

Al Purdy inspired generations of writers and musicians, from Leonard Cohen to Bruce Cockburn, Gord Downie to Sarah Harmer. Together they built the bonfire that is *The Al Purdy Songbook.*

1. 3 AL PURDYS Bruce Cockburn 6:05

2. TRANSIENT Doug Paisley 4:14

3. JUST GET HERE Sarah Harmer 4:28

4. THE EAST WIND Gord Downie 4:28

5. SENSITIVE MAN Jason Collett 5:32

6. OUTDOOR HOTEL Snowblink 3:43

7. UNPROVABLE Greg Keelor 4:26

8. WILDERNESS GOTHIC Margaret Atwood 3:00

9. AT THE QUINTE HOTEL Gord Downie 3:08

10. SAY THE NAMES Bidiniband & the Billie Hollies 4:19

11. THE COUNTRY NORTH OF BELLEVILLE Felicity Williams 4:54

12. NECROPSY OF LOVE Leonard Cohen 1:22

13. COWBOY Casey Johnson 3:08

3-DISC SET

• The Al Purdy Songbook CD

• DVD and Blu-ray discs of the documentary feature Al Purdy Was Here

alpurdy.ca alpurdywashere.ca borealisrecords.com

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THE AL PURDY SONGBOOK

Produced by $BRIAN\ D.\ JOHNSON\ &\ JASON\ COLLETT$ $\text{Co-Producer}\ JAKE\ YANOWSKI$ $\text{Mastered by } HARRIS\ NEWMAN\ @\ GREY\ MARKET\ MASTERING$

Art Direction, Design & Layout by A MAN CALLED WRYCRAFT wrycraft.com

Cover and last page of booklet photos by SHELLY GRIMSON

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Thanks to Jean Baird • Jody Colero • Bruce Cowley • Kevin Drew • Bernie Finkelstein • Jason Gileno Marni Jackson • Robert Kory • Daniel Lanois • Robin Mirsky • Michael Ondaatje • Jenn Pressey Eurithe Purdy • Damian Rogers • Howard White • Aubrey Winfield • Bob Young • Neil Young

AL PURDY WAS HERE

Directed And Produced by BRIAN D. JOHNSON

Co-Producer JAKE YANOWSKI

Executive Producer RON MANN

Written by MARNI JACKSON & BRIAN D. JOHNSON

Director Of Photography NICK DE PENCIER

Editor NICK TAYLOR

Composer CASEY JOHNSON

AL PURDY WAS HERE on DVD & BLU-RAY

With subtitled versions of the movie in French, Spanish and Portuguese (92 minutes)

SPECIAL FEATURES

- FELICITY WILLIAMS records "Woman" at the Purdy A-Frame (1:55)
- LIVE PERFORMANCES from The Al Purdy Show at Koerner Hall in Toronto, February 6, 2013
 - GORDON PINSENT reads "The Country North of Belleville" (3:52)
 - DENNIS LEE reads "My Grandfather's Country" (6:22)
 - GEORGE ELLIOT CLARKE reads "In Cabbagetown" (5:30)
 - BIDINIBAND & THE BILLIE HOLLIES perform "Say the Names" (4:13)

ARCHIVAL: DEEP TRACKS

- SELECTED PURDY a 1973 documentary by Thomas Howe (13:00)
 - MILTON ACORN: THE PEOPLE'S POET
 - a 1971 documentary by Kent Martin and Errol Sharpe (26:57)
- THE LOST PORTRAITS Photographs of iconic writers, taken in 1970 by Shelly Grimson at the age 22 for the landmark anthology 15 Canadian Poets (6:08)
 - POETRY IN MOTION Purdy reads "To Her in Sunlight" and "The Dead Poet" with images and music (4:14)

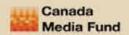






















(clockwise from top)
Leonard Cohen,
Sarah Harmer,
Gord Downie, Greg Keelor,
Felicity Williams,
Bruce Cockburn





(clockwise from top)
Margaret Atwood,
Doug Paisley,
Casey Johnson,
Bidiniband
& the Billie Hollies,
Snowblink,
Jason Collett





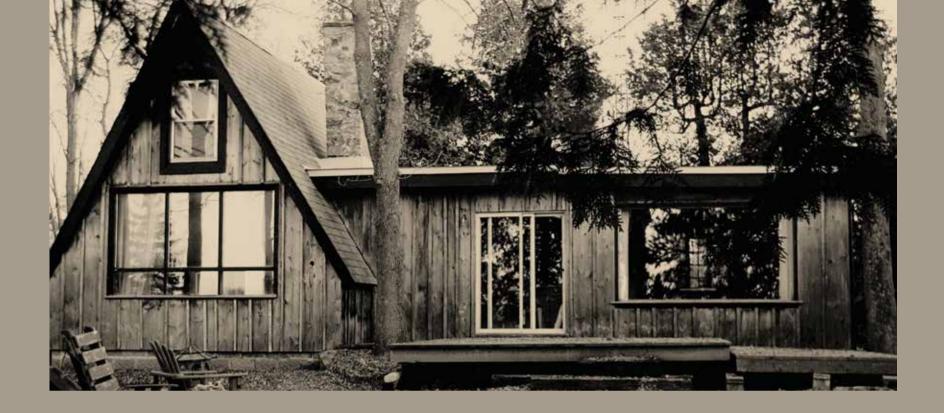






AL PURDY: a brief biography

Al Purdy was born December 30, 1918 in Wooler, Ontario and died April 21, 2000 in Sidney, BC. He has been called the first, last and most Canadian poet. "Voice of the Land" is engraved on his tombstone. But before finding fame as the country's unofficial poet laureate, he endured years of poverty and failure. Dropping out of high school at 17, he rode freight trains during the Great Depression, worked odd jobs, and served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. Purdy lived all over the country, labouring in mattress factories. In 1957, he and his wife Eurithe built an A-frame cabin near his birthplace in Ontario. There, after two decades of writing what he admits was bad poetry, he found his voice, and finally broke through with The Cariboo Horses (1965), which won the first of his two Governor General's Awards for Poetry. Purdy published 33 books of poetry, a novel, a memoir, and nine collections of essays and correspondence. In 2008, nine years after his death, his statue was unveiled in Toronto's Queen's Park. Then, after a robust fund-raising drive, the Al Purdy A-Frame Association bought and restored the A-frame, and launched a writing residency program in 2014. The A-Frame project inspired both the film *Al Purdy Was Here* and The *Al Purdy Songbook*.



