

CPR

*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

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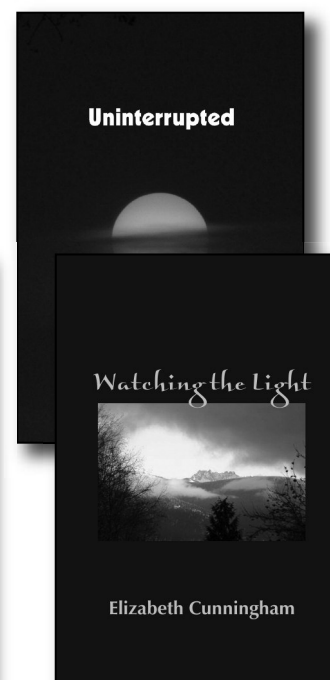
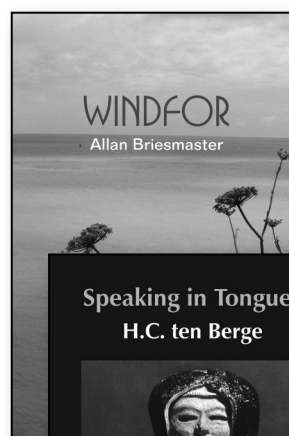
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Allan Briesmaster from WINDFOR

Going Elsewhere

One of my mother's earliest anecdotes
(cringe-worthy to a grown son when repeated)
has her doing laundry and then not finding me
in rooms or yard. In the neighbour's pasture,
there stood the diapered toddler, entranced
among the cows, almost under their hooves.

After we moved up to Great Aunt Bessie's
Victorian-gothic hilltop nursing home
came further running away. Three-year-old legs
propelled me across the broad swath of lawn
to pine-needled paths through the woods. I was found
seated happily on a log in the deep shade.

*

So then, what, if anything, was that child after?
It must essentially be what still draws me
and awaits "out there" beyond nature's charms
or the lure of adventure. Not sheer escape
from close confinement or boredom, either,
but a fresh outlet toward an unhindered view.

*

In the swift Anthropocene (a too-porous
dwelling-space thru-scanned and looped algorithmically,
all enclaves co-opted by global enterprise,
private and historic memory digitized)
one seeks a means, other than turning self-harmful,
of unmooring from surveilled GPS.

Making no permanent home anywhere earthly,
when broken off into zones of tall solitude
I shed my ill-fitted coat of identity.
As with high art heard and musical depth visioned,
an emptying-out of dubious emptiness
bodes how one once came from, then returns, someplace else.

Phases

Given all that was breathed in the air of the home,
its water, what fed us on plates and with words
from the only menu or singular script,

it's a wonder we ever develop a taste
for stranger cuisines and start to reflect
through a worldlier-flavoured dialect;

and then out of nowhere shoots the first bolt
of contrariness that, unless firmly stifled,
signals an across-the-board revolt

(perhaps the equivalent of indigestion),
which *could* clear space for flash innovation
still drawing on the familial genome –

leaving a quandary as to how far
the exotic data, taken in raw,
can bend, annul or supplant prior lore ...

amidst a flurry of random mutations
within, aligning to multiply
the fissures carried latent in the bone.

Embedded

I was thrilled when my difficult family took
day trips to the farthest ending of road
on Kodiak Island from the Naval Station
where for two years we were transiently living.

The dirt lane wound rough and narrow between
mountain and shore, edging rockfalls and cliffs,
on down past a sequence of three U-shaped bays,
to the fourth and wildest, called "Pasagshak."

The North Pacific waves rolled ashore windily.
Thunderous breakers released hissing foam
across empty breadths of volcanic-black sand.
Remote Ugak Island's peaks lay in the offing.

Soon as we got there, we combed the near beach
for the green glass floats great storms must have torn
from Japanese fishing nets: castaway trophies.
Then sat on big driftwood logs for our meal.

