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BARBECUE

Uncle Jim
reclining, reclusive
in an old dump chair;
blobous nose red-streaked
and wrinkled,
sniffs the smoky air.

Gramma Davis
fluttering between
us and the house,
tight-mouthed, stacking
stools and packing platters
piled with salmon, steak and butter,
sweet rolls and salad, plunks them down
here and there.

Joanie swings high
in the sycamore, one arm waving,
mouth in an O. “A monkey?” Mother
asks.

Aunt Margaret
bounds around, clucking
“Come down, come down”, breasts
near bursting
in her bright blue bikini. Uncle Bob
likes that. Aunt Ruthie
doesn’t.

Reggie tears around, roping
the twins, and spins them
till they fall.

Grampa Johnson
boilers “Hey, someone
kill that kid.” Nobody
does.

Lorraine
lounges, lapping up the sun,
legs spread a little
on the thirsty yellow grass.

Aunt Ruthie
makes Uncle Bob take off
his aviator glasses.
“I want to see what you’re looking at,”
she says.

Mr. Thompson
huge wobbly belly bobbing
goes to the veranda
for his violin.
Everybody claps
except Mrs. Thompson.
She yells something and covers
her ears
when the violin starts
to squeak and squelch and squeal.

Uncle Rick
opens brown bottles of beer
and everyone starts
drinking and dancing.

Tess’s
orange tabby
in the midst of it all.

Aunt Margaret
falls down again, giggling
and giggling like water balloons.
Reggie seems
to like it when she falls - Uncle Bob
too, but
he’s squinting.
Maybe he can’t
see without his glasses.

At dusk
Father says “Come
here son.” When I do, “Let’s
slip away”, he says, “just
us two. Go swimming,” he says.
And we do.

— Katherine Williams
If my eyes were brown
I'd walk dirt roads more often
I'd write with a black fountain pen
and wear batik, marimekko and beads.
My shelves would be full of hardbound books
and I'd often use green wax on my skis.
My cats would have normal names -
for cats, that is - catapult or Hy-purr-belly
I'd prefer avocados
and be more prone to split ends and frizzies.

But my eyes aren't brown
I like frost patterns on my window
I burn incense in the morning
and rarely make my bed.
I've got flowers painted on my floor
and tend to remember phone numbers.
I've collected lots of little boxes
though I know not what to put inside.
I change my mind a lot
and listen to snow,
Knowing that my eyes will never be brown.

- Daisy Fields
- Valerie-Anne Tannage

POWER

strength that dawns on anxiety;
a restlessness, writhing in the bands of the secure organ:

Man
But man
alone
can overpower
Nothing
but
his own will.

HANDS

Unfolding
hungry
millions
empty
need
more
than
a prayer.
La Joconde, 1981.
Elle a pris son amour,
Son bel amour, fort, tendre,
Glace et brillant,
Secret et éclatant,
Eternel et fuyant,
Elle l'a mis dans une botte,
Une petite botte d'allumettes.
Elle a allumé le feu avec la boîte
Et, la nuit,
Elle regarda danser les flammes
Et les écoute chanter,
Avec son sourire intérieur,
Moqueur.

"Do not disturb."
The sign is on my door,
The sign is on my heart,
The sign is on my lips.
There is too much inside;
Do not try to reach for it.
The sign is on my mind,
And I must hang it over my eyes
Before it is too late.
The kiss of love
Is a kiss of death,
Since what is born will die.
The silence of oblivion is
In the battlefields of my life,
No trespassers, please,
Do not disturb.

God's error, this light? It fills us
So rarely. We hardly see
It's purity. We know much more
Of darkness. The stars, the icy moons
Mere footsteps in the night. Just so
We leave behind us marks that cast only bluest light.
In meditation once I saw my mind;
The space between the burning suns,
So much of darkness are we given
The universe ... or you ... who'd wish to share
This tiny glimpse of light
When all we know is this dark night?

SNAKES
You've always said that you hate snakes.
The flash of body, the flicker of tongue,
The quick snatch of serpent grace
Make your skin crawl - you said.
And yet today I find you keep them,
As tangled black and venomed ball
Of vipers as any I have seen in
Sandy, snakey pits.
"Get rid of them," I say. "Call an exterminator
Your house'll never be your own
With vermin living in it."
You only smile. Your green eyes slit
And glitter. You run your tongue along my lips
As if opening a letter.

