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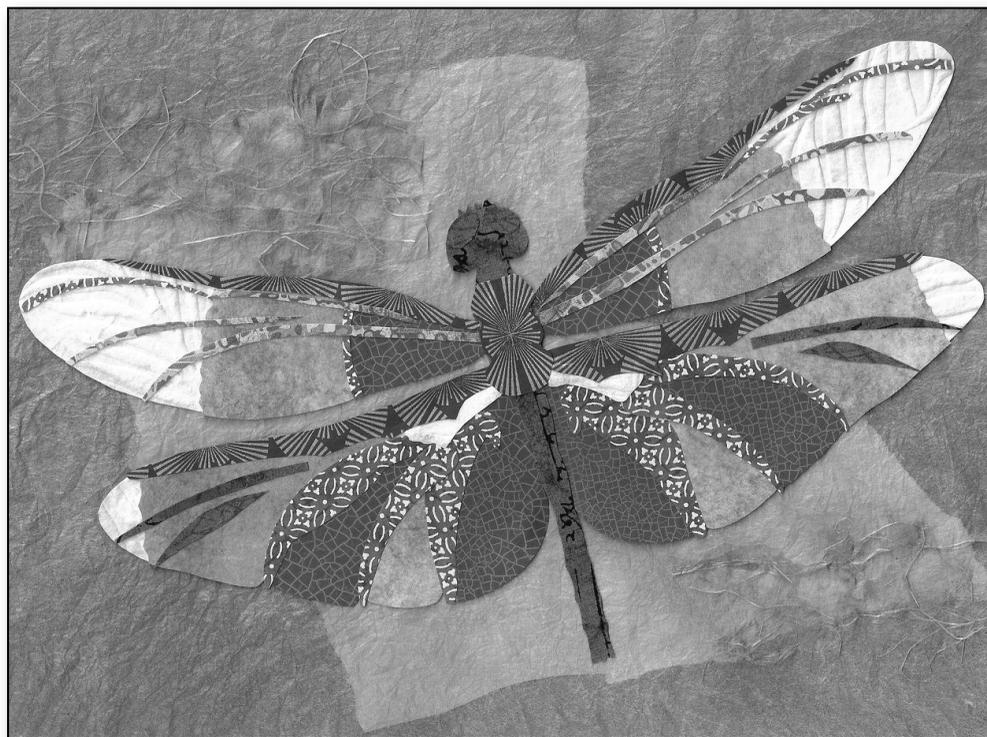
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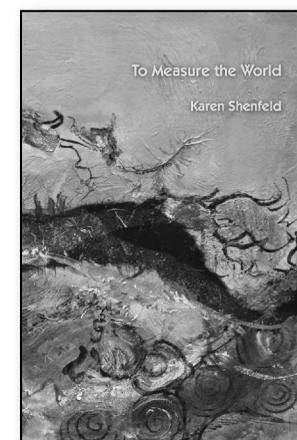
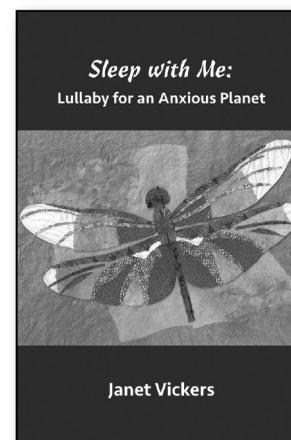
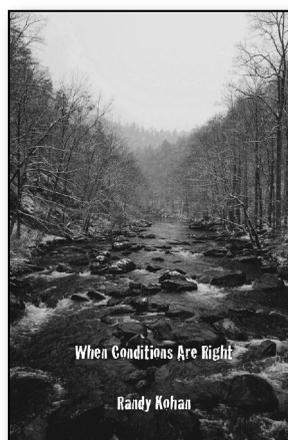
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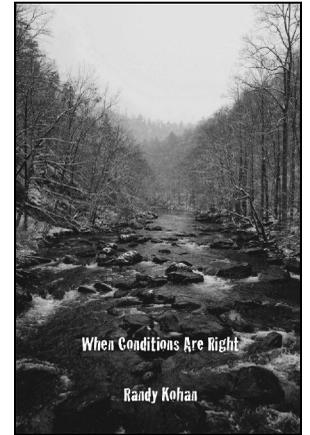
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Randy Kohan

from WHEN CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT

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Poetry
96 pages
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Now Available



Why I've been drawn to windows

Most of my teachers
were dead when I met them;
I only felt their speech –
the words they left behind
still pulsing on the page.

