
i could have danced all night  
have danced all i could night  
still have begged  
i could spread my  
done a thousand things  
the reverend  
never done be//fore

all i want in a room some  
where far away yes please from  
cold  
night air a  
child with one e/norm/ous  
chair oh wouldn't it  
be lovely



twenty years of  
dating and they move  
in to get her lots of  
choco lates for me to  
eat lots of coal making  
lots of heat in separate bed  
rooms she has a  
ca/reer in  
sales warm face warm  
hands warm feet oh  
wouldn't it  
be loverly, loverly  
lover lie

perhaps you'd be intrested  
i washed my face and hands in  
before a vibrator some  
say dildo some say potato  
potato tomato  
toe mat oh

i come i did i say let's call  
call the whole  
thing off

## body, without organs

there's this body see  
well actually you can't see be  
cause its all covered with  
organs  
you know this body well  
it keeps trying to talk but the mouth  
organ keeps (gettin a little to  
familiar dont ya know) gettin in the way  
and the vocal chords keep pipin  
out *fugue in d minor* cause  
that goes against the  
flow and the every so of,ten a  
bag(pipe) keeps in  
terri(tory)upting  
cannons booming  
calliope is not a  
mused *the organ*  
grind/er waitin and  
the mon, key  
(goin with the flow and figurin he  
has nothin d'lose)  
takes his  
place with Ma  
Chine (just in time)  
a major finale  
is comin  
up

the body sens, in the  
con, fusions is over  
come with d'sire  
(a schizophrenic kind a  
guy)

## buns

1

i am an exercise  
fanatic my major  
project this  
week is

2

the video taping of  
exercise shows man,y  
of which come on  
at five a.m. and i'm very  
grateful for the  
ability to program  
the vcr so that i

3

can sleep i haven't  
started exerci/sing nor  
watched any of them yet  
by the end of next  
week i should  
have ten hours of  
viewing pleasure  
saved up for  
somebody

4  
myself i'm making  
a study  
of the whole  
process of  
pack/aging

5  
buns of abs of  
steel pict ure sex bet  
ween two or more) who  
have attained this Glorious  
State or (should i  
say GQ no that's  
a whole

and 5  
different sort of  
thing wake up the whole  
neighborhood why don't  
you clank clank  
clank ... and the after

4  
play? rust proofing -- a trip to  
Maaco perhaps

for the connoisseur Ming  
proofing your  
arse

3

insanity in the form of  
evangelical exercise the  
Religious Right's two three  
four Real competition comes  
not from the amorality of sexual  
deviations over and back and  
over abortions soul  
less crime really

2

it is t/here in the  
biceps and triceps and  
ab/d/ominal crunches of the

and 1

rice cake anyone?

## i/dea

no idea who  
i am  
you pass the  
cream and  
sugar judgement  
chat about  
the price of  
coffee you  
can get a better deal  
at superstore  
isn't it terrible about  
the gst  
have a cookie  
diana is such  
a toy  
put away the heart  
pills? oh, she wouldn't  
touch them, there  
on the kitchen table  
(and the con  
sequences would only be  
fatal) and how is  
your sister  
do you think they'll  
get back  
together divorce is  
such a terrible

thing (what about  
pain does happiness  
matter)  
i hope they can work it  
out so hard  
on the child involved  
have you seen the news

about O.J. Simpson  
terrible isn't it  
more coffee  
will you take diana  
to work with you next  
week  
no, i answer  
and wonder  
why i think  
i am  
going crazy

## good/night kiss

velvet, i thought  
or petals  
off a rose  
but the  
prickles of  
your moustache  
told me  
this is real

i must re  
con ,sider  
my position



## Finding Models

i

i am afraid of women  
writers they remind me of  
the girls in the playground the  
ones who'll play with you if  
you bring the skipping rope as  
long as you hold the  
end and

yet my closest  
friends are  
sisters who stand with  
me against you and your  
fashion statements

ii

i don't want to learn to hate  
what you write and why  
you write and how you  
write and i don't want to  
patron/ize one of the smartest  
people (men and women) I know and

iii

i speak as woman  
for woman in a (now there's  
a scary thought -- marginalized  
state my friends are  
men and i love them and i love  
them because they are not  
typical men and i am  
afraid of women who don't  
like men who blame  
all men for the sins of their  
fathers and i am  
afraid of women because  
they betray  
they learn to betray i know  
but they do

iv  
i don't want to divorce you

v  
it's so much easier when  
the enemies are  
clearly identifiable  
nameable hateable

vi  
this is a  
domestic poem  
cats dogs rabbits gerbils  
wheat canadian home  
grown mr  
clean maids servants  
slaves and other  
pets

vii  
i'm getting a little sick of this  
reverence for mothers and  
mother's day and all the senti/mentalizing  
crap i know a mother who makes  
the best apple pie in the world and  
when push comes to  
shove she'll betray her  
children and her children's children until  
the end of time

