

ST@NZA

Issue 19 Vol. 2

Summer 2021



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The 2021 National Poetry Month Blog

News from the League

The 1st Annual Lesley Strutt Poetry Contest

The Lesley Strutt Poetry Contest is an award that provides a prize for the single best poem submitted to our judges. This contest is open to all poets (professional, emerging, and first-time) in Canada, and is run each summer in memory of poet and friend Lesley Strutt. *Deadline to submit is August 2, 2021.*

[Find out more](#)

Honouring Lesley Strutt - The Lesley Strutt Poetry Fund

Lesley Strutt was an incredible poet, friend and supporter of emerging poets across Canada. Her recent passing has left a void for many people, and we feel it is important to do a few things to honour her writing, legacy, and all the incredible work she did for poets in Canada. The League of Canadian Poets, as well as Lesley's family and friends are establishing the Lesley Strutt Poetry Fund to support the following initiatives: The Lesley Strutt Annual Poetry Contest (Submission are now open), the Lesley Strutt Chapbook for Emerging Poets over 40, and the Commemorative Bench and Celebration Livestream Event.

[Learn more.](#) or [Donate to the Lesley Strutt Poetry Fund](#)

See the Winners of the Jessamy Stursberg Poetry Prize for Canadian Youth.

Our jurors were blown away by the talent and gorgeous writing of these youth poets. [Read the winning poems.](#)

LCP Members: Annual General Meeting Info

The 2021 Annual General Meeting for the League of Canadian Poets took place on Monday, June 28 at 2pm EST. The AGM was held online, via Zoom.

[Learn more and review AGM-related documents.](#)

Feminist Caucus Business Meeting

The 2021 Feminist Caucus Business Meeting will be taking place on Monday, August 9, 2021 at 2pm EST. Members and non-members are welcome to join this meeting.

[Register for the 2021 Feminist Caucus Business Meeting](#)

LCP Statement

Please take a moment to read League of Canadian Poets' statement of support and call to action regarding the 215 children found buried at Kamloops Indian Residential School.

[Read the statement.](#)

The LCP Chapbook Series

Order a chapbook today and know that you are supporting the continued success of the Series that brings publication opportunities to underrepresented poets as well as some new, top-notch poetry for your

bookshelf.

[Available now for order:](#)

- *Voices of Quebec | Les voix du Québec.*
- *You are a Flower Growing off the Side of a Cliff: poems about mental health and resiliency*
- *What has been left out: 2020 Feminist Caucus Living Archive Series Chapbook*
- *The Time After: Poetry from Atlantic Canada*
- *The Next Generation Vol 1: Poems from Young Poets*
- *i am what becomes of broken branch: A Collection of Voices by Indigenous Poets in Canada*
- *These Lands: A Collection of Voices by Black Poets in Canada*

Book Reviews

The LCP is proud to share that we can now offer payment (\$25 per review) for select reviews each month, as well as continuing to accept reviews from other publications, or without payment. Check out our new reviews page, including our titles gallery and simplified request form. [Learn more.](#)

Land Acknowledgements

The League is seeking poets to create a series of powerful and poetic land acknowledgements to share at our digital poetry events. This opportunity will pay \$250, and we are particularly interested in working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis poets with knowledge in the history and culture of many Indigenous groups. [Fill out this form if you are interested in helping with this opportunity.](#)

Member News

The League has simplified the process to submit member news for St@nza and social media promotion. If you are a member and have news

you would like shared, [fill out this quick form](#). The next issue of St@nza will be out in September.

LCP's Poetry Neighbourhood Facebook Group

Won't you be our neighbour? Share your poems, your releases and events, and chat about all things poetry. Exclusive to LCP Members. [Join us today in The Neighbourhood!](#)

Poetry Parlour

We invite League Members to respond to three poetry-related questions each quarter: [Check out Poetry Parlour](#) (League member exclusive)

In Memoriam

Any time we lose a member of the poetry community, that loss is felt deeply and with great love. The LCP has created a webpage where all are invited to remember, reflect and share memories of those from the poetry community who have recently passed. [Visit our In Memoriam page.](#)

Poetry Pause

Poetry Pause is the League's daily digital poetry dispatch program and it's growing every day! We deliver a daily poem an audience of over 1200 subscribers and we are always accepting submissions of published or unpublished poems! Poetry Pause is a great way to introduce new readers to your work. [Submit your poetry today!](#) Tell your poets and poetry-loving friends to subscribe

Donate to the League

Support poets and poetry in Canada. Please consider donating monthly to the League of Canadian Poets. [Donate via Canada Helps](#)

Announcing the winners of the 2021 Jessamy Stursberg Poetry Prize!