In falling snow
they still
stir between the flakes
thrum the air within, beneath
the V's of soaring geese.

From quiet nooks and crannies
the seams of daily life
images, framed, telegraph
infusions of natural light
in rhythm at my window.

Deathbed

Where will your mind drift
riding that last great wave?
What landscape will beckon?
Whose voice will call
from across that other shore
while the one you've constructed, laboured upon
slowly breaks apart?

All the supplications I've murmured
now will they have the substance
the strength to carry me through?

I've chosen the poet's path
tracing the threads that flail and brush.
Will they bind into a rope?
Take me where they've beckoned from?
The song in Autumn's dying?

From the steps of Silentium
someone appears
absorbing the cold of absence

and draped in a blanket of silence drawn
from the warmth of a candle's flame
she opens, opens wide her arms
to welcome, take you in.

Particles (a gathering)

Of frost, float
swirl like a cape through winter's night
hungry for something to drape.

The smooth-skin trunks of poplar and birch
toward the river run
with arms outstretched they're slipping past
the pine and beds of ice.

Whose skin is this that shivers so?
What is this figure gaining shape
emerging from the frost?

Who is holding who? Who is held by whom?
Together entwined in frozen embrace
suspended, however briefly?

The slightest breeze moves
like an urge across the valley
and living memory shudders
lightly, lightly
against the velvet skin of night.

Deep Winter Cold

A roving band of sparrows
settle on a tree.
And drawing from a source
surging through the wood

the engines in their feathered breasts
as if the season's ripe
churn like humble peasant swathers
harvest winter's frost.

How will death befall you
my singers of the cold?
What foretaste squeezes at your breasts
to make you sing out so?

Tragedy and sorrow?
Freedom, lasting joy?

Sparrows. You. Those who've fallen
and those whose time is near –
your songs have all been heard.
It's written in the trees.
It's written in the leaves and branches
ragged lines of bark.

Randy Kohan is the author of three previous collections of poetry with Ekstasis Editions. His first collection, *Hammers & Bells* (2013) was translated into Russian and re-released as a dual-language work in 2019. With facilitator and co-translator Zaira Makacheva, they travelled to Russia, introducing this edition to readers in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Makhachkala, Dagestan. In St. Petersburg, they were the first Canadians to present at the V.V. Mayakovsky Central City Library. And in Makhachkala, *Hammers & Bells - Колокола и Молот* (2019) won Best Book of Poetry at the prestigious Tarki-Tau Book Fair. Born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan, Randy lives with his wife and two sons in Edmonton, Alberta.



Ceaseless, un-wearying Spring

Here, every needle
in the bronze and copper
bed of pine at my feet

is dappled, drenched
by sunlight, shade
embraced by potent highly spiked
enveloping Spring-time air.

And she's lavishing amorous kisses!

Arise! Arise! Make haste!
For the glory and warmth of the sun
has come! Unstoppable! Unshakeable!

And the needles too shall rise
appear once more from branches
release their pungent scent!

And heedful, fearless, like children
we follow
indifferent to how this might end.

Wonders never cease.

Janet Vickers from SLEEP WITH ME

Sleep With Me

Wind blows through trees
at the bottom of the garden

dark except for the moon
spying between branches.

I am too smart for my own good
and so are you.

Climate collapse, floods,
fires, plagues, earth-quakes.

Whose idea was it to record
all the world's calamities?

At least you can keep this book
on your night table

to read thoughts whose task is
to give you something more

than impersonal diagnosis
which predicts your future

without permission or comfort
for your shattered nerves.

Sleep my beloved
I love you more than money.

Lullaby

Your heart swam through ocean to air
how to breathe where you couldn't swim
no-one to show you how
you were the ocean, the plankton
and everything that flowed into you
also flowed out of you.

Now you gasp in the dry heat
on a sandy beach
and even though you can't see it
everything from now on
will be a struggle
to find your legs
and catch flies for supper.

You will be told in many words
you are an isolated ego
fighting for survival until you die
and the only thing that will save you
is a good night's sleep
and this lullaby.