Jan Draper
SCARS
Between you and me
There's a wound that's
deep and narrow
left by scalpel,
or maybe bayonet
And everytime
We try to touch
We strike the wound
Resonating pain makes us recoil
We seem to like
our small neat scar
We seem to fear
the blood that heals.

GRAY ROOMS
Down by the railroad tracks
below the city's consciousness
empty rooms wait.
Ketchup and old cans
stain the papers
that dust the floor.
Headlines fade into history,
Bones of rats and birds
are scattered
with cockroach husks.
On the walls industrial women
spread their legs
to the camera's metal finger
and cover the cabbage roses
that linger on the dying walls.

IN MY TIME OF DYING
Open my casket
but don't look at me yet
Say your prayers of forgetfulness
and I will remember you too
Speak to me from all your nightmares
and I will answer you with my tears
Let the full moon rise without you
and pull the waters off the shore
But I will be back yet again
before my time of dying
And before your life is through with you.
Now I've spoken my word
and it's time for you to look
into the coffin.
Open the lid and it's empty
except for water;
dark and full of reflections
Of us.
Both of us.

- Jenny Brigham
Death is a mangled cat
In the ditch at the side
Of a busy highway.

Death is an eyeless house
With a broken porch,
Dead vines on the door.

Death is a mink coat
At the circus
In the city.

Death is a shipwreck
On a reef off the coast
Of Sable Island.

Death is a body of a
Child in the arms of a
Woman who is crying.

Death is the carcass of
A fish on the sand
At the public beach.

Death is a knife in the
Back of a skeleton in the
Basement of my home.

-Charles Riordon
The bathwater was hot and silky. Judith had used one of her more exotic bath oils to counter the nerve jangling effect of the day. Greedily, she sank into the tub and propped her head against its edge. "Find a cork-screw," she thought; "make the sauce for the brussel sprouts and toss the salad." Like a good general, she reviewed her strategy to see if she had missed anything. But her eyes began to feel heavy, utilty, and she surrendered to the lassitude of the hot water.

Reluctantly, she dragged herself from the bath to get ready for dinner. As she dried herself off briskly, with short rough movements, she caught sight of her body in the mirror and noticed again how small the breasts were and how boyish the hips. Pale shoulder-length hair falling from a clumsy bun, emphasized the harried, almost furtive movements of the eyes. This self in the mirror seemed far removed from the Judith who in the mirror seemed far removed from the Judith who in the mirror seemed far removed from the Judith who had intended. She could remember when her mother, her face expertly contoured and shaded, would come into her bedroom to say goodnight before going out on the town. But that was when she was very young, before her father had developed polio. He had been a handsome man, but his disease had made him bitter and resentful. Judith could remember him crashing around the house in a fit of anger, his powerful chest and arm-propelling the crutches while his leg trailed behind. He looked, Judith thought, like a half-materialized genie—his lower body a smoky trail. He hardly ever left the house and her mother threw out all her lipsticks and mascaras; she didn't have time between her job and increasingly demanding husband. He seemed to resent his wife having a life in which he did not participate.

When Judith became old enough to drive he became very strict, forbidding her to go out with boys. At first she rebelled, but after awhile she began to feel that it was useless to fight over the few invitations she received. She stayed home instead and read a lot of romantic novels.

Judith stirred her cheese-sauce slowly, to get the lumps out. She wanted it to look as good as it tasted. She remembered the time Gregg had made dinner for her. The table had been beautiful and the food looked delicious, but unfortunately Gregg wasn't a great cook and the food was inedible.

The discomusicoddly staged. The dance floor had three levels and tables floated in unexpected natches. Green and red lights alternated with a strobe's cinematic effect. From her table, Judith watched the people on the dance floor. A woman with long, dark hair falling from a clumsy bun, expressed passion and sensuality with a smoky trail. He hardly ever left the house and his leg trailed behind. He looked, Judith thought, like a half-materialized genie—his lower body a smoky trail. He hardly ever left the house and her mother threw out all her lipsticks and mascaras; she didn't have time between her job and increasingly demanding husband. He seemed to resent his wife having a life in which he did not participate.

