

Sui Generis

It's never the same sky
twice, I remark,
on this walk that hugs
the river

and you're right to cite
the saying as a riff
from our former
Sensei, who spoke of ripples
in the water and the
debris that's carried
away,

and I'm sure he thought
the *same*
when it comes to clouds,
each wisp and configuration:

like there, the horns of a bull,
one that mimics Taurus
in the night, when again
the combinations—

endless, like a lotto
with only a fixed amount
of balls,

their digits dropped
by the *push*
of gust and gale,

their numeric, Arabic faces
granting wishes,
like a genie
freed in the desert—
from a bottle swept
by something we cannot see,

where there's *never*
a nimbus in sight, a stream
that surges through, and the stars
a phantom tease,

that under their fleeting cool
we swear the patterns are alive,
inspire us to entreat
upon the first we see
each dusk,
as if the billion proffered up
by all the children of the Earth

never go unanswered,

as if the mothers and
their dead arose
when early morning sun
was at its lowest,

like a Christ who strolls
the streets of Jerusalem,
His blood on cobble-
stones

barely even dried,

mistaken for a Ghost
who answers prayer
to this very day,

with the holes that
grace His palms,
the rivers
gushing through,

astonished He holds
the whole world in His hands.

Bistro de Montréal

You're hesitant
to check
the bill of fare, *note de frais*
it says
in padded vinyl, recalling
as a girl
you'd ordered *consommé*,
after your parents
let you pick
from the menu *en Française*,
anything
that you wanted,
thinking it sounded cool,
never catching the
smirk
from the maître d',

that you were left
to learn your lesson,
slurping broth
and fallen tears,
eyeing your siblings
wolf *le hamburger*
et les frites, with a slice of
à la mode,
your parents, their
crème brûlée,

while you chose
to play it safe
and ordered nothing
for *le dessert*,
your mother's *rien*,
s'il vous plait,
delivered with an air
of punishment,
for your pouting
and jealous gaze,
for your failure
with a language
they had loved,

and you plotted
a future meal
when you were older,

worked your way to
C in fifth-grade French,

when you gleaned
a dozen mollusks
from the garden,
placed them
on your parents'
gilded plates,

that *escargots*
would surely
pay them back,

that *vengeance*
is the same in either
tongue,
served best
when *il fait froid*,

will take
its sweetest time
to come to pass,
like a snail that needs
forever
to move a mile,
careful not to crack
its spiral shell,
like a chicken
and its egg,
un oeuf
et un poulet.

Untitled

I asked if you'd
come up with a
name for the poem
you've been writing
and you answered *not yet*,

annoyed by my
response: *great title,*
succinct and
to-the-point,
which was super-
fluous, I know,
as well as most
unfunny,

which reminded
me of the moment
REM were *Out of Time*,
to conjure the *name*
of their new LP,
that Warner
unwittingly *broke*
the creative block,

that I too
have seen the crag
of muted stones,

the words that failed to
topple
off my tongue's
precipice,

like the night
I was unable to
speak, *anything*
of love, if I loved
you, if it thrust into
my side like a lance,
nailed my wooden
heart upon a stake,

that in the agony
that is silence,
all I could finally
manage: *not now,*
I'm sorry, not yet.

This Bag is Not a Toy

This pellucid,
plastic sleeve,
slippery as an
icicle
to the touch,
which held my *trio*
of padded envelopes
(used to mail those
once-in-a-blue-moon
orders for my book),
is inked with
an outré caveat:

THIS BAG
IS NOT A TOY,

and I'm forced to
wonder what *birthed*
this bizzarro warning,

if it was a toddler
who had ditched
her coloured blocks,
to slide
her chubby fingers
into its mouth,
unable to shake it off

(like a fox with its
foot in a trap),
and bawled her
bellowing tantrum
through the daycare,

or possibly
a boy of six,
slipping it over
his head,
mimicking the
helmet of an
astronaut, taking
that *one giant leap*

before suffocation,
before seeing
his entire world
as the forlorn,
trifling marble
that it is,

then maybe that
kid in the barrio,
who's never had
a plaything in her
life,

whose father
brought it back
for a refund, in
order to buy some
flour, the stationer
refusing
before he's shot in
desperation and
an orphan is born
of it all,

hearing from her
dad via letters
from the jail,
arriving
stamped & sealed
for 40 years,

who saved up
for a telescope
to scan the lunar
scars, had it shipped
to her lonely *hovel*
in São Paulo,

coming with *Silica* packs,
labelled CAUTION:
DO NOT EAT,

which perhaps
has saved some lives,
a culinary
temptation
otherwise,
sheathed in bubble
wrap,

that you'd pop it
between your teeth
were it not for
the admonition,

with a dash
of cardamom,
a swig of Brazilian
rum to wash it down.

Marconi

The eight-year-old
next door tells us
Macaroni invented the
radio, something she learned
in third-grade science,
stars all in her eyes,

and we're both pleased
and pleasantly surprised
the way things work
is being taught
at her impressionable
age,

that she'll learn the *layers*
of all the strata
and the DNA
of chimps
we share a common
ancestor with,

evolution's
splitting branch,
its sailing seeds
of wheat,

that pasta's
been around
since the *Shang*
Dynasty, that Marco
Polo took the credit,

that it somehow
mutated, evolved
into a technical
genius,

with Fusilli
conceiving
the carriage
without a horse,
letting Ford perfect
the blueprints
because her life was in a
spiral at the time,

that *notoriety*
would be out of the
question, that her affair
with Spaghettoni
would cause nothing but
lurid scandal,

and Ravioli
beating Edison
to the electric *punch*,
that the towns on
Italian coasts
were all alight,
before Tesla
made his mark
in Illinois, the World's Fair
another farce, an overrated
Serbian taking bows,

and then there's Penne
making a monkey
out of Musk,
that he made a *Camaro*
move

with the might of the rising
sun—before the *South African*
wet his diapers
during apartheid,

that one of these days
he'll gladly announce
his *own* social media,

much more innovative
than simply X
marks the spot,

that he'll be saucy
at the launch,

no, not of rockets
to the moon
or to the bleak
of Marian dunes,

but the one where
eight-hundred
million people
are affixed behind
their phones,

make it through the
day without a single
insult thrown,
a single
conspiracy,

like the vintage days
of frequency,
of kilohertz
and turn-the-dial,

when recipes
were dropped
between the news,
like the one
for mama's lasagna,
on WKTC,

in which the crush
of red tomatoes
reminded households
of the blood
of their departed,

the sons on the western
front, whose names
rose up to heaven
when its *transmitter*
had grown taller
than the trees,

when children
in all their wonder
thought they'd heard
the voice of gods.