Memory

Who were you before
you were you?

Who told you who you were?
Who demanded proof?

Is language a child of love
or a threat of punishment?

Who told you to speak
and how does it happen?

We talk of oppression
but not of oppressors?

Do you think if bullies knew
their harm to others

is replay of the pain done to them
they would keep punching?

Do you remember your passage
from fluid to air?

Love

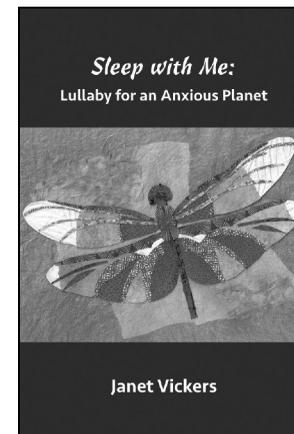
What is love?
Attachment to thoughts
that comfort?
Is it food?
A night without fear?

Is it father or mother?
Authority or belonging?

Let's suppose it is the moment
accepted as is and gratitude
where time is available to think
of those you love
and those you don't know
how they are cherished
by someone as much as your loved ones.

Imagine the world connected
by feeling and curiosity
what would be missed most if
we had never been born?

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84 pages
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Janet Vickers was born in the UK, came to Canada in 1965 and became Canadian by the love and friendship of other Canadians. She married in 1969 and celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary to her husband Tony, last year. They have three children, three in-laws, one grand-dog and four grandchildren. Her previous books include *Impermanence* (2012) and *Infinite Power* (2016) published by Ekstasis Editions.



Wake

Eyes open before a quorum is established.
Fingers, toes, lips, name, and bed beneath
—present and accounted for.
You hear your children's voices
and your mother tells you what to do,
from her grave.

Get up, get into the shower and turn on the taps
get under the spray where water licks
every curve and wrinkle of your skin
where every pore opens for its baptism.

You are not alone.

You have joined the brethren of air
and drinkers of water
there is no-one living
who has ever lived, or likely to live
in the future, who is identical to you.

This is why you are beautiful
and why corporate interests work so hard
to convince you otherwise.

Karen Shenfeld

from TO MEASURE THE WORLD

We All Come from Africa

“Look to the Southern Cross.”
He lay you down then,
The Cape of Good Hope,
a pillow for your head.

North, five thousand miles,
your right heel sunk in
The Delta’s branched veins;
your left, west, lost still

in the wild Tibesti hills.
Then down he lay you—
the blades of your shoulders
slicing Richards Bay,

the river’s Orange mouth;
the shy backs of your knees
shadowing Nubia and Cameroon.
As perhaps you imagined:

the green centre of your self
at the bend in the river,
the great river redefining its course,
pulsing along your spine.

Companion Poem

He floats you supine on the sea. Your body,

a small island, strangely
human. With compass and quadrant,
he comes to know you,

charting the elongated coastlines
of your torso and limbs,
your fingers’ intimate inlets, riding
charged waters around your face.

At dusk you hear the birds
singing bright news
of his landfall upon your shoulder
to grazing, oblivious sheep.

He releases you without
thought into the sky,
your body, burning,
a distant star.

With crazed lenses and mirrors,
he comes to know you,
climbing the mountain
into thin air
to sight you through
night’s telescoping eye.

At dawn
he names you for a lost sister,
found cataloguing God’s praises
at the bottom of a well,
sunk in the shoulder of
a small island.

He strips your velvet skin,
your body, a holy scroll
carried down the mountain
aboard a ship of cloud.

From cloisters and alleys,
he summons the scholars
to interpret the message of
your flesh and bones.

Without a Word

On the way to Iturbide—
the Madre’s sharp spines.

You were afraid to look.
Up top,

bougainvillea flared in
the eye of your lens.

A small battalion
swept the paving stones.

Petals brighter than
summer roses...

Is this what you meant?