To read the winning poems, visit poets.ca/stursberg

Senior Category

Grades 10-12

First Place

How to Write a Poem
by Angela Cen

From the Jurors: *This is a well-crafted, highly original work. The poet's use of metaphor and hyperbole is masterful and evokes an abstract, yet very real, impression. A pleasure to read and savour*

Second Place

Jiaozi
by Vanessa Chan

From the Jurors: *This poem's gift is its tenderness, an offering of nostalgia drawn from the poet's memory. It is a wonderful balance of creative metaphors, vulnerability, and reflection. A pleasure to read and reread.*

Third Place

grapheme-colour glossary
by Izabella Salih

From the Jurors: *A poem of surprising originality, elegance of craft and form, and close attention to grammar, with the bonus that it's whimsical and amusing.*

Thank you to our senior jury: Melanie Flores, Grace Lau & JC Sulzenko and our junior jury: Laura Cok, Samantha Jones & Matthew Stepanic.

Junior Category

Grades 7-9

First Place

Seaweed Soup and a Happy Birthday
by Mark Kim

From the jurors: *In "Seaweed Soup and a Happy Birthday," the poet's careful and developed craft is on full display. This poem showcases not only their ability to use plain language to delve into their personal history, but they also know how to pack a punch in a stunning image and spend the full value of a five-dollar word. The poem's thoughtful form and phrasing made it a clear and unanimous first choice for all of us.*

Second Place

undefined variables
by Michelle Masood

From the jurors: *In "undefined variables," a simple lunch scene is deconstructed by the speaker searching for meaning by sloughing off the things it is not. We loved the strong imagery, the inventive style, and the way the speaker keeps moving towards an essential truth just out of reach, and nearly grasps it.*

Third Place

I am a woman
by Nida Atique

From the Jurors: *The potent imagery in "I am a woman" immediately grabbed our attention. We loved the way that the colour red was used as an anchor to connect different scenes from a life story. The volta at the end of this piece is a revelation that left us thinking long after we put the poem down.*

Bill Arnott's Beat

Poetry's New Normal Part 2: Through Pandemic



(... continued from last issue)

The setting changed as a result of pandemic but even in a virtual version of the UK literature festival, there's a host or moderator. And, of course, in a group of any size someone invariably overrides their mute and we find ourselves listening to a poem or passage overdubbed by the unending crinkle of a packet of crisps. To which I hastily type my thoughts into the chat stream (*Hey pork rind, shut the hell up!*) before deleting it all with a heavy sigh and instead say nothing.

With a touch of the familiar, the most recent festival kicked off with our spoken word guru, a mentor to most of us, akin to an endless dock where eager boats berth then launch into surf without a compass, just intu-

ition and trust in a guiding north star. In this case, our polar sensei's name is Bob. Bob, you see, *knows* his work. He's learned it. Which I feel's quite different than memorization. We can rattle off a national anthem or perhaps recite a prayer without inherently knowing them, lacking the ability to breathe fresh nuance into each performance based on room, audience, accompaniment. *That's* knowing your work. With Bob's guidance, encouragement, and a few hundred hours of effort, I now have a few compositions of my own—poetry and spoken-word—under my belt. Work I'm proud of that's fun to share. One of these was my contribution to our virtual gathering. Our collaborative showcase—the equivalent of a small portion of the usual festivities—played out in a lively if somewhat displaced manner, that fascinatingly weird way online get-togethers simultaneously connect and dislocate.

This time around, however, collectively Zooming in from kitchen nooks and drawing rooms, like all of us, I wondered what the future has in store. How normal will define itself in another month; another year. And when, or if, we can do this again, in person. For this concise iteration of the festival, we set aside remuneration. Yes, we promote books and al-

bums, but still we wait to return to what festivals like this have traditionally been—performances with ticket sales along with a blend of free, voluntary events to promote the arts and foster accessibility.

This left me considering not only the challenges but the positives, opportunities revealed through this trying time, identifying ways in which we as writers not only benefit but can in fact thrive:

•**Connectivity.** Although online events may lack elements of the interpersonal, we are instead embracing healthy, safe, and cheap alternatives to gather with minimal environmental impact while reaching wider audiences.

•**Education.** The same sense of lack that drives ingenuity has fostered adaptability, incorporating tech throughout the arts. Public

and private financial incentives for digital interpretations of analog work have been created. Even reclusive writers now broadcast their work through social media in lieu of live launches and tours.

•**Creativity.** Writers are innovatively sharing their work by partnering with traditional sponsors, venues, residencies, and reading series, blending pre-recorded work with live, interactive events and presentations that utilize multimedia production and promotion.

Following our virtual festival, I asked poet Gray Lightfoot to share his perspective of the current environment. He relayed a conversation he had with a fellow writer, who explained, “For particularly vulnerable individuals, virtual events are our only outlet, especially for those of us with

mobility issues or uneasy in crowded places but who still want to share and be heard.” Previously they wouldn’t or couldn’t participate. Now they can. And do.

I posed the same query to poet and musician George Dow, who explained there’s a kind of beauty to Zoom events that “create a



welcoming destination where poets and musicians are pilgrims, able to gather with ease—our virtual destination a place of creativity certainly, but also of kindness, encouragement and inclusivity.”

