In 1885, Jane Arbuckle arrives from Scotland to Brandon, Manitoba to marry a man who has bought an Indian farm from a government official. It is then that begins the story of Jane, who will become the mother of the narrator. Tracing a matriarchal line through women who are always mentioned in passing in the family register, the narrator focuses on the particular history: the violence in her marriage, her poverty after her separation from her abuser, and later in the century, the breast cancer of her daughter, her mutilation and the prescribed silence of the medical world. This focus on the difficult situations endured by a line of women transforms a family history into a series of exemplary cases.

The inscription of the body of the mother as the first territory (source of an aboriginal romance) in the poem is superimposed on fragments of discourse on the historical conditions of the colonization of the lands of the autochthones. Entwined with the voices of a prime minister, a mixed leader, and a white major, the poem paints a portrait of another story about the native land and the violent occupation. A phrase like "Jane arrives in Manitoba very close to the same moment as the hanging of Louis Riel" is a reminder of the complexities of history that produce a family line.
In 1885, Jane Arbuckle comes from Scotland via Liverpool, on the liner Carthaginian, to Montreal and from there to Brandon, Manitoba in September of that year, unmarried, her three year old son with her, to marry his father, who three years before has also come from Scotland and purchased Indian land from a white government, to homestead. Inhabiting a particular, descent (inhabiting) a case in point, particular = case in point, Big Bear, a Cree, territory / recognized as chief of those stubborn Indians who province / refused to sign away their territorial rights was plainly informed he must go on to possession his reserve before November 1883, or all rations would be withheld. A case in point being the f-word Poundmaker, a Cree, who
signed f-f-fear Treaty Six, demanded complete control of reserve affairs be given to himself and Band Councillors. The territory of, white government refused and told him rations would be withheld from anyone on the (language) of, reserve who refused to work.

Representatives of the written White Government stated the indians in all things must conform to the rules laid down for their guidance — the bands already settled... have learned their lesson... ringleaders the...should be arrested at the slightest pretext... the Law might have to be strained a little... in the interests of the Country... as well as the indians themselves.¹

whole

body

A few months after Jane arrives, on November 16, 1885, Louis Riel is hanged.

soulbody in the Gabriel’s story comes blood line strain from the tongue in his mouth, what he sees,
hears, feels, thinks. Not the Official family house clan Story, The Record, because it is written with the voice, from the tribe eye, I-position, in a mother language called Miché; translated into French, ascending doubly (other). Its passion suspect.
descending spirals of dna

native,

I knew every blade of grass, followed their search patrols, the gattling only hit one, and it was a horse. The officer was so mad he almost hit the métis who told him. I sent

petitions to the government... every minor chief but me, offered a treaty... we have to firewood... no people the métis.

Given a choice between their rights and riches they chose their rights²

by birth belonging or-ig-in-al, ab or as-sim-i-la-tion ab or ac-cul-tur-a-tion prim i tive adoption

...finally they wanted Riel back. Someone said he is the only one who can help us now. We need him to draw up petitions, his contacts and abilities, to negotiate, but they tried to scare us when they heard we went and got him to come. They sent word there was a party of police come to take Riel and that got everyone ready to fight to protect their rights. In the end Riel gave himself up. He said the English would be satisfied with his head. He gave the mass himself, he didn’t trust the
church, being named said priests only wanted to convert to make money³

( other )

natal,

maternal, Canada has an excellent system for managing her Indian population,
of, like, the English Major writes in his journal, that it has succeeded in protecting far-flung or, enterprising and defenseless settlers, that from, the Indians themselves were not unaware of everything that had been done a mother for them and of the advantages birth/death yet in store... their savage nature requires control. Judging them by you their own standard doesn’t do. They are a conquered race narrowed down push from their wonted privilege of In 1901 of roaming free over the whole me country to occupying Jane’s husband reservations set apart for out them, though being liberal is brought before in the area are the nevertheless a Magistrate’s Court restraint upon charged with door of their freedom. assaulting his wife