Blinders

So I bowed my head, stretched
forth my neck. Unspooked

flew first from the gate;
hoofs, sweated flanks, her hair—

black as the pines that circled
your parents’ abandoned house—

outside my view.
Around the corner, beyond

the stands: a yellow
room with silver birch

Ekstasis Editions
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Poetry
56 pages
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Karen Shenfeld has published three books of poetry with Guernica Editions: *The Law of Return* (1999), which won the Canadian Jewish Book Award for Poetry in 2001, *The Fertile Crescent* (2005), and *My Father’s Hands Spoke in Yiddish* (2010). Her poetry has also appeared in journals and anthologies published in Canada, the U.S., England, South Africa, and Bangladesh. As well, Karen Shenfeld has brought her poetic sensibility to the writing of magazine stories and to filmmaking. She is currently writing a screenplay that has been optioned by the director, Bruce McDonald.

where she is lifting her weight
of water; her black hair

and spandex waist, narrow as
your youth, far away,

close enough to touch.
O how ornate they were:

hand-tooled and dyed,
studded, rhinestone-jewelled.

On the homestretch,
I heard your awful pledge.

No Time to Run

Be aware of those halcyon days when you let
down your guard, forget your tireless vigil.
Tamed words; perhaps a kiss...
On such days, you’ll sit across a laden table,
a wrapped jug of wine, waves nibbling the shore;
senses soothed, you might imagine
your foundation seamless and unshifting. Love renewed.
Be aware of those days when you might neglect the
signs—
the gasp of plants, the lake’s too brilliant colour,
his petty irritation. No time to run,
you’ll stand, petrified, the glass raised
to your lips, choking on ash.

COLD FIRE

James M. Fisher

New Brunswick's Donna Allard is the 2019-2020 International Beat Poet Laureate. She states that: "I write in the people's poet format... so it is easy to read, and easy to read between the lines." I was immediately impressed by *Cold Fire's* cover photo (by Jinn Bug) of a lone red leaf with ice along its edges. It would prove to be evocative of many of the fifty-one poems in this slim volume, including "red leaf" (which is dedicated to Jinn):

you are not
forgotten
you are cherished
like a leaf
within the pages
of my heart

Many of the poems deal with death: the loss of a loved one and the emptiness that death leaves the survivor with. Some, like "the essential other" are set in a cemetery:

there are many sweet flowers
and many stones in this garden;
the taller ones named by its dead
a crown of thorns lay hidden
beneath freshly fallen fruit
during autumn's wind

the desire for grace is long gone,
the last rose of the season
shatters under a warm touch
Prophets' words are captive
slaves to otherworldly gods
on a still winter's night
the whisperings of imagination
succumb to frost

Then, seemingly out of the blue, Ms. Allard presents us with "shoot the pen not the poet" in which she angrily states:

This is who I am: a poet when I write
but an uncivil
servant when I don't. This ink is my
bloodline. I have
no other children, just this, so these
pages are the
truth as I know it to be. The truth
often lies.

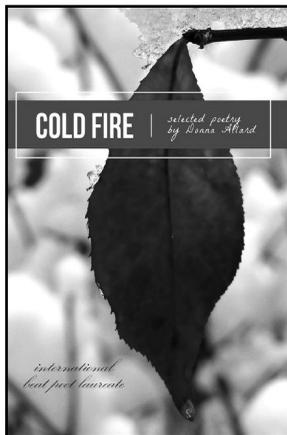


Donna Allard

Strong stuff! The poems in *Cold Fire* are full of great visuals too, my favourite line being: "I am deep in thought like an ice cube half-dissolved in whisky." (From "strolling the blues")

As she stated, her poems are easy to read, "People's Poetry" but the fun lies in reading between the lines. For an initial foray into the vast world of contemporary beat poetry, one couldn't do better than Donna Allard's *Cold Fire*.

James M. Fisher is the owner of The Miramichi Reader, a book review site that focuses on Atlantic Canadian writers and poets. An Ontario native, he now calls Miramichi New Brunswick home.



Cold Fire
Donna Allard
Sky Wing Press
64 pages, \$25.00

HUSH

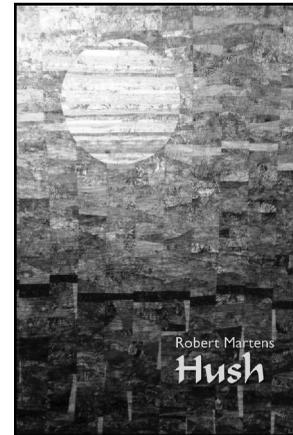
Candice James

Robert Martens grew up in a village founded by Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union. Still in his teens, he leapfrogged several centuries into the postmodern milieu of student politics at Simon Fraser University. Robert subsequently settled in Abbotsford, BC, where he writes poems and enjoys the spoiled existence of the wealthy West.

