

CPR

*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

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Georgina Montgomery



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P.W. Bridgman from IDIOLECT

Day 29

“If he makes it through the first 30 days following the procedure, he should have a few more years,” the surgeon had said.

My father was a man of no vanities,
yet a small one asserted itself
on what we couldn't know then
was his last day. The 29th day.
A Sunday.

We had wheeled him out into the afternoon sun,
manoeuvred around the hospital grounds,
then eagerly watched later as he ate a hearty soup
after having gone days with little appetite.

There had been wry humour, some fun.
Small triumphs.
When anxious for reassurance,
one reaches for it wherever one can find it.

We prepared to leave.
Not wanting to be a bother, nevertheless,
he allowed himself to wonder aloud:
Might we give him a haircut?

We obliged him, of course,
with our untrained hands,
his comb, some nervous giggles
and wonky bandage scissors
borrowed from the nursing station.

My father was not a fastidious man.
Nevertheless, as we stood back and admired our work,
there came a gentle reminder:
“Don't forget the eyebrows.”

After the drive and ferry trip home,
we tumbled into bed, relieved,
long after midnight but not long before
the call.

These many years later,
Dad, we haven't

forgotten your eyebrows.

Ode to Odean (On the Sale of the Haunted Bookshop)

(For Odean Long)

She's a reader's bookseller:
old school, the real thing; indeed,
a reader's reader.
A deep thinker.

And lately she's sold her shop.

For this, with some effort,
I can
almost
forgive her.

Odean's been an appraiser of books.
She carries on as an appraiser of books.
Little wonder: she's a library incarnate.
What university would let her slip through
its fingers?

And she's been an appraiser too, has Odean,
of those who slip through the doors of The Haunted.
She examines them discreetly through her loupe.

Mannerly and kind to all, she nevertheless
can sort out the chalk from the cheese:
those who think Rod McKuen is a poet
from those who know
in their minds and on their pulses
that he isn't.

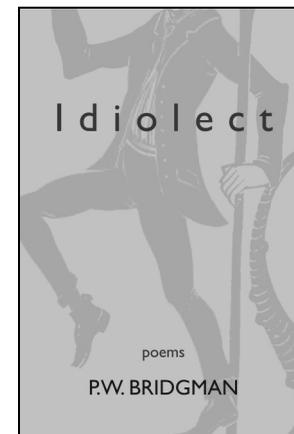
Books are serious business.
Odean's book business was a serious business.

Kindly, discerning and wise,
a “dear” as my mother
would certainly have said.
An old-fashioned word, that:
“dear”.
The highest honour my mother could bestow.
Few qualified.

Alas, they never met.

Shine on, dear Odean.

Ekstasis Editions
ISBN 978-1-77171-400-6
Poetry
69 pages
6 x 9
\$23.95



P.W. Bridgman writes from Vancouver, Canada. He has previously published two books of short fiction—a selection of short stories entitled *Standing at an Angle to My Age* (Libros Libertad) in 2013, and a selection of short stories and flash fiction entitled *The Four-Faced Liar* (Ekstasis Editions) in 2021. His first collection of poems, entitled *A Lamb*, appeared under the Ekstasis Editions imprint in 2018.



Thank You Very Much*

For Hugh Fraser

He closed almost every show with that tune.
It was so like him.
After giving us more than we ever knew
could be coaxed from a piano
or a trombone...
he thanked us.

God, the energy of the man.
Tireless. Tireless and talented
beyond all imagining.
A wild and gentle genius.

Goodbye, old friend.
This just shouldn't be.

“Thank you” hardly does it, Hugh,
but then who am I
to improve on your words?
So, old friend—

Thank you very much.

* Canadian jazz legend Hugh Fraser died on June 17, 2020 at the age of 62. A recording of his composition, “Thank You Very Much”, from his 2004 album *Bonehenge*, is available on YouTube.

Rhonda Batchelor from ALLOW ME

Fire

I burn through
the last of the winter wood
in a day-long fire
of selfish proportion,
no one to admire its glory
but me and a tabby,
green eyes half shut.

Beyond single-pane
windows, cedar boughs droop
in chimney smoke and rain.
There must be resin in this log
to make it blaze like a saint,
brief and fierce.
Spring so far away.