The doorbell woke her in the morning. It was an overcast day. The apartment was quite dark. She threw a housecoat on and wondered who was at the door. It was Gregg, smiling and dancing. As she came closer, he pulled something from his pocket, it was a mirror. He held it up and she saw herself. She was beautiful. Judith felt happy, but when she looked closer, she saw that the face in the mirror was smiling stiffly, like a cover girl. Judith felt herself tighten, and she awoke with a start.

The dream had been oddly disquieting and now she was wide awake. She went out to the living room. A little later, she heard the alarm ring in the bedroom and Gregg getting up. He noticed the tense expression on her face. "Is something the matter?" he asked. Judith spoke hesitantly, "I feel this something is wrong between us, but I don't know what." Gregg was immediately sympathetic. "Poor Judith, I guess I've been neglecting you. Tell you what, next weekend we'll go out to the cabin, just you and me." Judith stared to say that she didn't think that it would help, but Gregg was a hury. "Sorry honey, got to run. I'll call you tomorrow." After he left she went back to bed.

They left the disco early. Gregg wanted to rest before he caught his plane. He pushed his Porsche up to 120 mph. He reminded Judith of a cowboy actor who never learned to ride a horse, because in the snow or rain he drove like a little old lady.

Back at the apartment Gregg rolled a spiff, Lately they'd been having problems in bed. Gregg said that hash was a great turn on. He was right. He came twice as fast as he usually did. After, he set the alarm and rolled over and fell asleep. Judith lay on her back, watching the shifting patterns of light on her ceiling become the piercing lights of the disco. Nameless bodies swayed to the mechanical music. She saw Gregg smiling and dancing. As she came closer, he pulled something from his pocket, it was a mirror. He held it up and she saw herself. She was beautiful. Judith felt happy, but when she looked closer, she saw that the face in the mirror was smiling stiffly, like a cover girl. Judith felt herself tighten, and she awoke with a start.

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The doorbell woke her in the morning. It was an overcast day. The apartment was quite dark. She threw a housecoat on and wondered who was at the door. It was a delivery boy bearing gifts from Gregg. Candy and flowers. Judith tipped the boy generously. She was delighted even though she never ate candy. "How sweet and romantic," she thought. "Just like a forties movie." She read the card on the long thin box. "Just to let you know how I care." Excitedly she opened it. She froze. Twelve white roses, prim as virgins, nestled inside the box. She placed the roses in a vase in the dark hall. They loomed like icebergs against the black sea. Judith shivered. She caught sight of herself in the hall mirror and went to smooth her hair, but then she decided that it was fine the way it was.

- Elizabeth Bouchard
FOR MY SONS

I saw them come here with no words,
arms flailing air, past mother, thigh,
and blood. Here we begin again
We shall know each other
by the root of our appetite
or rhythm;
Their eyes direct as comment. As 
roaches or rats. As heads cracked
open for fun or law and order
in this strange place
When I woke up one morning
I saw them coming in the stillness
of his day and want. My eye sprung out
to embrace a season of dreams.
But they asked: if mother or father
is more than parent, is this my land
or merely soil to cover my bones?
AFRAID

I
below the lake’s black exterior
weed-like in vile confusion they breed
Upward in grim profusion they stalk,
we skim the surface, unsuspecting.

II
dead-eyed pale dusty men
with swift thin knives
lie poised beneath my bed
in wait for slim white ankles.

III
he dines with mother every day
a model son to gray ladies in lace.
Night he writhes with vivid dreams
of woman’s screams and his mother’s face.

MURMURING SPELLS

She mopes around
a sagging old spell;
hints
faint gestures of ambition,
then puffs off
into the kitchen
fringed now
in refrigerator light.

She ignores her charms
clustered in the closet
muttering secrets
and floats past
blue period sketches
hunched against the wall.

She tries to mend the silence
with a curse;
conjures up
the comforting whisper
of a candle.

She can’t dispell her tears
the filmy shadows; flickering
rows of windows
murmuring voices
dripping light onto the street.

