A PLAGUE YEAR READER

A Plague Year Reader

BEING A SAMPLER OF BOOKS ISSUED

BY GASPEREAU PRESS IN THE

COMPLICATED YEAR

2020



Gaspereau Press ♥ Printers & Publishers 2021

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The Premier of Nova Scotia has instructed citizens to stay home as much as possible to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Never has serving your community been so simple! This reminder was printed during the spring pandemic of zoao by Gaspereau Press, unauthorized & ad hoc printers to Her Majesty's NS Government.

Introduction

The year 2020 was an extraordinary one. As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the globe, making its impact on communities around the globe, people everywhere struggled to find safe ways to carry on their lives as best as they can. Besides handwashing and mask wearing, the most effective tool in public-health toolbox has been at once straight-forward and complex—the curtailment of human moment and physical engagement. And so in many jurisdictions people been asked to stay home and to limit their in-person interactions in order to slow the virus's spread, something that runs counter both to human nature and to the very architecture of our cultures and economies.

Here in Nova Scotia, where Gaspereau Press is located, citizens have overwhelmingly rallied behind elected leaders and public health officials, taking restrictions and directives to heart. As 2021 opens, Nova Scotia's prospects for managing the pandemic seem hopeful. At Gaspereau Press, we have been able to safely continue our publishing and printing activities without serious interruption, releasing a full slate of new titles in 2020. As with most literary publishers, the real disruption has been to the traditional in-person promotional activities that help us to connect authors to readers reading tours, book launches, festivals, lectures, workshops. While digital technologies have allowed a lesser version of these activities to carry on, we realized that we were well positioned to return to a simpler and older method of connection, one in absolute sympathy with the kind of books we make. And so we decided to use our printing presses and

bindery equipment to produce and circulate a an old-school sampler, a publication full of information on the titles we produced in 2020 and the authors who wrote them. It's not a novel approach, and it's not the same as sitting in a room with one of our authors and listening to them read from and talk about their books, but nonetheless we thought it might help foster the desired connection in a time when connections are necessarily curtailed.

We hope that you will enjoy this small taste of our 2020 offerings. If you would like to purchase any of these books, we'd be delighted if you are able to procure our books through your local independent bookseller. If that's not possible, we are certainly able to fulfill your order directly or through one of the major online retailers. You will find contact information at the back of this book, on page 127.

ANDREW STEEVES

Poetry



Gaptoothed

ROBIN DURNFORD

¶ THE OBJECT A trade book of poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5 × 8 inches making 112 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Typeset in Deepdene. \$21.95 9781554472093

♦ SYNOPSIS Gaptoothed steps into the voided spaces and fissures that disrupt our sense of identity and obscure our connections to a world that otherwise seemed our own. Chronicling the alienating effects of the death of family members and her disorienting unmooring from her Newfoundland home, her culture, and her history, Durnford's autobiographical poems inhabit gaps that left so much of her experience unnamed, unspoken, and missing. While confronting significant matters like death, adolescence, gender inequality, and the instability of history, Durnford retains an ear for language's wildness, resulting in poems as vigorous, playful, and brash as an open-mouthed laugh.

♥ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Robin Durnford has published two books of poetry, A Lovely Gutting and Half Rock, which was shortlisted for the E.J. Pratt prize. Her work has appeared in Grain, CV2, The Antigonish Review, The New Quarterly, Riddle Fence, The Independent, and The Evening Telegram. She is originally from Newfoundland and lives in Montreal.

♦ Q & A WITH ROBIN DURNFORD The metaphor of 'gaps'—things that are missing, things that are lost—is everywhere in the book, even in the form of the poems themselves. Why is this such a powerful idea for you?

RD: I have many answers to this, but here is my answer for today. I have been living with this 'thing' my whole life where when people first meet me, they react to something I'm not seeing or even aware of at that moment—this gap, this space, this 'flaw'.

And they often have wildly different reactions. It's fascinating because little kids will often come up to me and start pointing at my gap, asking about it, because they haven't yet been socialized out of noting people's differences. It often comes as a relief because they're so honest. They just want to talk to me about it, but then their mothers will come along to shush them, apologizing, embarrassed.

Men in particular often seem to hate acknowledging or talking about the gap. When I mention it, they sometimes get visibly uncomfortable, as if I am supposed to pretend it's not there—I have actually seen them shudder—but, on the other hand, my romantic partners over the years have often found it the most erotic thing about me, and they have all kinds of suggestively Freudian reasons for this.

So, after a lifetime of these seemingly small, insignificant experiences I started thinking there had to be more meaning to the gap, that this tiny flaw in my body—that I once tried unsuccessfully to fix—is telling me something about our secret demands for conformity, about social and sexual

repression, about our need for control. Yet living with a gap has also taught me that desire often comes from our fascination not with those like ourselves, but with the other, with all that is not us, and those features that are unique to the persons we love.

To me, this is a metaphor for art, especially the poetry I am trying to write. I know that my work might be challenging for some, even ugly to others, but I have to trust in the originality and strangeness of the (accented) voice I have been given and hope it comes vividly alive, even with gaps, on the page.

In what way do your poems explore the politics of gender and identity, and the notion of 'belonging' to a culture or a place?

RD: To answer the second part first, I think the poems express a deep suspicion of belonging to a place, a concept that I held near and dear for years as I travelled around and pined for the island, but I realized pretty soon after I moved back home to have my son, that this pining was built mostly on nostalgia and grief.

Look, the deepest most subterranean parts of myself are constructed out of ocean and rock and wind and stunted bushes, tuckamore and bakeapples, rugged landscapes and the bitterness of Tetley tea, and I hope that always comes through in my poetry, but I am now more aware than ever how community and 'connection to place' can be used to exclude those who are perceived not to belong, for any reason whatsoever.

For example, and I think this is connected to your question on gender and identity, I don't think my Nan ever felt she 'belonged' to the island even though I can think of no

one who more embodied the place than her. But, you know, she was also her own unique self, and she liked to wear golden scarves and silver shoes and show some cleavage now and again, and I think she was rejected because of it. Before she died, she told me they used to call her a witch, make fun of her stutter. Later on, she was thought to be putting on airs.

This taboo on originality is part of 'belonging' to a place too, and I don't think we talk about it enough in Canada, so I am exploring it here in my poetry—by honouring my Nan in all her unusual glory.

The other part of this is what we don't know about the place or the people to whom we claim to belong. In a settler colonial society like Canada, what right does anyone, except indigenous peoples, have to claim belonging? History is very mysterious in Canada, perhaps especially on the island. There is a lot we have not been told. The books we were asked to study at school have been telling us lies, glossing over things, hoping the culture will forget the truth about how Canada came to be.

And this is the other great gap, the greatest gap of all, if you will, that I have tried to acknowledge in my own way in the book, not out of guilt, no, but out of a deep poetic need for a better sense of history, my own history, however treacherous the waters, or the very ground, might become.

Five poems from Gaptoothed 🗲

GAP-TOOTHED

as a girl I'd lie for the story, lie to my mother and she'd look at me wild-eyed shhhhh my audacity to make a world of my mood, a world I lived in without the hush

that gap in my play when I'd think things through—now what would dolly do, and she'd blush and I'd befriend her, and we'd have a giggle or two, as dollies do, but then came that day

I told my story to the teacher, playing it up as I went about a dolly on the shelf who made me up, I wrote it in my book as she'd told me to, I dreamed it true, passed it in without her frowning

next day, imagining at my desk she came to me, looking down along her nose to see, holding my story pointing her little pen she said: you wrote this dearie with such flair it makes up honesty

TEETH

miss her talk the most
made up words, or sometimes didn't
how she shook out her tongue under false teeth
that haunted my childhood, her mouth standing ready
in a jar of water, smiling loudly and lightly
scurravunging through the glass, me little girl
now hello stranger now you get out a dat if you
knows what's good for you

couldn't write them, her verbs came coated in salt, rubbed raw like smuggled sundries from a past I never knew, and blessed were the rhythms
I couldn't copy, it was her sound left the pain on my eyes, holding her mute in that coffin, looking gay, yet
I know she knew I would write this before she went—she watched her tongue at the end as if afraid the words which had lived with her for eighty years would somehow be stolen by my own tapped now from this dumb vessel of ink

ELOQUENCE

tail of language whipsnaps the likes of me grew up with brudder on my teeth, fadder in my breast I was known for eloquence

for shouting lungfuls, bawling good people well out, but seldom cursed for 'e was watching every morning

went to church but every so and so I got 'em good when I disagreed with that said or should 'ave done and let go

a doozy to the lord who punched me in my mouth for 'e believed in the promised land where good wives only cried with a hanky

in hand, kept skirts out of the bog but now for me oh god only knows how he would hear me heh? so cursed him through fog

I HEAR THE RAIN ON THE WINDOW SO

it's starting: the freeze usurps the first day of spring with its groaning, the electric on again but light's not blowing me sideways or door haunted with hellos the effulgence of tomorrow's heavy snow but today ice rime on the sill is willowy I imagine flowers on the stove where the fire is how I'll plant them there in summer when the cool breezes through our windows leave us flagged but this blow-glow resistance of winter just shines and shines and I want to walk out the husk of myself, see myself through the tender streets of a town haunted by endless winter waiting for never spring.

THE THIN LAYER OF OUR DYING

there's a scrim of dross over us all: weedy hairs, flakes of skin, droop of lids, eye

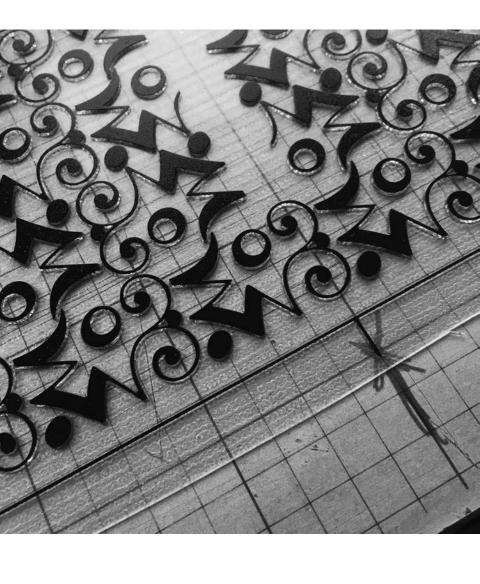
lashes faked for fluttering, the snaking goodbye of my perfect scar, all your shavings lost down cracking sinks frozen lusts on those bedsheets parts of you

that night, composing each other: from your mouth a kiss of skin tasting of my spit, tongues blessing

in lovely fragments. still my fingernails hold more of me than mind, the heels you held were buffed,

nails painted to the quick the blade that cuts my hair, strands swept by those years as I

lose what kept me fair next to baby over there watch him dust his mother as she combs his hair.



Murmurations

ANNICK MACASKILL

- ¶ THE OBJECT A trade book of poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5.3 × 8.5 inches making 96 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Typeset in Goluska.

 \$21.95 9781554472086
- ◆ SYNOPSIS Murmurations is a collection of love poems that explores how intimacy tests the capacity of language—how music is also noise and the prospect for miscommunication abounds. Populating her poems with birdsong and murmurings of the natural world, MacAskill highlights how poets and lovers share much with birders on the twitch, how even keen observation and intense passion can fail us as we pursue our beloved across distances and through time. Yet when we do finally find love it often seems, like a rare bird, "at once/singular and improbable/because of how clearly it appeared to us."
- ♠ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Annick MacAskill's poems have appeared in journals and anthologies across Canada and abroad, including Arc, Canadian Notes & Queries, The Fiddlehead, Plenitude, The Stinging Fly, and Best Canadian Poetry 2019. Her debut collection, No Meeting Without Body, was nominated for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award and shortlisted.

for the J.M. Abraham Award. Originally from Southwestern Ontario, she now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

♦ Q&A WITH ANNICK MACASKILL This is a collection of love poems, but it has a strong secondary theme of communication and miscommunication—and a lot of nature imagery, such as birds. Were these themes and preoccupations something you set out to investigate or were you somewhat randomly writing poems only to have these commonalities ρop up when you started to edit?

AM: I think Murmurations is a multi-threaded meditation informed by all these preoccupations, and I was relatively conscious of this while writing the book. With Murmurations, I quickly had the sense I was working towards a full-length collection; there were maybe two or three poems drafted when I realized I wanted to carry the conversation forward. Two things helped me organize my writing, while still allowing space for surprise and discovery—the model of a book of love poetry as its own kind of poetic project and genre, and the double definition of 'murmuration', a word that designates both a flock of starlings and a murmuring sound.

In thinking about a love relationship, I considered questions of resonance, communication, miscommunication, and meaning—questions that led me to think about other kinds of sound and other kinds of meaning and meaningmaking, like bird songs. This is pretty typical poet fodder, because poetry is that bizarre form that takes written human language and manipulates it to communicate something beyond the literal linguistic meaning of what's on the page. I think of instrumental music, for example—it communicates without human words. So, too, does poetry—a

construction of written human words—communicate an additional element in its music, in its spacing on the page, in its other extra-lingual characteristics, like its music, and in what the words themselves do or make when they come together. A counterpart to this would be the languages of nonhuman animals, which I of course don't claim to understand, but which can still have resonance for me, as a human listener.