Lesson at the Window

A robin, sated by the ripe fermented
berries of the mountain ash,
staggers drunkenly on the grass.
Fair game
in the eyes of the cat.

The Bidding

Find me,
when you're lost in my neighbourhood.
I'll be the one
in her garden swing as the sun sets, waiting
to set you straight.

Find me
at the airport on a long layover. I'll be
in the bar.

Find me
in front of a Rothko in the
museum of modern art.
Recognize the spell and
breathe for me.

Find me
at the market, at a
bus stop, in a corridor or queue.
Be there beside me
when I wake.

Find me.
I can't find you.

Sideways

Same horizon, different cloud.
Root-bound but recently repotted

flowers on the deck look
shocked by this chance to grow—

down, up, sideways—even though
nothing much has changed but their

earth and a minor lift towards heaven.
Salmon pink geraniums remain salmon pink.

Slow

One lunch, one movie, one
dinner and drinks. Our talk circled,
making us think about lost things,
lovers who'd left, things that hadn't
worked out no matter
how much time was spent.
Now life was coursing by and
where were we, you and I, but
mid-river and tired,
though not yet willing to let go.

We talked and said maybe
it was better to take it slow.

It was September that night
we walked the back lanes
under stars and the stubborn leaves.
For all my talk, I wanted nothing more
than your hands on my face,
lips on my lips, in our first
tentative kiss. No past,
just this: in the dark, leaves struggled,
then let go. One by one, falling
too fast to go slow.

Ekstasis Editions
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Poetry
84 pages
6 x 9
\$23.95
Now Available

Allow Me



Poems 2000-2020

Rhonda Batchelor

Rhonda Batchelor has worked in and around publishing, as a writer, editor, publisher, bookseller and consultant, since 1977. From 1990 to 1997 she and her late husband, the poet Charles Lillard operated Reference West, a small literary press publishing over 100 chapbooks of poetry and short fiction by some of Canada's finest writers. Her own poetry titles include *Bearings* (Brick Books), *Interpreting Silence* and *Weather Report* (Beach Holme Publishers). Born in Brantford, Ontario, Rhonda has lived on Vancouver Island since 1971 and holds a BFA from The University of Victoria.



McHugh's

Belfast Saturday night
the noise in McHugh's amplified
by exuberance and the sheer number
of Ulster voices raised and close
as the Bushmilling bodies pressed
to the bar. Lager and porter flow like
the Lagan past Waterfront Hall.

Another round, another, the floor wet with spill, the air
full of smoke and sound.
Young men with gel in their hair,
rings in their ears
shout into phones and all the while
the city's famous son sings out—

And you came back home to Belfast...

The noise in McHugh's is so huge
I can't make myself heard,
so I point to the drink I want.
The barman nods, takes my money.
Trying not to spill, I claim
a bit of wall and don't even try
to join in the *craic*. Let this rogue wave wash over me—

Let it run all over me.

Pasquale Verdicchio

from ONLY YOU

Where is the place where you are?

What does a young boy see
Through one eye
On the margins of the world.
Keeping watch
From a distance
Makes it feel like abandonment.
His absence follows me
Sits with me
Eats with me
Rests with me after a long day.
What could I say
That might contradict
My absence to let him know
That I am there with him
When he sleeps
When he walks
When he weeps.

Those are not

Those are not falling stars
They are meteors
And tonight is the best shower
Ever, so the say.

One catch, the skies are smoke.
Can't see a thing
Through the thickness
That has spread over here
From interior forest fires.

Somewhere above that smoke
There are stars
More than you will ever see
In the glare of a city
But those others are not falling
Stars, are something else
Are meteors headed straight
Toward us with the surprise
That smoke affords their approach.

Down the slope

I do not want to know
About this anymore.
I am ready to leave.
I am not here anymore.
I'm still here.
I get up and feel dizzy
But not sure if it's my age
Or this aging situation
Same as when I wake up
In the middle of the night
And thoughts start rolling
That kind of vertigo.
Is it my age or
My aging thoughts,
And the pattern repeats.
Another out of body experience
Spinning out the window
Down the slope and
To the beach
I swear I haven't touched a drop
In a while now. I just don't
Want to know about this
Any more.