- Elizabeth Bouchard

- Steve Balkou
IN THE LAST HOUR OF THE NIGHT

Nostrils wide, he tastes the night
discovers the insinuation
of cigarette smoke:
it's Joe, the Xerox man
The man from a thousand T.V.'s.
He's counting his pennies
flipping his nickels in the night
Bright fish slipping through moonlight

Moving on
Through the streets
of pregnant shadows.
The bloated wind smells of blood
A red dress flares in the darkness
defining the woman inside
She lies on her back
eyes wide
Mouth torn by a
Scream, miscarried
sperm die on her bruised thighs.
A wind blown newspaper
Straddled her body
for a few frantic
moments before moving on ...

A dog runs heavy
on sticky streets
A sour rotting
coates the air:
clear voice rise
in cries, and laughter
as ghetto children, aborted souls
play running games
with plagued-eyed rats.

Outside a yellow dog is crying
to his mate
darking the rising sun
in the last hour of the night.

- Elizabeth Bouchard
BLACKBIRD

My best friend finds you ugly
Blackbirds
I've no use for 'em
A robin a jay
a sparrow or quail
and I'd clobber
the cat in the hedge
before he could so much
as lift a claw.

But blackbirds
when they hit your pea patch
like a swarm of locusts
packing and gorging and trilling
I wish I kept a pack of cats
halfstarved like hounds
in my basement
to loose upon the fiends
flying to the aid
of my poor bespattered
melancholy scarecrow

And I remember
Martha my best
or almost best
Poetry student
sniffing at Avison's
city pigeons
cavorting above
straggling trees and
kempt unlush grass
ballet grace unfolding with wings
and flarings of tails
between the mutter and the murmur

of their fellows feasting below
on scraps and seed from benches

All she could say was
they shit
And indeed birdstool
in one's hair
does not conduce
to love of pigeons

But when I looked up
and beheld you perched
on that long gray rail
flanked by decorous trees
solemn and solitary and
still
and a breeze came by
riffling your dark breast
shedding bluegreen
embers from your form
saw the fierce lonely pride
of those great blindseeming
eyes
a mute bard visitant
I wonder at Eric
as I had at Martha
and I pitied them
and I pitied the birds
they hated
and I loved
and I wondered wondered
I could love them both.

- Tilak Banerjee
SONNET

“The regulation of water intake as a function of salt intake in the ‘recovered lateral’ rat”

A late recovered lateral rat
In lateral cage morosely sat,
Gnawing upon a lateral slat.
He had no fear of lateral cat,
Or lateral swing of baseball bat,
Or poison in his lateral vat,
And yet his lateral life seemed flat.
He yearned for mate and lateral brat,
For cheery lateral family chat,
For lateral cheese to make him fat,
And lateral drains down which to scat.
No lateral end to wonder at:
His lateral heart went pit-a-pat
And stopped, and that was lateral that.

QUATRAIN

“Satiation effects with reversible figures”

If our figures were reversed, my love,
Would we be satisfied?
I rather fear the worst, my love,
But who knows till we’ve tried?

ACROSTIC

“Sex difference in memory for faces”

She’s a girl that I remember,
Except I can’t think when;
December, was it? Or November?
It was sometime around then.
Forget where it was I saw her,
Forget even her first name;
Eva, was it? Perhaps Nora?
Ria? They all sound the same.
Even feeling none-too-clever,
Now I really can be sure,
Chap she came with, that I’ve never
Ever seen HIS face before.

1867 AND ALL THAT:
A HISTORY OF CANADA
ACCORDING TO STUDENTS OF CANADIAN HISTORY

edited by
Robin B. Burns

These unique and often highly imaginative interpretations of Canada’s past were taken from students’ examination papers between 1966 and 1978. The original contributions appear in quotation marks.

“In the North, where the beaver hung out,” the French founded their Empire. New France depended on the Indians for supply of fur, but the French “introduced morality, alcohol and disease – all of which the Indians had never before encountered and which proved disastrous to the Indians survival.” Jesuit missionaries tried to convert the Indians and they authored “a collection of different works and published them in a newspaper known as the Jesuit Relations.”

The Church, Feudal System and Customs of Paris were powerful institutions which shaped French Canada. “The church after 1674, with Frontenac appointed as bishop ... was very powerful ... and the Protestants resented it. Money matters, political matters, all matters for that matter, lay in the hands and on the decision of the church.”