viii  
i make a great apple pie it'll  
melt in your  
mouth  
i promise

## furnace

behind the furnace  
i found out  
where it's warm  
she lay curled in a  
ball where it's dusty  
the living  
room floor for  
that's the six  
months feeling the  
knitting needles in her  
word the phrase that  
cunt i love you mom i'm  
sorry scares

and scares  
don't know why my  
throat tight full of  
i shouldn't have been  
born it's my crap full  
of sticky  
stuff can't behind the  
stop shaking get furnace  
past this fault she  
cries  
want  
to know so  
i can

blue shelves scares and  
the blue

shelves worry  
she lost the baby  
her boyfriend the cellar  
steps and  
now she

don't like the blue  
shelves pushed her  
down pushed her  
down think smell  
booze but don't  
know trying to  
daddy is scares there that  
daddy don't want  
to be any has  
cancer more and  
can't take any  
more don't want to  
do this and her uncle when  
until she was fifteen  
you know what i'm  
saying saying  
that can't help  
need to be  
she was eleven  
alive right  
now  
you know what  
fault doesn't feel

to curl up and  
what i'm  
saying then there's  
him his dad

hide and be safe to  
be safe but let  
whatever has pushed cancer  
down his uncles his  
to happen  
happen  
so can't

blue shelves medium  
dark blue wide but  
not really

deep behind the furnace  
under the gin stairs i  
babysitter his  
hockey coach this  
last one makes  
the papers how  
horrible  
makes the papers

now how  
old now

feeling the knitting  
needles in her old  
cunt i love you mom i'm  
sorry i

## song

truth in youth is an amazing thing  
bodies are wasted on the young  
believe in causes  
i was raised to be charitable to  
help out others in need but  
when was i allowed to  
la la la, la la la, la la la  
acknowledge need so i became a left  
wing political activist looking for mother  
love in granola campaigns for peace and just/ice  
and *i believe*            *i believe i believe*

*do you hear the people sing*

*do you hear the people sing*

*singing the songs of angry men*

i'm wondering about the success rate for  
counsellors in breaking up family  
structures and if you are a counsellor you may feel (or  
even ex/press \* anger at this statement but if you will  
follow through what i am saying (really hear that  
family structure was long overdue for the  
*master of the house*  
wrecking ball  
family must not sur/re-vive the frame  
families m(ust

*it is the music of a people*

*will not be slaves again*  
do you hear what i  
here

and the winner is

so i know this guy who can get a real  
deal on turkeys, the kind that all  
the fancy hotels use in their sand  
wiches and i can get it for you for  
cost cause *that's what friends are  
for* and by the way my kid needs new  
skates

*it is the music of a people*

the ice is thin on the rivers so  
keep off the flow will be ferocious  
this year with all all the stuff falling  
and the push from down south a  
cross the border  
*up your bloomin' ass*

*who will not be slaves again*

as i was saying there's  
this guy who has a tattoo of his girlfriend's  
name on his penis and  
*when the beating of your heart*  
flags are flying it says Wendy but *the*  
*week was long ere wednesday came* so most  
of the time it says WY, wy wy --all the way,  
home. more later

*when tomorrow comes*



## birth of a tory, sorry

the umbiblical  
cord  
a perfect  
windsor knot  
the doc  
tor ex,claims to the  
father and the son and the holy  
look at the size of his  
what a  
man  
he'll do you  
proud  
sir  
a real  
credit to  
you  
sir

and the baby is  
washed, dressed in his brand  
new blue  
suit  
given his first taste of  
milk(cold) from the  
bott,le.

a real man, real  
*our children are our future*  
progressive,  
eh? men

## dignity

when you have  
a baby  
you have no dignity  
left  
my mother said  
every shred  
of dignity  
is gone

your third child i  
thought it was my  
fault  
that you were  
weak,  
willed silly  
unable to speak your  
mind

i wondered how  
birth was  
connected to  
teas at Eaton's  
Assembly Hall  
you in your navy  
knife  
pleated dress  
a string of

pearls around your  
neck  
a small hat with a  
(?mourning) veil  
this all seemed  
digni/fied

?how would these ladies  
know  
what i did to you by  
being born?

then i gave  
birth my/self  
two  
daughters  
and i  
found voice  
  
not a shred

## Elsie

Elsie looks down, out her living room window to the flower bed and sighs. Nothing coming up yet. And why should there be? April in Manitoba, another three weeks before even the tulips are in bloom. But Elsie watches just the same, thinking maybe she should break the surface a bit, give the shoots a better chance.

April in Paris, that's the song isn't it, that's the dream wasn't it? But instead, Elsie has a flower bed in Manitoba in the frozen. Instead, Elsie has a fix-it man, a man who thinks why go on a trip when you could take the same money and get a snowmobile and a trailer. A man who never thinks of Paris, never thinks of romance, never thinks.