Nobody else ever seemed to have visited;
those floats were ours. Once, a basketball-size one,
most often softball or lemon. Far better
than the old sunken Pacific War bunker

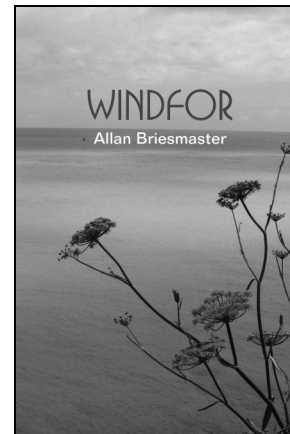
dug on a headland crest were the beds
of the fossils I wanted: showing like studs
in a grey vein slanted through brown cliff-face
and in broken boulders below. Fossil seashells,

calcified whole into smooth, chalky bone
within bluegrey stone. To get them, I swung
my trusty, balanced rock-hound's rock hammer,
splitting each out with a few careful blows.

None seemed especially handsome or weird – but
each touch brought on a feel of ancient lastingness:
the sense of some once-alive creature, stone-floated
over the eons intact in its form.

Then I'd select specimens to haul home.
And on dull days since that time, although none
remain, a transmuting memory comes
to cut, polish – and confer – layered gleams.

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6 x 9
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Allan Briesmaster is a free-lance editor and publisher. He was a founding partner in Quattro Books and currently runs his own literary press, Aeolus House. He is the author of eight books of poetry, most recently *The Long Bond: Selected and New Poems* (Guernica Editions, 2019), and he has read his work, given talks, and hosted literary events across Canada. He lives in Thornhill, Ontario.



A Connection

After the first reconnaissance – bookworm,
thick glasses; brainy, quiet – came the insight
of our commonality. You, also, set apart,
like I was ... bluntly ostracized,
shunted along the lonely isthmus
of a separate land. Demeaned
for looks, clothes, different background,
family stature; never measuring up
in areas of small concern to us
but central for those holding power.
Sports. Aggression. Swagger. Jibe.

Sharing the weight, we harboured, even so,
a stubborn self-esteem. Intuiting
that what the others labelled or construed
were not flaws of our own. Perceiving
how both, not alone, could grow and strengthen
by merely being more ourselves. – That *they*
were out of line. At once, prescient. Aware:
in years to come we would prove what we are.

gillian harding-russell *from* UNINTERRUPTED

The earth hangs askew

from the pole and roof
of the sky and that is natural
but one day the earth will do
a gymnastic flip

 heft of ice calving
off Greenland, weft of placenta
watery sliding off Antarctica
removed
and the north pole will do
an Olympic dive down
to become the

 south pole
magnetic fields reversing
and the sun's bare
eye exposed in the glare
of UV rays.
(Will we die?)

When the earth last flipped
where did the seed for the green
and the growing and the cell for the red
and blood-flowing go? Where did

it retreat, under what glacial till
under the silt of what river? Under
what iceberg inset with creosote
or grey crinoline of enlivening bacteria
at ocean black bottom?

A terrestrial history of war

Dagger tooth on scaled dermis, crested
horn on keratin shield, they battled, battled
in the palmy cradle between volcanoes
erupting landmasses chunking apart –

Gondwana and Laurasia – an ocean sprouting
sea serpents in the Bearpaw Sea growing fangs
new armies in the injuries of battles, lost or won.

Maw of hunger huge as magma
swelling mauveine blasts of smoke and sulphur
lurid rising green in twilight wreathes around
the ferny plants and coniferous trees
that pointed the way creatures inhaled
for 80 million years dissipating into the neutral air.
The sun behind a red-particle veil and
massive stench of dying flesh, the vertebraed
surviving ones less armoured, less

gargantuan in need though no less voracious,
apertures out front and back to ingest and excrete
the world, sensorial organs gathered to face what lies
ahead or to stoke a brain the oversize of
a coconut on smaller bodies: Note pathways'
double circuitry and feedback

ingenuity atop spindle-upright limbs
and leaning forearms with clever fin-
and claw-replacement fingers, when once
upon again, it was battle, battle on the lower
plains: instead of armoured reptile against
armoured reptile, it was armoured mammal
against armoured mammal, and then not bone
nor horn, not metal nor alloy, but instead

a combustive, technology-reinforced Sapiens
girded against technology-reinforced Sapiens
fighting over dividing earth patches: 'I claim X
at the treasure-navel of Earth and occupy Y'
and all the land parts are mapped in an alphabet
of names ('I own the magnetic pole and the sea
beside, with the sky attached overtop').