Can you talk a bit about your approach to form? Do you have specific influences?

AM: I'm no formalist—I have some friends who delight in writing within the constraints of fixed forms, and that kind of writing is not for me. What I do like to do is engage with formal elements or fixed forms in a sparing, loose way, and certainly it's important to me to pay attention to the sound in my work. This seems to be the style of many contemporary anglophone lyric poets.

Beyond this, I find it difficult to speak about influences, because I don't believe poets are always (or even often) aware of what work has left a mark on them. That being said, the Renaissance sonnet is a pretty obvious influence in my case, particularly the sonnet as practised by Petrarch and his French imitators—Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim Du Bellay, Louise Labé, Agrippa d'Aubigné... Many of the poems in this collection are approximately fourteen lines, and I often structure these pieces around a kind of turn. Some of the poems are also quite conceit-heavy, which at times felt indulgent, but I decided to go with it. The book itself, too, as a collection of love poetry, is influenced by the notion of

a romantic canzoniere, a cohesive suite of work on love that talks to itself.

In a couple other places ("Ringbolt," "Of Gold Arms, You," and "Vespers," for example), I aimed to imitate the sapphic stanza (a poetic form invented by the Archaic Greek poet) in English. Here my imitations are more visual and impressionistic, and I intend these poems as a kind of homage to Sappho and her work.

Writing love poetry is obviously both a personal and a public act, but for a queer writer publishing poems in a predominantly straight culture, does it also inevitably feel like a political act?

AM: It certainly started to feel political when I stopped to think about it! But in the process of writing the book, I was absorbed by what I was doing. And I was buoyed by the model of other queer love poets—Sappho, of course, but also contemporary voices like Carol Ann Duffy, Audre Lorde, Colette Bryce, Kevin Shaw, Arleen Paré, Adrienne Rich, and my friend Sam Sternberg. In this poetic company, my identity is not such a problem, or even worth remarking on.

When I stepped back from the work and thought of its place in the world, there was a feeling—maybe a mix of fear and concern—and a hesitation, which came from an awareness of the book's political function. This is all part of the experience of writing a collection of love poetry, of course, as a queer person, but also as a woman. I know what history did to Sappho—male poets made fun of her, they invented a fictional husband with a crude name for her, centuries later they mistranslated her so that her voice would be read as heterosexual, and her story was lost for a long

time. Similarly, the French Renaissance poet Louise Labé was condemned as a plebeia meretrix ("a common whore") by Jean Calvin because she wrote erotic and romantic (though not even necessarily queer) poetry. And there are obviously much more violent consequences for being queer and/or female. I continue to live and exist in a world that is both deeply misogynistic and deeply homophobic, and these are not realities I can shake off. To, on top of that, write about love and eroticism as a female queer subject—yes, it's definitely political.

Six poems from Murmurations

ORNITHOLOGISTS

This winter I am a birdwatcher, learning the determination I have shunned since childhood, when, in summers, I would blink my lazy eyes at the flutter of feathers, turning instead to the milky worlds in books.

Sparrow is the first family I know, stamp her likeness on my mind. Too late now I recognize the variety of finches that descend upon Aprils, shivering like a warm first snow. I know geese for their resilience, ducks

their footle—robins and jays shining against all backdrops. But I think crows look just like ravens and ravens exactly like crows. And over lunch that day,

you pointed out the window to what you said was a falcon, or hawk. I would have given anything to understand.

At the time, I just nodded, like I knew what you were saying.

NEVILLE PARK

Before the coffee, your breath like ocean spray over my sternum, the triumph of meeting after months lost to distance, circumstance, our waiting shed in the vestibule next to days of fliers, bills, salt clumped on the welcome mat.

On the beach, February is a cold tongue, slick—ice caked over rocks, ice cracked over sand, melting in patches like lace, stones made larger in your palm, while birds we can't name float cupped in the lake's surface.

MISSED CALL

The house sparrow carries sunlight in her beak. Consider the mystery—the slight frame

burgeoning with hymns against the backdrop of still melting snow, blue and white pooling

in the long-given-out grass. Under cedars I walk and whisper, attempt forgetting, but her notes

are pressed upon my mind. Her flush moves over me, probes my body—I don't expand like she does,

but I no longer split from wanting. Her call rushes my insides, sears my chest—

tests my resilience. I try her song, but my throat fails, feeble. And would you hear me anyway?

I imagine your arms in another version of winter, deep in snowdrifts, limbs and torso smudged

in effort and evening—you catch everything, as I see it, while I'm still here, rasping.

- [*... but her notes envelop / my mind's soft ear. Her flush ...]
- [*... but her notes still surface / in my mind. Her flush ...]
- [*... but her notes are stamped / upon my mind. Her flush ...]
- [*... but her notes / sink into my mind. Her flush ...]
- [*... but her notes become infixed / in my mind. Her flush ...]

MAGPIES

Remarkable to our east coast eyes, quotidian pest to the locals. You say beautiful and spark derision, their eyebrows raised like pinkie fingers and the corners of their mouths twitching.

Rarer still to us all these months later, as memory, relegated to our respective crevices of Canada.

A pest, this distance, this longing. In memory, the birds' sleek feathers are still glossy in sunshine—inky check marks against the whiteness of the sky, the mountains—their wings and tails iridescent, pulsing against the limits of spectrum, rippling our vision into mirage.

You still say beautiful with conviction.

The world won't know what to make of us either.

MONDAY

I'll take the morning like a slice of bread—buttered sunlight on the laptop keyboard warms my hands, makes me wonder you onto my desk—thirsty, too.

Later I make breakfast, fry eggs, then figure you in the soapsuds as I tackle last night's dishes, ignore the ringer on my phone, the reverberation—

emails from Nicole or advertisements for Viagra—and too afraid for wishing, count the minutes till we meet again onscreen—one, two—

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

We think we saw it—you were in the waves, your torso pressed to the board, letting go as they formed, their underbellies unrolling from the glint of post-dusk sky to frosted glass, bits of froth casting fish phantoms over the ocean floor. After a brief dip, I never left the towel, the tan pages of a library book sticking to my fingers.

You yelled out from the water, pointing—like any other gull, ordinary, its calls swallowed by the distance, remarkable only for its size. We second-guessed; the binoculars still under the passenger seat of your car, no nomenclature ready for our lips. We tried later in the bookstore, heads bent over the species guide unfolded like a take-out menu in our hands—the bird at once singular and improbable because of how clearly it appeared to us.



Dumuzi

CHRISTOPHER PATTON

¶ THE OBJECT A trade book of poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5.3 × 8.5 inches making 96 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Typeset in Bunyan. \$21.95 9781554472116

\$\psi \text{SYNOPSIS}\$ These poems do not merely retell the myth of Dumuzi, the Sumerian god of spring who, for a moment of casual disregard, is condemned to the underworld by his consort Inanna, Queen of Heaven, goddesss of love and war. While Dumuzi and Inanna preside here, the collection's true protagonist is language itself, which Christopher Patton refracts as he pursues their stories through a kaleidoscope of poetic forms and practices. He reaches into the graphic realm as well: fragments of the myth become word grids recalling a sacred orchard, or images built up from the pattern on a scrap of security envelope lining. Mixing elegy, mischief, and experiment, Dumuzi exhumes the body of a god, only to find a rhizome dripping with linkages and metamorphoses.

♠ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Christopher Patton is a poet and translator. A section from his first book, Ox, won the Paris Review's long poem prize. Recent books include Curious Masonry and Unlikeness is Us, a volume of translations from Old English which won an American Book Award. His visual poetry has been shown at the Whatcom Museum and the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. He blogs at theartofcompost. com.

Φ Q&A WITH CHRISTOPHER PATTON What interests you about these figures from Sumerian mythology, Dumuzi and Inanna? Is there something about their story that is particularly relevant to the present day reader?

CP: They seem a long way away, right? What's that ancient couple got to do with us? Their stories live on in museums, on musty tablets & cylinder seals.

I suggested to a class recently, it's other people's beliefs that look like myths—your own look to you like axioms. Space & time aren't myths, right? They're facts, verified by science. But if Benjamin Whorf got Hopi verb tenses even roughly right, not every culture sees the future as an expanse spreading out from the present wholly apart from mental action. Space, time, & causality are myth for us—they arrange a world. A myth is a form of mind, often a story form, that has worked for some group of persons to make, on earth, of earth, a world. Myth is psychic terraforming.

I'm writing with my voice, and it's funny how Apple's dictation software turns "myth" to "math, mess, Matt, met, Ms." As if Apple wanted to get free of myth, and trying to, made materials for a new myth.

I wanted in Dumuzi, which Apple calls "And Get Amusing," to touch on the currency of myth. Dumuzi, wistful, curious, inept, persistent, horny, beaten down by his demons & not down for good, is just me. Inanna, his lover, sending

him to hell, mourning him, in some versions rescuing him, is me too. A myth is a story you find more of yourself than you knew of in.

And of the world. By currency I also mean money. Dumuzi & Inanna begin in suchness. (Apple: "Do news he Andy Nonna begin in suction us.") They are to each other meanings that can't be sold off. And the story of their going, one then the other, to Hell, is the story of their fall into commodity. Wild grasses become fields of cultivated grain. The grain is cut down & goes to market. Eating the bread, you eat a god. And grain becomes a unit of measure: in England 7,000 of them made a pound. No one needs me to say how Inanna's daughters have been made commodities by a look.

Dumuzi & Inanna fall into the exchange whose present end is capitalism. (Those who describe the benevolence of capital in circulation are recounting a myth.) The insight myth, language, & money share is that everything is exchangeable. For a god, that's the notion that anything can be anything else. For a salesman, it's how anything can be had for something else. The capitalist gesture, in whose shadow Dumuzi cannot not be read, is a faltering reach for a spiritual fact. The book is, too.

Can you talk a bit about the book's form, such as the use of word grids and the use of illustrations built up from a single scrap of an envelope?

CP: There's a note in my journal, 20 years or so old, about the structure I wanted for Dumuzi ("Dumb Uzi"): "mixed as a weed plot shaped as a symphony." Later I read Williams's Paterson and thought I had found, in its heterogeneity & dispersed point of view, my exemplar. In the end, Spring and

All, where he refracts his language through Cubist compositional techniques, was a better model.

In my mind the word grids are called "colour fields." They were an effort to do something sort-of-Rothko in words. Each of the colour fields alludes to a place: an orchard, an altar, a gravesite, a marketplace. As important, though, is the place the words are, on the page. The words don't really do syntax, and the grid invites your eye to move in more than one direction. So the meaning you get depends on choices you've made. Similarly, you can start the book at any spot and read from there in more than one order.

The images were the last part of the book to come. I'd been working with security envelope linings for another project, and one design started to yield representational figures, a fly, a woman fleeing, a man in meditation. It felt like discovering beings hidden behind the surface of the page. Bringing them out was rescuing someone—myself? a stranger?—from hiddenness. They remind me a bit of the stylized figures incised on old cylinder seals. Those are rescues too, of a form of the mind from forgetting.

Four poems from Dumuzi 🥏

DUMUZI

Let no state be enemy. Wet, dry, agon. Work an inmost first flower mutedly.

Wind blows light about the life (hemlocks) from which art is not apart

nor of a part. What a rock thought to do was rain and it rained.

Deer come out of th hill.

CLEAR

I was at a centre of things.
Wrens at life in holes around me in woodrot.
Little, being,
the king's amiss,
his sky a bough
of mouths.

Death of the royal principle (ego). The nearer they came to look at me, the closer I was to gone to them.

Earth they walk on's an own-study. Earth I'm under another no one owns. Sing that, asshole.

Because we die? We always all died.

Little little.
Spike of sunblack at the temple.

All's well in hell, an they eat from each others' mouths.