Now, for each of us, once more a bar’s been set, this time embracing technology. In spite of challenges, artisans have leapt in to flatten not only viral curves but learning curves. Utilizing hardware and software with open-mindedness guarantees events like this will continue, ensuring we as artists can not only share our work but earn money while overcoming uncertainty and unfamiliarity, bad mics, unfocussed cameras, and intermittent Wi-Fi. Despite all this, perhaps because of it, we persevere with the same tenacity with which we pursue and hone our craft, a safety net of courage and community, in our small way making the world a better place.

A version of this article appeared in The Writers’ Union of Canada’s Write Magazine

Bill Arnott is the bestselling author of [Gone Viking: A Travel Saga](#) and [The Gamble Novellas](#). His work is published in Canada, the US, UK, Europe, Asia and Australia. He’s been awarded for poetry, prose, songwriting and is a WIBA and ABF Book Awards Finalist for *Gone Viking: A Travel Saga*. When not trekking with a small pack and journal, Bill can be found on Canada’s west coast, making music and friends. To join [Bill’s Artist Showcase](#) newsletter, [click here](#).

Poetry Parlour

See what Leaguers have to say about the future of poetry, celebrating milestones, and more.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the most recent Poetry Pause questions! [Check out our new batch of questions.](#)

What do you think the future of poetry looks like?

Bernadette Wagner: The future of poetry looks brilliant if the young people I have worked with are any indication. And, I think they are!

Anne Burke: Very bright because it has stood the proverbial “test of time” and demonstrated during our world wide pandemic how meaningful poetry (and poets) can be during lock-downs, contagions, virus variants, war, pestilence.

Honey Novick: Because poetry addresses the personal, the philosophical, the political, the public, the private, the potential, it is safe.

Poetry is the friend people turn to for self-development, for solace and comfort, for making new friends

Richard-Yves Sitoski: Differently abled. Neurodivergent, Economically disenfranchised. Vocally mad (in the sense as reclaimed by the Mad Pride movement). Not strictly urban, nor rural, nor suburban, but occupying those in-between spaces such as (former) small towns whose populations are swelling on account of the new economy's work-from-home outflux from the cities. And ready for burgeoning, beginning writers of all ages and backgrounds without MFA's.

Audrey McLaren: It looks promising. Due to present restrictions to popular forms of entertainment, more people have turned to reading. This includes the reading of poetry. The magnificence of Amanda Gorman's masterpiece has also ushered in a period of the re-discovery of poetry.

Katherine Lawrence: It looks like the fist-sized muscle that pumps blood through our veins and arteries.

Amanda Earl: ongoing, stumbling as much as anything else. if we work at it, voices that have been left off the white-male literary canon will be included.

Derek Webster: The future of poetry is so bright, poets should wear protective lenses designed to prevent UV and high-energy visible light from damaging their eyes.

Kamal Parmar: The future of poetry will shine like a beacon of light at the end of a tunnel. It comes like a gentle rain soothing the anguished and suffering souls of humanity. It is a healing balm to the mind numbed by emotional pain and loneliness.

Dina E Cox: In general, good. There seems to be more public interest in poetry at the moment (due possibly to spoken word at Biden's inauguration), and more and more there are poets laureate being appointed. That said, I'm not sure poetry is being read more, or given prolonged thought, except by other poets. Since I'm a 'dina'-saur, and not on social media, I can't speak for poetry there. Bottom line is the average person I know, and who knows I write and publish poetry, doesn't seem to have had a sudden resurgence of interest.

Eleonore Schönmaier: The future of poetry looks exciting because of its short form in a world where increasing people can only absorb small amounts of anything (not good for the world at large but great for poetry) and poetry adapts easily to multi-media forms for the creation of new art works.

Stephen Kent Roney: The new technologies of podcasting and video-casting make the future of poetry fantastically promising. We should see a new blossoming.

How do you celebrate your milestones that probably mean nothing to the world at large but mean a lot to you (like, say, finishing a difficult draft of a manuscript)?

Audrey McLaren: I discuss it with family and close friends.

Stephen Kent Roney: I cry quietly to myself.

Bernadette Wagner: I usually say something on social media.

Anne Burke: This is an acquired skill because I am gratified-challenged about celebrating myself. I suppose I would take a day off and read instead of write, but still practicing that art.

Amanda Earl: I celebrate each day quietly, often with tea, and a walk in the wilds of downtown Ottawa of lilacs, autumn leaves and icicles.

Richard-Yves Sitoski: I'm bo-ring. I am just shy of being a teetotaler, and I am extremely conscious of what I eat. So I celebrate with (at least) a glass of single malt or a couple of hipster-approved IPA's, and a tractor wheel sized plate of nachos (heavy on the guac) or half a steam table of Nepalese momos. Then there are the retail expeditions, in

search of the right flat cap, waist-coat, 70's polyester shirt, and suitably outrageous Chuck Taylors. Oh, and books. Books, books, books...

Eleonore Schönmaier: I create special moments with my partner and/or close friends as a form of celebration usually involving food and wonderful conversation. Long expansive walks are also a form of celebration for me

Honey Novick: I go to the lake. I offer tobacco in gratitude. I check the water levels of the lake against the shoreline. I understand finishing a manuscript is paying homage to myself.

Katherine Lawrence: A glass of wine, a slice of cake.

