

and white fur it did not have the look of an untamed animal: its wildness only appeared in its eyes. She left a bowl of water and some food, which it ate in a few mouthfuls before taking off.

Between this moment and its next visit, its paw had time to heal. From then on, the intervals between visits were always shorter. It came for a few bites and for a short nap before heading off to who knows where.

One day, the white cat arrived looking weaker than usual, and stayed longer, so much longer that she was the one who left it at the doorstep at the end of the day—not without concern for the frail animal. That night, she didn't sleep well, maybe somehow knowing

that the cat would go down the few steps leading to the yard, where it would lie in the grass and rest, sleeping or counting its breaths. Soon after sunrise, that is where she found him, motionless, his eyes half shut in the morning dew.

After giving him a few last caresses, and shedding a few tears, she laid him in a cardboard box of the perfect size, and dug a hole, and covered it with soil that she tapped down gently. Afterwards, she went for a walk by the water to clear her head, and picked up all the white stones that she found along the way. When she got back, she placed them on top of the dark mound of earth, as if to signify the quiet presence of a little white cat. ■■■■■

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**ANNE-MARIE PROULX** is an artist, author, and curator who lives in Montréal, Quebec. Her work often bridges writing and art creating stories in which there is space for the memories and imaginations of others. She holds a Master's degree in Art History from Concordia University, where she also completed a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts that was started at NSCAD University in Halifax. Text edited by Craig Rodmore.

**SARA A. TREMBLAY** holds an MFA in Photography from Concordia University (Montreal). Her work has been featured in several group and solo exhibitions in galleries and artist-run centres in Quebec, Ontario, and in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Visby (Sweden), where she studied in the fall 2011 and returned for *The Brucebo and W.B. Bruce Fine Art Scholarships* in the summer of 2013. In 2014, the artist was awarded the first Yvonne L. Bombardier Arts Scholarship. Originally from Charlevoix, a small region in the northeast of Quebec City, amidst mountains and the Saint Lawrence River, Tremblay now lives in Montreal, where she works in a studio with a nice view on Mount Royal.


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# SARA A. TREMBLAY: THE REPLACEMENTS

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**BY ANNE-MARIE PROULX**

  
Je suis la seule à savoir de quel bleu est  
l'écharpe bleue de cette jeune femme dans  
le livre. Mais il y a des manques graves,  
celui-ci ne l'est pas.  
— Marguerite Duras

If a writer of prose knows enough of what  
he is writing about he may omit things that  
he knows and the reader, if the writer is  
writing truly enough, will have a feeling of  
those things as strongly as though the  
writer had stated them.  
— Ernest Hemingway

#### *Hemingway for Duras*

That line by Marguerite Duras comes to  
mind: the one in which she speaks of the  
blue scarf worn by a woman in one of her  
novels, the shade of blue that only she  
knows about.

There are details that we do not need to  
know in full, and which the artist can  
condense in an image or a sculpture, as this  
author does when she conceals that  
particular blue in one word that she knows:  
blue. This author who allows us to imagine  
what kind of blue it may have been: was it a  
blue-grey resembling the colour of my mother's  
eyes, a soft blue like that of the shadow of  
a tree on fresh snow, deep like the night, or  
electric like the colour of a new car?

A translation of this passage exists, but it  
lacks one occurrence of the colour blue. The  
translator has decided to keep only one, even  
if the original contains two, leaving us to  
wish that they could be reunited.

Accompanying the original passage by Duras,  
the words of Ernest Hemingway replace the  
inaccurate translation. Not that Hemingway  
replaces Duras: on the contrary, it is as  
though they occupy the same space for the  
length of a fortuitous conversation.

The replacements do not just replace one  
another. They merge into one work, each  
continually succeeding the other as if in an  
endless relay race.

#### *Images for objects*

Sara A. Tremblay is an artist who makes  
images, mostly.

But before the images, often there are actions,  
performances, experiments, or just the  
contemplation of life, its ordinary details and  
textures. There are memories and stories that  
she gathers, that she takes into her hands,  
to which she gives the form of a clay sphere,  
for example. She might make a mould, and  
cast it in concrete. She might also leave it to  
dry, let it disintegrate slowly, accumulating  
scratches and marks as time passes, or as  
it is moved from one place to another.

A photo has probably already been taken.  
Maybe one was taken at the very beginning,  
when the clay was still damp, or maybe one  
was taken a bit later, or maybe they have  
been taken many times since. It is possible  
that photographs are all that is left of it.