THE FRIEND

The rain loves you alone to

gether down the garden hall

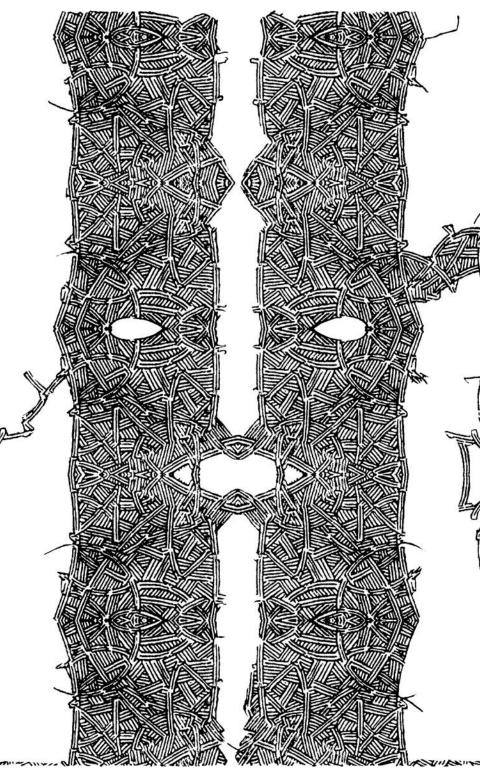
way. How clearly now cranes are called

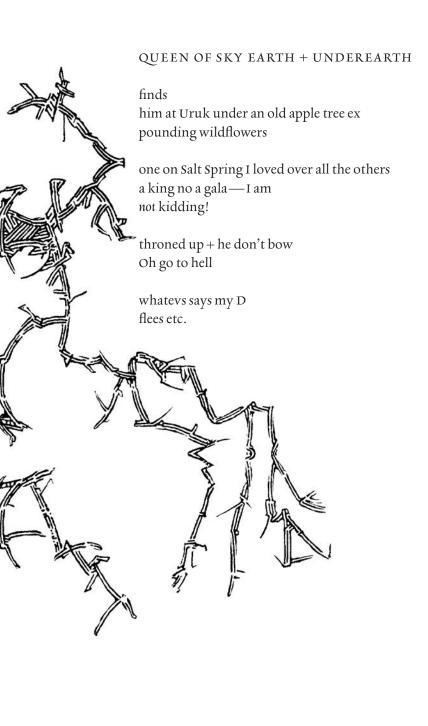
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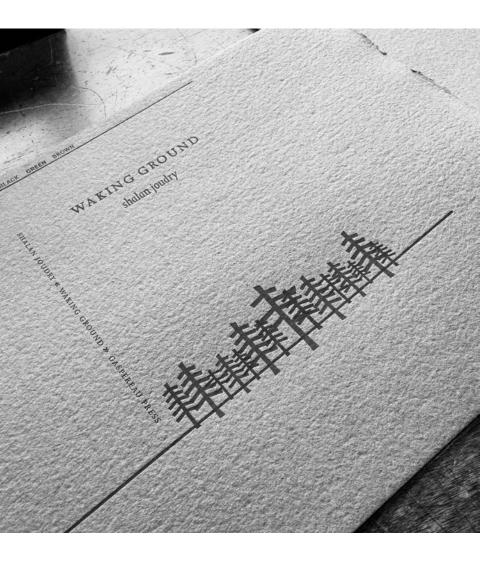
tion. Those flies too a sound

I am in you friend, in finite

friend







Waking Ground

SHALAN JOUDRY

- ¶ THE OBJECT A trade book of poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5.3 × 8.5 inches, making 80 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Typeset in Joanna.
 \$19.95 9781554472130
- ◆ SYNOPSIS Waking Ground connects the social and ecological challenges our communities face with the unresolved legacy of Canada's settlement and its ongoing impact on the lives of Indigenous people. Attuned to language, land-scape, and legacy, Shalan Joudry's insightful and candid poems bring forward stories that speak to the resilience of Mi'kmaw culture and the collective work of healing and reconciliation that lies before us all.
- ♦ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Shalan Joudry is a narrative artist, ecologist, and mother, as well as a poet, playwright, podcaster, oral storyteller, actor, and cultural interpreter. She lives with her family in their community of L'sitkuk (Bear River First Nation, Nova Scotia). Her first book of poetry, Generations Re-merging, was published in 2014.
- ♥ Q&A WITH SHALAN JOUDRY As someone who is also a storyteller working in the oral tradition, do you find that your

approach alters when you shift gears and write a poem? How do storytelling and writing complement or contrast with each other?

sJ: My approaches are almost the opposite of each other. When I create a story I prefer to walk around in a space (outside or inside) and think about the events or messages that I want to convey and how to create a narrative to carry those. I don't necessarily sit down and type the story out before I share it with audiences. When I write poetry, I sit down in a quiet place and write specific words in order to 'paint' a feeling, thought, or moment. I'm aware that my audience will mostly engage with that art, literary poetry, without me as the reader and so I carve with words as carefully as I can, using line breaks to help bring clarity. It might take a few years to edit some poetry by coming back to it and re-reading it, searching for each nuance of each word or line to make sure that's what I meant. With my oral stories, I edit the next time that I share the story with another live audience. I might remember that last time I told it a certain plot or way I described a character needed better wording and so I try a different way with the new audience.

I love that I have different mediums by which to share my thoughts. Sometimes what I want to share with people is best carried by an oral story, where I can change the tone of my voice or sing to the people to create an atmosphere of sensation. On the other hand, most of my poetry comes from what I want to share that is a briefer but more complex thought. I enjoy taking my time to find the right words to create a path that the reader will follow in their own time, in their own kind of silence or atmosphere, where they get to imagine and connect to it in various ways.

Your work is rooted in place, in your community's multigenerational relationship with the land. How does your relationship to place inform your poetry?

sJ: Much of my personal grounding is from relating to nature, watching, interacting, and learning from it. Over time my relationship with nature and place has developed through the lens of being Mi'kmaw and it has shaped my view of every forest stand, every stream, and every coast. I wonder about our ancestors, about our language, and about our future as Mi'kmaq. I actually spent the first 14 years of my childhood moving across the country with my family and I saw first hand how varied the landscapes and cultures are, how place helps shape people.

My poetry is inspired by mothering, my community around me, the trails through the forest that I walk often, the river that I watch over the course of seasons and my dreams of past and future here. I have been writing about what I perceive and it's very much about this place around me. I'm not sure how to separate my own sense of being human from place and I don't separate my work as a poet from my everyday life, at least not for these two first collections.

Many of your poems are based in your personal history and experiences, but also in your community's history and experiences as Indigenous people injured by Canada's settlement. What do you believe poetry can contribute to the work of healing and reconciliation?

sJ: There's an intimate emotional power in poetry that is difficult to get across in public workshops or school text-books. It can be acute, pointing to a certain idea, moment, painful or celebratory, that brings the reader immediately

into the crux of the story and on each page a complete mirror or grappling of some element of our experience.

With these personal truths in poetry, I hope that non-Indigenous readers will be able to have a deeper, broader, or more contextual understanding and empathy that might be more difficult to articulate, but that run deeper into their awareness so that future conversations about policy, treaty, and indigenizing various sectors of Canadian life are widened, more thoughtful. For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers, I hope that cultural/historical poetry can bring healing by the way that we grieve together, laugh together, celebrate the beauty and strength of Indigenous peoples together. This way, Indigenous story is really heard and that's the 'Truth' part in Truth and Reconciliation. For me, reading and writing poetry about our communities, nations, and cultural landscapes is very much about healing. I end up reconnecting to all of these by way of reading or writing. I find that the more we all share and end up in talking circles, the more we find ways forward together.

Five poems from Waking Ground 🗲

SWEETGRASSING

between salt and forest past the high tide mark of weeds is the sweet site

mud rich with scent as cinnamon drawing my feet into deep embrace

suctions popping as the bases release giving up root

i descend coddling the grass in my face like an aunty pleasured by the long-awaited reunion

crawling through, eyeing up blades losing myself in the green

CEREMONY FOR THE END OF DAY

when the herons fly home-bound at dusk lifting on the last current of warm air the river route is long and arduous

when the hardship of flight has peaked and tempered go ahead, remove your ornaments watch your hands articulate the unlayering a ceremony of undoing hang your garments with certainty acknowledging how many generations survived and how today you held space

walk barefoot to samqwan inhale with the force of gravity rattle loose the fragments lodged where you never thought you'd heal let your breath reach all the places you didn't trust to keep you steady

sip water from your cupped hands roll it over you like a thunderstorm and exhale so slowly that every bit of you melts sap going back to ground roots throbbing from thirst

herons shake their feathers fold their wings and rest

[SAMQWAN, water]

RAISING FORESTS

we are not the first generation to lose forests as trees were slain for ships and forts l'nu hunters were refused entry to their territory fracturing livelihoods and continuity

in this landscape there have been many ends of the world as one knows it parents mourned children at the edges of cliffs guardians became chained to bottles

to know the stories as story carriers do is to constantly taste scars where the wounds had long punctured through

people already devastated by massacres of forests each new generation's lost battle to save trees too many centuries of someone's world in pieces

let's tend to the forests like prophets encourage them to wilder in old growth and watch them mature into being

NESTUITA'SI

peway l'nuisi aqq nukumi' l'nuisit nestuita'sit aqq nujj nestuita'sit

peway ntusji'jk l'nui'sijik eta nestuita'si

I RECOLLECT

i dream i'm speaking our tongue and my grandmother is speaking our tongue she recollects and my father recollects

i dream my daughters speaking our tongue thus i recollect

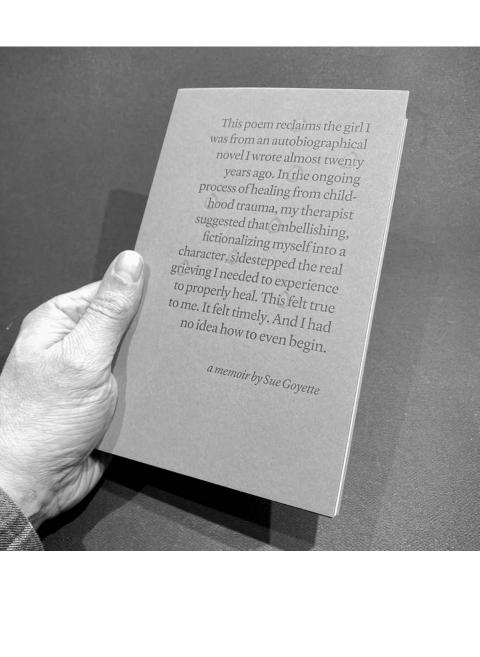
TENDING THE FIRE

there are lonelier places than under a darkened sky just before the winter moon as her shrinking edges cast doubt waiting for the return of longer light

let us not forget one another in the waiting i will hold flame for your health and you can hold flame for me then let us place both in a hearth made of grandfather and grandmother rocks of the land we're on without calling them yours or mine

around this fire i want you to hear
the stories of our ancestors and grandparents
so you understand the shapes of what was
and weep suddenly with me
the grief not only ours to bear
in naming the shadows we can watch them break apart
like morning frost
and wet our lips with the nourishing dew of dawn's heat

let us belong to the land, instead know the magnetism of trees watch the sun find its farthest peak and come back again between my mind and my heart between horror and hope reconcile the distance between us



Anthesis: A Memoir

SUE GOYETTE

 \P THE OBJECT A trade book of poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5×8 inches making 80 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket. Typeset in Laurentian. \$19.95 9781554472109

♦ SYNOPSIS This work of poetry reclaims both a child-hood trauma and a fictionalized telling of that experience. Retrospectively gleaning bits from an autobiographical novel published early in her career, Sue Goyette's process of "inverted redaction" extracts emotive words and images and gathers them into a new and freer account. Paired with her mythopoetic use of language, this technique of clipping and rearranging previously composed words escapes the confines of conventional narrative, embracing poetry's adeptness at preserving expansive truths in the careful ordering of small particulars.

♠ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Sue Goyette has published a
novel and six previous collections of poetry, including Ocean
(winner of the 2015 Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia
Masterworks Arts Award and finalist for the 2014 Griffin
Poetry Prize), The Brief Reincarnation of a Girl, and Penelope.
She has won the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, the Atlantic

Poetry Prize, the CBC Literary Prize for Poetry, the Earle Birney Prize, the ReLit Award, and the Bliss Carman Award. Goyette lives in Halifax, where she teaches creative writing at Dalhousie University. In 2020 she was appointed the city of Halifax's eighth poet laureate.

◆ Q&A WITH SUE GOYETTE You describe the process of "inverted redacting" in creating Anthesis from your earlier novel. How did the constraint of established words and phrases impact your work?

sg: One of the challenges I experienced was disrupting the narrative and temporal flow of the words in a way that would make space for me to engage in retrieving the words that still felt vital or had sap running in them and that were, in their way, apart from or glittering in the sentences/prose they were embedded in. Disrupting the narrative convention was no small thing for me. I could feel the politic of it. What breaking free from it implied. This retrieval gradually felt more organic like a rescue or, ultimately, like an act of liberation of the girl I was and who was still persisting and as well as liberation from a narrative form that had wooded over and that was no longer serving her/me.

I had to reckon with the pronoun she/her used in the novel and warmed to how she soon became an entity I could reflect on for how expansive she became; for how she houses so many of us; for how she is furred differently than the first person pronoun which, to me, might have felt more like survival, which is an entirely different motor than what I wanted. This was an act of retrieval and honouring. In this way, the she became a community that might have begun with me as girl but soon expanded, which gave me courage.

What do you hope that readers who have not read your novel will meet with this text's vulnerability and wildness?

sG: What surprises me still about this text is how it creates its own way of being much like how water finds its way to where it needs to go. I'm always beguiled by words and, in this case, how the words that lasted create their own fluency that feels apart from any narrative I've encountered. This way of telling/being feels singular and autonomous/independent from the novel where those words were waiting. Wild. In this way, I think the poem can be read without any familiarity with its text of origin for how the process has made its own logic and by how the words startle themselves into collaborating a way forward. This emergent practice feels important.

