

TES

TES

# TESTES

by Rob Budde

*wink books*  
2015

*dušie kollektiv 2015*

copyright © Rob Budde, 2015

*TESTES* is printed in 11 pt Optima font on  
24 lb Byronic text stock with an 67 lb Synergy Laid  
cover stock.

Published by wink books. Printed and hand bound in  
Canada.

wink books  
4629 Hunter Place  
Lheidli T'enneh/Prince George BC  
V2M 6Z7  
rbudde@shaw.ca

This copy is # \_\_\_\_\_ of 25

## managed

i am learning to cut onions with my eyes  
closed tight, I am teaching myself to shut out  
the edgy smell, the acrid air, feel just  
the fleshy juice against the knife edge  
clean and quick, it's really quite easy, that  
slow grope, a deceleration  
the sharp edge against thumb pad, wedged against  
the grain, the glinting blade made bright by  
an invisible light the quick plunge into  
forgiveness, the memory of tears, feeling  
the wet surface sliding out layers, your fingers  
slick with juice, your eyes tight, clenched,  
refusing the nasty effects, flicks of moisture

it's really quite easy, like averting  
eyes from a roadside  
casualty: a squirrel, a deer,  
a dog, a crumpled orange cat,  
its leg bent back, its tongue against  
the hot asphalt,  
a hand holding a sign reading  
"help please" and it is  
past, just like that, easy,  
the highway straight and smooth,  
just like that

you see i am learning to cut  
corners with emotions, the way they  
get in the gears, slow production  
sick pay, counseling, worker's comp  
other such archaic salves.  
And I am cutting corners with my life:  
living made easy in a

consumer-friendly pre-packaged  
sort of way plastic wrapped  
from China and all-in-one hair products

practically perfect in every way  
such a simple motion not to see  
the small muscles of the eye trained  
to defend, defer, hold back the swells  
of dust, pain, incrimination, complicity  
a crust at the corner, caught in lashes  
brushed away later

i am learning to cut  
down on negativity, the ugly  
pictures on tv: the death toll, the body count,  
the mass graves and *gravitas* of the memorial march,  
suicide bombings, machete  
killings of all sorts, the gratuitous  
mangled body of a child ripped up  
by well-intentioned daisy cutters—  
these are the type of things I am learning  
to ignore, shut off, it's really quite easy

you see, i am learning to cut onions with my eyes fully  
shut, as if sealed with newly minted coins

**small degrees further north:  
an exercise in humility**

The axe ground against verse  
to invent masks, straw men  
building upon  
laws of privilege they  
don't recognize,  
the violent fathers in their  
indignant judgments.  
They victimize, bully,  
idealize their own 'free' voice  
and discard the others as an inconvenience.  
So the others refuse to speak to them  
and the silence is taken as  
terror, turned inward—  
a confluence.  
Isolation  
extends as far as  
a desperate attempt to create  
a fight with yourself.  
A claim to no ideology is  
the dominant one, ancient and mean,  
in poor taste and as secure as a broken facade.

## mentoring

a casual fear, familiar  
almost invisibly learning to defend oneself  
in grade three, fists raised like you knew  
they were supposed to,  
tears welling, capped

carbon copy characters—  
sticks and stones will  
ahhh but names will serve me better

riding pride, a tank  
decanting terror churning;  
such bravery is sheer orderly panic,  
a powerful but empty shell,  
the fuel drying up on some conquered shore  
the beast beached

a bull in a china shop  
afraid of being laughed at

masculinity flees in face of hunger, the courageous  
real, and huddles, ensconced in myth

figuratively, i have no balls

*écriture feminine*—a state of mind  
to take us into writing  
the next century

and yet i am the same scared little boy  
as stephen harper—the question becomes  
how does one respond to the unknown?