In these poems, Martens allows us to taste the darkness of their rebirth and allows us to rest our minds on a 'pillow as soft and heavy as a spirit stone'. In the poem "Strangers", we embark on a surreal walk through a hollow planet as Martens 'travels with shadow people on a random road of strangers backlit by a chainsaw flame.' Leading us into the esoteric comparison or rain to heaven's tears: 'last night I heard/ the rain on my roof/ a falling broken god.'

The book is in four sections "hush", "the great depression", "Talking Hollywood: and "a few short sequels". In section 3, Talking Hollywood Martens takes us through the kingdom or filmdom from 'The Jazz Singer, 1927' through to 'The Terminator, 1984. Some very brilliant imagery is evidenced in the lines 'If the barrel breaks/ we'll drown in the spill of the light.'; and then there is the very unique poem "Instant Karma" encompassing a conversation between Buddha and Menno, both meditating and thinking on transcendence. The weave of the line spoken by Buddha 'All existence is suffering' runs ever so eloquently through the poem like a coveted river of regret.

Candice James has recently completed 2 three year terms (2010-2016) as Poet Laureate of New Westminster, BC and has been appointed Poet Laureate Emerita of that city. She is author of twelve poetry books.

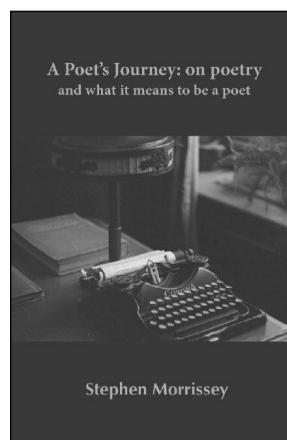


Hush
Robert Martens
Ekstasis Editions
124 pages, \$23.95



Robert Martens

New from Ekstasis Editions



ISBN 978-1-77171-356-6
Non-fiction
126 Pages
5.5 x 8.5
\$23.95

**A Poet's Journey:
On poetry
and what it means
to be a poet**

Stephen Morrissey

Writing from a poet's perspective, Morrissey discusses the influence of older poets who act as mentors; the poet friends of one's youth; poets whose books influence one's own work; and the varied experiences of life that are important to the development of the poet's writing. The art of poetry includes ideas about poetry; poetry as the voice of the human soul; visionary poetry; the purpose of experimental poetry; confessional poetry; and finding an authentic voice in poetry. The essays in this book are the culmination of a lifetime of thinking about what it means to be a poet and the art of poetry.

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DEVOLUTION

Howard Breen

We purge it all
into the dark void cleaving specificity
from surprise, our greasy matted psyches chasing a
prayerbook
butterfly that lets us think we can maybe grow
light enough
to lift off and start over again.”
from DEVOLUTION

Steady yourself. The crystal ball of Kim Goldberg is never anesthetizing or conventionally fictive. However, Goldberg's inventive acts of resistance always deserve to be read, pondered, and in her latest offering, possibly prayed over.

One can imagine a copy of *Devolution*, Goldberg's latest collection of poetry to be one day unearthed on the next millennium's underground bunker bookshelves, having earned Goldberg the unlimited and fully justified respect of members of the post-apocalyptic ecogentsia. Like the end time uprisings of such radical luminaries as Greta Thunberg and Roger Hallam during our current long dystopian darkness, captivating poetry can be a welcome psychological salve for all that ails.

Reminiscent of the insights of post-World War I European Dadaists and the full coloured surreal language of the culturatchic Greenwich Village beat generation, or the latest boldly off the wall stunt of Extinction Rebellion, Goldberg is a master at hypostasizing the absurdity and horror of our times to great effect. Here is poetry in collision with the virulently infested hellscapes of capitalist peddlers, carbon traffickers, and democracy-poaching racist presidents.

Like empyrean visions of a hyperventilating hypoxic land defender hallucinating from huffing insufficient breathable air through a N95 mask stuck on a tarsands tailing pond bank Goldberg's collection of poetic narratives are like running in front of a tsunami shattering our hyper-consumptive false illusions, replacing them with new capitalist-infuriating allegorical fables as she mediates between the present global ecocide and an uncertain future.