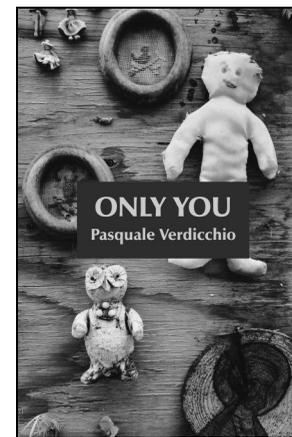
Below in canyons

J points to snow
Far off on peaks
Below in canyons
Look, snow, he shouts
Gleeful and delighted
At this marvel
That he has only
Imagined and heard about
And now sees it
Far off on peaks
Below in canyons
A mirage of imagination.

Of youth

What are those
He asks of a flowering shrub;
Flowers, I say
With the myopic imagination
Of age;
Butterflies, he says
With the wonder
Of youth.

Ekstasis Editions
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Poetry
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6 x 9
\$23.95
Now Available



Pasquale Verdicchio is an Italian Canadian poet, critic and translator teaching in the US at UCSD. Born in Naples, Italy, he moved to Vancouver BC in the late 60s. As a poet, translator, and essayist, he has published translations of Pasolini, Merini, Caproni, Porta, and Gramsci. He is the author of *Devils in Paradise: Writings on Post-Emigrant Cultures* and the poetry collection *The House Is Past, Passenger: Selected Poems* (Porta, Antonio and Pasquale Verdicchio, 2000) and *The Wall of the Earth* (Caproni, Giorgio and Pasquale Verdicchio, 1992).



Sense of support

Hold my hand
I have waited for you
to learn to grasp
the sense of support.

Walk ahead
I have waited for you
to guide me toward
a more direct manner
to know the world.

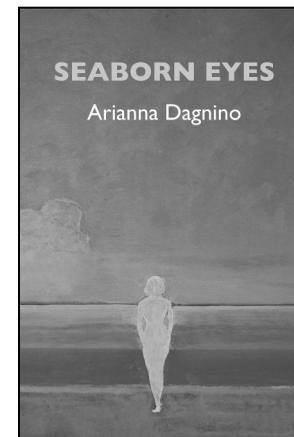
Let me look
in your eyes
I have waited for
your gaze to keep
memory from fading.

I have waited
and waited,
learned patience,
learned that dreams
can reveal
what language
can only hint at,
and in your broken syntax
I hear my own story told.

Arianna Dagnino

from SEABORN EYES

Ekstasis Editions
ISBN 978-1-77171-450-1
Poetry
56 Pages
\$23.95
6 x 9



Agathis Robusta

They cut me out.
to the brink of extinction.

They say,
I do not perform well in plantations.
I say,
I cherish the freedom borne by the southern seas.

It's in my name: *robusta*, the hardy one.
I would rather die than
being raised in captivity.

Now they leave me alone.

At Sea

Is this wind taking you away
far enough, son?
"I feel its power," you answer
in your salty smile,
eyes fixed onto
the unending seascape.
The keel rides over the blueness
before crashing onto the next hurdle.

Once we were
tritons and mermaids.
We tasted your same freedom
before letting you drink of it
from an opal shell.

You will soon be
on your own,
on that small hull
of yourself.

Was our teaching
too softy sandy?
too harshly rough?
Too much of this, too much of that...

Don't torment yourself
with our adults' reservations.
Take instead
the steady wind,
son of the seas,
and don't look back.

Blue Moon

If only,
just once,
she could get out of herself
and cling,
like sailors do,
to her magic pallor.

Camouflage

One day,
we shall have
interchangeable skins,
choose our outer layers
according to our
moods and moons,
blues and hopes,
friends and foes.

One day,
we shall dive in the sea
wearing silvery scales,
enjoy the rainbow
wrapped in translucent film.

One day,
we shall be
furry,
spiky,
covered in silicon.

One day,
shall we feel more
at home?
equal?
human?

Divinations

Visited by the Muse,
she glances at
spirals floating
in the skies,
bridges launched across
infinite lines of flight,
pyramids hovering over
distant planets' oceans.

The same symbols of power
for intergalactic elites.