## **mandated**

not wanting the blinkers down,  
nose to the grindstone, leisure made  
vacant by compulsive menial servitude

my job is not listed in the government web-site;  
emancipation is not an accredited program

drop out, they'd call it, dropped,  
leapt, slipped out/through  
the cracked backdoor

so i accepted their offer;  
a vocation vacation—vagrancy  
mending my way

this is not my fight, conscientious  
objector, so you and i will  
flee to the woods, live postmasculine  
in an adaptive  
body-symbolic, one embractive,  
circular, powerful

the mansion i live, alive, on life-support,  
the eco-economics, an intravenous failing  
as the blackouts roll by



## On the Body

and it betrays you, when the material  
is your flesh, a bad draft  
of a poem or a failed painting

blood flow is a thought pattern  
gone astray and you can't recall  
what arousal might mean

and dysfunction is a waiting  
room game played by lovers  
who wonder who will lead  
who back from disaster

contemporary love is rehab and  
the century will take care of us

skies and planes of language in pieces,  
the rest in bodies, skins experience  
those chemicals zigzagging between us

in volcanic starts, black molten minds  
hit by salty meteorites, shards  
of water forming a new poem

silence. our kisses more than  
semiotics and poet, we ungender  
the unearth, land between us  
nameless, painless, native

## menace

in grade nine my grandfather gives me the .22,  
tells me to practice my aim—  
the gun, its giving, a sentence  
with perfect grammar:

the range—syntax—my life as man,  
the target—dependent object—success as a  
man,  
the bullets—the verb, the act, actions—the  
motion of raising  
my voice just so, privilege at my hip  
(the damage done—mere semantics)  
the gun—the noun—that shadow slung over,  
well hung,  
an inheritance of empire, the reins of a regime  
the miss—the ungrammaticality—failure,  
fallow, the *unmettled*  
forge, the blank, a single feeble flag  
sprung from the barrel, a bleating guffaw  
a sob, stop, the sentence un—

i broke the gun, literally, a small part near the  
loading mechanism (i  
refuse to look up the proper terminology) snapped  
when i threw it down, shocked when i swear i saw  
blood on the barrel

that and a belt-buckle with a horse rearing, this  
taken cumulatively, equals lineage

several listeners have approached me after readings  
proclaiming that I hate my parents, citing  
my narrative choice to kill off the father in several  
instances

that passing down, passing on, passing  
through my veins the masculine impulse  
like an addiction at birth

i did practice with my .22, set up clay targets and  
took careful aim  
the gun hard against my shoulder like a hand and i hit  
quite often, i was pretty good, spent afternoons making  
clay spray into dust, and then  
one afternoon, clouds  
brewing, a chickadee  
had landed on one  
of the clay targets  
sprayed  
into dust—  
aim raised just so, a sob, stop,  
  
uncock

## **Scripts of Either Feather**

honour or answer—the offering  
up of how many times this  
open splay of petal, this lifting  
off of spray

interleaving these quilled admonishments  
to the trespassers and seven welcomes  
to the holders of knowledge—a requiem  
of silent, prayer, vigilance

this precarious memoir, this inconsistent love  
laid bare on the ashes

this I pledge:  
to count the hours  
until justice finds its perch  
and looks over the land once more

## **cocksure**

the line gropes from  
fierce engines of what they called  
'desire'—pedal pressed  
down driven by fossil  
fuels, the gut and the same scene  
thrill in the chase, a brotherhood

gang rape all Hollywood glam and king  
shit strut—it's the prenorth contingencies that hold  
sway, a blackwater cabal of fathers haunting  
the former form and handmaidens  
don't care that the classroom holds  
them in a dangerous gaze

the measure of risk  
is his own anxieties  
because the college insider  
is a psychology of fear  
of being  
found out, arrested

