

**Swallowed Rituals**  
**for Robin Poitras and New Dance Horizons**

Tim Lilburn

These are in the stone.

There is a fox's foot.

Snow is falling,

snow is falling,

widowed, broke, black March snow

dipping its shoulders into the pay-by-the-week motel of the back hills.

In the stone, there's a fox's foot hanging

from a wind-troubled, black wire.

There is an ocean in the stone,

a mid-ocean there; it is hearing.

I'm sorry, I've said this wrong, it is Last Mountain Lake

on a loud day that is there. You know that place.

The lake is a cup of hearing.

It hears the animals below the ground, the blur,

their shoulders pushing.

It hears the darkness, moving,

the muscle-sliding dark.

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Go below the small things, I think, then  
walk inside them and you have their kindness.

There is suffering and politics and the clay jawbone of a whale  
swaying left to right (be careful), right to left (careful), far  
in the stone.

There is the stone in the stone, *conatus essendi*.

There is Socrates curled in the coyote hole below the erratic of  
night, talking to a beautiful, light-pelted boy.

A camel train of cutlery goes by,  
a mule train of hotel beds,  
carrying bales of dried tears from the blind valley (they smell of kelp),  
from the grassy place between the lakes.

There's a white foot serene with bones, there's a light.

When Henry Kelsey died or left Hudson Bay, he started  
a walk under the ground; first he was just an inch below, then the grass  
came to his shoulders, then he was gone inside; this was the  
asceticism of Europe: all he was  
then was his voice, the upper part of it; he walked under the Swan River  
and under the big forest north of the Saskatchewan near what was later Somme  
and started moving west below the Porcupine Hills, working down the

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muttered slope.

He was a voice, the house of a voice, but nothing  
was in it and he wanted someone to put a shining movement in his mouth, he  
wanted some elegant drift stitched there, a late afternoon lift of dust  
from a dry year.

He found smoke and blue foreheads of pooled groundwater. He got thinner.

He built many irresistible lean to's

for his ear, spruce boughs, driftwood, space debris.

Later he died a second time.

These ceremonies can't be seen because  
they live within the lazy cheek and the thigh curve  
of mathematics and in the stream hump  
of music, as Pythagoras said they did.

If you find one, if one comes up to you on its naked brown legs, let me know  
and we'll kill an ox together in delight.

Tim Lilburn is the author of several books, and is the editor of *Thinking and Singing: Poetry and The Practice of Philosophy*, an anthology of poetics, to which he also contributes.