As I said, I'm still surprised by how dynamic this process was and what it manifested. What I hope readers who have not read the novel encounter is the potential this way of being instigates, how updating how we tell stories changes something fundamental in our understanding of ourselves and how we relate to others, how it refreshes and renews the archive. How this way of thinking/being can become a practice that acknowledges how malleable time is in some ways and how we are constantly becoming and are therefore capable of great change. I also hope readers consider how much power the stories we tell of ourselves have and how changing that telling can be transformational. The words we choose to use are important, vital. And how vulnerability is crucial to that transformative shift for how we are choosing to risk not knowing in the pursuit of growth and deepening our understanding of ourselves and of each other. This also feels important for this time we find ourselves on the

planet when a renewal, a refresh of our ways of being feels so imminent and so necessary.

In these poems, aspects of the landscape often present as characters, beings. How do they support or intrude on the characters and events in this text?

sG: Emily Dickinson said there are no pauses in the natural world and I know growing up I relied on that reliability, the physical tree after tree after tree for some kind of sustenance I can't quite name but recognize that it still feels important. That natural landscape, at times, felt more like home than my house did. There was a sense of not outright welcome but a welcoming, a space for me. That company is something I continue to honour and I found, in extracting the girl from the narrative, what came along with her were those trees, the landscape that had kept her company. Kept me company in that realigning way. And as it still does.

Five poems from Anthesis, in sequence 🗲

The clouds were bored, cartwheeled briefly then left without looking back. The pavement saw her father and untied his boots. Do you understand? Yes, don't look at me like that! His boots forgot who he was. She was the emergency. Breathe, she ordered herself. Think. Reluctantly, the window fogged. The mysterious power was giving it the will to settle. Her mother was the teapot, still on the table.

Her mother didn't boil and the kitchen folded into a cocoon. She dared her rage like a stranger. The house wanted to leave too. She managed it with tv and tape. Electric and strange without celebrity. Imagine living like that. She's fucked but engrossed; her membranous wings pulling to unravel. Shame in the pit of her plastic. She shocked herself alone. Her name was engraved on her somewhere. The want to run came back.

She straightened her girl and ran. Her shame was right behind her at the edge of her breath. The sound of dead leaves sneered. Where is the last thing she didn't want to know? Panic clawed the emergency. The green winter flinched and waited for the dark to stop talking. Now a different landscape knew her. This recognition sent a glimmer back to her in smoke. Once the old service moved to the edge she couldn't see the fear. What the fuck are you

up to? She was tempted to trust her anger and threw a knife. So amazing, the hollow silence; the occasional thaw and realizing how stupid she had been. She was surprised by the land of her noise; even her breathing sounded bare. Everything herding into wild. She was looking right at the panic and the quiet knowing held her down. Out and under, under and open, over and in and scared. It didn't like protecting girls.

Before she remembered, the view of empty felt blessed. The opposite of hurry, surrounded by body. Hey, hot frying pan, don't even move. All you do is lie around. Syrup and cowardly. Too much house. Listen, psychology ignited the flame quickly, no matter how much it burned. Such a loser. Fuck off, fuck-up. The door was cornered without a tranquilizer. The month of melting melted. She didn't

DIRTY WORDS Selected Poems 1997–2016 CARMINE STARNINO GASPEREAU PRESS LIMITED PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS

Dirty Words: Selected Poems

CARMINE STARNINO

♦ THE OBJECT A trade book of poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5.3 × 8.5 inches making 192 pages. Wrapped in an offset-printed jacket. Typeset in Seria. \$26.95 9781554472123

\$\psi \text{SYNOPSIS} Dirty Words offers a selection of Carmine Starnino's best poems, drawing from his five published collections: The New World (1997), Credo (2000), With English Subtitles (2004), This Way Out (2009), and Leviathan (2016). Arranged chronologically, Dirty Words follows the development of Starnino's formal and thematic preoccupations over two decades, revealing how his affinity for rhythm and sound, his muscular ratcheting of language, and his facility for keen observation and evocative description deepen with each new offering. While his poems and their subjects—such as relationships, family, Italian-isms, uprootedness, and masculinity—are nested in the familiar context of contemporary culture, Starnino's particular artfulness with language and form result in moments of beauty and insight where the personal takes on transcendence. Yet always, his poems are rooted in elemental human

experiences: as he writes in "The True Story of my Father," I would like this, finally, to be a story of love.

¶ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Carmine Starnino has published five collections of poetry, including This Way Out, which was nominated for the Governor General's Award in 2009 and recently translated into French by Éditions Hashtag under the title Par Ici La Sortie. His most recent collection is Leviathan. His other books include The New Canon: An Anthology of Canadian Poetry and Lazy Bastardism, a collection of essays on contemporary poetry. He has received numerous awards, including the CAA Prize for Poetry, the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry, and the F.G. Bressani Prize, in addition to being shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Prize for the best first book of poetry. He lives in Montreal with his wife and three children.

♦ Q&A WITH CARMINE STARNINO Your selected poems are compiled from several books over the last twenty(ish) years. How would you describe your work's evolution? Are there changes that struck you, personally, as you selected?

Cs: A selected poems is a story. By focusing on your strongest and most representative poems, you create a streamlined version of your development. Any unevenness, therefore, is collapsed into a clean, confident timeline. A different editor, however, might come up with a different story after combing through the same books. Here's what I found. Early on, I built poems artisanally. I looked for interesting ideas or objects and worked them up, word by word. There was a premium on formal control, freshness of approach, surprise. It didn't matter what the poem was about, as long

as it was vigorously done. When preparing Dirty Words, I was struck by how dramatically all that changed with my third book, This Way Out. The poems are mined from my life, they react to my surroundings, they reflect aspects of my thinking back at me. The style isn't an end in itself. Instead, it's a means, often taking the shape of an observation in the process of clarifying itself. The phrasing is more exploratory, the sense of form intuited and improvised. Some of that is due to confidence; I'm more comfortable taking risks. Mostly I chalk it up to changes in my life—the shift to playgrounds, mortgages and terminal wards—that made me intolerant of anything that smacked of fakery. The harder thing, I now realize, is saying something simple well.

How has your publishing and editorial work impacted your own writing?

cs: Publishing and editing has given me a living, so I feel incredibly lucky to do it. There are downsides. It steals time away from your own writing. Your head fills up with other voices, and it can take a little longer to find your way back to your own. But editing also made me a better writer. It sharpened my eye for bad habits, lazy phrasing, and slipshod writing. I also panic less. Fixing other people's problems gives me confidence that I can fix my own. It's also funny how much traffic travels between the two roles. I've used tricks I've picked up in my own poems when I edit other poetry and, in turn, other manuscripts have taught me lessons that influence my own process. What's key is to make sure that, when you're at the writing table, the editing side doesn't have the upper hand. The creative state is an errorprone state: you want to feel free to make mistakes, mistakes

that can spark useful ideas, the kind of ideas that can lead to other useful ideas. And because you're playing a long game, your sense of time is different. You have no real deadline. No one is waiting for you to file. That means you can live with the poem a bit longer and give yourself permission to test out certain strategies. Getting it right means budgeting in enough time for missteps. What you don't need is an inner voice constantly barking: that can't work.

Your earlier poems seem to examine form, language, and poetic tradition, while later poems centre on fatherhood, masculinity, and family. Would you describe your subjects as preoccupations? What continues to capture your attention?

cs: Maybe what is most surprising about Dirty Words is how consistent my concerns have been. Even when I focused on form and language, as you put it, I was obsessed with male codes. I found it easy to tap into the sadness and frustration behind those codes. These emotions were often bound up with the story of what my family left behind when settling here. More specifically, my idea of immigration was shaped by the paterfamilias who surrounded me when I was growing up; the sense of duty that came from being the head of a family and of providing for it at all cost. My uncles prospered in Canada, but they also paid an emotional price: loss of a country, of a culture, of a shared past. They made a life here, but it was never really home. And that sense seeped into my work. I dwell on disappointment, dreams deferred, and the brutal clarity that can come from failure. In my sometimes-painful transition to midlife, the stories of the men in my life have become my own stories: the bottomscraping sense of unfulfillment: the what-ifs that constantly

run thought your head, the longing for do-overs that follow every setback. That's how I see my poems: as the product of doubt-ridden self-knowledge. So if Dirty Words is about anything, it's about yearning for the right answers to the big questions, but knowing none exist.

Four poems from Dirty Words

When I was a boy, the men I loved laboured with their bodies. The nails of their hands were black and split. Their ankles and knees ached from standing on concrete. They squinted. They were half-deaf from the roar of the assembly lines.

Lavoro. It is what gave their days direction. My uncle's life a straight line travelling without interruption: five days a week, twelve months a year, thirty years at a plastics factory. He's a simple man, is what I told people, someone who has

never wanted more than he needed, happiest trusting only his two hands, the strength in his back. Suddenly one morning in a hospital room—his wife's last gaze yanked ceilingward then down and away—he had nothing left to take him

any further. He quit his job. And then this man—this man who I'd seen hammer a wooden stake into the soil using only an open palm, or wrench apart a melon for inspection with his grip and a single swivel of the wrists—sat for weeks

in his kitchen, hands locked between his knees. He stared as my mother stayed up late to sew a button back on a shirt, or watched as she climbed up, tired, from the basement, one more basket of laundry under her arm. He's a grown man,

friends told her, he can take care of himself. Well, what else could she do? She's a woman, after all. She steps into a room, looks around to take in whatever's dirty or in need of mending, then rolls up her sleeves and goes to work.

WHAT MY MOTHER'S HANDS SMELL LIKE

Right now it's obviously garlic. She chopping a little of it for tonight's pasta con alici, my father's favourite dish. The sauce calls for three cloves and three fillets of anchovies, mashed with a fork, all brought together to fry in some oil for about two minutes. But after dinner—after she's scoured the mucked pan and scrubbed the smeared plates, after she's flushed the glasses free of wine-stains and wiped the grease speckling the top of the oven—take her hands, ruddy with the scalded burnish of hot water, bring them to your face, breathe deeply, and somewhere, worked into her red knuckles, is the cool stowed in a pile of sheets just off the line, is the scent of one's soul in a dry dwelling-place.

OUR BUTCHER

I could bone up, be the right man for that one-man job, hang by its hocks a rabbit shucked from the jacket of its black-bristled fur and still talking in twitches.

As well, I might grasp the particular way he swings

a cleaver, brings it down on a neck like a primitive. More to the point, I'd learn to move the beak of my blade into the fragrance of a flank, or browse apart a chest's cardiac leafage, my white apron a blotchwork of blood.

I'd like to pickle ox tongue and pig feet, screw lids on sheep tripe and calf brain, set out jars like indices to carcasses unpacked like suitcases. Striated and plush, crewelworked with fat and grosgrained with gristle,

meat is not semblance, meat is baroque. That said, I'd love to break back the pages of a shank and read all day. Tales about the flex and kick, the squawk and gack of things in pens: grass-nipping goats, had-been hens,

hogs which nuzzled mud and snorkelled its odors until their plug was pulled and the spinning gears stilled to small organs, organs I'd like to disinter and wrap, risen again inside the pink of new paper skin.

DRAGONFLIES

I'm a forty-year-old man having just put his son to bed. Having just rubbed calamine onto his mosquito bites. Having just read him six storybooks, most of them twice.

My two-year-old can't sleep. There's too much going on. Today, for instance, dragonflies swarmed the backyard. Butched-up butterflies, double-petalled killing machines that slashed past our faces as we crossed their line of fire.

I'm a forty-year-old man having just put his son to bed. I'm sitting here in case he gets up. He's already risen twice. "Is it early?" he asks. "No," I say, tucking him in, "it's late." On the bridge of his nose, a blue mark, there since birth.

Dear lance-tipped darner, I admire the wire-work of your wings, your basket-shaped limbs, the way your spiracles flare with blood-lust as you make a meal out of what you please.

I'm a forty-year-old man having just put his son to bed. Having waited in the room for his lashes to flutter shut. I've been able to make some progress, and now am too far out to find my way back. Sometimes I don't know what I mean.

I'm a forty-year old man feigning calm, but screaming.



DO NOT believe that small organizations such as The Stinehour Press are mere vestiges of a crumbling past, soon to be outmoded by technology. Technol-

ogy will not only serve the mass culture, but will bend also to comfort the small. Small organizations may in fact be in the forefront of a new movement toward a participatory industrial democracy, one that can serve basic human needs that are suffering so from neglect today. It is the cult of bigness that is crumbling; it is the cult of mindless work in the production of useless things that is under fire. Small groups of intelligent workers engaged in humanizing pursuits may yet be the salvation of our age.