And now, it's only the flowers who have company in their beds. Elsie feels it's silly to spend so much time with the flowers, thinks maybe the neighbours wonder about her, knows the flowers won't be starting yet, thinks of her life inside the house and puts on her car-coat to go outside anyway.

Cold. The wind is cold as it whips around the corner of the house. Elsie folds the lapel of her coat up around her neck, shuffles along the sidewalk, watches for patches of ice, jitterbugs in her head. The ground is still frozen, mud in big chunks, and Elsie keeps her head down, searches for specks of green, reaches with grey eyes and touches the earth, wonders about wine on a sidewalk cafe, like the picture on the placemat, the one covered in plastic so it won't get stained, so you can't touch it.

A few steps along, a few brown twigs, some dead leaves. Elsie bends to pick them up, she'll take them to the garbage in the back. Give the flowers an easier job of breaking through. There it is again, the sliver through her back, the pain that comes from bending. Dead leaves in her hand, Elsie straightens up, a little at a time.

## By What Right

by what  
right  
do you  
talk  
take my  
pain my  
thirty year  
secret and  
turn it in  
to coffee  
time chitchat  
but you  
love me you  
say as you  
add sugar to your  
al/ready  
satu  
rated cup  
try to change the  
subject to  
chat  
bargains  
garage sales

but my life my  
self  
is not  
a garage  
sale and you  
are self  
right/eous a  
bout how

wrong my  
anger

what is  
? left

## recipe

let me tell you a story a true  
tale for i am the bard try  
me oh (just kidding  
you've heard that one i know it's  
enough to bore the bard but

there's this guy i know and every time i  
read one of his stories i think why  
didn't i think of that like a  
story of stories that doesn't have  
anything just words

this is my favorite  
recipe pour contents of  
package add 2 1/2 c. boiling  
water stir and chill but the faster  
method is with ice cubes use  
a mold if desired  
i read it in a cook book  
truly i did

your tongue is ugly

rich or poor, each language always  
implies a deterritorialization of the  
mouth the tongue, and the teeth  
the mouth, tongue and teeth find



their primitive territoriality get  
your foot off my property  
in food. in giving themselves  
over to the articulation of  
sounds, the mouth, open  
wide -- tongue, and  
teeth deterritorialize. a kind  
of foot and mouth di/sease  
of course you can get the  
same effervescent effect with  
dentures but nobody writes about  
them chompers

in our school we don't say throw  
up we're more polite we say  
puke

one of these days i'm going to die  
grape cherry orange even  
blueberry raspberry strawberry  
jelly and jam tell me the  
name of

i'm writing a long poem, full of  
voices and perspective, lots of  
perspective it was  
around here somewhere

theoretically speaking, i'm a body  
without organs paranoically  
desiring fine french

cuisine interesting, i didn't know  
i was writing a  
food poem, how  
freudian of me --or was that jung, per  
haps you will debate this for centuries or  
not as if i really gave a

quick look in the mirror and see if any  
one )or two is be/hind you or  
can you recognize it  
let us pray and add

tomatoes and celery , some mush  
rooms sprouts and en/dive  
i read that in a fancy  
book but i can't remember which  
one i don't think it was fanny  
farmer maybe it was  
joy of

it jiggles on your  
spoon and in your mouth if  
you can /i can't  
make it  
right

## Car-ride

Make into a ball. Curl up tighter. Hands over eyes, elbows over ears. Then she won't hear. Then it will stop. Then it won't happen.

Hot. Can't breathe. Eyes wet, comes up for air. Smoke, can't breathe, El Producto regular, can't cough, can't move, no sound, please no sound.

Hides again, try looking at gravel on the floor, caught between ruts on the hard plastic car mat. Count them, she can count, she's smart, she can count. Make a pattern. The bigger one and the little ones. Big are ugly. Big is mean.

Dark. Hot. Mean.

She hears you crying. Can't help you. Can't help you. He's too big. He's Daddy. He's got the keys. He'll drive off the road again. Out on the highway, fast fast fast. He'll take his hands off the wheel, we'll all die. None of them can stop him. They'll die. He said so, he'll show them he'll do it, just like last time.

Her hand, she reaches, over the hump his side. Out where its not safe, out of her place on the floor of the back seat. But she reaches out slowly, shaking, and her fingers find his, his bigger hands, his brother hands, their fingers grasp, her eyes peek up, she sees him looking back, wet on his face, his eyes wide open, a kid your eyes..

And then choking, coughing, gagging, not daring to throw up. Daddy hates throw up. He'll get mad then.

Zipper. She hates zipper.

You are on the seat, the front seat, curled up, looking out the window, wiping off your chin.

Get up out of their places on the floor. They look at each other. Look at you. Your eyes are theirs.

They don't look, at Daddy.