Derek Webster: Alcohol.

Kamal Parmar: I give myself a pat on my shoulder and raise a glass of Santorini wine to the Muse!

Dina E Cox: Relief, in the case of a manuscript, then the effort to market it, then the profound fear I'll never create another while I still can (compounded by getting older), but also by a thought that this next time I'd like to vary my voice... I used to say 'find' it, but that's not quite accurate. Other milestones? Depends upon the milestone ;)

Who are some prose writers who aren't poets, but whose writing makes you think they would make great poets?

Richard-Yves Sitoski: Since the 80's I wanted Leon Rooke to write poetry -- and lo and behold, in the early 00's he started, so that takes care of him. Nut I'd also love to see poetry from his buddies John Metcalf and the late Ray Smith: the former on account of his musicality, his use of punctuation, his verbal effects, and his overall style; the latter because -- well, who doesn't love a postmodernist who despises theory?

Dina E Cox: Harder to answer as there are just too many works out there to read to know if I've found

them all. Many I see historically, like W. O. Mitchell, Antoine de St Exupéry.

Eleonore Schönmaier: Cynan Jones and Horatio Clare. If I could add composers I would add Fazil Say and Ashley Hribar.

Kamal Parmar: Michael Ondaatje; Joseph Boyden and Shauna Singh Baldwin have highly acclaimed skills that can be fine-tuned into poetry.

Bernadette Wagner: Stephen King

Anne Burke: Marcel Proust In Search of Lost Time/ À la recherche du temps perdu, in six volumes.



The 1st Annual
Lesley Strutt
Poetry Contest
\$500 to one outstanding poem

In memory of Lesley Strutt 1953-2021

Count “Leo” Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, especially War and Peace (1867) and Anna Karenina (1877). Gertrude Stein, although “A rose is a rose is a rose” is from a 1913 poem, “Sacred Emily”, in the 1922 book Geography and Plays.

Derek Webster: Billy Collins (haha).

Honey Novick: Barbara Kingsolver
Richard Burton
Tempest Williams
Gloria Steinem
Esther Broner
Philip Roth”

Audrey McLaren: Wally Lamb, Lalita Tademy, and Lawrence Hill.
Katherine Lawrence “Edna O’Brien
Ann Patchett
Alice McDermott”

Amanda Earl: Arundhati Roy, Helen Oyeyemi, Carmen Maria Machado, Eimear McBride, Maria Semple, Alison Bechdel

Stephen Kent Roney The simple answer is, all of them. The skills are the same, and the transition from one to the other is the usual thing. Much prose is already at the level of poetry.

JUST FOR FUN: If your poetry had a scent, what would it smell like?

Bernadette Wagner: My poetry smells like well-composted manure.

Anne Burke: A rose by any oth-

er name would smell as sweet. (Shakespeare’s play “Romeo and Juliet”)

Richard-Yves Sitoski: Not lilacs, not the forest in early spring, not wet autumn leaves. Rather, a full cat litter box, the dusty air that blasts out of the ducts when the furnace first comes on, and, true to my East European roots, dill pickle brine. Honey Novick the child of lilac and lavender

Stephen Kent Roney: Dandelions and cut grass and wet earth.

Audrey McLaren: East Indian mango mixed with rain on a sunny day.

Katherine Lawrence: earth after rain

Amanda Earl: Wood burning on a campfire

Derek Webster: Failure.

Kamal Parmar: It would have a thousand intoxicating smells, the prominent one being that of frankincense.

Dina E Cox: The Atlantic Coast

Eleonore Schönmaier: thyme preferably the kind growing on the edge of a cliff in Crete

[New Poetry Parlour questions are now available! Click here to share your thoughts](#)

New Members

Hari Alluri

Hari Alluri is the author of *The Flayed City* (Kaya, 2017), *Carving Ashes* (CiCAC, 2013) and the chapbook *The Promise of Rust* (Mouthfeel, 2016). An award-winning poet, educator, and teaching artist, his work appears widely in anthologies, journals and online venues, including *Chautauqua*, *Poetry International* and *Split This Rock*. He is a founding editor at Locked Horn Press, where he has co-edited two anthologies, *Gendered & Written: Forums on Poetics* and *Read America(s): An Anthology*. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from San Diego State University and, along with the Federico Moramarco Poetry International Teaching Prize, he has received VONA/Voices and Las Dos Brujas fellowships and a National Film Board of Canada grant. Hari immigrated to Vancouver, Coast Salish territories at age twelve, and writes there again.