Rocky Stinebour assessing a quarter century of The Stinebour Press, Lunenburg, VT, in 1975. Printed here in Janson types by Andrew Steeves at Gaspereau Press, Kentville, NS. MMXX

Prose



All New Animal Acts: Essays, Stretchers, Poems

DON MCKAY

♦ THE OBJECT A trade collection of essays and poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5 × 8 inches making 144 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Typeset in Neacademia. \$24.95 9781554472154

© SYNOPSIS Collecting his recent essays with a few new poems and stretchers, Don McKay builds upon his decadeslong exploration of poetry and its relationship to the world. Whether he's paying tribute to poets Margaret Avison and Joanne Page, cracking wise about the impropriety of the F-word interrupting a consonant cluster, contemplating our relationship to the obscure worlds of fossils and lichens, or laying bare his own staggering grief, McKay's wily notion of poetry resists the anthropoid urge to name or map with certainty the things we pursue, reinvigorating our capacity for wonder.

♠ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Don McKay is a poet, teacher, and editor. He has published more than a dozen books in a career that spans five decades. He has twice won the Governor General's Literary Award for poetry, and won the Griffin Poetry Prize for Strike/Slip in 2007. His previous essay collections include the GG-shortlisted Visà Vis: Field Notes on Poetry & Wilderness, Deactivated West 100, and The Shell of the Tortoise, winner of the 2011 BMO Winterset Award. McKay lives in St. John's, Newfoundland.

 \P Q&A ... AT 3 A.M. (DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THE DIRECTOR OF INSOMNIA & DON MCKAY.)

DIRECTOR OF INSOMNIA: Well, well, here we are again, right on schedule. One assumes you are eager to discuss this weird book, All New Animals Acts?

DM: Not with you, and not now. I know how these sessions go. Root canals are more fun.

D OF 1: Listen to you, Earth's only insomniac. This is the thanks I get for bothering to relieve the tedium of wakefulness with sprightly discourse and critical commentary. I've a mind to abandon you to the ministrations of magnesium citrate, warm milk, and counting sheep.

DM: Well don't let excessive hospitality stop you. Besides, no one counts sheep anymore. It's all chemicals, herbs, and relaxation techniques devised by your enemies, the therapists of sleep.

D OF I: All testimony to the enduring hegemony of our regime, as they say in critical theory. Which I see you dabble in at several points in this strange tome. Trying to be 'with it' are we? Leaving

the safe harbour of rocks and birds for a few forays into cogitation? Or did you just wander off when your minders weren't watching?

DM: You know perfectly well that wilderness poetics has been the issue underlying all four of these essay collections, going back to Vis à Vis in 2001. Sometimes they tell it slant, sometimes head on. And, since you bring them up, birds and rocks do get featured; there's a nameless bird singing a lead role in "[] or Iconostalgia," and, in another piece, a revival of the ancient folk science of Visageology, linking rock faces with human ones. Also in the rock vein, there are two poems on fossils of the Avalon Zone. One of them is the very first evidence of muscle in the rock record—an all new animal act that's half a billion years old, and virtually unique. The other fossil is so common that specimens are regularly dug up when putting in hydro poles or sewers in St. John's. And besides such familiar subjects, this book includes an essay on lichens, a "cogitation," as you put it, showing how these amazing lifeforms prompt us to question all the usual biological—

D OF 1: Sweet Jesus stop him somebody. Is our mute button out of order? They made a big mistake when they vaccinated him with a phonograph needle.

DM: — categories. That essay also makes a case for bewilderment, which lichens always induce, as the left-brain companion to the epiphanies of Romanticism, and so one potential bridge between poetry and science. And, speaking of building bridges and mixing modes, let me also say that it's been great colluding with Andrew Steeves at Gaspereau on all four of these "strange tomes," crossing back and forth

over that great divide between poetic and discursive modes. All New Animal Acts even includes a couple of 'stretchers'—kin to tall tales and the Newfoundland 'cuffer'. One presents a long overdue account of the correct usage of the F-word, a timely contribution to the disciplines of grammar, linguistics, and anthropology.

D OF 1: Lord spare us. How many trees were destroyed in this bent enterprise? The whole thing seems gro —

DM: Go on, out with it. What were you about to say?

D OF 1: I was merely commenting on the incommensurate nature of the elements and—

DM: Bullshit you were. You were about to label the array of animal acts in the book as "grotesque," but realized after the first syllable that you were playing into your victim's hands. Am I right?

D OF 1: Listen, the way this works is I ask the questions and you try in vain to answer them. You don't get to deal the cards when you play blackjack in my casino. Now, about the doomed trees—

DM: Grotesque: that's the word you nearly said, and that's the subject of All New Animal Acts's title essay, a theme that runs right through the book. I'm saying that it's the artform that identifies the Anthropocene epoch, the equivalent of permanent plastics and rising sea levels. It's the spoor of the big-brained species that simultaneously laments the catastrophic erasure of others and persists in the carnage. And—are you listening—O Captain of Questions?—this

artform is exemplified in the "incommensurate nature of the elements," as you so ponderously put it, which structures the book. Thanks for the set-up. You'd better hope that this Q&A is not being monitored by your superiors at Insomnicorp. Could be trouble.

D OF 1: Yadda yadda yadda. To hear you talk, you'd think a desperate dodge was a knock-out punch and a lurch was a dance step. Don't tell me you're presenting this hodgepodge as some sort of assemblage. By those standards, my dog's breakfast is a collage. I see you're trying to pull off the same intellectual judo in that final essay, making out that memory lapses have a positive value.

DM: I don't believe you have a dog. A hyena, maybe. I do like that bit about a lurch being a dance step though—could be I'll come back to it later. As to the "[]" of that last essay, it's a reminder that meaning precedes and exceeds words, that it's the parent of language, and not, as is sometimes claimed, vice versa. Iconostalgia should be some consolation to you, as you reflect on your own screw-up over "grotesque."

D OF 1: Grotesque schmotesque, you smug bugger. Don't forget that 3 A.M. recurs every twenty-four hours. And still so much to discuss! Typos, misquotations, misanthropy (try dodging that one), comma splices, missing Oxford commas, appropriations, exaggerations, lies, solecisms, false analogies, malapropisms, bad taste, bad jokes, egregious errors, split infinitives, dangling modifiers—the list goes on. See you tomorrow night.

DM:[].

An essay from All New Animal Acts 😂

WHY POETRY?

The Griffin Poetry Prize program, The Reykjavik International Literary Festival, Nordic House, Reykjavik, Iceland, September 12, 2009.

\$\psi A\$ visit to Iceland is an important occasion for me, since I have been for some time absorbed in geology and geological processes. Rocks and thoughts about rocks, as well as fieldwork connected with this, formed the basis of my latest books. When I was kid, I spent much time camping on the Precambrian Shield in Northern Ontario and Quebec—what you might call an all-Canadian boyhood. We paddled across lakes and along rivers which are shaped and contained by the oldest rock of the planet, scraped bare by the glaciers of the last ice ages. Unfortunately, we were not very attentive, being more absorbed in adventure and our own achievements than we were in the amazing natural world we paddled through. Things had to be large and mobile to get our attention—rapids, bears, moose. Of course, once my interest in natural history took hold, I wished I could have those summers back so I could retrace those canoe trips slowly, with field guides in hand, and lots of time to pause in astonishment at plants, trees, and the ancient granites themselves, bearing so eloquently the shapes of the glaciers which seem to have left yesterday.

When I think back, it seems that part of our mindset, as we bashed our way through the bush, were assumptions that the Earth is static and stable and, moreover, that it was at our disposal as human beings. Now we realize all those assumptions were false, and symptoms of our self-centredness

as a species. It might be said, in our defense, that this was before plate tectonics was accepted as a theory (I know this dates me) so most people also believed in a relatively stable planet Earth. Well, a visit to Iceland—even a brief one — should serve to convince anyone of the dynamism of the Earth. And while I might flatter myself that I no longer need to learn this, it will not hurt to have it demonstrated so dramatically. It will serve to remind me that no other planet—that we know of—has plate tectonics with the creative and destructive power of the Earth's rock cycle. And that, as James Lovelock realized early on, such dynamism is probably essential if a planet is to produce and sustain life. Of course I could go to the moon and look back on the Earth to provoke this sense of Gaia, but it is much cheaper and more convenient to come to Iceland instead. You might point out to me that it would be even cheaper to stay home and simply re-read James Lovelock's books, or look at images on-line. But that would be far less exciting and inspiring, and without the opportunity to taste the vibrant, ancient, and contemporary culture of Iceland firsthand.

The chance to visit Iceland relates directly to the question I've been asked to address in this short talk: "Why poetry?" It would take many volumes to respond adequately to this question. These volumes would include a discussion of how poetry has transmitted the entire cosmology of peoples and cultures, as in the epics of Homer, the Norse eddas, or Dante's Divine Comedy.

But for me personally, the question "Why poetry?" has most bite when I think of it in connection with the natural world, so I'll focus on that. Back in the seventies, before I became an incompetent student of geology, I was an incompetent student of birds. I recall especially the experience that first got me hooked, at a place called Hawk Cliff on the shore of Lake Erie in Southern Ontario. It's a place where hawks, migrating south for the winter, are caught and banded. The image, or icon, that is fixed in my memory is of one of the bird-banders standing in the back of a pickup truck with a small frozen orange juice can upside down in his hand. He whipped off the can, like this, and there was a kestrel. (I learned later that these small cans were just the right size to hold the kestrels, or sharp-shinned hawks, compressed and quiescent, as opposed to a cage, in which they would likely thrash about and damage their feathers.) Anyway, once the orange juice can was removed, the kestrel stared right through us - an atom of fierceness in the midst of all us binoculared birdwatchers. It was partly the suddenness of the montage: ordinary orange juice can then wild kestrel—Hopkins' windhover itself—incarnated in the bed of a pickup truck. Why poetry? Because I wanted language to do that, to contrive the moment of astonishment when the orange juice can is transformed into a kestrel.

The Polish poet Adam Zagajewski has put this succinctly: "Poetry allows us to experience astonishment and to pause in that astonishment for a long moment or two." Those are the pauses I wish I could insert, retroactively, in those canoe trips of my youth. I think such astonishment is important as an antidote, or counter-tendency, to language's great capacity for organizing, manipulating, and naming the world. Poetry—any poetry—is always political and subversive because it uses language, our foremost technological tool, against its powers of mastery and control. In poetry, language discovers its eros. In poetry, language is

always a singer as well as a thinker, a lover as well as an engineer. Language delights in its own being as though it were an otter or a raven and not just the vice president in charge of making sense.

The Icelandic poet Hannes Pétursson writes of the May night, when

The streets become silent, stop thinking aloud—and stare with yellow lamp eyes.

All
The houses close around themselves
full of talk and kisses.

In the background mountains with burning skies on their shoulders.

[translated by Martin Allwood]

In the condition of astonishment, we see familiar objects and landscapes afresh, with the veil of habit removed: the streets stare like animals with yellow eyes; the sunset is the sky on fire carried on the shoulders of mountains. It is amazing to me that the same tool which distances us from the world while it organizes and controls it, is also the instrument which has this capacity to work astonishment, to suspend its own mechanisms of logic and return the world to us with its energy restored and maybe even increased. As Charles Simic has said: "A thousand naked fornicating couples with their moans and contortions are nothing compared to a good metaphor." This is bad news

for the pornography industry, but excellent news for us as poets and lovers of poetry.*

So—to sum up my response to the question, "Why poetry?"

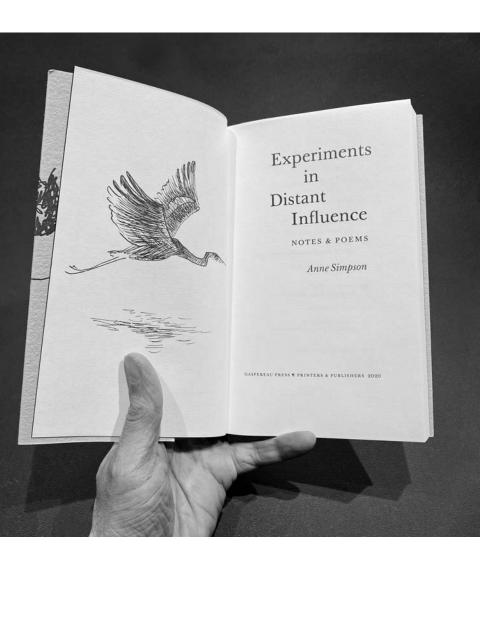
- because it increases the level of astonishment and counteracts the bad side effects of linguistic mastery;
- because it gets the kestrel out of the orange juice can;
- because it enables us to see the streets with yellow lamp eyes and the mountains with burning skies on their shoulders;
- and because it is the very eros of language.

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^{*} In fact, it has inspired the invention of the Betweenometer, a scale serving the same function for metaphor as the Beaufort Scale serves for wind speed and the Richter Scale for earthquakes. On it, a mediocre metaphor registers as the equivalent of five hundred semi-clad lovers enthusiastically making out; a cliché registers as two bored people at an office party running through obligatory gestures of flirtation.