## Anxiety Trust

(for Jesse Simon)

a great place to in  
vest in the anxie~ties safe  
where you can even get inte  
rest so what starts out a little  
twinge and uncer/tain mo  
ment invest wise/ly leave in  
trust gain inter.est on the inter  
net (the poss/ibili/ties are  
stag,gering) the little twinge, if treated  
prop,erly, will become neu, roses  
then a sign/ifi,cant anxiety and, if you're  
care/ful don't take it out and  
spend it a phobi/a full  
fled/ged para,noia it might eve/n  
be split into diffe/rent ac/  
counts and by all accounts  
then you'll leave it all in, i  
trust, because which one  
of you has the author,ity to with  
draw -- A. Gora has to  
stay in, on principle, and asking Claus  
makes him run fr th free mark/et,  
but while they're in there, arguing  
among them,selves well you can be

carry,ing on with whom  
ever you like re  
minds me of a friend of  
mine one who  
was very fond of nursing  
a grudge

## Nightclothes

You lie  
face to the wall  
stretch your arm  
sigh  
and snore

I lie  
face you  
                    silent spoon  
nightgown open  
breast  
                    exposed  
feel soft  
baby sucks

we used  
                    to lie  
naked

*what was said*

*hogwash is what you  
said*

*we were*

*and i believed you  
about the lie*

*we*

*and i hurt like  
hell*

*i feel it in me*

*my*

*please don't please  
don't*

*girl*

*hogwash is what you  
said*

*i don't believe it*

*it's all made up to  
get attention*

*what a lot of nonsense*

*nobody would do such a  
thing*

*you're daddy's little*

*girl*

*young*

*sometimes when*

*touch*

*once twice three  
times a  
lady*

*be my be*

*baby*

*yesterday when*



*shh. shh. i'll be good i  
promise i won't  
tell*

*it's your own fault*

*there's a kind of  
hush*

## poetics, a pretentious poem

airplanes cars trains fashion he  
roes and rows of dead soldiers sport  
stars who can bounce balls and/or beat their  
wives beautiful house/ actors and  
actresses moms -- she was a saint  
and dads he made me  
stand on my own two feet  
all by myself its  
lonely though now  
and then

the voices are quiet

i heard last night about a poet who  
is most concerned about voice and i thought  
wow. wouldn't that be nice  
to have one

to hell with poetics  
to be able to speak with  
certainty now

that would be an  
amazing thing

i'm in love again well actually  
i'm not but i thought maybe i could  
write a love poem  
go ahead, you try it.

don't speak for me don't you  
dare to put words as  
wife or mother or woman or any  
thing cause you weren't aren't t/here are  
you no -- beware of -  
false prophets

i can do it my(self

there's a fine line between  
confidence and conceit ever  
seen the grand canyon  
dad?

it is better to be kind than right

this is the poem that no one will ever  
see because it really is a spontaneous out  
pouring of true self what you  
don't believe me ah! well then i  
guess you just don't understand a/muses

*oh my lost men*

i know this guy who's going on a  
reading tour this spring now i usually  
tour museums and art galleries and stuff  
like that and when i read i can  
snuggle under a blankie with a  
book in one hand and a bottle -- read  
glass in the other but you  
know what i meant so how come  
he has to travel all the way  
to Paris ain't he got no  
ma/gin/a'/shn

the sum of the square root of the sides of an  
isosceles triangle is equal to -- i never was  
any good at math

it is better to be kind than right

but away from the intellectualizing  
crap that isn't that the question  
i try real  
hard to honour

all the voices in  
my head/world without

sliding into cliché or  
sentimentality i am not a hall  
mark i am a human being  
i am not a hallmark i am a human  
being

## just his luck

sadly, with a tremendous  
sigh  
you comment on  
the breakdown  
of his  
car  
(a mere twelve  
year old)  
the impact  
stuns  
an out  
sider  
this calm  
ment  
on a life  
you could have  
said  
(with embar/ass  
ing pride)  
my son the  
doctor  
my sun  
the music  
ian  
my son  
poet

my son  
father  
gentle, quiet, in  
tense, passionate

my son  
husband  
lover  
friend  
philosopher  
rebel (yes,  
really  
but you sigh  
over the  
character  
istic break  
down  
of a  
car  
as the meta  
phor a

life  
just his  
luck

## Pony

Molly's going to ride a pony maybe. It's August, holiday weekend, and Molly and her cousins are going to a riding ranch. A riding ranch that has real horses and maybe even a real pony for Molly. Red stretchy pants, T-shirt, running shoes. Molly wishes for boots, real cowgirl boots like the Lone Ranger only pretty, knows she doesn't look like she can ride. But she wants to so her mom says she can go even if she's little. Molly runs to the car, climbs in the middle at the front cause she's the littlest. It's squishy between two grown-ups, between Uncle Bjorn and Daddy, and it's hot. Kristy and Jimmy are in the other car, with other cousins. Molly makes herself small in the front seat, so she won't bump anyone. Uncle Bjorn drives fast, one hand at the bottom of the wheel, puts his cigarette in the ash tray in front of Molly. Gravel dust all around the car. Molly really wants to ride that pony.