Arianna Dagnino is a writer, researcher, and literary translator of Italian origin based in Vancouver. She is the author of *The Afrikaner* (Guernica Eds.), a post-apartheid novel inspired by the five years she spent in South Africa working as an international reporter for the Italian press, and currently lectures in Italian Studies at the University of British Columbia. For over 20 years she has worked as an independent journalist, travel writer, editorial consultant and literary translator (English/Italian, French/Italian) for major Italian publishing houses. She has published several books, including *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility* (Purdue UP, 2015) and *I nuovi nomadi* (*New Nomads*; Castevecchi, 1996), a short treatise on the emergence of a neo-nomadic lifestyle and worldview.



Dry Seas

We lay bare under the scorching sun.

On the parched land of the ancestors,
our thirst is unquenchable.

After having drained us,
you go in search of your lost souls.

Your destiny is in our geography.

Dumb Love

A muted rock
I was asked
to become.

In the blackout imposed
by an imperious love,
the goddess remains silent.

HAIKU IN CANADA

Joel Robertson-Taylor

Haiku is poetry in form but attempts more with less. Perhaps it makes itself to be a category of its own, being like a Zen reflection as much as an art, Haiku's focus on simplicity and the "now" within a particular place is the quintessential quality that sets it apart. Terry Ann Carter explains this and gives her own reflection on the form in *Haiku in Canada: History, Poetry, Memoir* which is a focused attempt to introduce Canadian haiku to a broader readership.

Carter's book is primarily a history and reflection on haiku. There is a reverence for the form in her careful chronicling of haiku history, and an intimate reflection on having been there though much of its growth. Canadian haiku is still young, though according to Carter, is world-class. And despite this and the numerous fine examples of haiku in her book, the form, broadly, is under appreciated in Canada outside of the small yet devout community of haiku writers across the country.

Perhaps this is because haiku is misunderstood. Note that haiku is not *always* a three lined poem with lines of five, seven, and five syllables respectively, as is taught in grade school. According to Carter, three lines defines the *essence* of haiku without placing rigid boundaries on the structure:

*the moon
not quite full
but full enough*

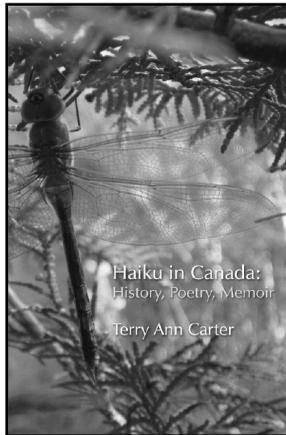
-Diana E. Cox

To be exact, haiku is traditionally thought of as a three-lined, 17 syllable poem. And while there are "ideal" elements of traditional haiku (these are: referring to a specific event, capturing the present moment; objective tone in observation; avoiding poetic devices) Carter writes that the form like any other is subject to experimentation and contemplation. More to the fact that not all haikus pattern the same is that the form is native to another language, and thus, like it, its set of rules are translations. If the very best specimens of Japanese haiku are translated into English, they'll not likely fit the 17 syllable confinement. As well, syllables are counted differently in Japanese than in English. A 17 syllable poem in Japanese would have half as many in English. In exposition on the *way* of haiku, Carter writes: "...a 17 syllable English haiku will seem inordinately long to the Japanese reader. As a result, many English haikuists try to write with as few syllables as possible to capture more accurately the spirit of the shorter Japanese version."

Haiku in Canada situates much of Canadian haiku history among a handful of central figures who helped to shape its growth. With a focus on history, for what the piece lacks in narrative it makes up for in impressive detail and recall. Carter highlights the important, if unfortunate, genesis of Canadian haiku. These might have been the first haikus—those written by prisoners of Japanese internment camps in British Columbia. Carter also notes the first known collection of haiku published in Canada (1965) and mentions Leonard Cohen's Haiku-like poetry in his *The Spice Box of Earth* (1961) which was likely the first haiku-esque poem published by a mainstream Canadian poet. Not long after all of this, the first known collection of haiku in Canada was published in 1965. The formation of the Haiku Society of Canada and a handful of haiku-focused publications then followed suit, and helped bridge the writer to reader.

Largely structured like a history book in its exposition, example, exposition, and figure format, Carter adds charm through memoir. This history Carter provides is one of research interwoven with her own thoughts before she closes with a simple reflection on her developments and achievements as a writer.