At times these compact ones confused
by dreams, and in the greater insecurity
of these visualizations (a dim ancestral
remembering) how to stake out
and guard a paradise implementing
greater plated and armoured
peri-cognizant robotic things
most lethal chemical and
explosive weapons, using body-shields
deadliest drones (remote-

controlled so as not to witness
the fellow gore
and discomfiting
collateral) for these Sapiens in forking upright
onto giant legs ventured into places that
in their naming, gained them.

All this Sap-activity fuelled by a fossil layer
from a green age 65 million years before
plus a few fiery breaths (after a medium
brief pause) and then...

 Sapiens' ingenuity
favouring function (somewhat) continuing
to adapt for another 100 million years

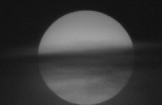
when, with margin of accumulating
error snowballing, another veil (carboniferous
combusting fossils and complicated

by forest fires following continental
drought after global heating and glacial
ice-fields evaporating sulphurous gaping
gaseous...)

 rose over the sun.

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Uninterrupted



gillian harding-russell

Regina poet, editor and reviewer **gillian harding-russell** has published in journals across Canada and her poems have been anthologized in seventeen collections. Her recent poetry collection, *In Another Air* (Radiant 2018), was shortlisted for a City of Regina Saskatchewan Book Award. Her work has been shortlisted or has won the Thomas Morton Award, gritLIT and Exile's Gwendolyn MacEwen chapbook competitions. She received a Ph.D. from the University of Saskatchewan, completing her dissertation on postmodern Canadian poetry. *Uninterrupted* is her fifth poetry collection.



The trouble was

a babel of voices
of shades and hues and intensities
vying for supremacy
on the overpopulated planet
circled with travel lines
in a scurry of populated knots
where the old order was

outweighed by changing numbers
and previous slights, though all the threads
originated from the same family tree

going back to Eve (correction: Lucy).
Please note, although a crow will snatch
a redwing child for breakfast, and the blackbird
knowing this, will dart savagely
at the overstepping crow to keep him away

from the nest, many dissenting birds, blackbirds
grackles, starlings, yellow-heads, redwings, crows
will assemble at the tilt of the planet's rotation
into a cycle of the dark to migrate together
socially wing-spaced
against a common denominator
of shared danger and, well, the killing cold.

H.C. ten Berge *from SPEAKING IN TONGUES* *translated by Pleuke Boyce*

Dança Mortal

I had wanted to hunt partridges
before the day was done.

The empty village square lies trembling in the sun

I played here in my younger years
and merrily walk down the green.

An ambush suddenly: surrounded
by high voices like a hedge

I stand transfixed, my feet nailed to the ground –

In an instant I'm disarmed
by children.

The circle goes round in a song
and helplessly I'm counted out:

*One is your skirt of water
Two is your bodice of bread
Three is for eating you later
Four is your hands are all red*

*Five 'n six and no one cares
Settle down and say your prayers
For you are dead!*

Heat soils the body, skin turns
to lead in the afternoon sun.

Flies give the eye-sockets of a cadaver
a coppery sheen.

It's already later than I thought:

I had wanted to hunt partridges
before the day was done.

(1977)

Dancemaster Death (Lübeck 2)

Eastward the plains,
Westward the sea.
Horsemen at the borders,
Ships run aground in flight.
Fra Pole Artick blows the ice wind
Over the land; a whip catches

Blackening flesh. Cold eats
Away at hides and houses.
Thus the winter gets us
In its grip again.
The lice crawl deeper
Into hair.