your other heart the force your other heart the

and sentenced to force If the half-breed a fine of uprising were to twenty of get out of hand, dollars and causing a general uprising bound over the of the Indians as well,
to keep the peace  great disaster would befall
for one blow the commercial interests of the
year blow splits back for many years by retarding
splits immigration. True statesmanship required
us at this time for the Canadian Government to
restore law and order in the Northwest and
my show the world she can protect the life and
property of her most distant citizens

open pores sucking on air and
other's fear to
learn my own,
name
and when you die
you leave me twice the
force of that blow binds us in the truth of
fear, in
the sound of that light

I am her(e), your silence(d) breathing,

Her daughter will be born three years later.

turning,
tuning me
child outstretched against

a sun grown Your grandfather, the old woman with
timeless eyes says, was a prominent
drinker. Yes I knew your mother,
her mother, Jane. I never forgave

out of sky and
your dark child pale mother for leaving her(e). She came back, not even for your grandmother’s sun funeral, none of them did, except the separated womb of light them from him, he abused her so,
greening me / her in,

womb of light sun
never
grandmother’s sun
except the
separated womb of light
so,
greening me / her in,

lost, everything
had nothing, stayed
house the sons
completely
them. Living in poverty
her days

breathing silence,
silent,
(i am you)

man-made, the
She is not mentioned by
name in the family story. Her

experience of
sons are, and he is, breeder of
wheat and male children. She is

being man-made
mentioned in passing as his wife and
her daughter named as though never

being named (other)
heard from, once born.

our heart(s) read(s)
Jane’s daughter weeps
for her mother never

tide pool,

butterfly,

In 1988 Jane’s daughter is eighty-five. To remove a small lump in her broken wing breast a man in a surgical gown cuts off her left breast. He sends two underlings to image her hospital room to tell her daughter they got it all. They watch her daughter carefully as

of a
they speak of her mother’s irregular heart

beat under anaesthetic, do not mention
the rain of small strokes it sends into her brain, or what that will do to her memory, her orientation in time and space. What they say is no follow up is needed, leaving the daughter believing in their success.

feathered bronchi gathering water around an overworked heart

In 1994 Jane’s daughter is taken into a psychiatric unit to control her aggressive behaviour. She is ninety, by the clock. Dementia releases her into the present past, linked

fall—opian, opiate, option, utopian did we fall from it? grace? whose?

releases her out of silence. But the system cannot let an old woman free herself, take hold of her own life. They call it paranoia, hallucinatory, fill her with anti-anxiety, anti-psychotic drugs until she is no longer able to walk or sit upright. Her jaw is rigid, her mouth drooling. Your mother is potentially violent, they tell her daughter. We need her compliant, for her own good, for the good of the rest.

I want to go home, Jane’s daughter says, I don’t
belong here. In seven weeks Jane's daughter dies for every breath.
fighting They have discovered re-creation that her aggression is due to the metastasised cancer from eating ourselves her breast.
They remove the drugs, except for morphine for the pain and feeding on the silence ask her daughter what she would like them to do for her mother. She says we dissolve, drowning I think you've done enough.
we dissolve, drowning
in our own fluids, sea creatures learning to swim this inner natal sea

your death is your other heart
my death joined to you in the force of the fear of what is gone I feel the weight of what is left form without spirit familiar man-made, the still to sight but not touch experience of being man-made absence is presence being named (other), our the rainbow bleeds heart(s) read(s) its colours through the tide pool butterfly sky until sky does not know broken wing itself are these colours true? or not true? spilling and drifting into what mind perceives as vermilion cobalt blue indigo crimson lake permanent yellow viridian permanent green bleeding stories not yet told told each (other... )
Notes

1 J. A. McDonald Papers, Volume 4.
2 M. Barkholden, Gabriel Dumont Speaks. (Original manuscript of Dumont's dictation now held in Archives of Union Nationale Metis de St. Joseph, Manitoba Provincial Archives.)
3 Ibid.