SUPPORT THE A-FRAME

A share of the proceeds from this three-disc set of The Al Purdy Songbook and Al Purdy Was Here will go to the registered charity that inspired these projects, the Al Purdy A-Frame Association, which has successfully restored the cabin as a retreat for new generations of writers.

Since the program was launched, in 2014, twenty-two writers have passed through the A-frame, with a per diem paid by the Association. They wrote where Al wrote, surrounded by the books he read and the landscapes that spoke to him. His spirit of dedicated risk seems to have rubbed off. A number of residents have published acclaimed volumes of poetry written under the influence of Al.

Maintaining the A-frame and the writing program needs your support. Contribute with a tax-deductible donation to one the most exciting literary arts programs in the country:

AL PURDY A-FRAME ASSOCIATION www.alpurdy.ca

FOREWORD

By Michael Ondaatje

Foreword to Beyond Remembering: The Collected Poems of Al Purdy ©2000 Harbour Publishing

We were very young and he was hitting his stride—*Poems for All the Annettes, The Cariboo Horses.* There had been no poetry like it yet in this country. Souster and Acorn were similar, had prepared the way, but here was a voice with a "strolling" not "dancing" gait or metre, climbing over old fences in Cashel township... (And who ever wrote about "township lines" in poems before Al did?)

And with this art of walking he covered greater distances, more haphazardly, and with more intricacy. Cashel and Ameliasburgh and Elzevir and Weslemkoon are names we can now put on a literary map alongside the Mississippi and The Strand. For a person of my generation, Al Purdy's poems mapped and named the landscape of Ontario, just as Leonard Cohen did with Montreal and its surroundings in *The Favourite Game*.

We were in our twenties (and I speak for my friends Tom Marshall and David Helwig, who were there with me) and we didn't have a single book to our names; we were studying or teaching at the university in Kingston.

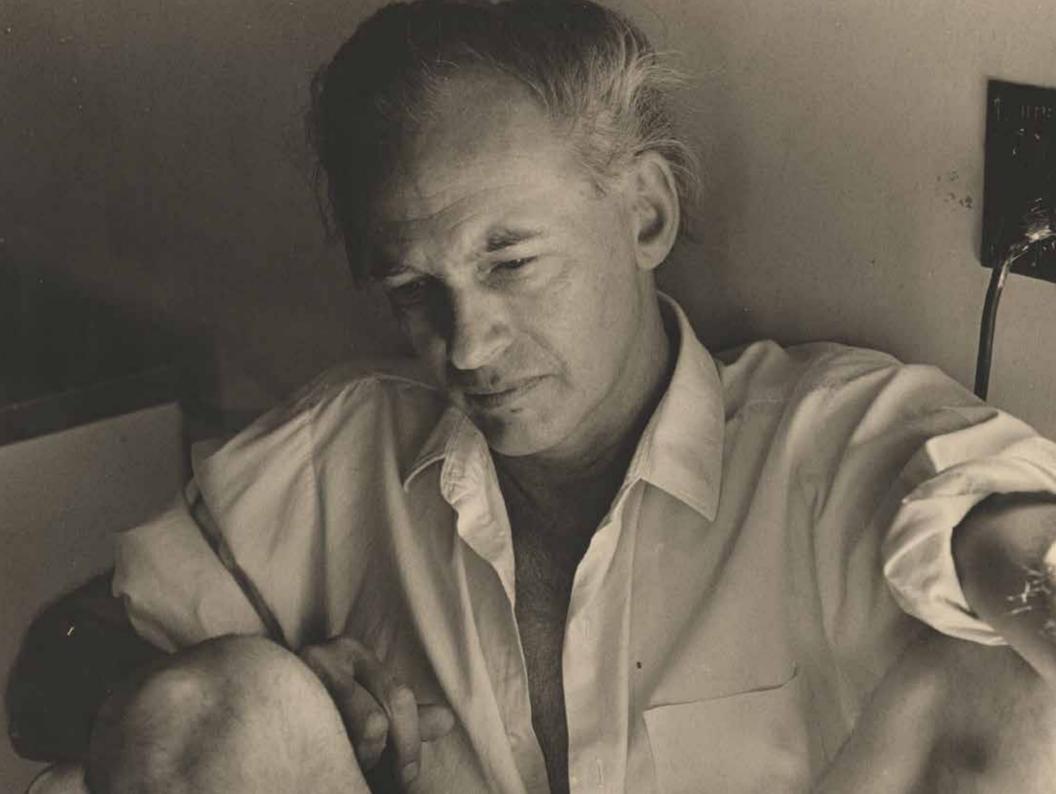
...And Al and Eurithe simply invited us in. And why? Because we were poets! Not well-known writers or newspaper celebrities. Did Kipling ever do that?

Did D.H. Lawrence? Malcolm Lowry had done that for "Al-some-thing or other" in Dollarton, years earlier.

These visits became essential to our lives. We weren't there for gossip, certainly not to discuss royalties and publishers. We were there to talk about poetry. Read poems aloud. Argue over them. Complain about prosody. We were there to listen to a recording he had of "The Bonnie Earl of Murray." And sometimes we saw signed books by other Canadian poets. (My favourite dedication among them was "To Awful AI from Perfect Peggy.")

All this changed our lives. It allowed us to take poetry seriously. This happened with and to numerous other young poets all over the country right until the last days of Al Purdy's life. He wasn't just a sensitive man, he was a generous man.

Most of all we should celebrate his fervent, dogmatic desire to write poetry. A glass-blower makes money. A worm-picker has a more steady income. Al, a man who had the looks and manner of a brawler, wanted to be a poet. And what is great is that he was a bad poet for a long time and that didn't stop him. That's where the heroism comes in.



And when he became a good, and then a g reat poet, he never forgot the significance and importance of those bad poets—they were rather like those s mall homes and farms north of Belleville, "a little adjacent to where the world is," and about to sink into the earth. He had been there. It gave his work a central core of humbleness, strange word for Al. It resulted in the double take in his work, the point where he corrects himself.

"I have been stupid in a poem ..."

As he was not ashamed to whisper in a poem—this in a time of midcentury bards. All never came with bardic trappings.

"Who is he like?" you ask yourself. And in Canada there is no one.