It becomes clear in *Haiku in Canada* that Carter (and her contemporaries) think of haiku as something more than a form. Quoting Eric Amann, one of the influential members of the early haiku community: "A problem for the Western reader, therefore, is not to find the hidden meaning, the 'symbolic significance' of a haiku, for there is none, but to re-convert the images of a haiku into his own institutions. And the



***Haiku in Canada:
History, Poetry,
Memoir***

Terry Ann Carter
Ekstasis, 2020



Terry Ann Carter

answer to that lies in the art of reading haiku."

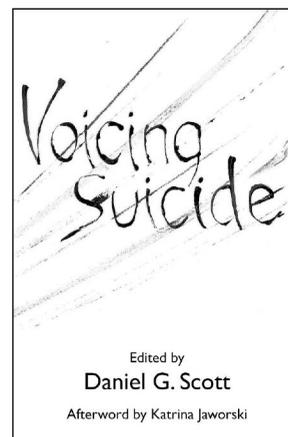
And it may not be possible to appreciate this until one reads through hundreds of syllables. Fortunately Carter includes a great deal of haiku from many respected Canadian haiku writers. Some are which are simply delightful such as this one of the two poems that Jacqueline Pearce won the first League of Canadian Poets haiku contest with:

*after the rain
my daughter jumps into
each piece of sky*

- Jacqueline Pearce

Carter's open adoration for the growth of haiku in Canada should be met with an equal appreciation or a curiosity about the unique form. There is a special relevance it has today. Haiku's precise, terse style makes it a peaceful combatant to the chatter of infinite scroll content — not something all together opposite to poetry, but adamant in intent. And that's what makes it a particularly powerful form for this era. Carter's recent work adds to this growing body of Canadian work, detailing its importance to her and the whole of Canadian poetry.

Joel Robertson-Taylor was the recipient of the 2018 Canadian University Newspaper Editor award of the year. His previous review in PPRB was *Two Roads Home*.



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Deborah L. Kelly from GLASS HOUSES

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Broken People

Plastic mall filled with
glittering baubles catching
the eyes of broken people;

filling the empty places;
those of longing and a gentle,
anguished sorrow which ebbs
upon their shore.

They weep because of our confusion
through this great calamity
we have created.

*Where do we go from here?
Are we doomed to extinction?
What has happened?*

We continue to perpetuate vicious
cycles of hatred and war.

There is so much more we are missing!

Transcend

A tree: strong, vibrant, alive!
Great strength, yet they choose
peace in all their ways.

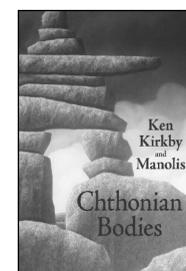
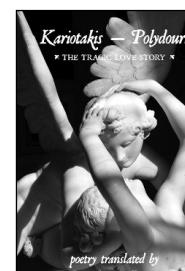
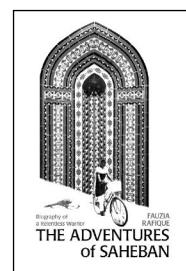
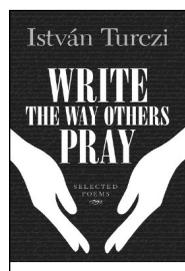
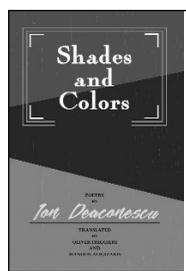
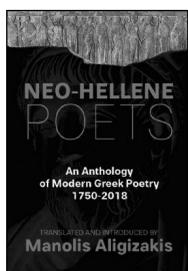
*They stand silently; witnesses to the foibles
of humanity.*

Blinders; so we see not those things
we find upsetting.

We *must* look at them; let ourselves
feel all the brokenness we have come to.

In order to transcend, we must mend.

Deborah Kelly has been writing poetry for more than 40 years. Having found poetry in her teenage years, she discovered it helped her to cope with the conditions around her during her youth. An award winning poet and short story writer, she lives in the beautiful forests, edging on the Land of the Midnight Sun, in Prince George, BC. It is here, *Deborah* spends her time writing, gardening, and breathing in the delights of her beautiful grandchildren. *Glass Houses* is Deborah's sixth book of poetry.



Neo-Hellene Poets

translated by
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