Tender temptations lure me
Inside the walls
Where wood fires smoke
And bread burns on the grate.
'O vrou, mit di ik danssen beghinne' – *
Between fish, skinned hares and quails

You are no princess anymore
But a nameless creature
Who in the glow of the last pleasure
Forgot the final hour.
I peddle everything here, bear
On my back the wares of death.

You say: *Ik wuste nicht dattu hir werst.* **
I take your hand: you could have known.
See the choral dance that's leaving town,
Hear the starving customer who smells
The bread and knocks, but shuddering
Takes to his heels.

Inside: extinguished fires
And stiffened bodies.
The terror reign of cold and fever.
Outside: sable and hoof beats,
Faraway horsemen hurrying eastward
Through a grey dawn.

* 'Oh, woman with you I start to dance'
** *I didn't know that you were here*

[2013]

The Hour Glass

Never a dancer
of tango or twist
you looked like death out of Lübeck, Ypres, Berlin,
wrote a friend from days gone by.
Everything was said, the last questions
were not eluded either.
What did we amount to? Less than nothing
we were in spite of that not all that bad.
Imagination brought us the idea
of un-becoming, clear word
that proved impossible to grasp.

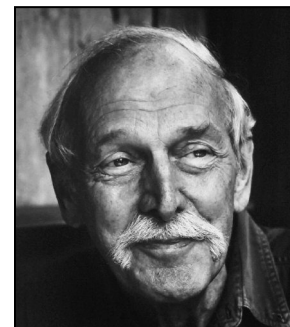
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Speaking in Tongues
H.C. ten Berge



Selected Poems
Translated by Pleuke Boyce
With an Afterword by Breyten Breytenbach

H.C. ten Berge was born in 1938 in Alkmaar, the Netherlands. One of Holland's most important poets, he is the author of a large body of work that includes not only poetry but also novels, novellas, essays and translations. Apart from translating from modern languages, he collected and translated poetry and myths of the Aztecs, Inuit, Eastern Siberian Peoples and First Nations of the Pacific Northwest. He has received many awards for his work, including the most important and prestigious oeuvre prize in the Netherlands, the P.C. Hooft Award.



Pleuke Boyce was born and grew up in the Netherlands and now lives on Vancouver Island. She received the James S. Holmes Award from the Translation Center at Columbia University for her translations of work by Dutch poet Gerrit Achterberg: *But this Land has no End - Selected Poems*. Her translations into Dutch include seven books by Alice Munro.

We imagined
the living growing rigid, while death
was already on its way, out of the church,
up the street, into the bar,
where guests and revellers like young dogs
drank to hardcore partying,
danced body to body
and blissed out became entwined with one another.
Fleshy lips sucked ears, mouths, nipples.
Life should be celebrated
and the barrel emptied.

It was over, the last call
had already sounded, the hour glass
was running out.

High time to depart.

Still kissing they were stripped of flesh
and done away with, sinking first into deep sleep,
then waking as crestfallen skeletons

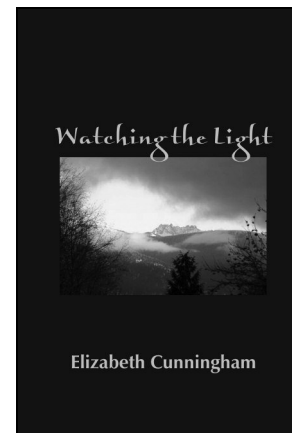
in a close dance with death.

[2016]

Elizabeth Cunningham

from WATCHING THE LIGHT

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\$25.95
6 x 9



The Soul of Venice

Among swarms of restless humanity,
we enter Venice,
city of dazzle-palaces
and mazes of furtive streets.

Arching bridges of web-like dexterity
span the veins of the venerable city.
She has split the hearts of eons of lost travelers
as she floats in her eerie light of mirage.

Phantoms, cloaked in mystery
and the masks of centuries,
lurk in murky corners,
whispering unrelenting desires.