Experiments in Distant Influence: Notes & Poems

ANNE SIMPSON

♦ THE OBJECT A trade collection of essays and poetry printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5.3 × 8.5 inches making 208 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Includes illustrations by the author. Typeset in Baskerville. \$28.95 9781554472017

♦ SYNOPSIS In these essays and poems, Anne Simpson embraces the robust role that literature can play in helping us to navigate our relationship with the world. Whether she's meditating on the nature of artistic collaboration, poetry's ability to have an impact everyday life, the commonalties between the practice of writing and the practice of spirituality, or the prospect of hope and courage in the face of illness and death, Simpson approaches her subjects with intense curiosity and a deep empathy for both the human and non-human phenomena she encounters, recognizing the complex ecology of our communities and how, through practising the attentiveness poetry fosters, we might help each other flourish.

♠ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Anne Simpson has published five collections of poetry, one of which, Loop, won the 2004 Griffin Poetry Prize. Her prose publications include The Marram Grass: Poetry & Otherness (2009) and three novels, most recently Speechless. Her mentorship of other writers has taken her to libraries and universities across Canada. She lives on an estuary in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, sharing space with ravens, herons, and bald eagles.

◆ Q&A WITH ANNE SIMPSON As someone who works across various genres, are there subjects that you feel are best approached through essays as opposed to fiction or poetry?

As: An essay is like elastic, because it gives in just the right way (and it snaps back sometimes too). It allows me a form that offers something intimate, but it can also let me think my way through something. I mention sophrosyne in one of the essays—the Greek concept of freedom through a disciplined life—and this isn't something I can pursue in poetry or fiction. So I love the fact that an essay lets me explore a question in different ways. Poetry lends itself to something a little wild, almost strange, like a dream state, and fiction encompasses a whole world that I inhabit fully, while with an essay, I can engage in what it's like to accompany someone who is dying, or what it means to consider what a bee perceives. I feel released into essays after writing poetry or fiction because, as you say, I can approach certain subjects much more easily.

Given this book offers different forms—poetry, essays, illustration—how do you see these forms communicating with, complementing, or pushing against each other?

As: The way I can answer this by referring to an experiment that the painter and colour theorist, Johannes Itten, did with his students (he talks about this in The Art of Color). He asked them to choose the colours that best represented them, and many students chose one set of colours, as expected. But one student chose different clusters of colours, which were quite different from one another. On the first day, she chose silver, blue, white, and red. On another day, she chose black, gold, orange, and purple. When asked why, she responded, "I have a feeling these colors are just as important to me as the others."

Not unlike the student who needed more than one colour cluster, each form is important to me. I find there's a multi-dimensionality to essays if there are poems and drawings that also reveal the 'thinking'. No one thing is enough: I need that push and pull between them. I like what happens when there are sparks of electricity between disparate forms.

In this book, you draw from the personal, but also engage with classical philosophy and literature. What is it about these texts that compels you to revisit works in your own writing process?

As: It's really the hunger to understand. How is the Iliad relevant to us? What does it show us about ourselves? To write is to participate in a conversation about the world: it might be a conversation about courage, one that started long before Plato, I imagine, and it continues in the writing of Atul Gawande. Or it might be a conversation about vulnerability, which Martha Nussbaum articulates so well.

Both philosophy and literature ask questions that I find fascinating. And people around me ask questions that

also get me thinking. Katherine Lawrence, a poet in Saskatchewan, asked a question, or a series of questions, that I thought about for years: "What does poetry do? Does it do anything? Does it help anyone?" That's the real excitement about writing essays: engaging with these questions to find out where you stand as a writer, as a person.

An excerpt from Experiments in Distant Influence & taken from the middle of an essay

from WOLF MOON, BLACK WATER: NOTES ON THE THRESHOLD LIFE

¶ Once, in winter, I ventured outside long after the nuns had gone to bed, during the time of the Grand Silence, and saw the full moon over the black, rushing stream. I was trying to write a poem, and after I came inside, cold and crampfingered, I listened to the elegiac music of Henryk Górecki. Kate had told me that I should be alone as I listened to it. At first it seemed there was nothing, or hardly any sound at all, and then, very gradually, it became louder. The first movement of Górecki's Symphony No. 3 is twenty-seven minutes long, swelling to fullness; it is based on a fifteenth century lament from the Holy Cross Monastery in the mountains of central Poland. It was appropriate to be listening to it in my room in wintry New Brunswick.

I knew nothing of the origins of the music when I first heard it that night; it was simply that some space opened inside and filled with light on an icy stream. I heard it. It kept opening and opening, until I didn't think I could bear more of it, and then a woman's voice began to rise, a voice that shimmered, an almost unearthly instrument that wasn't entirely human, as if from another world. I went wherever it took me. I was sitting in an easy chair, an unremarkable one that had been bought at an outlet like Sears, maybe in Moncton, the kind with beige-pink upholstery and a footrest that could be lifted with a wooden lever, and my eyes were closed. The chair levitated in the air, very slowly. I didn't open my eyes, but the chair stayed aloft. This was not the case at all, but it could have been that I was lifted up by that chair; it seemed I was no longer in that room. I was listening so intently that I was completely gone. I wanted nothing to bring me back. It was joyous and sorrowful, heartening and heartrending all at the same time. After a while, I opened my eyes. The chair was in its place, tilted back into the reclining position, with a draft emanating from the edges of the window that I hadn't noticed, and the electric baseboard making curious noises, as if branches were being dragged across glass and stones being tossed against pavement. The blind wasn't drawn. I forced down the footrest by pressing hard, and the chair thumped back into its upright position. There was the floor, with its linoleum flooring, flecked with green, the stand-up wardrobe, with its odd collection of hangers, the sink and medicine cabinet above it, and the light, left on so someone could look in the mirror as she brushed her teeth.

I got up and walked the hall, dark except for a night light, looking in each of the guest rooms, all of which were vacant except my own, and found the moon, the same moon as always, that dusty, drab bit of rock hurtling through space, lit by the sun's reflection on its surface. Because I'd listened to the music, it was a stranger, more radiant thing, a sleepless eye. I went back to my room, brushed my teeth, turned out the light. Why was it so exhausting to be taken inside radiance and then dropped back into the world of green-flecked linoleum, wardrobes, and medicine cabinets with mirrored doors that opened and closed with a click? Slits between the curtain are rare. We pull on the curtain, look inside. I will never hear Górecki's music as I heard it that time, though I have listened to it often.

That sense of being alone with the music stayed with me, then I slept and woke, and in the morning thought about it again. I began to think, not only of Górecki, but of the soprano with the clear, high voice that kept ascending, and of the multitudes who must have listened to it over time. Kate had listened to it, and had given it to me, a hospitable gesture, born of making community out of the materials at hand. Here is a piece of art for you, an idea for you, a piece of music for you, one that will break your heart at the same time as it mends it. It is almost invisible to us, this informal community of the inner life, with the springing arc as a thought passes from one mind to another, one heart to another, and the quick catch, as an idea is received, considered, mulled over, enjoyed.

After I met Kate, years ago, she showed me some haiku she'd been working on. She'd filled a binder full of haiku. Bobolinks, cicadas, robins, hummingbirds, herons, and geese. I read them all. Stones, clouds, Northern lights. A fox on the railway tracks carrying a crow in its mouth. The colour of bark peeling from a tree, or the intricacy of lichen on a fence, or party hats of newly fallen snow on wizened apples in what had once been an orchard. The fabulous, flung beauty of the world is an invitation to see; Kate was one of those who took up the invitation. She took photographs, and not just any photographs, but really fine ones, another kind of haiku. She looked closely at the world and brought up treasure: the inner world of an orchid, frost on grass, dew clinging to a spiderweb. On the wall of the guest house at Notre-Dame de l'Assomption were a few of her photographs: one showed a leaf on the water, a maple leaf turned bright in autumn, glowing against a whiskeycoloured stream. Taken on a slow shutter speed, the photograph looked as if the leaf had spun to the water on a smear of yellow-gold radiance. It was brushed by fire.

The one who goes questing seeks the ineffable: off she goes, after it, yet she goes nowhere, sitting in the armchair

and simply putting her hand on the windowsill, gazing at the light on the jumbled cumulonimbus clouds. Mystery, again, the momentary gift, the thing that comes and goes. It is so fugitive that when it comes into view, most of us have no idea what to do it except to try to hang on, and hang on, even as it fades, or leaps, or, in the case of Górecki, diminishes into silence.

• Kate spoke of a luminous calm she felt when she first came to the abbey almost fifty years before. It had to do with the clouds, she said, which were piled up in the July sky, and it was as if she'd never really seen clouds before. Perhaps she had a sense that she'd found a place where she could belong. It had a deep and powerful draw, and she knew that the passing visit to the abbey in New Brunswick marked a turn in her life. She returned, became a novice, and eventually took her final vows. At the time, she'd didn't fully realize all that her journey would entail. Her vows were made on faith, vows that only became real as she lived them out over time. The stark realities of living in the community struck her.

"It was as though I got on a bus with people I didn't know," she once said. "And the bus kept going."

Women came; many left. Kate stayed. There were about forty nuns at the abbey at the time she entered, and now only a handful remained. In the move to a new home, the community would have to reinvent itself. The myriad ways that people living together can irritate each other would be magnified by the close quarters they would keep.

It was entirely different for me as an outsider. My time at the abbey allowed me a relationship to community, while still allowing for my distance from it to be maintained. This is the distance a writer keeps, or anyone whose work is in-

tensely individualistic or creative—how far away can we go and still sustain our ties with those going about the daily round of their lives? I didn't have to attend the offices of the day to know they were going on. Someone might answer a phone in the office one floor below, the doctor might return from the medical clinic in the village to his small suite at the Trappistines where he stayed two nights a week, or a monk from the men's monastery two kilometres up the road might visit. To feel the rhythm of the community, but not be required to participate in it, helped me to write. And yet this particular Trappistine abbey, on the verge of disappearing, came into existence because of seeds of discontent that often heralds a break with the establishment. It began almost 1,500 years ago, when a boy named Benedict, probably from a wealthy Roman family, left Rome and found refuge in a cave where he lived as a hermit, with no idea he would become the driving force for disruption within the church.

Even hermits can't wholly extricate themselves from others. Kate told me of a time when she had to get away from the abbey to be alone just after her father died. For her, it was necessary to be a hermit even if it was only short-lived.

"I came back from being with Mom and burying Dad," she told me. "But after two weeks I had to heed the grief that was welling up in me."

She asked to leave the abbey and went to a cabin in the woods. "I cried, read my Dad's letters from over the years, listened to 'Going Home' from Dvořák's New World Symphony, cried some more. I had never felt such a loss in my life, but by the end of that time I knew I had to get back into the routine and be there for my mother."

Grief was clear and sharp. Doubt was another matter altogether.

• When we had been out snowshoeing on that cold afternoon when I'd lost heart, Kate said something that took me by surprise.

"You might not have to try to publish what you've written, you know," she said.

I must have looked at her in amazement. Of course, I had to try to publish it. What sort of writer would I be if I didn't try to publish?

"You wouldn't have to deal with rejections," she said. "Maybe you could just write and not publish."

It was as if I'd stepped out of a spacecraft into the deep blue of nothing below, nothing above. She'd removed all obstacles. I floated in the strange and surreal dark.

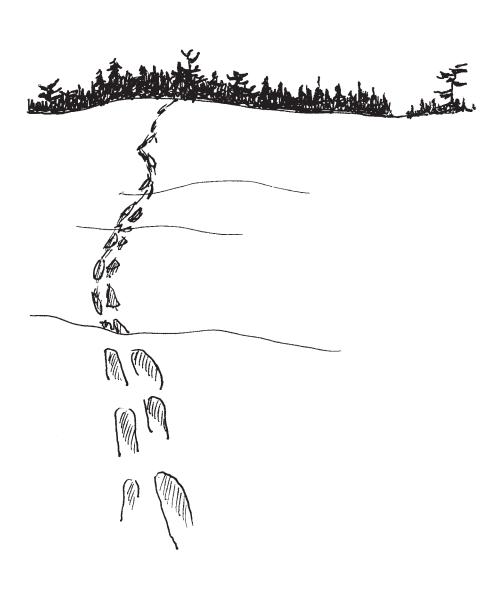
"What would I do then?" I said.

"It's just that it doesn't seem to give you much joy."

A ruffed grouse thumped in the woods somewhere. Light striped the snow as it came through the spruce and birches. A little further along this trail, we'd once seen a fox cross our path. It wasn't wary of us; it seemed to want to play, almost prancing on its black legs, pointed ears cocked. Its tail was a russet-coloured feather duster. But the fox wasn't there this time; we kept going, and I took the lead. The snow was thick and heavy.

I could just write and not worry about anything else. She'd released me for a moment, and I felt the expansiveness of her gesture.

But I was a writer; this was what I did. Though there was much I'd written that I'd never publish, I had to make an attempt for those manuscripts I hoped would have a readership. I didn't want to be crushed by doubt, but I wasn't ready to call it quits. Kate's questions made me see it. I knew I had to try.