I can't think of a single parallel in English literature. It almost seems a joke to attempt that. He was this self-taught poet from up the road. What a brave wonder.

So how do we respond to all that Al was and stood for?

The great Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid, who was pretty close to Al in some ways, had by the time of his death become the embodiment of what his country's culture was, and stood for, and stood against. Fellow Scottish poet Norman MacCaig recognized MacDiarmid's contribution by saying:

Because of his death, this country should observe two minutes of pandemonium.



CREATING THE AL PURDY SONGBOOK

By Brian D. Johnson

So we built a house my wife and I our house at a backwater puddle of a lake near Ameliasburgh, Ont. spending our last hard-earned buck to buy second-hand lumber to build a second-hand house and make a down payment on a lot so far from anywhere even homing pigeons lost their way getting back from nowhere

from 'In Search of Owen Roblin," Al Purdy

This album began with a campaign to save a cabin—the A-frame in Ameliasburgh, Ontario, that Al Purdy and his wife Eurithe built with their own hands in 1957. Skeptics argued that this ramshackle cottage made with salvaged lumber was beyond salvation. Or not worth the trouble. But that didn't deter a group of the late poet's friends on the West Coast—publisher Howard White, editor Jean Baird, and her partner, poet George Bowering—from their tireless mission of rescuing a literary landmark on the other side of the country. Rallying a pantheon of Canadian authors and musicians, they generated a grass roots fundraising campaign to buy the house, and restore it as a writing retreat for a new generation of poets.

The campaign seemed as quixotic as Purdy's own career. A high school dropout who worked in mattress factories, he was still struggling to make it as poet after 20 years of consistent failure. Then as he set up shop in the A-frame, not far from his birthplace, "a truly remarkable thing happened," writes Howard White in *The Al Purdy A-Frame Anthology*. "Nurtured by the deep connection he felt with this place, the man began producing poems of startling originality." By his death, in 2000, "he had produced what many consider the greatest body of poetry in Canadian literature." The cottage, where Al and Eurithe lived off and on for four decades, became a legendary crossroads for the pioneers of CanLit—a rustic salon irrigated by Al's wild grape wine and homemade beer, and frequented by writers such as Margaret Atwood,

Michael Ondaatje and Dennis Lee.

The point of the A-frame drive was never to enshrine a poet's house. It was to revive its role as a place that would continue the conversation, and incubate new poetry. The event that helped push the campaign over the top was *The Al Purdy Show,* a benefit at Toronto's Koerner Hall, February 6, 2013—with a line-up that included Atwood, Gord Downie, Gordon Pinsent, Dave Bidini and a whole mess of poets.

Marni Jackson, who scripted the show, enlisted me to cut some old TV and film clips of Purdy into a montage. It was my first encounter with the man, who loomed larger than life in the black-and-white footage. At the last minute, we arranged for a camera crew to film the show for posterity. It turned out to be a singular event, an exhilarating mix of poetry, music and funny stories. After the concert, I blithely suggested the logical next step should be *The Al Purdy Songbook*—go to the singer-songwriters, who revere the poets, and get them to create an album of Purdy-inspired music to benefit the A-frame. I had no idea I'd become involved. Or that it would take over five years for the album come together.

The footage from the show became the germ for *Al Purdy Was Here*, a documentary feature that we created in tandem with the *Songbook*. Stickhandled by Executive Producer Ron Mann, the film got financed on the basis of a dream cast before anyone had even been approached—including Atwood, Ondaatje, Downie, Bruce Cockburn, Sarah Harmer, Neil Young, Leonard Cohen. Once the word went out, it was like a barn raising. The notion that a dead Canadian poet could generate such a response was beyond inspiring. But it was not just for the love of Al. The project uncovered a deep longing for a place where poetry once mattered, and a time when our cultural horizons were being opened up, rather than fenced in and cut back—a sentiment that cut across generations, from nostalgic boomers to young artists wanting to experience a kind of Canada they never knew.

In our pitch to potential *Songbook* contributors, we tried to make the parameters as broad as possible. Most of Purdy's poems don't rhyme or follow a strict metre, so you can't just flip them into lyrics. Musicians were urged to take poetic license and adapt his work as freely as they liked. They could plunder a single poem or a dozen. Or draw inspiration from the whole canvas of Al's life and landscapes. The result was an uncanny convergence of songwriting talent around the work of a Canadian poet.

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THE ARTISTS

Jason Collett, who has been combining literary and musical talent for years in Jason Collett's Basement Revue, agreed to co-produce the *Songbook* without a moment's hesitation. He also came up with a soulful track called Sensitive Man, named after an ironic boast from Purdy's epic tale of a barroom fight, At the Quinte Hotel. Featuring The Band's Garth Hudson on organ and accordion, Jason's vocal captures Al's yearning spirit in a droll yet vulnerable portrait of an artist who was "born a middle aged man with belly and ballpoint pen" who "built a frame to fill with mythology/late night brawls and epiphanies/a northern nobility that we couldn't quite conceive/where a country could imagine itself."

Bruce Cockburn was one of several contributors already deeply familiar with Purdy, and he embraced the challenge as if it were something he'd been itching to do for years. In 3 Al Purdys, a rousing six-minute epic, Bruce lets Purdy's words come tumbling through the verses as if poured from a pitcher of draft. A generous portion of his lyrics come straight from Transient, Al's 1967 poem about hopping boxcars on the way to Vancouver as a teenager. The song's refrain—I'll give you 3 Al Purdys for a twenty-dollar bill—was inspired by Bruce's distant memory of a poet selling books on a Toronto street corner. That's not something Purdy was ever known to have done, but it evokes the scrappy character of a poet who could connect with the street. Bruce is the only *Songbook* artist who tried to capture Al's persona in his voice, adopting a gruff swagger quite unlike anything we've heard from him before. This was the first song Bruce had written in two-and-a-half years, ever since becoming a father, and it kindled a new burst of songwriting that led to his 33rd album, *Bone on Bone*, and 13th Juno Award.

Doug Paisley was a teenager when he met Purdy at a poetry reading at the Red Dog Tavern in Peterborough, Ontario. He had him autograph a pack of rolling papers, and became a lifelong fan, amassing a personal collection of rare editions. Doug's song, Transient, takes its title from the same poem that Bruce Cockburn draws on, and channels Purdy's experience riding the rails. But it's a more intimate ballad, capturing the romantic side of a young man who has his eye on the horizon while his heart pulls him home. Doug recorded the song twice, first for the cameras, as he sang it solo with his guitar in his living room, then in the studio with a band. In the film, we merged the two versions to forge a soundtrack for Al's early years.