The seigneurs and habitants were a separate people not really liking each other, the upper class would be looking down on the lower class and the lower class would always be looking up at the upper class. There was ... conflict between landlords and serfs who worked for them ... The serfs started to complain that they were working too hard and getting too little in return. The seigneurs naturally did not want to give up what they were getting because they were all wealthy men. For a while the serfs were powerless to do anything for the power lies in the hands of those who have the money. Eventually though they did rebel and serfdom was abolished. The lack of freedom on the part of the habitant to move from seigneury to seigneury (led to) repeated family inter-marriage with one area may also have resulted in some weak-minded characters.”

“Intertwined within the seigneurial system, were the customs of Paris; and these were particularly evident in the lifestyle of the upper class, who imitated the Parisians through their fashionable mode of dress (and) lavish forms of entertainment ...”

But all was not peace and concord. Indian wars were followed by wars with the English. “There was ... conflict about trade and industry. The fur trade was becoming very popular and flourishing steadily. Arguments arose as to who could hunt and shoot fur where and who could trade with what Indians - this problem was soon ironed out.” The conquest. “Professor Nish agrees with the Conquest and was accused
of being a gentilhomme." A once proud Empire was reduced to two tiny islands, "St. Pierre and
Michelin."

The Conquest inaugurated the problems of English French co-existence. Lord Durham "felt that if the
two were joined the French would be eventually dissolved by the English majority." Matters became more
complex "After 1815, (when) over 3 million Irish immigrants came and most ended up in New Brunswick
summer camps." French Canadians survived, however, largely through the efforts of their political leaders.

"One of the earliest 'blues' was Lafontaine. He, together with Governor Sydenham formed a coalition
and cooperated for their mutual benefit. Together they managed to repeal the Corn Laws, repeal the
Timber Laws, and repeal the Navigation Laws."

This necessitated a whole new arrangement, especially "When the United States was in the midst of
their civil war ... After much fighting and rebelling and killing and burning of buildings the leaders of all
the provinces began to meet and confer with each other. It took a few years but finally on July 1, 1867
Confederation was formed ... (the) unionization of the British North American colonies."

"Confederation was a great thing and we are lucky it happened or today we might be part of the
United States. We owe a lot of thanks to men like MacDonald, Cartier and Brown who were responsible
for Confederation. They united the country which made trade, defence and communications much better.
I am not sure when but I am sure of one thing. In 1871 the Canadian Pacific Railway was built ... which
really linked everyone together."

After some delay, the railway helped to open the west, and "In the prairies dairy and cattle farming,
making of ore, and Petroleum products produced a particular breed of people, sturdy and fun loving at
harvest time." But Quebec influence declined, for there were only "500,000 Canadiens-Francais on
train d'anglophones de 30 millions."

And in the new industrial cities, "The hours of ... work were extremely long and not to mention
arduous. There was also poor visibility to be in evidence, and this was to be directly related to the inferior
quality of the lighting system. Due to the lengthy hours, people would become fatigued and eventually
hysterized, thus they would be prone to injury because of physical overstrain. To coincide with the
aforesaid, no means of safety regulations were employed to prevent serious and debilitating injuries. As a
result workers might perishce by maimed accidentally by the primitive modes of machinery." These
conditions led to confrontations like the Winning General Strike and to repressive measures by Prime
Minister "... Sir Author Meighen. Laurier was out of office because of his death in 1917."

"In the 1930's the economy of Canada was in poor state. There were bread lines across the whole
country. Canada was going through a hard stage at this time. It was in the throws of a depression. The
people didn't know what they wanted, so once again King won. However (his) policies were all used in a
proper fashion. To the betterment of the people. Only Duplessis pursued a capitalist policy to the
detriment of his people and he won not a Liberal."

Despite its size, Canada has had a remarkable impact in international affairs. "Who were the ones who
got gassed in W.W.I and won, though the others retreated? (But) our dependence with the states started
growing before our liberation from Britain." Americans persuaded Canada to send troops to Korea.

"North Korea had invaded South Korea with (the) Communist Party, and the United States was not
pleased, so the injected troops within the country ... All things considered, "I would much rather be
dominated economically by Japan ..." Thus a new party will have to be organized which will be
preoccupied with the establishment of a better Canada and not the winning of votes."