ST Harry Thurston Remembrance A Memoir

Lost River: The Waters of Remembrance

HARRY THURSTON

 \P THE OBJECT A trade literary memoir printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5×8 inches making 208 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket of Saint Armand paper. Typeset in Dante and Seria Sans. \$28.95 9781554472161

♥ SYNOPSIS Harry Thurston's eco-memoir Lost River is an elegiac meditation on the way that fishing, the rivers he has fished, and the people he has fished with have shaped his life. It is a story that encompasses both significant loss — of his childhood homestead, of rivers, and of the Atlantic salmon stocks, as well as of family and friends — and significant reward. Whether he's recounting his experiences fishing his way down his native rivers and streams, reflecting on family bonds and writerly struggles, or recollecting the long work of establishing Nova Scotia's Kelley River Wilderness Area, Thurston reminds us how fully the human and nonhuman worlds are interconnected, and of the great value of a life based in attentiveness and affection. Like a fish finally rising to the fly, the beauty and insight of Lost River elicit a bolt of excitement and hope. As one of Thurston's mentors would say, "It's good to know that we're not fishing over barren water."

◆ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Harry Thurston's environmental writing has been published in many of North America's leading magazines. He has been awarded numerous writing prizes in both Canada and the United States, including the Sigurd Olson Nature Writing Award, the Lane Anderson Award, and the Evelyn Richardson Literary Award. His poetry collections include Keeping Watch at the End of the World and The Deer Yard. He lives in Tidnish Bridge, Nova Scotia, and is a Mentor in the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction program at University of King's College.

HT: The impulse for this book began with a single line, "In my youth I lost a river." I wrote it, in fact the whole opening of the book, in a rush of words, in a high-rise city hotel far removed from its inspirational source. The words arose instinctively through the dark waters of memory, like trout to the fly. That opening has not altered through the decades during which this book evolved. In the beginning, a writer doesn't always know where such unbid clarity will lead. But it signalled that I was writing about a deep past and it contained a controlling metaphor for loss — of memory, of the people and places that I loved. The writing was a remembrance, not yet a memoir. It was a narrative, but I would have to wait another twenty years for the rest of the story to reveal itself. Those pages were unwritten because the events that compelled them had not yet unfolded. What connected these events to the death of my father when I was a young man apprenticing as a poet, my original subject—that is, my environmental advocacy for saving wilderness rivers

and the premature passing of my brother—was a love of fishing, that primal and practical act of testing the waters for connection.

In the memoir, fishing is often the entry point for discussion both of your relationship to the environment and to the people in your life. What is it about fishing that's so relational, so connecting?

HT: Flowing water, the sound of it in spring opening the land, draws me out of the hibernaculum of winter, its inwardness and isolation. Brook trout are slurping the first mayflies, salmon are navigating high seas, silver arrows pointing ineluctably toward their rivers of birth in the fall. The flow of water, the flow of time, the round of the seasons, these life patterns draw me to rivers. The nature writer Ted Williams has said, "having one's rivers is important, like having family..." and certainly that was true in my family. We fished together, my father, mother, and two brothers, but we also fished alone. Even when I was a boy my father and I would often go our own ways, him downriver and me upriver. An aspect of fishing is the need for human solitude, which brings you into closer touch with the elements and the plants and animals of a watery world. There is also a moral aspect to fishing, in relation to other lives, for you are inflicting pain and, when the fish is not released, administering death. Growing up on a farm and later working in the veterinary sciences faced me with these life-and death realities and the choices they impose. Flyfishing allows for easier and safer release of the fish, but when the fish is kept, there are rituals of expiation which my father taught me: the quick killing of the fish and its laying out in a bed of wet ferns in the creel to preserve its beauty, and ultimately,

freshness for the table. Fishing has become, in the long reach of years, a way for me to reconnect to the loved ones I've lost, in a sense, to the springtimes of my life, and always to the natural world's forces of renewal. Fishing is a kind of conjuring of the unseen and the unknown, a mystical pastime.

One might suspect that the poet and the journalist might sometimes be working at cross purposes when writing a memoir. Can you talk about how these two elements of your writing life worked together, or didn't, in this work?

HT: As has been observed elsewhere, contemporary poets in North America are mostly associated with the academy. Although I have been a Mentor in the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction at University of King's College for the last several years, most of my working life was as a freelance journalist for a wide variety of trade magazines in Canada and the United States. I travelled widely for this work, which often fed my poetry, in more than one way. Journalism requires a certain objectivity, which is not foreign to modern poetry, so I have learned a degree of comfort navigating between the two genres. At my writing desk, with the ongoing work in both spread wide before me, I often switch attention spontaneously from one to the other. There is a difference, however, in voice, in inflection. In the memoir, though I am not freed from the need to verify the facts, I am freer to invoke a lyricism more common to my practice as a poet. It is an almost ideal form for one with my writing experience.

An excerpt from Lost River

 ¶ It had always been our intention to return home to Nova
 Scotia after Cathy completed her degree. When we did, in the spring of 1977, we settled in the coal-mining community of River Hebert, named for the tidal river that runs through it. Locals referred to their home simply as The River. Another river, a black river of coal, ran under the community. It was the compressed plant matter—primitive trees, ferns, and giant horsetails — of a vast river delta that overspread a jungle-covered plain 300 million years ago. At that time, meandering rivers fanned out from the coast at Joggins, a few kilometres away, to the town of Springhill whose halo of lights I could just see in the distance on a clear night. Springhill's two mine disasters, in 1956 and 1958 — a gas explosion and a roof failure, a so-called 'bump'—had claimed the lives of thirty-nine and seventy-five men, respectively. Those tragedies had entered the collective consciousness of North Americans through the new medium of television when The Bump became the first disaster to be televised live. It ended coal mining for good in Springhill. Now the only mine left in the area was the primitive pit in River Hebert, where men worked on their knees, sides, and backs hacking out a seam of coal barely higher than my writing desk. Each day at my desk I saw the miners outside my study window, in their heavy, coal-begrimed jackets and overalls, filing by after stopping at the general store next door to buy their lunches or chewing tobacco before descending into the earth.

In time, I would join my neighbours 2,500 feet underground to write an exposé on their brutal working conditions, a story that would launch my career as a magazine

writer. As a man who had spent fifty-two years in the River Hebert-Joggins mines told me: "I don't think God ever intended Man to mine a thin seam." The mine workings were akin to ones described by Emile Zola in Germinal, his novel of a 19th-century miners' rebellion in France. I had found a discard copy from the regional library, a hard cover Everyman's Library edition, and could now clearly picture the scenes he described: "The devouring shaft had swallowed its daily ration of men... who were now at work in this giant ant-hill, everywhere making holes in the earth, drilling it like an old worm-eaten piece of wood." The mine closed a year after my article was published when a river of underground water broke through the workings.

♠ Atlantic salmon entered the modern-day river from which
the community took its name. I do not remember now who
told me so, though I was always eager for fishing intelligence, especially after the long time away from my favourite
avocation.

Although I had never caught an Atlantic salmon and, until then, fished very little for them, it was my ambition to do so. From a friend of Greg's, I had bought a Fenwick eight-and-a-half-foot fibreglass fly rod and a JW Young 'Pridex' reel. The friend had made the rod from a kit and was also a bow hunter, so the rod had ample bow line for backing, if I was lucky enough to hook one of the King of Fishes and it decided to run to the sea whence it had come.

With my brothers, the September before Cathy and I left for Ontario, I had fished the Stewiacke River, the most productive of the Bay of Fundy salmon rivers, not far from our home in Greenfield. And later that fall, alone, I had spent a memorable afternoon to no avail casting over a veritable school of grilse, young salmon which had spent only one winter at sea before returning to the Bay of Fundy's Minas Basin and their native Debert River. I counted several dozen fish holding at the bottom of a shallow, clear water pool but not one would rise to my awkwardly presented fly.

The River Hebert flowed into the bay's more northerly arm, Chignecto Bay, and it was there that I began my true apprenticeship as a fisher of salmon.

Salmon are a so-called anadromous species, from the Greek ana, "up" and dromein, "to run." Literally, it is a fish that "runs up rivers." But they spend most of their adult life in saltwater and return to freshwater only to spawn and initiate another life cycle of their species. Each river, among the hundreds that once hosted salmon from Connecticut to Labrador, produces a genetically distinct stock. This behaviour of returning to the river where they were born is called 'homing', an instinct I seemed to share in my desire to return to Nova Scotia.

When salmon enter freshwater to spawn, they usually rest near the head of the tide to allow their body chemistry to adjust to this new, less salty environment. On the River Hebert, because of the massive fourteen-metre tides in the upper Bay of Fundy, this place was fifteen kilometres from the mouth of the river. It was called the Doctor's Pool for a Doctor Cochrane who had fished there and who had also financed the rickety coal mine that nevertheless sustained the community.

In August, a month after moving into our new home, I received a late acceptance from the University of Toronto's medical school. I agonized but turned it down. We were home, and I now found myself, in the early morning before plying my poet's trade and then again in the evening,

repairing to the Doctor's Pool to cast a fly in the hope of hooking Salmo salar— "the leaper," the common name first given to the salmon by the 4th-century Roman poet Ausonius, a native of Bordeaux, whose most famous poem was the Mosella, a celebration of the beauties of the Moselle River and its "slippery swarms of fishes ... that follow each other upriver in shoals never ending."

♠ Throughout the fall I left the warmth of our bed before dawn to drive the several kilometres through the gathering morning light to the river. The Doctor's Pool was located at the boundary of the Chignecto Game Sanctuary, a place that would play an important role in my life in the years to come. My only thought then, however, was to get to the river at first light in the hope of catching my first salmon.

The anticipation rose in my chest and throat, a fluttering excitement, like a moth circling a light, as I turned off the Boar's Back Road, which ran through the Sanctuary, and onto the dirt track that skirted a hayfield in a bend of the river. It was within this bend where the salmon lay, silver from the sea. As my headlights cut through the last darkness, panning across the field shorn of its summer crop, I saw Jack's blue pick-up truck parked at the turn-around where the tall salt marsh grass grew—and my heart sank.

No matter how early I rose Jack was sure to beat me to the river. Only much later did I figure out, with a sense of chagrin at my naivete, why I could never do so—he camped overnight on the riverbank, sleeping in the back of his capcovered pick-up so that he could have first pass at the Doctor's Pool. Many mornings when I arrived, Jack was already at the first corner, and not infrequently, he had landed a grilse, its silver body shining in the electrically-green marsh

grass as it caught the first light fanning through the great white pine that presided on the far bank.

Jack was King of the River, a title bestowed by fellow fishers on that person who knows a river and its fish best, and therefore catches more fish than others. He hardly acknowledged my arrival as he worked down the pool, past the first corner, along the straight stretch, around another bend to where the pool tailed out into a shallow run on its journey to the sea.

Following, I watched him carefully, trying to discern where he expended the most effort, how he worked the water, and when he was finished his turn through the pool and he passed me going upstream to begin another rotation, I cast a sidelong glance at his hook keeper in a clandestine attempt to determine what fly pattern he preferred.

I would make a couple of passes through the pool. By then the sun would have risen through the branches of the great pine and be shining blindingly on the water, and I would return home fishless to have breakfast and begin my day's work writing poetry, editing Germination, and filing bi-weekly stories for a regional farm newspaper. But after supper, I returned to the river, determined to become part of that elect group of fishers who had caught an Atlantic salmon.

Jack would also have returned, and often another old man would join us, but he always fished on the other side of the river. It meant that he had to cross the fast water above the pool, and it seemed to me that it did not provide as good an angle of attack. I wondered whether these two gentlemen didn't enjoy each other's company as they had about as much to say to each other as they did to me, which was hardly anything at all.

We three were the only salmon fishers on the river: two taciturn old men and me, a hapless tyro unable to hook a fish no matter how hard and often I tried. The best that could be said about any fraternal feeling between us was that we kept out of each other's way in the slow ballet of rotating the pool.

Then one evening, I saw the man on the far side of the river, crossing over. He was a big man, wide of girth with a round, welcoming face and a short-clipped, grizzled moustache. He always wore a tweedy flat cap and when he heaved himself upon the bank where I was standing and extended his hand in greeting, with the other he removed the cap, revealing a very bald head, which caught the late evening light.

"Hi," he said, with a tip of the cap. "I'm Shine."

"Hi," I said. "I'm Harry."

At my introduction, Shine burst out laughing.

"Did you hear that, Jack?" he shouted downriver. "His name is Harry!"

He was almost dancing with mirth, but he gathered himself now, seeing my bemusement. "That's what I said your name was," he explained. "That's what we've been calling you—Hairy."

As with his own moniker, "Shine," I understood the humour of my Christian name. I had a very full head of curly red hair that stuck out in unruly ways all around the bottom of my ball cap.

This word play broke down the barriers among us, as night after night we took our turns in the rotation of the Doctor's Pool. Jack and I also kept the morning shift through the shortening days of the fall.

