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*Resuscitating the art
of Canadian poetry*

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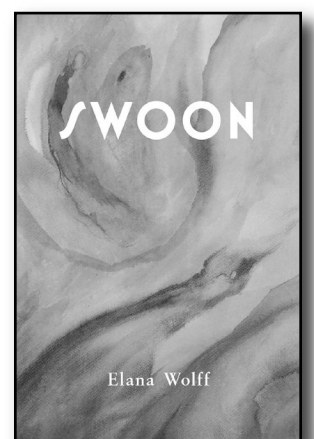
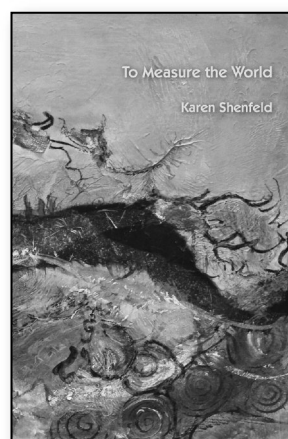
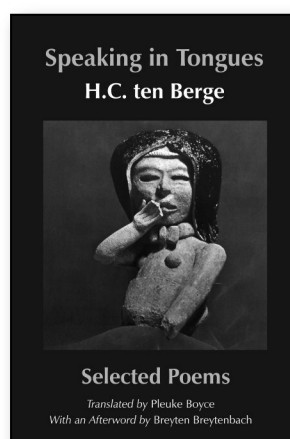
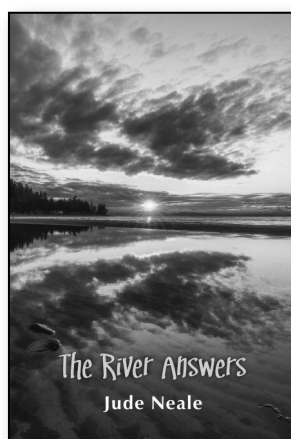
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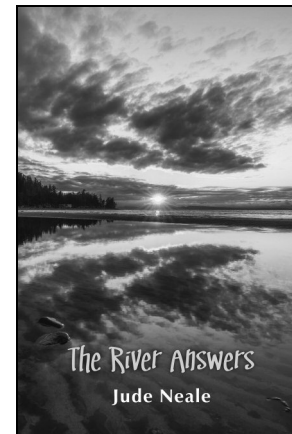
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Jude Neale

from THE RIVER ANSWERS

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Jude Neale is a Canadian poet, mentor, educator, opera singer and spoken word performer. She has published eight collections of poetry, including *A Quiet Coming of Light* (Leaf Press, 2014), *Splendid in its Silence*, which won the SPM Publications (London) Poetry Book Competition and was published there in April 2017, *Cantata in Two Voices* (Ekstasis Editions, 2018, with Bonnie Nish), *A Blooming* (Ekstasis Editions, 2019), and *Impromptu* (Ekstasis Editions, 2020). She has been a winner in competitions featuring flash fiction and short stories and was a finalist for The Pat Lowther award. Her poetry was finalist for the Gregory O'Donoghue Poetry Prize in Ireland. Jude believes that her writing should move, elevate, and illuminate.

Everything was familiar.

From the thin black crack
on the ceiling,

to the brown braided carpet
where my pink fuzzy slippers

waited for morning.

This Nanaimo home
held my family that swelled
and was love happy.

I lay sleepily letting
my fathers' words
fill my head with awe.

Darkness spread
over the bed, and slipped
under the door.

The clock chimed
in the kitchen.

then my father
kissed our brows
and slipped quietly

out of the hushed
and somnolent room.

The River Answers

I would pin your memory
to the river, Nana,
to make you stay.

You flash your quicksilver
smile at the camera,

But what did you see
beyond the lens?

Were the mountains spruce-blue
and the water roiling
at the confluence?

Did you stop to see
the dragonfly hover
over the rock,

then lift off,
a blur of cobalt
and green?

Did your tongue gladden
at the small wild berries

that filled the bushes
with a glazed purple hue?

Did you gasp at the sound
of your own velvet voice

returning back
and back again

from canyons above?