Madhur Anand

Jonathan Bessette grew up in Vancouver—the unceded and traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm, səlilwəta ʔ, and S wx wú7mesh peoples, and recently moved east for the MFA program in creative writing at the University

of Guelph. Jonathan is a white settler of French, Irish, and Croatian backgrounds, learning only in his 20s of his Red River Métis background. Understanding the intersecting voices of these backgrounds, as well as the landscape, politics, and magic of the Pacific Northwest, are regular themes and inspirations in his poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

Gregory Betts

Selina Boan

Jason Camlot's recent critical works are *Phonopoetics: The Making of Early Literary Recordings* (Stanford 2019), and *CanLit Across Media: Unarchiving the Literary Event* (co-edited with Katherine McLeod, MQUP, 2019). He is also the author of four collections of poetry, *The Animal Library*, *Attention All Typewriters*, *The Debaucher*, and *What The World Said*. A fifth poetry collection - *Vlarf* (MQUP, Hugh MacLennan Poetry Series) will be out in Fall 2021. He is Professor and University Research Chair in Literature and Sound Studies at Concordia University, and director of the SpokenWeb research program that develops and studies audiovisual archives that document literary performance and activity in Canada since the 1950s.

Cairistiona Clark is a poet and writer, and also a fisheries biologist. Her poems have been published in *Understorey*, *Juniper*, *yolk Literary*, *antilang*, and elsewhere. She was mentored in the Alistair MacLeod Mentorship Program with the Writers Federation of Nova Scotia, attended the Emerging Writers Intensive at the Banff Centre, and graduated from the Humber School for Writers. She lives in rural southwest New Brunswick.

Molly Cross-Blanchard is a white and Métis writer and editor born on Treaty 3 territory (Fort Frances, ON), raised on Treaty 6 territory (Prince Albert, SK), and living on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples (Vancouver, BC). She holds an English BA from the University of Winnipeg and a Creative Writing MFA from the University of British Columbia. Molly is the former Poetry Editor at *PRISM international* and the current Publisher at *Room* magazine.

Jaclyn Desforges is the author of a poetry collection, *Danger Flower* (Palimpsest Press, 2021) and a picture book, *Why Are You So Quiet?* (Annick Press, 2020). Jaclyn is a Pushcart-nominated writer and the winner of the 2018 RBC/PEN Canada New Voices award, the 2019 Hamilton Public Library Freda Waldon Award for Fiction, the 2019 Judy Marsales Real Estate Ltd. Award for Poetry, and a 2020 Hamilton Emerging Artist Award for Writing. Her first chapbook, *Hello Nice Man*, was published by Anstruther

Press in 2019. Jaclyn's writing has been featured in *Room Magazine*, *THIS Magazine*, *The Puritan*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Minola Review* and others. Jaclyn is currently writing a collection of short fiction with the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts. She is an MFA candidate in the University of British Columbia's creative writing program and lives in Hamilton with her partner and daughter.

Jocelyne Dubois' novel, *World of Glass*, was a finalist for the 2013 QWF Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for fiction. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in numerous literary journals. *Doodling Moods*, a hardcover book of doodle self-portraits done during the Covid-19 crisis, and her poetry chapbook, *Hot Summer Night*, were published by Sky of Ink Press. Jocelyne's work frequently deals with mental health. A survivor herself, she gives talks in schools, hospitals, and community settings to help reduce the stigma of mental illness. Her art has been exhibited in several Montreal galleries. For details and links related to both her visual art and writing, please visit her painting blog at www.duboispaintings.blogspot.com

Triny Finlay

Dagne Forrest lives and works in a small town just west of Canada's capital. She shares her life with several other humans, an athletic labrador retriever who suffers from separation anxiety, three cats, and a

small flock of chickens. Her poetry has appeared or will soon appear in *Deep Wild Journal*, *Prime Number Magazine*, *Not Very Quiet*, *The Moving Force Journal*, *The Crank*, and *Sky Island Journal*, and her creative nonfiction in *Paper Dragon*. In 2021 she's one of 15 poets featured in the LCP's Poem in Your Pocket campaign. Learn more at dagneforrest.com.

Marco Fraticelli

Carol Good

Michael Goodfellow lives on a small waterfront acre in Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, where he grew up. His first collection, *Naturalism, An Annotated Bibliography* is forthcoming from Gaspereau

Press, and his second collection is in draft. His poems have previously appeared in *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *CV2* and elsewhere. He is also the editor of *TLR*, an online poetry magazine that publishes one poem each season along with an interview about craft. In his spare time he grows vegetables and garlic and tends to an old house.

Carla Harris is a disabled queer writer, performer and interdisciplinary artist from Treaty 4 territory, living in Regina Saskatchewan. As a improvisation teacher, poet and spoken word poet she has taught writing experimentation and performed at Verses Festival in Vancouver (2017) and Saskatoon Poetic Arts Festival



(2018). Rooted in music, theatre & writing, the arts lift her to understand her disabled experience, while gradually working to bring harder stories forward. Her first chapbook, *Obtain No Proof*, is with the Disability Series of Frog Hollow Press.

Mikko Harvey

Mark Hertzberger

Anne Hopkinson writes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction from her home in Victoria. She is a retired teacher, nature lover, and water rat. She is president of Planet Earth Poetry, a reading series of 25 years in Victoria. Her work appears in anthologies: *Walk Myself Home* by Caitlin Press, V6A, Writing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Arsenal Pulp Press, and *Poet to Poet* by Guernica Press. Most recently *Refugium*, by Caitlin Press, *The Sky is Falling, The Sky is Falling* by Goldfinch Press, and *Old Bones and Battered Bookends* by Repartee Press. She won the Victoria Writer's Society Creative Non-fiction Contest in 2018, and The Canadian Stories Poetry Prize for 2019. Her work was short-listed for the BC Federation of Writers Poetry Prize in 2019, and in the FBCW BC and Yukon short fiction prize in 2020.