♦ One evening three years before my father's death, in the living room of my parents' home, I had read aloud Dylan Thomas's "Poem in October," imitating as best I could the recordings I had heard of the poet's cadenced baritone. It was an awkward effort to demonstrate to my parents that I understood and perhaps even had an aptitude for poetry. Before I had a chance to catch my breath, my father applauded loudly and declared, "I really understood that." Unnerved by his enthusiastic response, I was so embarrassed that I apologized.

"I'm sorry," I said.

from emphysema and was buried a few Marshalltown. Unite neads for the said lied as one of Norzakowa. This parents anons own our and Lewis died as one of Noral Scale and the control of the smile and beautiful and the control of the smile and beautiful and the control of th MaudLewis died as one of Noraccast disability, and chronicas a She was renowned to rher sinule and he had not be and indeed, had named and had named face of poverty, upaumy, and chores always happy—and indeed, had many seed Paintings remain as a testament to be open Pantungo Lentenan Marian Maria I ain't much for travel anyway constraint and any and any and anyway constraint in the angle of chair. As long as I've got a brush in from of the Maud Lewis spent her career making spenses of a nostaleic view of knowledge. familiar expressions of a nostalgic view of least Pastoral, and joyful. She deliberately crewthen the strict and the Scotia, a "world without shadows" in which the After her death two new icons came to be creed as the other. The first was her painted house labeled house was seen as a billboard of sorts, parothers of visiting Mrs. Lewis and buying a painting Artes became seen as a monument to her and, evanual to work itself. The house supports the second ione line folk artist, who is often called Canada's Grandon Men Of course, before the house became Maud's, it was to Originally sited elsewhere, he bought the houseings moved it with teams of oxen to a small plot of ladient next door to the Nova Scotia Poor Farm, where he had be

moved into the house with him after their marriage in 1938, and moved in the 32 years that she lived there she transformed the house over the 3=3 into a three-dimensional version of her painting, what Murray Bamarddescribed in 1965 as "a studio, gallery and year-round Barnaruces "19 After Maud's death in 1970, Everett made living quarters." 19 some changes to the house: he painted the roof and gutters, and decorated a few of the outside shingles with small evergreen trees. But he left the interior alone—the painted walls, furniture, household items, and windows. Everett died in 1979 when ayoung local man, seeking Everett's rumoured hidden money, broke into the house and killed him in a struggle.

A group of local citizens had hoped to take on responsibility of the house, and in early 1979 founded the Maude Lewis Painted House Society.* The members of the society considered the house a work of art and hoped that Everett's heirs would donate it to be preserved on its original site. Instead, the house, property, and copyrights to Maud's images were left to Everett's relative Barry Jennings.

The Painted House Society members continued to raise funds in the hopes of purchasing the house and property from Jennings, while worrying that it would be subject to vandalism and damage caused by unscrupulous treasure hunters. The Society's efforts, while well-meaning, were hindered by their own naïveté. An annual membership in the Society cost \$2, and while at their height of activity they boasted hundreds of members, they never were financially stable enough to both buy

nd where he eventually worked as a caretaler and

It's ceiling height reflected the approximant

fits first owner, and Everett, at six feet, halves

ig his neck to fit under the ceiling. Mail

^{*} In Digby County there has always been a certain amount of confusion about the spelling of Maud's first name, with or without the final "e." Maud herself didn't sign any of her paintings with the "e" on the end of her first name, and her gravestone simply reads "Maud Dowley." Near the original site of her house however, is "Maude Lewis Lane."

GASPEREAU FIELD GUIDES TO CANADIAN ARTISTS, NO. 5

Maud Lewis: Creating an Icon

RAY CRONIN

 \P THE OBJECT A trade essays printed offset on Zephyr Antique Laid paper, folded, sewn, bound into a paper cover, and trimmed to 5×8 inches making 64 pages. Wrapped in a letterpress-printed jacket. Includes seven colour plates. Typeset in Laurentian. \$21.95 9781554472062

♦ SYNOPSIS More than any other Canadian artist, Nova Scotian folk artist Maud Lewis (1901–70) is defined as much by her life as by her art. While her story was one of poverty, hardship, physical disability, and chronic pain, it was also one of triumph of character and creativity over circumstance. Catering primarily to the tourists who drove past her tiny house each summer, Lewis's bright, primitive paintings of oxen, cats, boats, and rural scenes were both a response and an invitation to nostalgia. In this essay, Ray Cronin explores how Lewis's style and imagery became iconic, synonymous both with the way Nova Scotians's viewed themselves and the way the province would promote itself to the world.

♠ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Ray Cronin is a Nova Scotiabased writer and curator. Between 2001 and 2015 he worked at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as both curator and director. Cronin has written on visual arts for over two decades and is presently the visual arts blogger for Halifax Magazine. He is also the author of Our Maud: The Art, Life and Legacy of Maud Lewis and the ebook Alex Colville: Art and Life.

An excerpt from Maud Lewis 🗲

♥ More than any other Canadian artist, Maud Lewis is defined as much by her story as by her art; how we see her is as important to her popularity as what we see when we look at her paintings. Perhaps more. Only the heroic origin myth for the Group of Seven (that of a group of determined Canadian nationalists, braving the untouched wilds, fearlessly innovating and creating a new way of seeing Canada's landscape) has been as integral in shaping popular perception of an artist or artists. But even the Group are considered painters first and icons second. Not so Maud Lewis, whose life story and artistic production have been conflated from her earliest public notice. Her disability and her poverty—negatives belied by the happy, even joyful, tone of her paintings—are the central thread in any discussion of Maud, whether that discussion paints her as survivor, pawn, or victim. The hyperbole around her work and her story is virtually unprecedented in Canada, with her most notable champion—biographer and playwright Lance Woolaver—going so far as to compare her to Vincent van Gogh. After seeing Van Gogh's work in the Rijkmuseum in Amsterdam, Woolaver remarked that "the only other painter with that pure dedication to happiness was Maud Lewis."

Maud Lewis's images have always been presented as if they tell stories of her life, based in her memories of some rural idyll. But they are more complex than that, and the actual sources of much of her work in popular culture are too little stressed. As with so much Nova Scotia folk art, Maud's paintings have as much to do with pop culture as they do with rural nostalgia. Perhaps that helps explain the persistent popularity of her work, which is marked by recurring broad themes and common traits. Her style is instantly recognizable, and her images stick to a few subjects

that she repeated with little change over the decades. One painting of a mother cat and two kittens might be construed as biographical, as a memory of a specific pet—dozens of them are something else all together. Maud Lewis, as the most famous of Nova Scotian artists (not even Alex Colville had a feature film made about him) occupies a unique position in the art history of this region. For such simple work, her legacy is complex—a body of paintings, certainly, but also an economy, an art museum, a story, and a legend. The word "iconic" gets overused, but it is accurate here. Maud both created icons and became one.

One cannot discuss Maud Lewis's legacy without also discussing tourism and the economic factors that made tourism so important in her life. Nova Scotia, especially rural Nova Scotia, could be a bleak place during Maud's lifetime, with widespread unemployment, unequal access to services, and relative isolation. This was a relatively new phenomenon for the province, which for much of the 19th century had been one of the richest British colonies in North America, a centre of industry, resource extraction, culture, and innovation. The province's current slogan, Canada's Ocean Playground, would have made little sense to the hardheaded clipper captains, merchants, miners, shippers, and industrialists who were building a prosperous and forwardlooking colony back then. The province's reliance on tourism came about as a response to the collapse of rural economies. Nova Scotia's settlement pattern of numerous small towns and villages strung along good harbours or dustered around resource sites such as mines and mills, and its reliance on a north-south trade dynamic, were undercut, at least in part, by Confederation and its attendant westward expansion, while changes in technology spurred further

changes at home. Farming, fishing, lumbering, mining, and transportation all were fundamentally altered by steam and internal combustion, which created efficiencies, changed markets, and caused the loss of thousands of rural jobs. By the early 20th century, too many people were living in too many places where there was too little or no work for them. Nova Scotia began to export people at an ever-expanding rate, and governments and businesses tried desperately to find employment for those who stayed. Amid myriad industrial development schemes — from subsidized steel plants and coal mines, to tire factories and call centres—one industry stood out. Tourism has been the most successful strategy for bringing jobs, even if only seasonally, to rural Nova Scotia. That seasonal market, coupled with government assistance programs such as unemployment insurance and old age pensions, enabled people to stay in their rural homes and helped fuel a folk art boom in the latter half of the 20th century unique to Nova Scotia in its scope and impact. Maud Lewis in her lifetime helped sow the seeds of this artistic explosion, and in death has become the most prominent face of the art genre that has become known as "Nova Scotia Folk Art."

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◆ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Jocelyne L. Thompson is Director of Collections at UNB Libraries and previously occupied the position of Provincial Librarian and Director, New Brunswick Public Library Service. In 2017, she received the Atlantic Provinces Library Association's Merit Award for contributions to the profession and to the region. She launched the New Brunswickana Project at UNB in 2016 and is founding editor of the New Brunswick Bibliography Series. Peter F. McNally is Professor Emeritus, McGill University School of Information Studies, and the current Director of the History of McGill Project. Tony Tremblay is Professor of English at St. Thomas University. He is founding editor of the Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick and the New Brunswick Literary Encyclopedia.

♦ ABOUT THE SERIES Launched in 2016 by University of New Brunswick Libraries, the New Brunswickana Project is an initiative which undertakes to collect and preserve materials published within the borders of the province, and materials by New Brunswick authors or about New Brunswick published elsewhere. The project encompasses many activities, including the collection and preservation of materials, the development of a comprehensive database, the hosting of an annual symposium, and—through an arrangement with Gaspereau Press—the publication of bibliographies and essays through the New Brunswick Bibliography Series. The series is projected to encompass not only 'lists of books' on diverse topics of social, political and cultural importance to New Brunswick, but also to include volumes dedicated to all aspects of books and book history.

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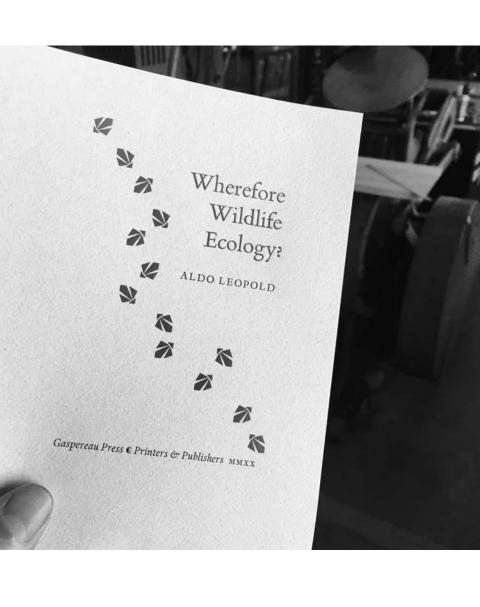
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NOTES: UNSPECIALIZING POETRY Wendell Berry

In this essay, Kentucky writer Wendell Berry counters post-modernism's intellectualized detachment of literature from the tactile world, arguing for poetry that is firmly rooted in the communities out of which it emerges, and for a literary culture steeped in a sense of responsibility. This essay originally appeared in Berry's 1983 collection Standing by Words. Typeset in Linotype Falcon. Printed on Stella Text cotton paper, 5×7.75 inches, making 64 pages. Black text with spot colour. Machine sewn and casebound (cloth over boards) and enfolded in a letterpress-printed jacket. Limited to 150 copies. \$120

WHEREFORE WILDLIFE ECOLOGY? Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold's work as a forester, an instructor at the University of Wisconsin and author helped to establish the modern land conservation movement. This short essay from 1947, evidently lecture notes, provides useful insight into Leopold's teaching methods, a snapshot of how he framed humankind's relationship to land for his students. \$\psi\$ Typeset in Monotype Dante, handset. Printed on vintage



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LAGOMORPH

Alexander MacLeod

A short story told from the perspective of a father who brought home a rabbit for a family pet, Lagomorph explores the significance this critter takes on for the narrator as the family's dynamic shifts and fractures. Originally published in the literary magazine Granta, "Lagomorph" was one of the winners of the 100th O. Henry Prize in 2019. Alexander MacLeod's first collection of stories, Light Lifting, was a finalist for the 2010 Giller Prize. He lives in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Typeset in Linotype Janson. Printed on Zerkell mouldmade paper, 5×8.5 inches, making 48 pages. Black text with spot colour. Includes an original wood engraving by Wesley Bates. Handsewn and casebound (cloth over boards) and enfolded in a letterpress-printed jacket. Limited to 80 copies. \$130

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This catalogue was edited and typeset in Rialto types by Andrew Steeves and printed offset under the direction of Gary Dunfield at Gaspereau Press.

Gaspereau Press acknowledges
the support of the Government
of Canada through the Canada
Council for the Arts and the Canada
Book Fund, and of the Province
of Nova Scotia.