Margaret Atwood found time between being a prolific author, an ambassador for the Handmaid's Tale, and an unflagging activist, to serve as one of the A-frame campaign's most dedicated supporters. In Toronto's Pilot Tavern, she reminisced about her old friend AI for the film then shot some pool. Later, in the book-lined basement office of her home, she recorded a reading of Wilderness Gothic. After the first take, which was flawless, I asked if she would do a second take just to see where it might go. She agreed, only after telling us it would be no different. She was right. She's always right. We used the first take.

Dave Bidini was turning Purdy's poetry into music long before the *Songbook* was conceived. Among singer-songwriters, he may have been the first responder. As much author as musician, he became familiar with Purdy when he was working with McLelland & Stewart, Al's publisher at the time. "His books were always around," Dave recalls. "I couldn't believe that Naked With Summer in Your Mouth wasn't written by an 18-year-old." (Purdy wrote it at 74). Dave slipped a sample of Al reading the last three lines of "Wilderness Gothic" into "Me and Stupid," a track on the Rheostatics 1994 album, *Introducing Happiness*. And his Bidiniband recorded "Say the Names" with the angelic Billie Hollies for their 2014 album, *The Motherland*. Opening with Purdy reading some lines from Necropsy of Love, it drifts into a choral incantation of him hailing Indigenous place names versus their colonial substitutes. Published a year before his death, "Say the Names" was one of Purdy's last poems. Before "Voice of the Land" would be engraved on his tombstone, he reminds us that the real Voice of the Land belongs to Native Peoples, and flows directly from Nature—"you dreamed you were a river/and you were a river."

Gord Downie, like Bidini, fell under Al's influence early in the game. Next to Leonard Cohen, it's hard to think of a major Canadian artist who moved so promiscuously between poetry and songwriting. In 2002 he starred in a short film dramatizing At The Quinte Hotel, Purdy's bittersweet yarn about a moment of truth in a tavern brawl. The *Songbook* offers his live performance of it at *The Al Purdy Show.* Before his death, Downie also offered up "The East Wind," a Purdy-influenced song he'd recorded with the Country of Miracles for their 2010 album *The Grand Bounce*—with a couple of lines from, once again, "Necropsy of Love."

Neil Young was approached to write a *Songbook* number. For inspiration, we sent him Al's "My '48 Pontiac," a noir chronicle from the viewpoint of a car in a junkyard. Neil liked the poem, and the project. He never got around to writing a song, but graciously donated his 1971 Massey Hall performance of Journey Through the Past to the film's soundtrack.

Leonard Cohen met Purdy in Montreal in the 1960s. They were never close, and as poets they were from different planets. But they shared a friend in poet Irving Layton, and Cohen's enduring respect for Purdy was clear when he stepped up as one of the first luminaries to make a substantial donation to the A-frame campaign. I thought of asking him to read "Necropsy of Love" for the film, but it seemed too obvious. This spare poem about love and death, which Al wrote in his early 40s, reads so much like a Leonard Cohen poem to begin with. So I sent him "The Country North of Belleville", hoping to create a canonical moment for Canadian literature. He declined, saying he would need help pronouncing all those Scottish names, and besides, he didn't understand the poem. I finally sent him "Necropsy of Love," and Leonard wrote back, "I'll give it a shot." Indeed. In early October 2014, while recording his final album, *You Want It Darker*, Leonard found a moment to make Al's words his own with heartbreaking gravity and grace.

Casey Johnson composed and produced the original score for *Al Purdy Was Here*. With performances by songwriters occupying so much of the movie's musical real estate, the score had to play a constrained and specific role. Casey's method was right in tune with Purdy's desire for authenticity: he recorded the entire score using vintage analog equipment. *The Songbook's* final track, "Cowboy," was created for a sequence early in the film that establishes Al's character as a laconic outsider striding into the quiet saloon of CanLit and creating a stir. Sailing over the track is David Chan's sublimely lazy, cantina-like trumpet. David prefers to play outdoors, so Casey set up a microphone on the sidewalk and wired him into the studio.

1. 3 AL PURDYS

Bruce Cockburn

Stand in the swaying boxcar doorway moving east away from the sunset and after a while the eyes digest a country and the belly perceives a mapmaker's vision in dust and dirt on the face and hands here its smell drawn deep through the nostrils down to the lungs and spurts through the bloodstream campaigns in the lower intestine and chants love songs to the kidneys After a while there is no arrival and no departure possible any more you are where you were always going and the shape of home is under your fingernails...

I'm a product of some parents
of the sort that shouldn't breed
didn't get much schooling past learning how to read
got the poetry bug in some forgotten institution
when first I did embark on my career of destitution
the beauty of language set a hook in my soul
me like a breadcrust soaking soup from a bowl
You can call this a rant but I declare I declaim
Al Purdy's poems are the name of the game
the winds of fate blow where they will
I'll give you 3 Al Purdy's for a twenty dollar bill

Porkers in the counting house counting out the bacon matter's getting darker in the universe they're making they love the little guy until they get a better offer with the dollar getting smaller they can fit more in their coffers and the doings on the corner neither sung nor seen they're circling the shopping carts at Sherbourne and Queen I resemble that assembly but I'm not the same AI Purdy's poems are the name of my game the winds of fate blow where they will I'll give you 3 AI Purdy's for a twenty dollar bill

You can spit on the prophet but respect the word I've got some lines I want to spin you that you ought to have heard the winds of fate blow where they will I'll give you 3 Al Purdy's for a twenty dollar bill

the winds of fate blow where they will I'll give you 3 Al Purdy's for a twenty dollar bill

And after the essence of everything had exchanged itself for words and became another being and could even be summoned from the far distance we chanted a spell of names

and we said "mountain be our friend"
and we said "River guard us from enemies"
And we said what it seemed the gods themselves
might say if we had dreamed them and they
had dreamed us from their high places
and they spoke to us in the forest
from the river and the mountain
and the mouths of the ochre-painted dead
had speech again and the waters
spoke and the speech had words
and our children remembered