It is possible that the sculpture was left  
behind on a vacant lot somewhere. That  
it was too heavy or too big to fit into a  
suitcase. That there were no takers when  
it had to be given away, or discarded.

The artist has probably turned to something  
else since then. She probably forgot all  
about it, at least for a moment. But the work  
may not have disappeared completely—  
someone might find the sphere where she left  
it; maybe another photograph will be taken.

As long as the work can be found (by her, by  
others), there is a possibility that it will  
transform, become something else, take one  
form or another. But even as it risks dis-  
appearing, chances are at least one image  
will survive.

#### *Drawing for photography*

She is a photographer. But once she said  
that photography felt like making nothing,  
that one doesn't have the feeling of "making"  
a photograph. This is why she turned to  
drawing, choosing to work with charcoal  
and with chalk. Black and white, like gelatin  
silver photographs. But black and white  
in the form of sticks that feel dirty as they  
disintegrate at the mere touch of the

fingertips, leaving a fine powder on the  
skin. The charcoal is for white paper, the  
chalk for black paper.

A little like a negative in an enlarger: for a  
few seconds, the white light passes through  
the clear parts of the film and strikes the  
photographic paper. It traces black shapes  
that will be revealed all at once when the  
paper is immersed in an alkaline solution.  
All the while there will have been the  
distinctive odours of chemicals in the air  
and the continual sound of running water.

With drawing, shapes appear progressively.  
On the paper, lines in charcoal and chalk  
must be executed one by one, one after the  
other. Each and every line has to be performed:  
the stick sliding on the sheet for a few  
fractions of a second, leaving a mark on the  
surface, causing the powder that did not  
cling to the paper to fall to the bottom of  
the wall or to float in the air for a moment  
before falling softly down to the ground. When  
the drawing is finished, a thin layer of  
charcoal or chalk will cover the floor, bearing  
the inevitable traces of a few footsteps.

#### *Photography for drawing*

It was found in one corner of the studio: a  
torn piece of paper, with a few charcoal  
strokes and smudges. More a sketch than a  
real drawing. A small piece of paper, a little  
nobody, next to nothing, which one found  
fascinating and yet could not justify keeping.  
It could easily have been mistaken for a  
piece of rubbish. It may one day have ended  
up in the bin.

If it had been hers, she would have kept it,  
and pinned it to the wall. Then she would  
have made a photo of it. Once reproduced  
and enlarged, it would have assumed the  
status of an artwork.

A photographed drawing—especially a  
charcoal drawing—is not a drawing anymore.  
If we place the tip of our finger on the paper,  
no black powder will transfer to the skin. If  
we let our finger slide across the surface, it  
will not change. It will remain intact.

Unless someone decides to draw on it. Unless  
the artist asks two people—or was it eight  
people?—to spend a whole evening (the  
evening of her opening), from five o'clock to  
ten o'clock, working from top to bottom and  
covering the photograph with small, more or  
less equal vertical lines. Then the drawing-  
turned-photograph can be a drawing again.  
But it won't be a photograph anymore. Until  
she makes a photograph of it, one more time.

#### *Many lines for a branch*

She finds a dead branch on her path. An  
ordinary, insignificant branch. To her, it is  
perfect, so it will make its way to her studio.

As she turns it around, on all sides, the long  
branch of dry wood reveals its knots, grain,  
and curves. Tying an invisible thread at its  
centre, she hangs it from the ceiling. The  
branch spins around, like a mobile above a  
child's bed. She places the tip of her  
forefinger on one end, stopping it for a few  
moments, then lets it go, so that it continues  
to spin, but slowly, its movement almost  
imperceptible.

"C'est tellement beau"; it should become  
an image.

She sets up her camera and the image  
appears in the viewfinder. Against a white  
background, the branch is flattened and  
becomes calligraphy. With each slight move-  
ment, a new position offers a new mark, a  
new expression, a new letter, or a new word.  
In a video that is almost a still image, or in  
a series of photographs, it is as though the  
branch becomes an invented language.

We could imagine that what she found on her  
path that day was these many lines, these  
multiple drawings, which emerged all at once  
before her eyes, through the apparition of  
this single branch.

#### *Stones for a cat*

A story comes to mind: one that may have  
happened to her.

It was a few summers back. A stray cat  
appeared one day at her doorstep, limping  
on one of its front legs. With its small frame