Leah Horlick grew up in Saskatoon. Her first collection of poetry, *Riot Lung* (Thistledown Press, 2012) was shortlisted for a ReLit Award and a Saskatchewan Book Award. She won the 2016 Dayne Ogilvie Prize, Canada's only award for LGBT emerging writers. That same year,

her second collection, *For Your Own Good* (Caitlin Press, 2015), was named a Stonewall Honor Title by the American Library Association. Her new book, *Moldovan Hotel*, was released in April 2021 by Brick Books. Learn more at leahhorlick.com.

Evan J (he/they) is from Manitoba and now works and writes in the town of Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Evan's debut book of poetry, *Ripping down half the trees*, will be published in 2021 by McGill-Queen's University Press. Evan is currently on the selection committee for the Winnipeg International Writers Festival, is the Fiction Editor for *Cloud Lake Literary journal*, and runs poetry workshops in Treaty 3 Territory as part of *Vallum* magazine's "Poetry for our Future!" program. For several years, Evan worked for *Brick, A Literary Journal*, and directed the Slackline Creative Arts Series in Toronto, a multi-disciplinary presentation series showcasing emerging Canadian artists. Evan has been nominated for a handful of literary awards including the CV2 Young Buck Poetry Prize and *subTerrain* magazine's Lush Triumphant Literary Award for Poetry. Evan's also a previous winner of the *Vallum* Award for Poetry. When not writing poetry, Evan teaches digital literacy to people living in remote Indigenous communities. Evan's also an avid hunter, forager, birder, Oji-Cree language student, transgender rights activist, and long-distance runner. Learn more at EvanJ.ca.

Danielle Janess

Natalee Johnson

Joan Kehoe

Deborah L. Kelly

Deirdre Kessler

Sharon King-Campbell

Carole Glasser Langille is the author of 4 books of poetry, 2 collections of short stories, 2 children's books and her non-fiction book, "*Doing Time*" about giving writing workshops in a prison in Nova Scotia, published in January 2020. Her 5th book of poems, "*Your Turn*," will be published in the fall of 2021.

Her poems have been put to music by the Canadian composer Chan Ka Nin and recorded by Duo

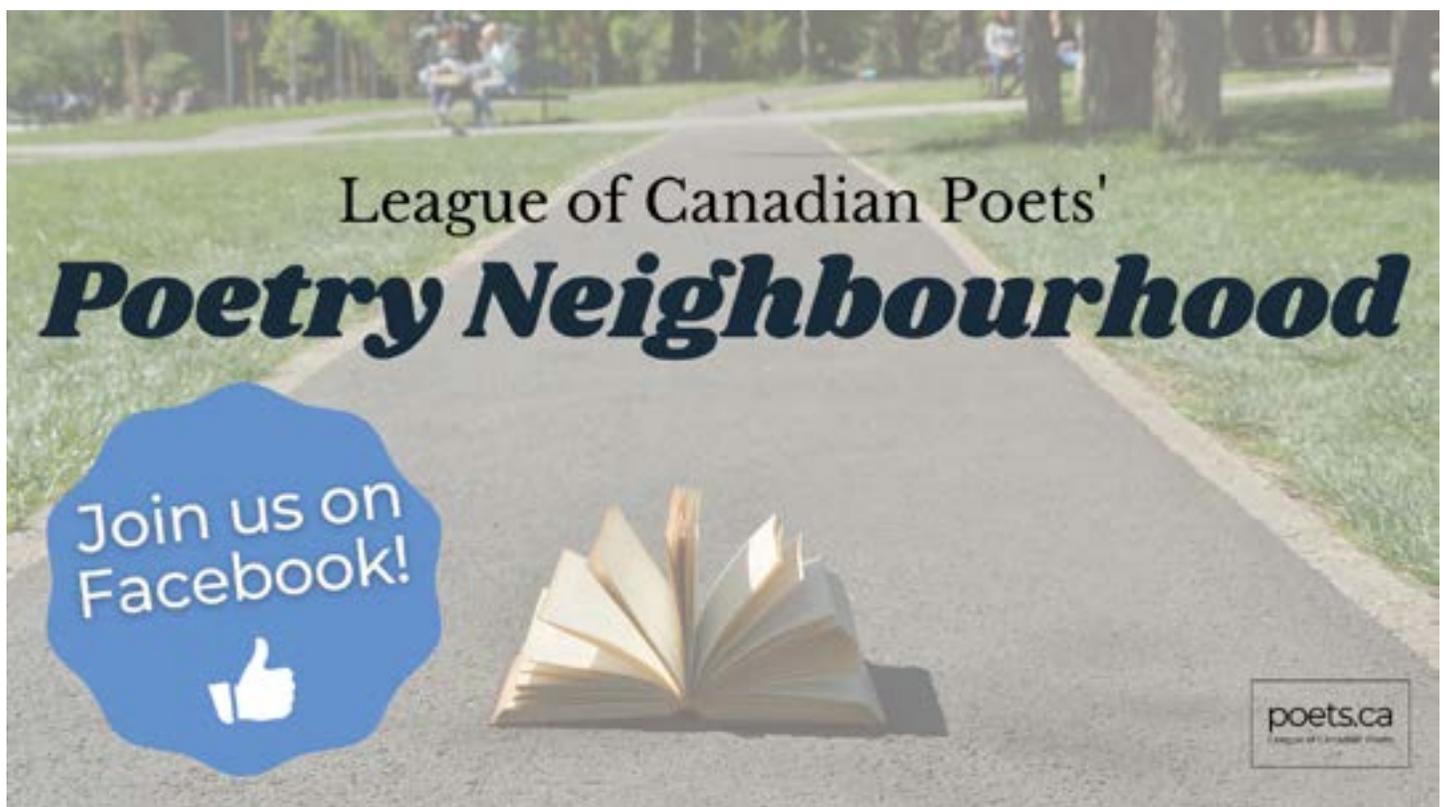
Concertante. Poems have been put to music, as well, by the Canadian Composer Alice Ping Yee Ho and performed in New York by the Cecilia Chorus.