There are lots of people when they get there. Happy Acres Ranch. And everyone goes different directions. Uncle Bjorn and Uncle Einar go with most of the kids to find the horses. And Daddy is going to help Molly. Help Molly ride a pony.

And all of a sudden, it's cold. Molly wishes Sigrid had come too. Wishes she weren't going to be the only one. Molly's stretchy red pants feel all wrong, she doesn't feel like a cowgirl at all. She looks for Jimmy. How did they all disappear so fast? And Daddy says, we'll go to the back of the corral. Maybe the ponies are in the stable at the back. And so they walk. The tall grass prickles on Molly's legs, the grass comes up to her seat and the haystacks to her stretchy pants. Daddy ahead. He knows all about farms. He learned about them, and sometimes he says words like cowshit. Daddy knows about farms and Molly follows.

And finally they reach the barn at the back of the

corral. It's quiet here. Grey, wind blowing through the cracks, Molly thinks the barn is old, it doesn't look like any ponies around here. And Molly feels sad. She wants to ride a pony. And then she hears it, the zipper. Daddy takes her hand, he puts it there and makes her pull. "Pull on the reigns Molly, that's how you hold on to a pony." And Molly can't get away. Molly looks around, tries to pull. But he's too big, he's too strong, and he hits her face. Her face hurts and he says, "It's your own fault Molly. You're left-handed. I changed to right but you didn't. It's your bad hand. You did it."

And Molly feels the thing in her hand and Molly feel his hand pushing her head toward it and she feels it in her mouth and she starts to gag and he hits her again, makes her feel it with her hand and then it's all sticky, and her hand feels wet and her mouth feels wet and Daddy's zipper. And then she sees Uncle Einar. And Uncle Einar looks at

her, and Daddy says. "It's your own fault, your left hand."

And Daddy walks away with Uncle Einar.

Molly walks back through long grass, through hay that prickles, wipes her face with her sleeve. She walks back to where the cars are, edging ditch, headlights peeping through weeds. Can't find Jimmy and Kristy, waits in the middle of the gravel driveway. And she sees her cousins and one of her cousins says, come back in the car with us and Molly is worried that Jimmy and Kristy will be worried, that Daddy will be mad. But her cousin says, "It's okay, they'll know."

And so Molly gets in the car. And her cousin puts her arm around her, strokes her hair never mind never mind, the horseback riding wasn't any good.

## Co, worker

I'm a cynic you  
say  
proudly  
with an emp,  
has/is on the  
ic ick  
ick its a  
trick  
you use  
label as ex  
c/use to  
judge and  
jury and  
exe,cute the idea  
list joy  
must be snuff,ed  
out be fore it can  
ever be con/ceived or  
be,fore the play or  
the fore  
play can  
ever begin

and you say  
this proudly in your  
im,potent

way and get  
even pleased when  
dis/cussion  
dies without ever  
gettin it.

*shifting is what*

*you call it a quest  
ion of post  
modern ethics and i'm won  
dering what  
you're talking  
about as i study  
about post  
co-lonial mental/ity  
feeling irredeemably  
colonial in your  
eyes*

*let her see her grand  
children that's  
what you want  
how come every  
thing shifts to your  
pre/determined  
conclusion i hate  
absolutes, absolutely  
i have to protect  
my children  
i'm not going to  
let them get hurt  
like i did*

they're at the

and they're

off

Stop with the cliches al  
ready said  
The Critic

*you think you under  
stand and you want  
to write*

*a narrative*

*where my under  
standing is limited  
don't respect that*

*i have to protect  
myself. i know  
what im reading*

utterly lacking in imagi  
nation or origin  
ality don't bother reading

when at night i go to sleep  
stiff you lie stiff wait  
for it to be over  
yellow bauble ponytail holders  
hard little sister  
you love my yellow  
ponytails because they're  
me and i hate them four  
teen angels watch  
the same reason  
lie close lie close he won't  
know you're here  
to keep hanel the  
crumbs hanel where  
are the crumbs

what i'm  
thinking what  
will happen to  
my children if i  
don't protect them don't  
tell me i'm dog/matic  
i know what i'm  
protecting them from

take my word for it

oh i didn't realize

my dear

you fought all afternoon grandma  
letting a three year old jump  
in the neighbour's  
pile of leaves. you argued  
grandma was wrong to  
interfere with someone else's  
property grandma knew all along  
jumping was what the pile  
had been made for. but  
grandma fought too,  
in front of the child  
and the child  
doesn't jump in leaves  
anymore  
and i wonder  
what would five minutes to  
rake the neighbour's pile



back together  
really have cost  
you?