Goldberg uses dashes of disturbing satire, unsettling gallows humour, entertaining fantasy, and remarkable social ventriloquism rife with sparkles and crackles that produce new goose bumps of apprehension and dissatisfaction with the human race. With each successive poem in *Devolution* she aptly destroys conventional frames of reference altering our thinking about today and tomorrow, establishing both new preposterous mythologies and unclouded, memorably lifeshifting units of thought that will likely resonate long after the book biodegrades.

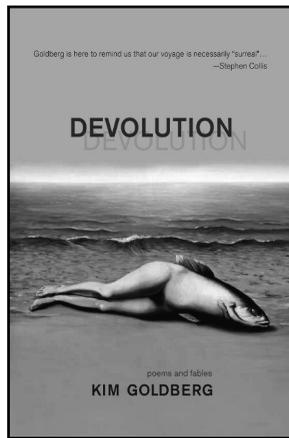
A profoundly observant rat race seismographer with a keen sociological eye for class and ideology and literary liquefaction Goldberg tracks and charts viscerally the deep disruptions and earthshattering surface ruptures now becoming daily reoccurring existential fissures for Homo sapiens and the flora and fauna that supports all living things. Goldberg grasps simultaneously many complex structured relations, taking some almost beyond belief. She does so with such hypnagogic eclecticism as:

by the storytime creekbed hissing getaway plans, popping bubblegum lips,
blowing mud kisses to overflying crows

by the ceaseless thrum of fluorescent traffic above

by the pigeon-suited pinkertons strutting the upper gallery (ever vigilant for
pocketed words, sedition in a herd of bottle caps)

Extinctionist emeritus Goldberg provides rebellious cross impulses, Anthropocenic cross references of science and thought, conflicting aesthetic and the ethical, disentangling the rejected and rediscovered in fabulist expression, transforming



Devolution
Kim Goldberg
Caitlin Press



Kim Goldberg

mundane conformity into regenerative revolution, evolution, and devolution.

Devolution is bundt pan full of distinctly individual and redolent descriptions of influentially disobedient subjects. Here such lines of ground-penetrating radar detecting a ticking time bomb:

The ocean broke
We called a repairman
The sea stars shot hoops using the anemones
We retweeted headlines of planetary collapse
The crows vanished among oily barnacles on the beach
We joined #TeamFollowBack
We waited for miracles

Many of us in a post-Covid 19 world will be hungry to fend off our tragic, morally-disengaging path of corporate cultural indoctrination. Extinction literate Goldberg anthropomorphism and fabulist solidarity is exactly the devolved frozen-thaw alchemy that may be radically needed to help liberate a future that affirms a non-moneycentric, inclusively just worldview.

Goldberg may be among Canada's finest lettered guides to the Gaian soul and casting ourselves on the earth's good mercy and live. Grant us all one more lockdown-bed wish: another Goldberg book full of our pernicious and insidious cognitive struggle for survival. More bluntly infectious personal acts of literary ecotage.

Howard Breen is a founding organizer of Extinction Rebellion Vancouver Island living in Victoria, British Columbia.

CRY OF HUMANITY

Stephen Karr

I first met Deborah Kelly when she returned to Vancouver to see friends after she had moved to Prince George months earlier. I have become a huge fan of her poetry. While visiting, she sold me a copy of *Cry of Humanity*. I'm so glad she did. It's a collection of powerful poetry. It captures the desperation and desolation of the lives of far too many, while also portraying a positive vision of where we as a society can travel to improve our state of affairs.

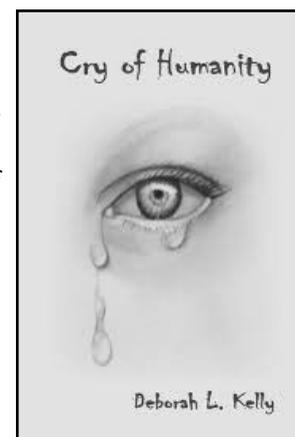
"Graveyard Love" is a dark one, speaking to the horror that an abused domestic partner endures, with the juxtaposed line, "this is graveyard love." It is followed by a somewhat more optimistic poem, though still tempered with recognition of those less well off, I Bow in Gratitude. Each stanza except the first and last end with "I bow in gratitude / many cannot." The first and last stanza imagine what it is like to live in deprivation, and concludes with "many can / I bow in gratitude."