The startling gleam of gothic facades
in every open piazza
proclaims ostentatious praises
of wealth long gone.

Along sinuous canals,
we meet the specters of the night.
They demand to know the nature of our presence
as their city sinks and their palaces crumble.

We plead ignorance,
innocence, and reverence,
as have millions before us,
shirking the haunting questions.

Our eerie hosts lead us
to the Bridge of Sighs,
prison and palace on either hand.
Together, we cross the threshold of the Cathedral.

Within its vaulted cavern,
entranced by millions of hand-laid stars,
we find at last
the dark and glimmering soul of Venice.

Cinque Terre

There are places in this world,
like a dew-dazzled web in the first light of day,
that create patterns of iridescence
you can never quite believe.

Ancient villas cling
to hand-terraced tracts
where dry-stone walls
endure with tenacity.

As you wind from path to path,
sunlit vistas weave a dappled shawl
of rosemary, rock rose, and lavender,
lulling the wanderer to dreaming.

Amble from town to town,
and perch upon pathway walls
like the green, chirping finches
that flit between the villages.

Drowsy boats
wait for bold fishermen far below,
where the wild sea
gouges clefts between steep cliffs.

Secretly, the sensuous trails
meander deep into the crooning mountains.
There a heart of lava broods,
and the soul of the sea is swaying.

Before long, torrential rains
will tear away the paths of brilliant tracery,
and the tender threads that link the dreaming villages
will all be washed away.

The Wall of Lucca

The ancient wall of Lucca
is wide, round, and endless.
It rises from the fertile hills of Tuscany
like a lover on a sleepy summer morning.

Ancient defense, yet never used in war,
the circling city wall was wrought
by an architect of trust
in a dangerous time.

We cycle peacefully along the wall,
peering like roaming migrants
over hand-hewn roofs
and labyrinths of narrow streets.

Viewing havens of rest and worship,
we glean but a glimmer
of thousands of lives
we will never know.

Today, we complete
the timeless circuit.
Tomorrow, Lucca will wake without us,
as if we had never been.

Born in Toronto, **Elizabeth Cunningham** moved to Eden Mills, near Guelph, with her three children and husband for a teaching position in the 90's, Elizabeth volunteered for many years at the Eden Mills Writer's Festival where eventually she read her own poetry after winning first prize in the literary competition at that event in 2015. This award encouraged her to keep working towards publishing this collection of poetry. Now residing in Nelson, B.C. with composer Doug Jamieson, her partner for over 40 years, Elizabeth spends her time exploring the mountains, playing with her grandchildren, writing, teaching, photography, music, and enjoying her practice as an Expressive Arts Therapist.



Travelling Together

for Doug Jamieson

We have rambled along many roads,
randomly, or with purpose,
meandering slowly through mountains
or driving persistently down highways;
always insistent in our return.

At the foot bridges of the canals of Venice,
we waited for each other on one side,
and then the other,
watching the way the water flowed below us
at its own pace.

Water is constant in our lives,
yet always moving.
Like the great lake beneath the lumbering ferries
ploughing their way to our Island home.

All the waters we have known
ambled and surged,
but were steadfast.

We have travelled
so much of this world together.
Wherever we have yet to wander,
we will wait for each other
until there is no other place to go.

THE HALF LIFE

Karen Shenfeld

If you pick up Rogers Greenwald's latest collection of poetry and peruse its opening pages, you'll come across the term, "half-life," nine times. *The Half-Life* is the title of the book and forms part of the title of its introductory poem. It appears inside that first poem, too, and in the book's long, meditative penultimate piece. Derived from the field of physics, "half-life" is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as "the time taken for half of the atoms in a radioactive material to undergo decay." Greenwald references the term to speak to us about the nature of sorrow. "The Half-Life of Sorrow," he says—with the poem's title doubling as its opening line—"is about five years." A few lines further on, he concludes:

The half-life isn't hard
to understand.
It means the sorrow
will be half gone in five years,
what's left will then take five again
to diminish by half.
So it will never stop flashing
in your life, though your life
will stop it eventually.