i made the mistake of thinking  
other families were normal i was  
marrying into one

**open the  
door it will never  
close again**

i have come to despise tea

*another baby i think will be twins this time, twin boys two of them, two  
heartbeats plus mine, to fill not full but freckles but no matter how many  
inside of me or even how many chocolate chip cookies, they can't fill what  
was left when my mother left me dream it in the day but never at night*

leave your body leave my body leave my body  
alone

*across the  
room you on  
the love seat  
telling me  
that's not  
logical not  
adult your  
mustache  
pricklier by the  
second*

*my  
grade five  
piano exam  
(Royal Con  
servatory)  
seated with  
my back to the  
examiner not  
remembering  
my scales  
forgetting sit  
straight the  
minor arpeggio  
getting my  
fingers all  
muddled up  
even though i*

*knew it all by  
myself sure i  
felt him look  
ing at the back  
of my yell  
ow dress sleeve  
less thinkingif  
i look pretty  
the daisies  
high neck  
white collar i  
would do  
better but  
not liking his  
eyes behind me  
telling me to  
relax just  
relax and  
try again*

and the margin  
goes mar  
gin in

i dreamed last night i dreamed last night i dreamed last night i  
dreamed last

he held her close rubbed his body against hers slammed his penis against her tiny little legs she is two years old she tells me mommy he rubbed against my body the private parts the boyfriend of the older the one who fucks everywhere but *he's just finding him/self* and so is she experimenting with biting sex i saw him bite her nipples her rolls of fat rolling everywhere as he pushed her up against the wall looking for love this is experimentation this is rebellion this is allowing for possibilities the police on the phone after the damage i hold my baby close stroke her eyes her perfect skin and they believe me now but i'm the only one locking the door, i put the hook on struggle to get it to fit put the deadbolt on the inside door but what good does it do when the walls are made of screens and the angry drunk is on the other side and the police can't find their way and where can i keep my daughter safe and why am i believed in hindsight when the monster is at the front door look ahead and see and know that i see and know that i know and keep her safe as her eyelashes tangle with her tears. i know what i know.

please write about more pleasant things dear no one wants  
to be reminded we want to read to escape into fantasy  
forget our daily

troubles a romantic comedy with a happy  
ending always with a happy

ending

*F# minor*

i learned it  
by heart  
i wear it (heart) on my sleeve  
bleeding – heart  
a good heart don't break  
my heart  
the wonder of  
it's only words

forgiveness in the world you take the high road  
seven babies born to the same  
mother and her fertility  
drugs and we rejoice  
buy them a van a real  
decoy so happy  
with new life a house and diapers  
a black woman in washing ton with five well that's gone away not  
news they have an apartment and some  
social assistance after all and  
baby sophia is dead  
would you know my name if i saw you thrown against a wall in  
algeria baby you are forgiven you are not alone you are not alone you  
are not alone i dreamed i saw a galilean

it was only a dream dreaming words  
all i have

abundance and generosity one of those rare human beings who dares  
to risk that unique experience we call being alive

i'll take the low road  
shifting is what  
staying alive staying alive

i got First  
Class Honours on that  
exam you know i can  
make beautiful music  
with or without  
the dress

## the high heeled kind

inside wanting to be out  
side an open letter to  
canadians politically in  
correct but, funny

the house on the  
welfare bullies  
here's how to play: the right  
attitude committee urges  
fourth day of a blizzard  
cuts be restored scratch  
for cash

let it snow let it  
operative word safe-sex  
farce is a hoot the last  
women standing the  
dancing sailor your prince waits in  
a box engaging, colourful and all  
snow sewn up a place for men to  
cool off profit

motive inside  
going stir crazy this  
sale could prove elementary  
tran/saction

april so stuck for  
meet me in the  
    money is a lot  
        like muck

ideas i hear  
cloning is raising  
ethical questions do women  
need a  
    break? dinosaur  
eggs has everything  
after the  
    shock wears off  
other people clean out  
modern family dis/sect/ed  
the father of the bride meets  
the mother of  
    all weddings  
sharks 3



## whalers 2

closets i read old  
development

the unwelcome guest arrives  
the good ship filmon  
steered by a small  
band of power  
brokers truck-tire theft

ring stopped  
in its tracks gracious  
-- affordable --  
excellent neighborhood boss has  
look at road a  
head pools charge

newspapers in  
ahead money  
but i'd like to  
is a lot like  
muck

between doing  
laundry candidate picking

undemocratic molester dangerous  
hire a pro not barbie's  
type keep pet  
page free of abuse

and picking up are  
you suffering from  
panic attacks

after the kids  
practical world female  
pilot hopes  
to retrace  
earhart's famed last  
flight recognition comes  
in faraway places actor  
achieved fame on  
charlie's angels

dolls and dolls'  
clothes especially  
barbie's shoes the high  
heeled kind legend  
lives on new

re/leases

and making hot  
subjects still  
loyal are you  
suffering from panic  
attacks

chocolate with marsh  
world, people  
meet me in the  
miniature  
m(ellows word