Bruce Cockburn - guitars and vocal Scott Amendola - drums John Shifflett - upright bass Julie Wolf - accordion Gary Craig - fan and other percussion John Dymond - electric bass Ron Miles - coronet

Produced by Julie Wolf
Recorded & Mixed by Adam Muñoz
Lyrics by Bruce Cockburn and Al Purdy
Music by Bruce Cockburn
Courtesy True North Records, Bruce Cockburn
and the Al Purdy Estate/Harbour Publishing
© Holy Drone Corp 2015



2. TRANSIENT

Doug Paisley

Riding on an eastbound train Trying to get home again Behind the coal fire burning bright

> Cross the Continental Divide Digging in the great landslide Beside a silver river of light

Running from Sault Ste Marie Caught a deadhead on the Kootenay Rode a steel dream through the night

The faraway bells are ringing You've been away from home so long

And when it's time for saying goodbye We know we won't see each other again But I can still hear your voice

> Casinos and the parking lots All the criminals have been caught They emptied out the night

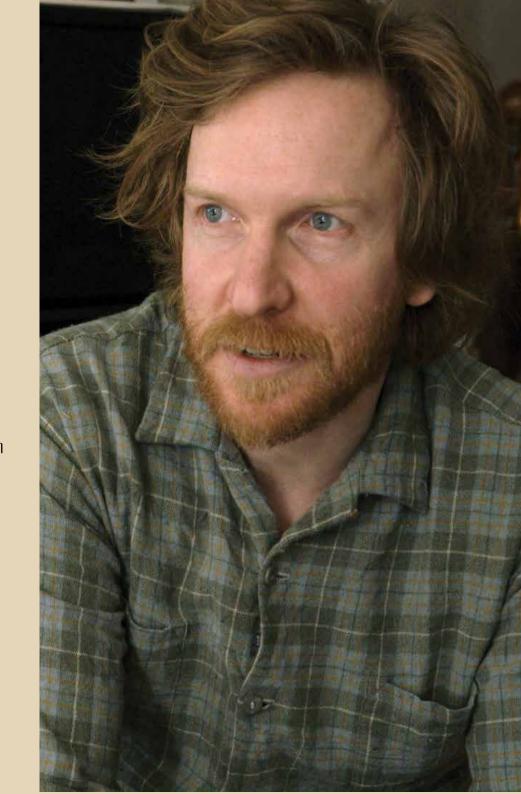
Standing like an old scarecrow Lassos around your throat Ploughed furrows in your brain

Out beyond the last streetlight Reach across the distance tonight Is there something you could do

This is my blood flowing into you All the work must be undone

And when it's time for saying goodbye We know we won't see each other again But I can still hear your voice

Doug Paisley - Vocal, guitar
Rob Drake - drums
Darcy Yates - bass guitar
Robbie Grunwald - keyboards
Recorded and Mixed by Stew Crookes
Lyrics by Doug Paisley and Al Purdy
Music by Doug Paisley
Courtesy of Doug Paisley and the Al Purdy Estate/
Harbour Publishing © Doug Paisley 2015



3. JUST GET HERE

Sarah Harmer

If I was a crow I'd fly the roads
that wind between these places
Over back lanes and weathered veins
where creeks have left their traces
Fruit trees planted long ago
still bloom every other season
Fence won't keep the rabbits out
Gate's always open for some damn reason

Writing under wallpaper, writing on the womb Though poets die a lullaby still whispers faintly in the room

If you're too tucked away and you can't see the sun If you've something to say but you ain't got no one What ever you do if you have to use your thumb Just get here, just come

Follow and trace the coastline's lace
to a place that's worn and storied
At the end of their chain the Great Lakes drain
into the old St Lawrence
Oh we've held party or two
Slept a million dreamers
who woke to find the coffee on
Though the smoke is gone the poetry lingers

If your too tucked away and you can't see the sun If you've something to say but you ain't got no one If your hands are getting cold and you don't know what you've become

If you're too tucked away and you can't see the sun If you've something to say but you ain't got no one Whatever you do if you have to use your thumb Just get here, just come.

If I was a crow I'd fly the roads
that wind between these places
Where poems were read and hungers fed
and hearts were warm and gracious
Did we keep a guestbook somewhere
or are the records fading?
We'll make a vow to start one now
there is still time but it's not waiting

If you come out at night you'll see the light and where to make the turn off But do call ahead we might be in bed or writing with our clothes off

Sarah Harmer - vocals and piano Lyrics by Sarah Harmer and Al Purdy; Music by Sarah Harmer Engineered and Mixed by Aaron Holmberg Courtesy of Pare Publishing the Al Purdy Estate / Harbour Publishing © Cold Snap Records 2015



4. THE EAST WIND

Gord Downie & The Country of Miracles

Hello again, my friends I've come to see you again Like the East Wind The laziest wind It doesn't go around you, it goes through you

> Night is like a room It makes the little things In your head Too important

It doesn't go around you, it goes through you It doesn't go around you, it goes right through

> No I do not love you Hate the word Run to the outside Public sound

It doesn't go around you, it goes through you It doesn't go around you, it goes right through

Hello again my friends I've come to see you again I'm the East Wind The laziest Wind

Produced by Chris Walla
Gord Downie - vocals
Julie Doiron - vocals, guitar, bass
Josh Finlayson - bass, guitar
Dale Morningstar - lead guitar
Dave Clark - drums
Dr. Pee - keyboards
Courtesy Universal Music Canada
© Gord Downie and The Country of Miracles

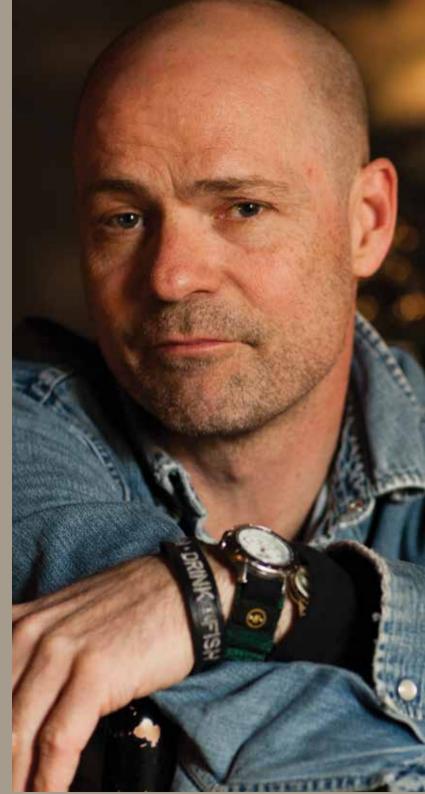


PHOTO BY ANDREW TOLSON/MACLEAN'S

5. SENSITIVE MAN

Jason Collett

and we shall build our home where running waters gleam and plant the ground with roses and sow the day with dreams and we shall live forever a little down the river a little down the road those were back breaking days in the sun and the rain surrounded by nothing but beautiful trees and I hate beautiful trees