JUNE 7/8, 1944

Oh, my father
imagining the tramping boots
of the retreating Brit; the
mourners ahead.

Caugh alone with Sid and Harry, the three of you,
in your proud R.A.F uniforms,
and young and excited.

You three, negotiating the tired roads
of France
on the night of July 6, 1944.

The night is deadly quiet:
birds are gone.

Nor even a bark of a distant dog
can be heard.

Somewhere, somewhere,
somewhere ahead
is your squadron.

Somewhere between you and
and the fleeing French,
or to you hope.

But where are the road signs?
You are young (twenty-four);
so are Sid and Harry.

You a corporal, Sid a sergeant,
Harry a private.

Sent to find your squadron
on that night of
July 6, 1944.

The engine of your dusty jeep
chugs ominously in the
muggy death-like quiet.

Distant gunfire flares,
chilling your blood.

But you stubbornly, blindly follow
the straight arrow road
to ... what?

Darkness, darkness.
Fifty shades of gray
surround you
on this improbable journey.
Your thoughts stray
to the fair Helene
from Calais.

"Bien, you are young yet,
and bullet-ridden windows.
You've seen death come
and you tell me,
are you not Geoffrey?"

Dawn streaks muddy fingers
across the sky
and illuminates the inky outlines
of shell-truck forms
and bullet-ridden windows.
The buildings are becoming more numerous.

"God, where are we?"
you ask.

It must be five o'clock
when your jeep trundles under the
Arc de Triomphe.

You are on the Champs Elysee
entering one end of Paris
as the Germans leave the other;
Unknown, unknown conquerors
of the sleeping city.

How did you get there?
Paris is still eldor.
Snipers are hidden in
shadows and
bullets ring past your ears.

"As long as one hasn't got
my name on it, I'm okay,"
you say.

You've seen death come
quickly and too often
in other days your age
who should be in university
and taking girls on dates
and movies in Canada.

But this is June 8, 1944
and you three R.A.F soldiers
are driving into Paris
not yet awakened
from the grasp of the Nazis.
No one even notices
your proud uniforms.

Accidentally you find
a deserted Nazi headquarters
in a hotel you and Sid and Harry
stop at for rest.

Field and swastikas everywhere
chill your blood.

Bullet-holes from the guns
of the dead to the soldiers
riddle the once grand,
silk-papered walls of the hotel.

It is June 8, 1944
and you realize that you are
living like a sleep-walker
in a dream.

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of the dead to the soldiers
riddle the once grand,
silk-papered walls of the hotel.

It is June 8, 1944
and you realize that you are
living like a sleep-walker
in a dream.

But this is June 8, 1944.
No one even notices
your proud uniforms.

Accidentally you find
a deserted Nazi headquarters
in a hotel you and Sid and Harry
stop at for rest.

Field and swastikas everywhere
chill your blood.

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riddle the once grand,
n...
BILINGUALISM

On the train.
Forgetting we are now in English territory,
Je demande pour un cafe.
The waiter, amused, notices my English accent,
He answers, “cinquante” then “fifty”;
“merci - thank-you.”
I laugh.
A little boy’s voice shrieks from the snack bar,
“Hey, two cokes, two cokes!”

Last night a young Quebecois laughed with two pretty girls.
Drinking beers to the steady sway of the rails
A guy got on in Ottawa, obviously English.
It didn’t take him long to demand silence;
Upright and loose - westward bound
Laughing with the francophone,
Controlled with cross-armed silence like the anglo.

Joseph and Jacque,
Both on the train;
Two peoples, two langues, two Canadas …
And a big country in between.
Bilingualism, well and alive in Sudbury 11:35 pm.

FEBRUARY

Warm sun
on the winter-weary face
"Spirit lifter—"
Tiny rivers
snaking
down
slushy
streets
by-passing
pebble mountains
to flow
into
curb-corner seas
Dogs bark at fur-coated cats
chasing birds
winging in from
the south
Noise returns
chatter, laughter,
drip
drip
drip
of icicles clinging in vain
to weary eaves
The earth’s soul returns
after having vacationed away
the cold, quiet
months of winter
Testing our faith
Teasing our patience
Relenting in February
to assure us
that Spring
will come again
to release our
frozen souls
into the sun.

- Adrienne Chinn