## In/sist

i  
in/sist  
you say  
you will like  
it  
a different  
taste  
sens  
a tion  
just re/lax  
and if you  
don't  
you will taste it  
any  
way i like  
but dad  
i say but  
you  
in/cest

## The Poet Introduces His Work

people stand  
politely  
lean carefully against  
bookshelves  
try to look  
comfortable

the poet is introduced

he has a new  
sub genre  
an important work  
and to set the  
context

edge of book  
shelf digs in  
back  
winter coat  
(wool) suddenly  
seem heavy and

itchy  
in my arms  
silently  
i sigh  
glance to the other  
side of the  
store  
see you  
elegance always gracious  
comfortable in your  
clothes

fearing your disapproval  
i try to look  
away  
but in your eyes  
i see  
the genre isn't new  
important to you  
either

the poet  
now approaching

adolescence  
explains profound perceptions  
life confused      ego  
centric

i cross  
my ankles wish i had  
pee-ed before  
i came

the significance  
of the image of  
door

as metaphor  
- a comparison that does not use  
like or as-  
for entrance and  
for exit at even more significant junctures  
in the character's troubled  
(angst filled perhaps?) existence

Kroetsch straightens  
his back rests

his chin on the heel of his hand  
Birdsell adjusts  
a scarf  
Arnason, ready to  
pontificate  
starts to  
twiddle his fingers stops  
Cooley (near  
the front) shuffles  
blinks  
looks embarrassed  
(?annoyed)  
Kambourelli looks  
at Kroetsch

The poet's family looks  
impressed.

a fire  
truck zooms down  
Osborne street  
i hang on  
to the back  
handles



let my legs go limp  
fly to the fire  
fire fly

the ?poet  
about to read except to  
thank

air a late  
comer(apologetically) opens  
the door  
i breathe the cold winter  
air (return from)  
adjust my posture to look attentive  
for the reading

the writer  
about to begin

## *taking inventory*

*the circle of hair*

*on your belly is no more than a*

*penny around and i whorl it with my*

*index finger taking inventory of*

*coarse black, fine blonde, strong brown,*

*sneaking grey and*

*a smile of red and*

*female skin sliding bodies tongues and openings and  
enterings and cries and gutturals and how i would like to oh how i  
would like so many*

*lovers men and women touching caressing*

*exchanging feeling*

*pleasing*

*feet and toes and elbows and knees and bellies and breasts and*

*tickles and testicles and tongues and shoulders and*

*backs and dries and wets and ears and hair and all*

*the places where hair can touch and*

*touch and feel and*

*smooth and soft and coarse and hard and wrinkles and hollows*

*and*

*bumps and white and freckles and moles and marks and*

*folds and licks and sucks and pushes and scents and*

*trembles and trickles*

*you know the*

*rest*

## **i hear voices**

*for Angel Voices: An Advanced Handbook for Aspiring Angels*

so i opened this  
book and tried to  
read keep an open  
mind i said  
and i found  
Truth and Beauty and  
all good  
Capitalized Words a whole recipe of  
answers to sustain my  
mere existence and i  
kept reading and  
thinking this is for  
?real one of  
those  
texts where if  
you contest the au/thor will  
smile say Ah,  
Yes, but you just  
haven't opened your  
mind to the possibilities and  
other such high  
road trivial/ities  
on this high

way to (Michael Landon ~ perhaps he  
has even communicated these  
ideas to you, being ~ Angel Himself)  
heave/n but i  
keep reading, the chap  
ter on *Grace* appeals particularly perhaps *i can a*  
chieve *Grace* be  
fore break  
fast, before the kids get up and  
i have diapers to change, cereal to pour, swings to  
push... and i wonder about this divine feeling as i wipe shit but  
even still i do not  
dis/miss this text because the  
feel of pages between my  
fingers touch the words  
infinite spaces and i keep  
thinking about kroetsch's (vera  
lang's) bees  
that i liked little  
joe the cowboy so much  
better than Jonathan  
the Angel  
i'll take tight  
jeans be  
fore wings in my  
flight, angel