I was born a middle aged man with belly and ballpoint pen you know I am a sensitive man

with a hammer and a saw
bent nails and as many beers
I built a frame to fill with mythology
late night brawls and epiphanies
a northern nobility
that we couldn't quite conceive
where a country
could imagine itself

pissing on a star stop exactly where you are a fifty thousand gallon tank of bullshit a dirty dishrag for a stiff upper lip and here I am with both hands high under the skirts of the world

I was born a middle aged man with belly and ballpoint pen you know I am a sensitive man I went out walking the land I took it all in you know I am a sensitive man

Jason Collett - vocal and acoustic guitar
Mike O'Brian - drums
Jason Haberman - bass
Neil Quinn - acoustic/electric guitars, background vocals
Carlin Nicholson - piano
Garth Hudson - organ, accordion
Engineered by Carlin Nicholson at III Eagle Studio
Mixed by Howie Beck

Lyrics by Jason Collett and Al Purdy; Music by Jason Collett Courtesy of Jason Collett and the Al Purdy Estate/Harbour Publishing © 2015 Jason Collett



6. OUTDOOR HOTEL

Snowblink

In the river's white racket small purple arctic surprises
All those noisy flowers in water places
you've seen them
In the outdoor hotel
lovers came this way
to watch the water floor show years ago
in the outdoor hotel
lovers came this way
All those noisy flowers bodies touching surprises
In the outdoor hotel
lovers came this way
to watch the water floor show years ago
in the outdoor hotel
lovers came this way
And love the sound of a colour that lasts two weeks in August—

Performed by Snowblink (Daniela Gesundheit and Dan Goldman)
Adapted from ''Arctic Rhododendrons'' by Al Purdy (1967)
Lyrics by Snowblink and Al Purdy; Music by Snowblink
Courtesy of Snowblink and the Al Purdy Estate/Harbour Publishing
© Snowblink 2015



7. UNPROVABLE

Greg Keelor

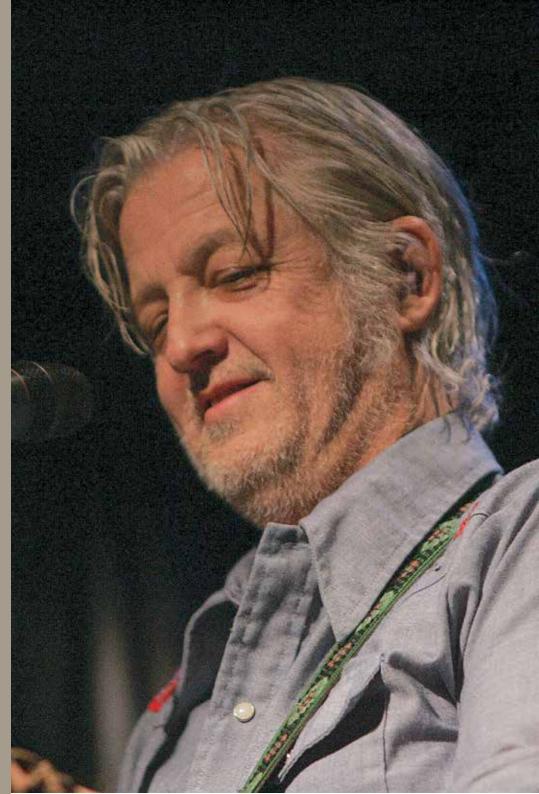
For those whose home Is the wind That lifts the curtains at night

> When you wake up And you don't know why She's there too

> > Now there is only Myself here In this cave of bones

Kept prisoner forever Never to be free To hover and hover as a moth

And unprovable as the sun on the other side of the world Unprovable as the sun -un -un on the other side of the world Adapted from "Woman" by Al Purdy (1994)
Greg Keelor - vocals, guitar
Dean Stone - drums
Graham Walsh - guitar, bass, keyboards
Julie Fader - vocals
Engineered and Mixed by Graham Walsh
Lyrics by Al Purdy; Music by Greg Keelor
Courtesy of Greg Keelor
and the Al Purdy Estate / Harbour Publishing
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O BY MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER / MONTREAL GAZE

8. WILDERNESS GOTHIC (1968)

Read by Margaret Atwood

Across Roblin Lake, two shores away,
They are sheathing the church spire
With new metal. Someone hangs in the sky
Over there from a piece of rope,
Hammering and fitting God's belly-scratcher,
Working his way up along the spire
Until there's nothing left to nail on—
Perhaps the workman's faith reaches beyond:
Touches intangibles, wrestles with Jacob,
Replacing rotten timber with pine thews,
Pounds hard in the blue cave of the sky,
Contends heroically with difficult problems
Of gravity, sky navigation and mythopeia,
His volunteer time and labour donated to God,
Minus sick benefits of course on a non-union job—

Fields around are yellowing into harvest, Nestline and fingerling are sky and water borne, Death is yodeling quiet in green woodlots, And bodies of three young birds have disappeared In the sub-surface of the new county highway—

That picture is incomplete, part left out That might alter the whole Durer landscape: Gothic ancestors peer from medieval sky, Dour faces trapped in photograph albums escaping To clop down iron roads with matched greys: Work-sodden wives groping inside their flesh For what keeps moving and changing and flashing Beyond and past the long frozen Victorian day. A sign of fire and brimstone? A two-headed calf Born in the barn last night? A sharp female agony? An age and a faith moving into transition, The dinner cold and new-baked bread a failure. Deep woods shiver and water drops hang pendant, Double yolked eggs and the house creaks a little— Something is about to happen. Leaves are still. Two shores away, a man hammering in the sky. Perhaps he will fall.

