

# *t\here*

two-homed tales  
by katie o'brien

when blinding storm gusts fret thy shore  
and wild waves lash thy strand  
thro' spindrift swirl and tempest roar  
we love thee, windswept land

– Sir Cavendish Boyle, *Ode to  
Newfoundland*, 1902

born and bred Calgarians are kind of like the  
Snuffleupagus

– some kid on the internet, probably

## ***acknowledgments***

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some works contained herein have appeared, in various capacities, in *The Murmur House* and *Riddle Fence*.

***smokesick***

nightfloating houses  
boiled crickets and menstrual blood  
the tormented file glitches

not your hair in the sink  
your cobalt crimson lips last year's  
hips on the bush

listless plastic bags rolling  
tumbleweed across pavement  
we were born lovers

***the hike***

sea salt lovage  
sweet slate peas  
and juniper

tiptoe driftwood  
tuckamore faultlines  
my a(r)ches

rusty fingernails  
a sentinel outhouse  
and radiator fluid

## ***saskatoons***

baked seagull pie for birthdays

a recipe for homesickness – fifteen years later taste like

bruised knees fresh-picked scrapes on my ankle

Signal Hill's most popular night

to get drunk

*felicity*

crunching moss pilgrims  
olive lichen on pink granite  
: the original patriot

the scent of seaweed reminds me of  
*six names four dan*  
*two and some degrees*

lonesome boots on smoked out boilup  
we are chicklet teeth warm sweat  
this was your incense

my grandmother  
never wanted to be Nanny  
but Nanny she became

***nowhere steps***

magic baking powder  
by once throne chimney  
graveyards

mouselike boardwalk  
twisted foundations and abandon  
ed root cellar

pink rust truckbed  
drinks dandelion wine for  
strong livers

***crux***

my father hates the neighbour  
's crimson cat

do you remember the stag on the lawn  
my brother running inside  
doe across the street

in the shadow of Nose Hill  
it's the closest we got to reindeer

## ***t(w)o Lethbridge***

princess alberta

49°41'39"N 112°49'58"W

population 83,500 some

my Nan talked about

little pills for seasickness

water and brandy

oldest newfoundland

48°22'06"N 53°52'10"W

population 900 none

## ***oddities***

dusty condom takeover  
would make a good band name  
giggling – we collapse

our ground molars  
and eggplant-bruised nailbeds  
ruminates on legends

centuries pass and  
ageing cassette tapes yodel  
in this northsloped house

***skerwink***

dig holes in my skin  
peels it flakes drying cod  
on forgotten wharfs

geological uprising  
rock walls bleed water  
old man's flowerbeard

wearing stolen orthotics  
at the stone site of capelin  
suicide squads

***a Friday morning Fuck you***

the Kensington clinic spits out protesters  
like broken teeth after a boxing match  
seems I'm only ever around when it rains

my tiny car floating in the downpour  
downtrodden solitary signholder across the street  
whispers – serves you right

***northbound***

I always forget the second e in 'acknowledgements'  
the one-way street by your place  
Crowchild's orientation

I always forget how cold it is in the morning  
the sound of her laugh  
her middle name

(there isn't one

***muddertongue***

sun hits the hills the  
gullies of your abdomen  
your spine sweat  
glistens

orange wax and  
orange juice

## ***abandonment issues***

pearly gray fog on the harbour  
all-terrain vehicles of retroactive birth control  
fiddleheads and turnip greens

wedding gifted toaster from  
the piano-fingered grandfather emeritus  
he forgot about Saturdays

by the lone public payphone  
an abandoned smoothie, like vomit,  
sweating in the late June heat

***eight o'clock (for Jessie Ida)***

water and  
stool softeners  
then prune juice

raisin bran  
tea and toast  
with butter and  
marmalade

soon be time  
to have a bite  
to eat

## *eardrumming*

house

less a roof

less a room full of

rum found with beachcomb

my Lord jumpin' dyin'

this throat coating tumbling

this less-than-accented tongue

rock on rough

seafoam symphony on smooth

this tune will bring you

home

***oh! Claire***

twenty-four checkmate  
memories of did I know her band camp  
last night we smoked them out

a car2 nowhere  
your aggressive read receipts  
please, rate this app ★ ★