## **if i were a man**

1. The tip of my conscious  
gender would flinch
2. Time would stop for me, its  
marks and transitions swiveling  
to greet me; time as distance  
I am traveling toward
3. I would eat  
everything; toxins  
don't scare me because  
I made them
4. My love of nature would know  
no bounds; it houses  
my ideas and feeds my  
urges to make accurate maps;  
I would travel the world and  
experience it all; I'd be open  
to new ideas, thrills, all the exotic  
has to offer
5. I would make lists to  
characterize gender; the constructions  
hardwired into my male hunter  
brain as I lumber across the land looking  
for sustenance, an animal to bring down
6. I would depend on semicolons  
to condition my thinking; it is like  
a binary flipside to everything  
I do
7. I would love women—not all  
women, some are down-right frightening—

with every ounce of my being, reverse

their form and sure-footed wisdom

8. Numbers would be in my pocket

9. I would be to-the-point, upstanding,  
gentle, forgiving, generous—my abilities  
would be the world's to have; I would be  
in the conditional future tense

10. If I were man imagining being  
a woman I'd try to  
be one of the guys, fit in and  
be cool; I'd leave behind that tortured past and  
just move on

11. My poems would be emotive, glimpses  
into the inner workings of the world, the human  
made tactile in the flick of image—  
a hawk espied on the horizon

12. I would love language, its access  
to thought and persuasive tenor; I would die  
without words, without pages of alphabetized  
props, without that paper-thin veil to hide  
my fear (she) that invades

## **demand**

the hood, sleek green polyurethane  
paneling, retro, trying hard to recover  
oil reserves, a battery pack, power of any kind;  
the night-vision goggles a kind of cultural attaché,  
a cache of optional features, full length, smart  
bombs

where? where are we?  
in the check-out line  
my male purchase is made unsure

no more a calling than a jingle,  
a call to arms, a vacant  
draft, comraderie an echo of  
spaniards slaughtering toltécs or any other other

this is an inheritance trance,  
a kind of hypnosis only  
the left hand of writing can undo

to recover formally  
from the male regime  
shed like snakeskin

to become impotent  
by all standard definitions;  
post-masculinist, outlasting  
the last great empire

a male manifesto but  
not one, not so knife-like  
not so mannered



## the new nation

“Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and  
no aspect of society being at all relevant to women,  
there remains to civic-minded, responsible,  
thrillseeking  
females only to overthrow the government,  
eliminate the money system, institute complete  
automation and destroy the male sex.”  
*S.C.U.M Manifesto*, Valerie Solanas (1968)

third wave, wave  
so long, so long we've waited  
for the new age, gender a lead  
weight, a shriveled balloon in  
his back yard, the straw that broke  
her waters

i know how to cut him up  
but it takes time and patience  
and there is so much else to do

so, so long mr. fresh, mr. macho,  
mr. success, so long mr. sensitive,  
mr. feminist, mr. violence; i am leaving  
you for better genders; i am crossing  
over into the post

here, men shatter, read themselves inside-out  
and women are cyborgs  
interfacing with the mainframe

here, gender screws with itself  
and hierarchies are arcs  
across the cosmic virtual belly

## **the protocol**

Intransitive, the pleasure of recognition  
flows from the colleges and corner stores  
where that line that thought streamlines  
marbles meat in a mode of production like the rows  
of close-set colonizing corn proliferating itself.

It's more than is needed, more bushels  
per page and the required distance from the healthy body  
remains—writing pennies to read dollars in a colossal  
economy of docile fossils.

The poem leaves no trace. The book is a feedlot.  
A regurgitation into the cheapest deal, the closest  
common sugar, the delta of the new hypoxic and the  
election is next Wednesday.

High yield lyric poems are lesser and larger and  
subsidized by the firm of Fill 'Er Up and  
Ease Inc. but the only guy getting good is beefing up  
on the wasteland baby.

## **The Porous Body: Background Music for a Dance with Sculpture**

The body is not a body  
shaping clay

The body is not a body  
but a riverbed  
shaped by love

Love is not love  
but a body moving you

Through and through  
the movement recreates  
boundaries

Boundaries are porous  
tributaries of thinking  
like water changing course  
like a glance in a gallery

The body is not a body  
shaped in a any way we know  
yet how to feel

Hands are a river