Performed by Margaret Atwood in Toronto, Recorded by Patric McGroarty Poem by Al Purdy, courtesy of the Al Purdy Estate/Harbour Publishing



PHOTO BY ANDREW TOLSON/MACLEAN'S

9. AT THE QUINTE HOTEL (1968)

Read by Gord Downie

I am drinking I am drinking beer with yellow flowers in underground sunlight and you can see that I am a sensitive man And I notice that the bartender is a sensitive man too so I tell him about his beer I tell him the heer he draws is half fart and half horse piss and all wonderful yellow flowers But the bartender is not quite so sensitive as I supposed he was the way he looks at me now and does not appreciate my exquisite analogy Over in once corner two guys are quietly making love in the brief prelude to infinity Opposite them a peculiar fight enables the drinkers to lay aside their comic books and watch with interest as I watch with interest A wiry little man slugs another guy then tracks him bleeding into the toilet and slugs him to the floor again with ugly red flowers on the tile three minutes later he roosters over

to the table where his drunk friend sits with another friend and slugs both of em ass-over-electric-kettle so I have to walk around on my way for a piss Now I am a sensitive man so I say to him mildly as hell "You shouldn'ta knocked over that good beer with them heautiful flowers in it" So he says to me "Come on" so I Come On like a rabbit with weak kidneys I quess like a yellow streak charging with flower power I suppose & knock the shit outa him & sit on him (he is just a little guy) and say reprovingly Violence will get nowhere this time chum Now you take me I am a sensitive man and would you believe I write poems?' But I could see the doubt in his upside down face in fact in all the faces "What kinda poems?" "Flower poems"

"So tell us a poem" I got off the little guy but reluctantly for he was comfortable and told me this poem They crowded around me with tears in their eyes and wring my hands feelingly for my pickets for it was heart-warming moment for Literature and moved by the demonstrable effect of great Art and brotherhood of people I remarked "—the poem oughta be worth some beer" It was a mistake of terminology for silence came and it was brought home to me in the tavern that poems will not really buy beer or flowers or a goddam thing and I was sad for I am a sensitive man.

Performed by Gord Downie at 'The Al Purdy Show', Toronto's Koerner Hall, February 6, 2013 Recorded by Ian Harper. Poem by Al Purdy, courtesy of the Al Purdy Estate /Harbour Publishing



10. SAY THE NAMES

Bidiniband & the Billie Hollies

an echo in the mountains Tulameen

Briton Windsor Trenton and Nahanni
Lo the borrowed land of foreign names
Kleena Kleene and Lilloet
Say the names and dream your little dream
Sky is falling down with the Buffalo
North is as a deed and forever more
Lost among the mountains Osoyoos
West to Head Smashed In and Similkameen
Say the names and dream your little dream

an echo in the mountains Tulameen

He came into the world a poet, ya
He died at 82, he was the best
Say the names
Sky is falling down with the Buffalo

an echo in the mountains Tulameen Briton Windsor Trenton and Nahanni

> an echo in the mountains Tulameen

Adapted from Al Purdy's "Say the Names" (1999)

Dave Bidini - vocals, acoustic guitar

Don Kerr - drums, cello

Paul Linklater - electric quitar

Doug Friesen - bass

Brian Chahley - trumpet

Janet Morassutti - vocals

Donna Orchard -vocals

Coralie Martens - vocals

Julia Hambleton -vocals

Music by Dave Bidini; lyrics by Al Purdy © 2014 Dave Bidini Courtesy of Dave Bidini and the Al Purdy Estate/Harbour Publishing



11. THE COUNTRY NORTH BELLEVILLE (1968)

Felicity Williams

It's been a long time since
we must enquire the way of strangers —
a country of quiescence and still distance
where farms have gone back
to forest
are only soft outlines
shadowy differences —Old fences drift vaguely among
the trees
a pile of moss-covered stones
gathered for some ghost purpose
has lost meaning under the meaningless sky
— they are like cities under
water

undulating green waves of time are laid on them —

This is the country of our defeat and yet lakeland rockland and hill country it's been a long time since we must enquire the way of strangers —

Adapted from Al Purdy's "The Country North of Belleville" (1965) Felicity Williams - vocal Robin Dann - supporting vocal

Michael Davidson - Vibraphone David Occhipinti - electric guitar Dan Fortin - upright bass.

Recorded at the Purdy A-frame Engineered and Mixed by Patrick McGroarty Lyrics by Al Purdy; Music by Felicity Williams Courtesy of Felicity Williams and the Al Purdy Estate/ Harbour Publishing © Felicity Williams 2015



12. *NECROPSY OF LOVE* (1965)

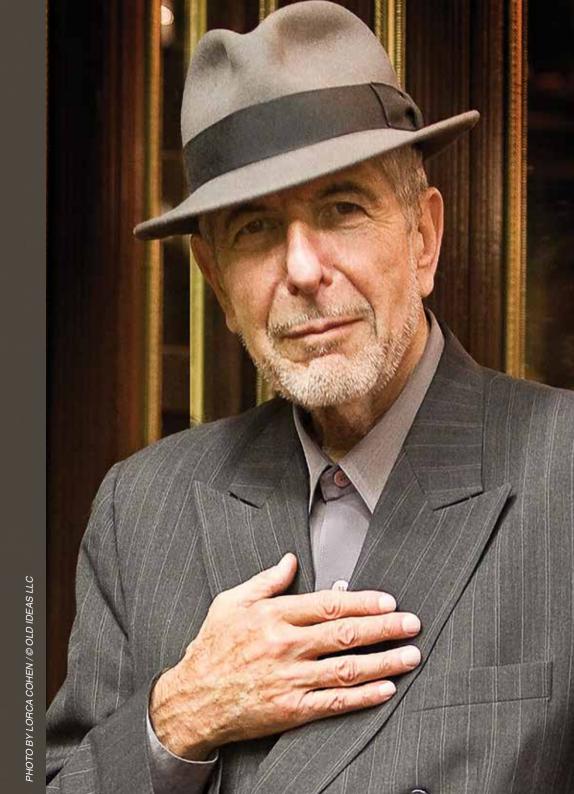
Read by Leonard Cohen

If it came about you died
it might be said I loved you:
love is as absolute as death is,
and neither bears false witness to the other—
But you remain alive.

No, I do not love you
hate the word,
that private tyranny inside a public sound,
your freedom's yours and not my own:
but hold my separate madness like a sword,
and plunge it in your body all night long.