Sorrow indeed underlies many of the poems in *The Half-Life*, as do feelings of loss, longing, and alienation.

T.S. Eliot begins his famous love song with that flamboyant evocation of "a patient etherized upon a table"; in "Sliding Doors," which opens book's first section, Greenwald leads us through a hospital's automatic doors.

Her body rolls into your dream that opens for it
like the hospital's automatic doors
where you were getting some air—but an alarm went
off they're all running could you
move please, go sit in that room.
"Nice that they run."

Here, and in other pieces, Greenwald eschews the signposts of language. He leaves out commas, periods, question marks, capital letters, and quotation marks. He consciously crafts a poetry of the unconscious that mimics the workings of memories and dreams—in which objects may be symbolic and events happen out of rational order, collide, reoccur, contradict, appear connected or disconnected to our lived lives.

To steal lines from several of his works, Greenwald's poetry arises from "a space / where allegory and psyche embrace."; where the poet "drift[s] back // to song singing sung of resting in the half- // light or dark..."; where he sits "half hearing / music" that he "can't really catch the feelings or intentions of"; or crosses a plateau, each foot of which dwarfs his age "with a half-life whose mirrored image in the black lake / is an endless mating of clouds..." ; Reading *The Half-Life* half locked down in my house, distanced from family and friends, my nights coloured by pandemic mares, the book had, for me, an additional, unintended resonance.

What is the wellspring of the poet's sorrow, a sorrow that, like a sword, runs through his "halved life / that won't heal"? Greenwald is direct: It's love — the bidden or unbidden recollections of a lost love, a love that was thwarted before it ever came to fruition. "My children don't believe in me", Greenwald declares in "Open Water," "because I lost their mother / before she could be their mother". In dreaming and remembering this love (or possibly several loves) the poet is, by turns, mournful, wistful, matter-of-fact, and, at times, sardonic and angry. He ends his poem, "Giving," with:

She gave me a life
and took it back.
I gave her a life;



The Half-Life
Roger Greenwald
Tiger Bark Press, 2020

she took it with her.
Thanks, she said.

Not all of the poems of *The Half-Life* are, however, melancholic. "Body Dreams," for example, is culminated by an ecstatic verse with erotically charged imagery inspired by the lyrics of rhythm and blues:

We hold our bodies; mine shakes.
It shakes and shakes till my seed
is making dry music like a gourd's.
Seed and language, mine and hers,
deepest flesh I have. No end to
shake and sing while the blood goes.

A few pages later on, the lines in the poem, "1 A-M One Me," hurry across the page, mirroring the whispered words of a lover approaching climax: "your body that is through and through your words, body of words / that is body, body of body that is words that are breathing you." Music also offers the poet consolation, and he references traditional folk songs, Neil Young, an Indian raga, Mozart, and Bach.

The Half-Life is divided into three sections: the first dream-filled "Body Dreams"; "Home on the Range," containing poems rooted in Toronto; and "Open Water," which gathers together travel-related poems, mainly set in Scandinavia. The section divisions offer clues to the poet's biography: American-born Roger Greenwald moved to Toronto in the late 1960s, where he obtained a Ph.D from, then taught at the University of Toronto, I first encountered him, there, in the late 1970s, leading a poetry workshop for students and non-students alike at Innis College. A young, not-yet-famous Anne Michaels was also inspiringly in attendance.