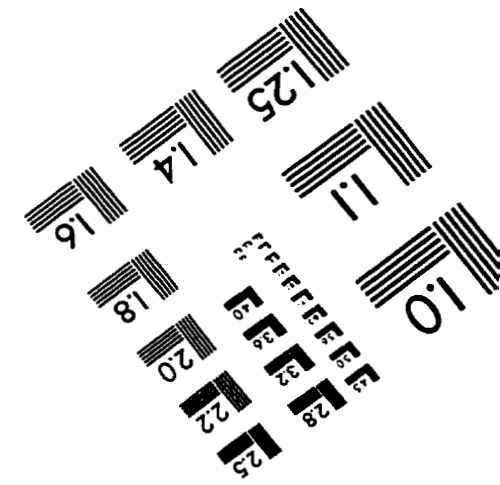
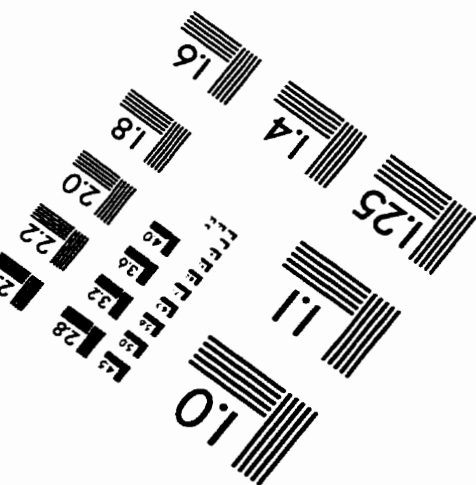
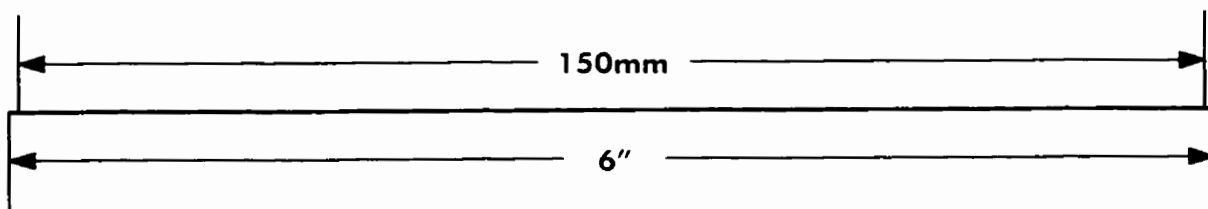
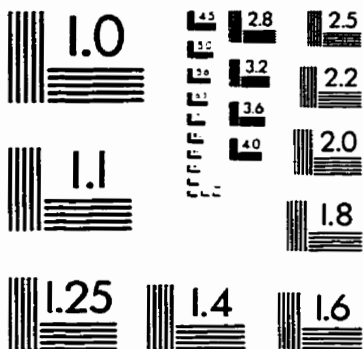
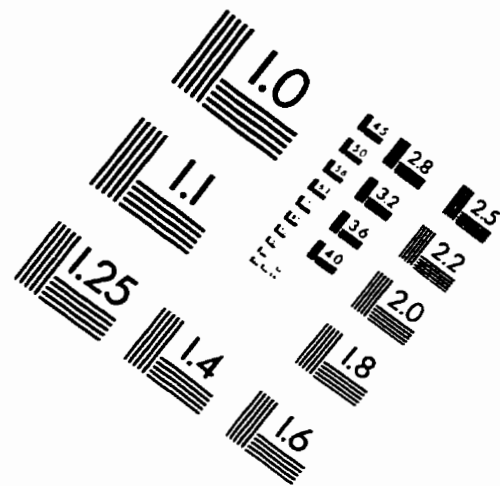
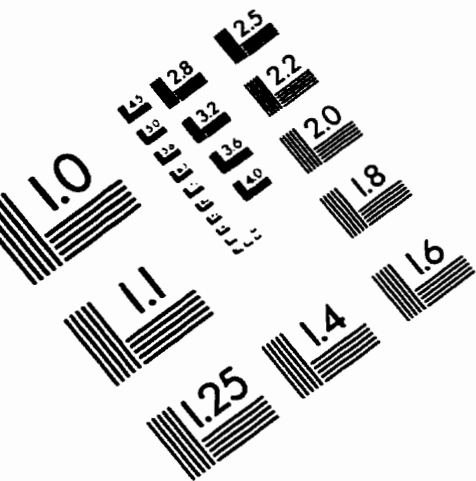
## just a second

*i'll think  
about it  
you said i  
really will and i  
believed you for a fraction  
of the second  
that i am to you and the  
cotton can  
dy web  
circles ever tighter a  
round my  
arms they are  
stuck to the sides of  
me and i can't move can't  
breathe any  
more and you  
smile, reach  
out touch my  
hand and ice my  
heart and i think i have met  
gregor not charlotte  
in this web yet  
i look in your eyes for a  
flicker of a second that you  
are the  
second not  
me*

## lesson

*i can fly*  
*up, up, up*  
*down, down, down*  
*up, up, up* said  
Diana in her own  
voice  
smiles, holds the  
book  
serious matter of  
fact  
as though  
reading was always  
already  
there  
don't you know that Mommy?

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



**APPLIED IMAGE . Inc**  
 1653 East Main Street  
 Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
 Phone: 716/482-0300  
 Fax: 716/288-5989

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