If death shall strip our bones of all but bones, then here's the flesh and flesh that's drunken-sweet as wine cups in deceptive lunar light: reach up your hand and turn the moonlight off, and maybe it was never there at all, so never promise anything to me: but reach across the darkness with your hand, reach across the distance of tonight, and touch the moving moment once again before you fall asleep—

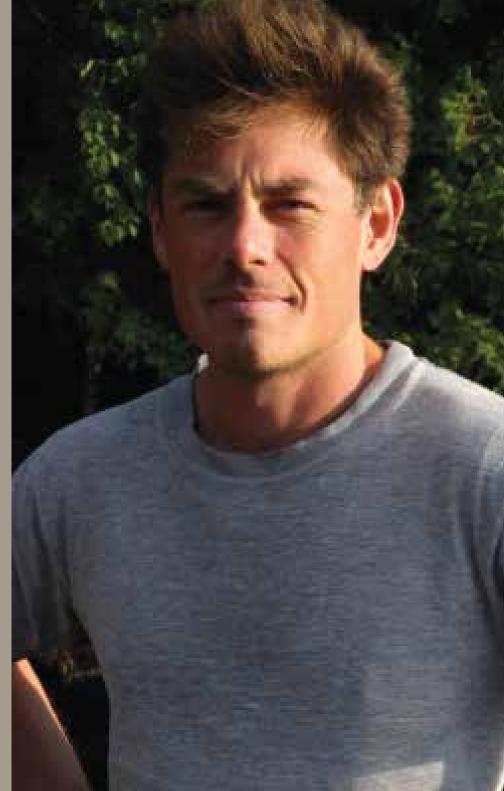
Performed by Leonard Cohen in Los Angeles. Engineered by Ed Sanders Poem by Al Purdy, courtesy of the Al Purdy Estate/Harbour Publishing



13. COWBOY

Casey Johnson From the original score for Al Purdy Was Here

Casey Johnson - electric guitar
Dylan Gamble - classical guitar
David Chan - trumpet
Peter Eratostene - bass
Alonzo Moore - drums
Recorded at the Dovercourt Road Studio
Music written, Produced and Engineered by Casey Johnson
Courtesy of Purdy Pictures Inc. © 2015 Casey Johnson



HOTO BY SHELINA ALI

FOUR POEMS BY AL PURDY

THE EAST WIND (1967)

say the names, say the names and listen to yourself an echo in the mountains Tulameen Tulameen say them like your soul was listening and overhearing and you dreamed you dreamed you were a river and you were a river Tulameen Tulameen not the flat borrowed imitations of borrowed names not Briton Windsor Trenton but names the ride the wind Spillimicheen and Nahanni Kleena Kleene and Horsefly Illecillewaet and Whachamacallit Lilloet and Kluane Head-Smashed in Buffalo Jump and the whole sky falling when the buffalo went down Similkameen and Nahanni say them say them remember if you ever wander elsewhere "the North as a deed and forever"

Kleena Kleene Nahanni
Osoyoos and Similkameen
say the names
as if they were your soul
lost among the mountains
a soul you mislaid
and found again rejoicing
Tulameen Tulameen
till the heart stops beating

say the names

TREES AT THE ARCTIC CIRCLE (1967)

(Salix Cordifolia---Ground Willow)

They are 18 inches long or even less crawling under rocks groveling among the lichens bending and curling to escape making themselves small finding new ways to hide Coward trees I am angry to see them like this not proud of what they are bowing to weather instead careful of themselves worried about the sky afraid of exposing their limbs like a Victorian married couple

I call to mind great Douglas firs
I see tall maples waving green
and oaks like gods in autumn gold
the whole horizon jungle dark
and I crouched under that continual night
But these
even the dwarf shrubs of Ontario
mock them
Coward trees

And yet—and yet their seed pods glow like delicate gray earrings their leaves are veined and intricate like tiny parkas They have about three months to make sure the species does not die and that's how they spend their time unbothered by any human opinion just digging in here and now sending their roots down down down And you know it occurs to me ahnut 2 feet under those roots must touch permafrost ice that remains ice forever and they use it for their nourishment they use death to remain alive

I see that I've been carried away in my scorn of the dwarf trees most foolish in my judgments To take away the dignity of any living thing even tho it cannot understand the scornful words is to make life itself trivial and yourself the Pontifex Maximus of nullity I have been stupid in a poem I will not alter the poem but let the stupidity remain permanent as the trees are in a poem the dwarf trees of Baffin Island

Pangnirtung

THE DEAD POET (1981)

I was altered in the placenta by the dead brother before me who built a place in the womb knowing I was coming: he wrote words on the walls of flesh painting a woman inside a woman whispering a faint lullaby that sings in my blind heart still

The others were lumberjacks backwoods wrestlers and farmers their women were meek and mild nothing of them survives but an image inside an image of a cookstove and the kettle boiling — how else explain myself to myself where does the song come from?

Now on my wanderings:
at the Alhambra's lyric dazzle
where the Moors built stone poems
a wan white face peering out
— and the shadow in Plato's cave
remembers the small dead one
— at Samarkand in pale blue light
the words came slowly from him
— I recall the music of blood
on the Street of the Silversmiths

Sleep softly spirit of earth
as the days and nights join hands
when everything becomes one thing
wait softly brother
but do not expect it to happen
that great whoop announcing resurrection
expect only a small whisper
of birds nesting and green things growing

FOR HER IN SUNLIGHT (1997)

Didn't turn my head kept absolutely still for seven seconds stayed in this skin tent until an unpredictable you has joined me with river and rain song and your long quietness a cloak of invisibility around both of us your brown-gold head turned toward me and white places on your hips are silver hirches on them we swing

And this is the way it was:
friends and relations dropped away
the cities blinked out
one by one
and left nothing in their place
but a vagueness
the landscape was dim background
we could see only each other
on the tiny island of us
standing in sunlight
and it was enough

it was enough
—then after a while
the people began to appear again
and they seemed strange to us
we heard the news of the world
and that was strange to us as well
and we glimpsed in each of us
hundreds of dozens of others
in different times and places
and mirrors

and glimpse among us
a discovery of strangers and lovers

a collected self

These are life's gifts
and in the loopholes and catacombs of time
travel glance back
to see far-distant replicas
of ourselves
perched on a mirage
waving to us
surprised to find us still alive
as if both had imagined the other
as the seed imagines the flower
beyond death

the idea we are used to like a far-away train wreck Malj