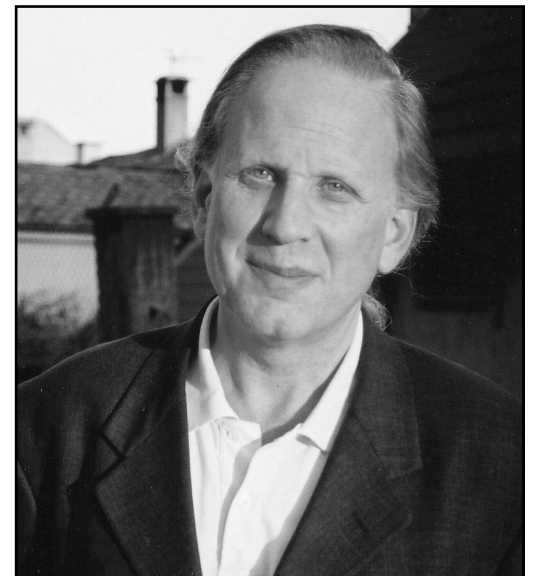
Since that time, he has published two previous books of poetry and has twice won the CBC Literary Award (once for poetry and once for travel writing) and the Gwendolyn MacEwen Poetry Award. He has also won numerous international awards for his many translations of Swedish and Norwegian poetry and fiction. Several poems in *The Half-Life* allude to Greenwald's work as a translator. In "Actions and Answers," the poet, trying to remember the details of a dream, struggles to know what language he is reading, even though he has understood the meaning of the words.

I appreciated *The Half-Life* for its authenticity of voice and depth of emotion. Quoting a friend named Sarita in "Relief," the first poem in the book's final section, Greenwald writes,

Later she says, Stop I can't
stand it. I can't
stand that any doubted
whether to be with you.

Reading those lines, I wanted to call the poet up to wish him well, to tell him that he'll surely find love again to mitigate the sorrow.

Karen Shenfeld's most recent book of poetry is *To Measure the World*. She is currently writing a screenplay that has been optioned by the director, Bruce McDonald.



Roger Greenwald
Photo by Alf Magne Heskja

Randy Kohan

from WHEN CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT

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Now Available

Countries of one

*But even the very hairs of your head
are all numbered.*

~ Luke 12:7

I am a country of one:
I hunger, hurt;
sometimes I'm heartened, sometimes not;

mostly defenseless, I'm bludgeoned
speechless
from time to time.

Yet I am a branch
no arborist can remove
with the teeth of his grinding saw.

The free wind blows
here, through our hair
caresses our faces and ears...

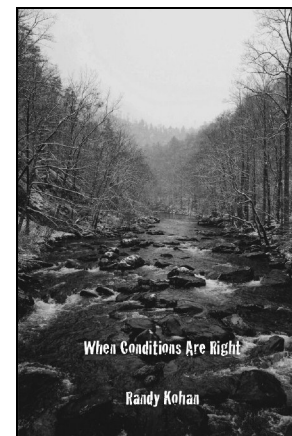
I come from a place
of accounted-for ones
of sparrows, snowflakes, strands of hair.

Quietly I open my arms, invite
the blade of beauty to plunge
this heart of contradictions

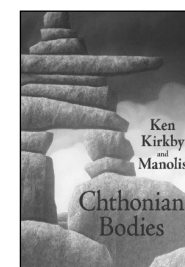
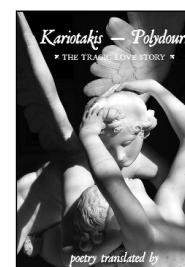
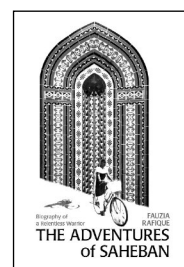
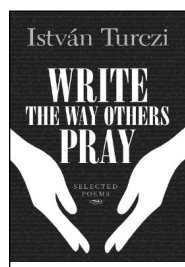
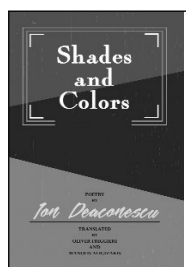
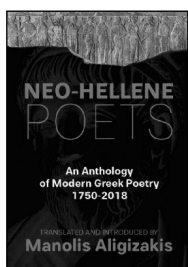
plunge this devoted, ambivalent heart
again and again and again; accept
what the piercing wounds let in.

I am a country of one
holding out
my hand...

O for a fresh water cold mountain stream!
A match!
And words of tinder to keep us warm!



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. 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.



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