Did you smell the coming
of the quenching rain,

which soothed the sweltering heat
of a July afternoon in the Rockies.

You were sap-happy in summer,

grateful for the abundant
possibilities laid before you

at your table of plenty.

The river remembers,

me standing behind you,
following your life like a map.

Small Gifts

The ceiling I stared at
was the cream of tulips.

I lay in my bunk listening
to the true stories

that came from
my young fathers lips.

He spoke of Russia
and breadlines,

and I squeezed my eyes
shut to see them too.

The filigreed oak chair
sat in the corner,
below the blackboard,

where we had each printed
our names and claimed
this room for our very own.

He brushed the yellowed linoleum
with the sole of his shoes.

And they slid
and squeaked,
against the newly
polished floor.

On the wallpaper
floated green teapots
and pink roses.

I had peeled some off
in a secret space,
beside my bed,

hoping to see
what lay beneath.

In the corner,
by the window
was my baby
brother's crib.

He slept in the beam
of moonlight,

and was outlined
in a wash of silver.

My father filled
the small bedroom
with his story
and careless jokes.

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

Three Metamorphoses

En Toute Candeur

Myrrha's fate

That his gaze from the beginning took my breath away,
Made me afraid of death and sick of life.

Nothing held me back, she said,
Nothing could have stopped me:
Where the love, there the eye.

As if the words themselves bolstered her senses,
And she that night struck him with blindness,
At the place where she was standing then
Brought him with date wine and sweet scents to ecstasy.
And how she standing where she stood
Was lost and he who drank
Absorbed her and defiled her irreparably.

That he more than once that night
Refound himself in me, she said
Bestowed shudderings of triumph –
Until he, yet before the break of day
Made light and saw me in all innocence.

The ground gave way under my feet.
How murderous rage chased lust away,
How he drove me off,
And I, unclothed, fled in great haste,
Losing my face; dragging myself along, forever slower,
heavier,
Soon without hands, my skin already wooden, the toes
(with roots)
Digging themselves into the earth.

In short, the story of a flight that gets bogged down.

And that since then something grows deep inside me,
A fruit, still unborn and unwritten, something
Adorable perhaps, a redeemed desire
That in the twilight of my body
Unfolds, nearly breaks me
As I forever deeper root into the earth.

No father who will catch my tears
Nor smell the blood track of his fallen angel.

Ovid, Metamorphoses, X, 298-518

The Enchanted Ship

The adventures of Acoetes, told by himself to Pentheus the Cruel

Not to Naxos?
Naxos lay elsewhere and behind us.
The islands came no closer.

A kidnapped boy, the sleepy haul
of greedy mates.
Derisive laughter when I said:
‘There is a god in him,
Though I do not know which god.’

The sun spilled light upon the water.
And I, Acoetes, stood there, and the god
Stood there beside me, the aftertaste
of must still on his tongue.
Both languid, in the languid
sun-baked afternoon
Below the coast, before the foaming cliff,
On the slow undulation –
The heads red and light-sated,
The eyes directed at something that didn't come.
And the mutinous rowers held the oars upright,
Like air riders, like air rowers,
(Lycabas, the Lydian, beat me yet into the rigging).
Oars heavy, suddenly entwined; vines
Tied themselves around the rudder, around the mast;
From the deck veiled growth shot up,
A rioting of tendrils, ivy and lianas
Entangling the ship's rump, raised
From the shining by an unseen hand.
The anchor thick with dripping leaves.
The ropes, the battens,
The seats cloaked with green garlands.
Panthers and lynxes flanked the god.

The fish-tailed sailors growing scales, huddled
Together, beaten and defeated; then toppled
Overboard.
Dolphins making water music, somersaulting,

foam splashing on the snouts,
All tumbling mutineers,
Except me, Acoetes, skipper and slave
Who, sailing to Naxos,
Honoured the god with the wine-red lips.

