

## notes from the cover

*Magie Dominic*

Notes from the cover *a commencé comme une liste de mots, sans émotion, sans commentaire rédactionnel. Cette liste a été difficile à mettre sur papier, mais à la fin, chaque mot a pris place de lui-même, faisant naître des groupes de mots et, finalement, la structure même du poème. Notes from the cover évoque la notion de reconstruction, d'un mot l'autre, quelles que soient les cassures. Le poème évoque la plongée au fond d'un océan de vie et le geste qui consiste à s'accrocher à une branche ou à une brindille.*

the woman who wanted to write this poem declined.  
finding none who shared her language.  
i am speaking for her.  
she had no idea her seven-year-old heart would sit in a car  
under newfoundland trees  
while an old man had his way with her  
sunday after bloody sunday  
and she'd search forever for safety,  
(one reason she's not here now)

had no idea her heart would know experiences  
"growing up"  
so unspeakable they remain unwritten.

would be beaten by nuns wearing jesus  
and sung to by others.

would stand in a hallway  
trying to calm  
the rapist with a knife to her head  
talking  
as if her life depended on it  
then fall to the floor  
wordless.

would stand on flatbed trucks screaming  
sixties poems about napalm  
and burning flesh through manhattan microphones  
and years later find herself unable  
to whisper the unbearable  
pain in her heart.

would so often have nearby  
a book and a cup of tea,  
could be in any country in any century,  
only the radio gave her away.

would light so many candles

know the names of so many saints  
(and their addresses)  
would walk through the heroin darkness  
of a lover's apartment,  
slap him to consciousness,  
convince him to walk with her again.  
she did this often  
(who was convincing who, she wonders now?)  
(who in god's name?)

would move her family so many times  
trying to save what was already lost.

would  
walk silently  
on early vancouver mornings,  
pick bottles from sidewalks,  
go to the unquestioning chinese grocer,  
exchange everything for eggs and bread,  
(food for a child)  
she did this while the father/husband  
slept beneath detachment's blankets.

had no idea her heart could hold so many  
memories.

would one day tell this father/husband  
she was leaving  
now and walked to the blue station wagon  
under trees  
with a child on one arm and rage  
swept from the coals of her heart on the other.  
(abuse of other human beings  
is against the law)  
(it took this woman an eternity  
to believe she was sleeping  
with a criminal)

would go running through aids wards  
howling for blankets for friends dying cold.  
could not keep tears from her face  
as these friends turned  
to skeletons, time running out,  
a rolex ticking on bone,

remembered the one left dead in mexico's desert,  
a lover panicked, searching for cures, afraid now  
with a dead body in the car  
(how exactly do you explain all this to customs)

had no idea her heart would travel  
trying to find itself again,

had no idea it would feel so invisible  
could feel so afraid.

would fall in love with so many women,  
so many brave healers,  
and some of them with her.

would write so many poems about death  
read so many  
and write so many obituaries.

would take so many risks to save herself.

would one day in thin clothing  
stand on her front steps  
not caring what the neighbors thought,  
yell with a voice pulled from the throat  
of a god  
"tell the truth you bastard,  
tell the truth you bastard."

the woman who wanted to write this poem  
declined.

i saw only the cover of her notebook.  
(what things are written inside)  
her heart allowed me to see no more.

her heart wrapped in feathers  
and lace,  
guarded fiercely by angels.