




The Curriculum of Desire: Four Poems

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Lost and Found

(Press Here for Sound)



always wanted to be a saint,
perhaps St. Francis of Assisi.

But somewhere along the long way
to middle age, I lost my way,
at least my conscience
(learned I am no more
a saint than Roger Moore
or a St. Bernard).

Nobody has turned my conscience
in at the *Lost and Found*,
even though, like false teeth,
it's no good to anyone else.

All I know is I once had
a conscience, but lost it.
I'm not sure when or where.

One day it was gone,
like losing hair, heart,
teeth, smooth skin,
elasticity in underwear.

Now I confess I have only
a few thin proverbs to guide me,
like combing sparse wet hairs
over a shiny skull.

What I Want

(Press Here for Sound)



n the cusp of old age I no longer
want to argue about the lack
of soap in the shower and whose
responsibility it was to replace
the fragile wafer, so many
details like armies of mites.

Instead I want to remember
the pineapple juice with psyllium
I sipped in this slow motion morning
and the organic banana I forgot to eat
and *The Vancouver Sun* I didn't read
while I stared out the kitchen window

at the parade of men in denim overalls,
men, like my father, I will never know,
who ambled to the noisy warehouse
where they shuffle with acetylene torches
all day amidst clanging iron composing
the alchemic syntax of girders and trusses

while Mr. Burns sleeps in the patio door
steeped in the late winter sunlight
filled with hope for an early treat,
a long day's sleep, and dinner
that can never come fast enough,
but will come, he is sure.

Diaspora

(Press Here for Sound)



I have seen sea gulls far from the sea
at KFC in Fredericton, keen as giggling
adolescents for deep-fried chicken

I have seen sea gulls far from the sea
in Sault St. Marie, scavenging
for sprinkled Timbits at Tim Horton's

I have seen sea gulls far from the sea
like hoarfrost in wind-tossed fields
of Saskatchewan canola and flax

and I have seen sea gulls suspended
in Atlantic gusts between sea and sky
like bleached rags blowing in the wind

or white flags calling a weary truce:
I too have explored ample possibilities
for returning, if possible, to the sea

Alex Faulkner

(Press Here for Sound)



he first Newfoundlander to play in the NHL
was Alex Faulkner, and one time I stood in line,
a long time, outside the CBC in Corner Brook,
for his autograph, sure the Detroit Red Wings were
the greatest hockey team that ever played,
and when I told Nicholas how great
Faulkner was, he nodded politely

then last summer while bussing across Newfoundland
from one coast to another, Nicholas read
The Central Newfoundland Tourist Guide,
and learned what happens to hockey greats,
slipped me a folded scrap of paper, an advert
for the Beothuck Family & RV Park:

*A Great Quite Family oriented Park to Relax
Owned and Operated by Alex Faulkner
The First Newfoundland NHL Player
6 foot water slideRV Dumping Station*

(no punctuation between *slide* and *RV Dumping*, only
the image of sliding 6 feet into what RV's dumped)

and while I flinched with a stab for extinct Beothuck
families who will never relax in Faulkner's park,
my first thought was the predictable punctilious response
of an old English teacher: Alex needs a better editor

*the grasshopper
jumped, bumped
into my leg, tumbled
head over heels, somersaults
like a Cirque du Soleil artist,
perhaps just for the fun of it*

now we have all gathered in the hospital
where Pop is on a ventilator, propped up,
in forest green pajamas with a maroon trim
like Hugh Hefner wears, glad he is still alive,
surprising himself and all of us

Sterling just dropped in, and Pop tells him
how Joe Gullage's bed was wheeled away
to palliative care an hour ago, and now
ten of us huddle around Pop's bed like angels
who can't find our flaming swords
and everybody talks at the same time,
even if nobody can hear anybody,
even if we've long run out of things to say

and when Cliff asks Pop how he is, Pop holds
up the oxygen line, I'm tied on too short

and the nursing assistants and doctors
with their clipboards come and go
as if rehearsing for guest spots on *ER*
and none of us knows, so we make up
scenarios stewed in familiar TV fictions

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Michael Crummey's new novel *The Wreckage*
lies on the window ledge

as I watch people in the parking lot,
far below, I ask Nicholas, Do you think
this is what God sees when he looks down
at us scurrying here and there

but Nicholas growls, Don't make me come down there,
and I like that line, a lot, and according to Picasso
cited on a stamp in my moleskin journal
like Hemingway wrote in (according to the sign
in the Nikaido shop in Steveston):

There's nothing more difficult than a line

and I determine I will commit whatever life I have left
to body-building and joy and writing zigzags
in the sharp brokenness all around me

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Carl Leggo is a poet and professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. His poetry, fiction and essays have been published in many journals. He is the author of several books including: *Growing Up Perpendicular on the Side of a Hill*, *View from My Mother's House*, *Come-By-Chance*, *Teaching to Wonder: Responding to Poetry in the Secondary Classroom*, and *Lifewriting as Literary Metissage and an Ethos for Our Times* (with Erika Hasebe-Ludt and Cynthia Chambers). Also, he is a coeditor of *Being with A/r/tography* (with Stephanie Springgay, Rita L. Irwin, and Peter Gouzouasis), and of *Creative Expression, Creative Education* (with Robert Kelly).

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