Langille received her MFA from Brooklyn College, studying with John Ashbery. She also studied with William Matthews and Carolyn Forché. Langille taught in the Creative Writing Program at Dalhousie University for 12 years, and has given readings and workshops in France, South Africa, India, as well as readings in Great Britain, Canada, New York City and Hawaii.

Allison LaSorda

Grace Lau Born in Hong Kong, grew up in Vancouver, now living in Toronto. Loves a good gin cocktail.

Genvieve Lehr



Michael Lithgow

Michael Lithgow's poetry and essays have appeared in various journals including the *Literary Review of Canada (LRC)*, *The / Temz/ Review*, *Cultural Trends*, *Canadian Literature*, *Existere*, *Topia*, *Event*, *The Antigoneish Review*, *Poemelocon*, *The High Window*, *ARC*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *TNQ* and *Fiddlehead*. His first collection of poetry, *Waking in the Tree House* (Cormorant Books, 2012), was shortlisted for the A.M. Klein Quebec Writers Federation First Book Award. Work from this collection was included in the 2012 *Best of Canadian Poetry* (Tightrope Books). Michael's second collection, *Who We Thought We Were As We Fell* (Cormorant Books, 2021), was published in the spring. He is an Associate Professor teaching at Athabasca University, and currently lives in Edmonton.

Jessi MacEachern lives in Montréal, QC. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Touch the Donkey*, *Poetry Is Dead*, *Vallum*, *MuseMedusa*, *Canthus*, *PRISM*, and *CV2*. Her debut poetry collection, *A Number of Stunning Attacks*, is available from Invisible Publishing. Her academic writing on the contemporary feminist poetics of Lisa Robertson, Erin Moure, and Rachel Zolf has been published in *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature Canadienne* and *CanLit Across Media: Unarchiving the Literary Event*. She is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Concordia University.

Natalie Meisner is Calgary's 5th Poet Laureate. She is also a playwright and professor who grew up on the South Shore of Nova Scotia. Her work often deploys the power of comedy for social change. *BADDIE ONE SHOE* (Frontenac) is a collection of odes to renegade women who fight the powers that be with laughter. *LEGISLATING LOVE: THE EVERETT KLIPPERT STORY* (University of Calgary Press) illuminates the life of the last Canadian to be jailed for homosexuality. Her play *BOOM BABY* about young maritimers working in the oil patch won both the Canadian National & the Alberta Playwriting Award. Her play *SPEED DATING FOR SPERM DONORS* (Playwright's Canada Press) non-fiction book *Double Pregnant: Two Lesbians Make a Family* (Fernwood) and children's book *My Mommy, My Mama My Brother & Me* (Nimbus) are all based on the true story of a two-mom, biracial family finding community. Meisner is a wife and mom to two great boys and a full Professor in the Department of English at Mount Royal University where she works in the areas of creative writing, drama and gender/ sexuality studies. www.nataliemeisner.com

Lillian Nećakov

Lillian Nećakov is the author of six books of poetry, numerous chapbooks, broadsides and leaflets. Her new book *il virus* was published in April 2021 by Anvil Press (A Feed Dog Book). In 2016, her chapbook *The Lake Contains an Emergency Room* was shortlisted for bpNichol chapbook award. During the

1980s she ran a micro press called “The Surrealist Poets Gardening Association” and sold her books on Toronto’s Yonge Street. She ran the Boneshaker Reading series in Toronto from 2010-2020.