"On the Street" is written from the perspective of a street person struggling to survive. This character stands up for themselves in the stanza, "I'm not quite sure how this happened, / so entrenched and without a home. / I can assure you it did not come from any choice I made on my own."

Sometimes, amidst the darkness, light can shine through. We see that in "Senseless Pathways." Though the middle stanzas are darker, the identical first and last ones give us a glimmer of hope, "Let the sun shine upon / the heart of those who / be lost in the darkness."

I found this book tremendously powerful and moving. I recommend it for anyone who cares about humanity and wants truth to be given to the reality of the world in which we live.

Stephen Karr is a library technician and poet who writes about social and environmental issues, nature, and personal observations on his life and locating himself in the world.



Cry of Humanity
Deborah L. Kelly
Silver Bow Publishing
2017

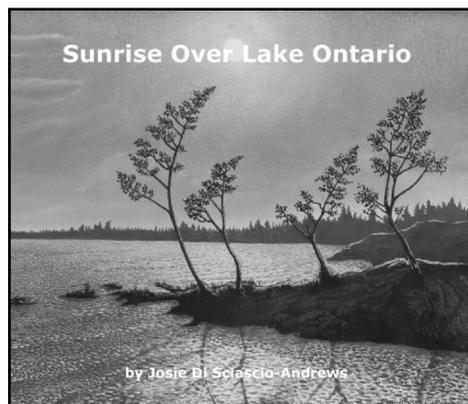


Deborah L. Kelly

SUNRISE OVER LAKE ONTARIO

Gordon Phinn

After seven volumes of poetry and two explorations in the realm of non-fiction and memoir, Josie has branched out into mixed media. Her handsome volume “Sunrise Over lake Ontario” is beautifully illustrated, in classic coffee table book manner, with her own photographs of the lake and surroundings, both urban and park-like. If the words don’t get you the images will. Her verse is honest and sincere, and although those qualities are not often praised in contemporary CanLit, unless the poet is complaining, in this context they are valuable. The community and landscape/seascape in which she has carried her incarnation onward through its journey, is carefully etched and celebrated in texts that vary from the commonplace and quotidian to the mystical and metaphysical.



Sunrise Over Lake Ontario
Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews
Espresso Bar Publishing

In essence a ‘selected and new’ collection, repeated encounters reward the reader with much heartfelt contemplations in the rhapsodic, melancholic and mystical modes.

The mystical:

We are everything and nothing all at once
...
Mind poised to merge
With the ineffable whisper
Of the mysterious in everyday things

The melancholic:

Sailboats make me sad
What,
With their virginal sails
Aimlessly wooing a passionless lake
They speak to me of loneliness.
A lifetime of it.

The rhapsodic:

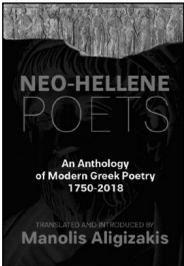
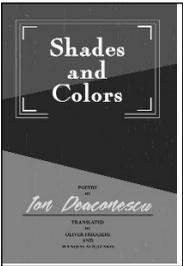
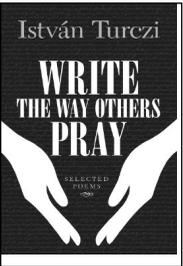
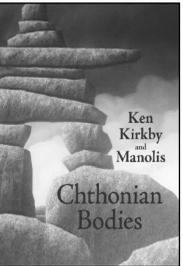
How many days have I known like this
Banal moments duping the sacredness of time
Wearing the mask of commonplace
tedium.



Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews

One arrives in the poems like a stranger, with some discomfort at the newness of it all, but one is intrigued and stays, learning to admire the subtleties in the shadings, the I-phone images unleashing their magic with every look. One takes a seat to contemplate, and slowly one absorbs the life and loves of this poet, seeing, as she says, “That I am one/ That I matter/ That I am not replaceable/ That I am not obsolete”.

Gordon Phinn, author of *Music Amuses* and *Consciousness: A Primer*, is a Canadian poet, author and poetry podcast/creator, and continues to interview top CanLit poets on his podcast.

						
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