Ovid, Metamorphoses, III, 572-691

Kingfisher at Sea

Spellbound in Morpheus' arms
She saw her husband, drowned,
Stand there in sodden clothes

She hastened to the beach
No one prevented her
Day broke, the storm died down

She saw a body floating out at sea
It had the shirt and hair
The figure of her spouse

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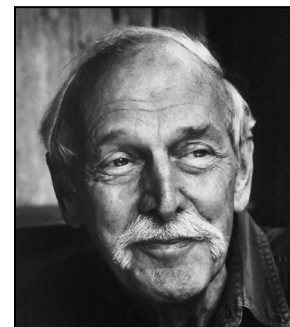
Speaking in Tongues
H.C. ten Berge



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.

She swayed and wailed
(Her mouth turning into a beak)
Running along the tide line

She swayed and wailed
Skimmed low over a levee
Up to the water

Broken waves at her feet
A mutilated body thrown onto the rocks
The gods speaking winged language

Once again she rushed towards him
Who for some time had appeared
To her at night

How the gods were slowing down her wingbeat
Until the dead man rose again and he
With Alcyone chose the windless air

Ovid, Metamorphoses XI, 410-748

Karen Shenfeld

from TO MEASURE THE WORLD

Romania

I've been reading of late about Romania.
About the great curve of her alpine mountains
(Carpathian and Transylvanian), hooked

like the crook in the burnt hands of a shepherd,
guiding his flock across a high meadow
to the ends of time. And I've been reading about

her meadows where the ox-eye daisy and bellflower
and sweet william and ragwort and pincushion teach
the clouds to dance. And I've been reading about

her tall peaks that rule the clouds, her peaks and
valleys and forests and meadows and plains and
lakes and streams and rivers, whispering

their myriad Romanian names beneath the breath
like a prayer or a curse. And though I've never read
much before about Romania, I've been reading

about her rivers that are gates through the walls
of her mountains, about the mercurial winds
that through her gates blow hot and cold.

And I've been reading about the warriors
on horseback who rode the winds through her gates,
penetrating the walls of her mountains:

the Goths and Gepidae and Slavs and Avars and
Bulgars and Magyars and Pechenegs and Cumans.
All the fearsome, marauding invaders of Romania.

All the fearsome, marauding invaders of Romania,
and her tumbling Voivodes (Ralph the Black,
Michael the Brave), those whose names tell a story

and those whose names do not. And I've been reading
of late about her foods and farms and lumber mills
and clamorous ateliers, the embroidered seams

of her mines. And I've been reading about
the He and the She who sold their people's
half-starved whispers, built a palace of ten thousand
rooms.

I confess I never before had a desire to know
much at all about Romania. Not until a fortnight ago,
when you left me for the Romanian receptionist

(with the plastic nails and dyed tresses)
who works in the window of the dental office
around the corner. Her name is Anca C_____

and she hails from Sighișoara, which is, I've learned
from my reading, a medieval city of walls and towers,
the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler, whose deeds

may or may not have inspired Bram Stoker
(who's Irish not Romanian) to pen his dark tale.

Last Look Back

The duplicate key threaded
even still on its silver ring...
The lock turns and
I'm in—

a hushed ghost tiptoeing
round toppled pillars,
broken busts,
through the tumbled-down walls.

Ants feast on the counter,
spiders in high corners.
Six months or a century?
I can't say. I see, though,

you're making steady progress:
that coy new sofa and chairs
before the fireplace,
potted plants in the bay

window where I sat at my desk
writing or, more often, not writing
in the ancient afternoons,
and upstairs—

a fresh bed,
twin reading lamps bent
at the elbow,

her floral silk kimono flourishing
on the hook behind the door.

Of course, you'll repaint!
Farrow & Ball,
nothing but the best!

*The law of return
has brought me back to
a red-brick house,
these rooms like those rooms...*
Do you remember the day
I wrote those lines?

Friends extend invitations,
admonish me: *No trespassing!*
Danger! Stay away!

I'm Lot's unnamed wife,
stealing a last look back—
beyond the kitchen's paned glass:
the cherry tree we planted

together our first spring
in the house, a shy sapling
now soars and soars,
its cold blooms white as snow.

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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.



Epilogue

The cherry tree went first.
A slow death, limb by fungus-rotted limb.
Hers was quicker,
a mix of pills and booze.

What remains:

Flagstones circling a dried stump.

A jar of jam glowing
in the cupboard's night.

Franci Louann

from ARGENTINA POESÍA

Jasmines, White on White on White

in October after Mother's Day
at the kiosk in Buenos Aires
I discover
jasmines

this time I want fragrance
stoop to find the source;
the merchant fusses, touches
all that we have touched

later, on our white table
in a milky vase
amid green-wax leaves
ivory petals burst open

el perfume
fills our *apartamento*—
jasmines
just discovered

Café Tortoni, 2002

five years ago
with your sisters
we had thick hot chocolate
poured from copper pitchers
with long wooden handles

here in South America's oldest café
we marveled at stained glass windows
antique lightshades, dark wood
black and white tiled floors
photos of famous visitors

copper too
held
hot milk
y
agua caliente

Café Tortoni, 2007

today, we come in from the rain
you order beer for yourself
chocolate espeso
(dense chocolate)
for me

this time, stainless steel
holds chocolate and milk;
the china's blue edges are faded
my cup is chipped
I have to ask for water

Café Tortoni
Buenos Aires
it's not
the same
this time

San Telmo Promise

we called them
engagement rings
matching bands of gold, silver, and bronze
nothing precious, except intent

bought from the young artist
in San Telmo Square in Buenos Aires
he, with an impression deep in his palm
from years of working metal

he was our witness;
you did not notice for six months
when I stopped
wearing mine

then yours was lost
and mine was too small for you;
you did not notice
when I stopped wearing mine

Tal Vez

tal vez
were my most useful words
for six months in Buenos Aires

I thought it was one word;
then,
if people asked a question

and I didn't understand
I answered *tal vez*—
“maybe”

it was positive
optimistic
not an argument

sometimes, when I made a comment
and wasn't sure, I'd follow with
tal vez

I might be right
might be wrong—
I'd covered it

—*tal*
vez
“maybe”

Ekstasis Editions
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170 pages
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Franci Louann had her first fine publications in Dorothy Livesay's last anthology, *Women's Eye: 12 BC poets* (Air) in the 1970s. Her name was then Fran Workman. In 2010, Lipstick Press published her *Beach Cardiology*. There have been awards for Franci's poetry and for her decades of volunteer work. She is thankful for many falling-off-her-chair moments. Franci was born in Stratford, Ontario. Her father was a British Home Child, her mother third-generation German-Canadian. From 2002 to 2017, Argentina was Franci's "second home." Poems about these latter experiences could fill another book.



Palermo, I Love that Name, Palermo

I remember a Sunday with family, after pizza
Bosques de Palermo—the Palermo Woods

Lagos de Palermo, three lakes
the zoo botanical, and Japanese gardens

we have photos against gnarled sprawling trees
the lungs of Buenos Aires

Zapatatas for Palermo

I remember an afternoon at the race track
the wide marble stairs—
José, refused at the top because
he wasn't wearing leather shoes

zapatatas de cuero
his New Balance runners likely cost more
than leather
here in Argentina

A FEMINIST TAKE ON YEARNING AND TRANSCENDENCE

gillian harding-russell

A playful and intelligent poetry, Elana Wolff's *SWOON* is finally a romantic collection with poems about yearning and transcendence that alternate between the elegant and the conversational. With allusions to Thomas Mann's *sturm und drang*, a turbulent and timeless nineteenth century romanticism is brought into play in a modified modern context where the lovers "huddle eye to eye" in a teepee 84) and Icarus is seen "splashing back to birth," (87) not defeated but reborn after a failed try. Not unexpectedly, this messy mixture of yearning and obsession, at times sexual and predatory and other times Platonic and intellectual, in Wolff's vision is tintured with varying shades of irony as tradition meets the present reality.

In "May I Call You Friend," Wolff's speaker yearns for certain dead nineteenth century German writers' company, including, Soren Kierkegaard and Heinrich von Kleist. "We haven't met, you've never seen me" (20) and so she laments not being able to discuss the issues raised by their writings, *Fear and Trembling* and *Michael Kohlhaas*. And we sense, despite this reverence, her intention might be to test their plausibility against modern thinking.

I have come too late to hear you speak, to hear you read
to see your teeth, (20)

While at once evoking physicality associated with aggression and possibly sexuality, the image of "teeth" becomes more generalized as avidity for life in this context. However the suggestion of obsession re-enters in the image of the sublimating speaker who feels the need to "stalk your sentences, //obsessive and possessive." That she, "full of want, impalpable" finds herself "tongue-tied" effectively reverses our perception of the "stalker" so that in this context she becomes the one stricken, the victim of a futile desire to resurrect dead minds that she admires.

In "Fate Like That," Wolff's speaker in dramatizing Abraham's servant's offhand procuring a girl to become a wife for his master's son is elegantly presented in Classic chiselled verses that mimic the mores of an age when women in their subservience did not question male prerogative:

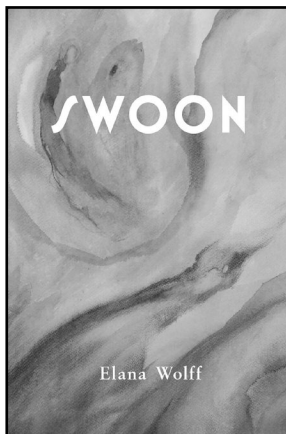
Imagine a girl, jug on her shoulder,
meeting a man at the desert well.
Drink, my lord, she says, and lowers

her jug to give him water – (35)

Even as "her kindness is his cue," the servant brings out the "gifts," including not only "golden bracelets and some money" but a "nose ring" of servitude. This girl who ages over history and the poem, however, proves both wiser and more pragmatic than Abraham who, so unconditionally dedicated to God, was willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Instead the girl, growing wiser over time and history in the course of the poem chooses to ditch the "nose rings" which, she concludes, come at too-high a cost.

The closing lines of this carefully crafted poem neatly slide the changing tableaux from biblical scene into modern application with a surprising reversal in our expectations: "May I angle forward and remind you of the husband:/ his trial on an altar, and the knife – a fate like that// you don't forget"? Damaged by his experience, "his mate will always remember," and in a turning of events, it is not the girl who is subservient and damaged but the "one she reproduced with" who was that "filial/ that willing" i.e. gullible, and now perhaps in need of her protection. (35)

In the title poem "Swoon," Wolff engineers an elliptical poem that finds application on multiple levels. Although the scene appears to be one in nature with swallows and ravens, another level emerges in the first verses with such incongruous word-



Swoon
Elana Wolff
Guernica, 2020
\$20.00



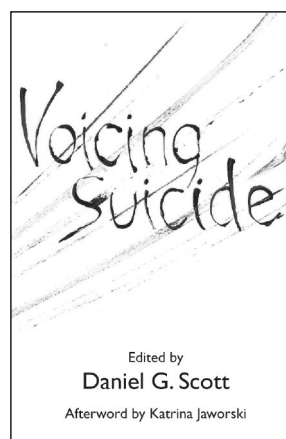
Elana Wolff

cues as "strongman" and "pumped up on sun":

Raven holds the swing-vote
and you know
he's in with his beak. (52)

Raising our curiosity, the speaker appears "in my black suit" (evoking an office setting) "swaying sillily from the middle" as the preferred position of one wanting to keep clear of controversy and disagreement, until "something weighty" (52) falls "from the inner ledge," and the suggestion becomes that the speaker feels impelled to speak out. While the "swaying" and fall recreate in our minds in a suggested female "swoon" such as those common among nineteenth century women who wore too-

New from Ekstasis Editions



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Poetry Anthology
202 pages
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Voicing Suicide

edited by
Daniel G. Scott

Voicing Suicide arises out of a conviction that poetry offers an opportunity to understand some of the difficult aspects of suicide by allowing us to give it voice – through memory, and elegy, through an honest declaration of the draw of death. In poetry, we can enter the spaces suicide shapes around loss and sorrow and give it voice. Poems can speak to the loss of a loved one, to considering suicide, to struggling to make sense of suicide and poems can offer the words of those who have suicided. Although intense and sometimes painful the book is honest, in moments delicate and tender. It offers an important exploration of suicide by writers who have been close to suicide and speak of it without disguise.

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