Hoa Nguyen

Debbie Ohi Writes and illustrates for young people. More about me and my work at www.debbieohi.com

Tolu Oloruntoba

Kelly Pflug-Back

Newton Ranaweera

Erin Robinsong

Terese Svoboda I am the author of 19 books of poetry, fiction, memoir, biography and translation, and have won a Guggenheim, the Bobst Prize for fiction, the Iowa Prize for poetry, an NEH and a PEN/Columbia grant for translation, the Graywolf Nonfiction Prize, a Jerome Foundation prize for video, the O. Henry award for the short story, two Appleman awards, and a Pushcart Prize for the essay. I am also a three timewinner of the NY Foundation for the Arts fellowship, and have been awarded Headlands, James Merrill, Hawthornden, Bogliasco, Yaddo, MacDowell, Hermitage and Bellagio residencies. I wrote the libretto for WET, an opera that premiered at L.A.’s RedCat Theater, Disney Hall. I graduated from UBC in creative writing/fine art and received an MFA from Columbia’s School of the

Arts, where I’ve taught, along with positions at Williams, William and Mary, Davidson (McGee Chair), U. of Tampa, Miami and Hawaii (2x), U. of Wellington, Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, San Francisco State, New School, Fairleigh Dickinson, the Summer Literary Seminars in Nairobi, St. Petersburg, and Tblisi, and for the State Department in Kenya.

PJ Thomas

Lauren Turner

Magpie Ulysses is a dynamic performance poet and storyteller known for charming and slaying her audiences with intense stage presence and thoughtful insight about humanity. Writer, Rabble Rouser, fancy talker; Magpie began performing in Alberta in 1998 at the age of 17. Since then she has performed across North America at hundreds of events, is a veteran member of two national champion Vancouver poetry slam teams and was named a Poet of Honour at the Canadian festival Of Spoken Word In the Fall of 2012.

In 2014 she completed a cycle of prose poems called “*Past Presence; Pleiotropy & the impossible cycle of being*”. The 40 minute performance is a collection of prose poems telling the stories of strangers and self from Magpie’s experiences of hitchhiking over 25,000km across North America in her late teens and early twenties with a reflective yet explosive eclectic electric soundtrack composed by James Lamb.

Shannon Webb-Campbell

Member News

Bill Arnott

Bill's launched his poetry collection, "[Forever Cast in Endless Time](#)" (Silver Bow, 2021), reflecting the musical cadence of a journey, exploration and escape for travellers at heart.

Rebecca Anne Banks

"Subterranean Blue Poetry Announces!

Coming Soon! "The Doll House: The Blue Metropolis" for June 2021 (Volume IX Issue VI)

"The Word/Kraftwerk" for September 2021 (Volume IX Issue IX)

New Subterranean Blue Poetry Imprints!

Rêveuses Rivières by Margaret Saine.

French poetics in Art Nouveau Film Noire @ Amazon Stations.

PoemZ 4 U AND YourZ by Zo-Alonzo Gross.

An arthouse book of Rap inspired poetry and artwork @ Ingram Sparks.

Coming Soon!

A Psalm of Blue by Rebecca Anne Banks.

The BeeKeeper's Daughters by Rebecca Anne Banks.

Hardcopy Codagriffes of Subterranean Blue Poetry are Available @ Amazon Stations!

"Where is dinner?" he asked.

"Sky above

sky below

flying dragons . . ." she said, quietly inking the page, with blue ink.

"I've been writing all day," she said.

"Then we'll order in sushi from the new resto around the corner," he said,

"And I want the latest Codagriffe from Subterranean Blue Poetry."

Submissions are Open!

We are looking for poetry for: The Christmas 2021 Issue: John Lennon and The Beatles for Christmas.

We are on vacances over the Summer 2021 for July and August. We will return for September 2021.

"all the poetry, everywhere"

"for those subterranean blues"

www.subterraneanbluepoetry.com

Ashley-Elizabeth Best

This summer, Ashley-Elizabeth Best will have a chapbook released with Rahila's Ghost Press titled Alignment. "@capitatelikeahead

rahilasghostpress.com

David C. Brydges

2021 Dr. William Henry Drummond Poetry Contest league member winners

Second Place: Keith Garebian, Honourable Mention: Kathy Fisher
Judge's Choice: Blaine Marchand, Lynn Tait, Grant Wilkins, Renée M.

SgROI, Susan McCaslin, Keith Garebian

Fern G. Z. Carr

Fern G. Z. Carr was pleased to present a series of four livestreamed themed poetry readings on Facebook thanks to the support of the League of Canadian Poets and the Canada Council for the Arts. Recordings of these readings can be found on her Facebook timeline. She was also delighted to have been invited to participate in two online open mic sessions, one for Bill Arnott's NPM 2021 and the other for Poems to Welcome Spring, A James-Sharp Retrospective by Candice James and Cynthia Sharp. The Miramichi Reader featured Bill Arnott's Author Showcase interview with Carr.

Fern continues to expand her poetry YouTube channel and is currently developing a new "Interviews" section."

facebook.com/contact.ferngzcarr
miramichireader.ca/2021/02/fern-g-z-carr-interview/
youtube.com/channel/UCUWnUy-BQysPMNTFW23BCwdw

Louise Carson

Poems in Montreal *Serai's* poetry issue 34.1. Poems in the League's chapbook *Voices of Quebec*. Haiku in *Haiku Canada Anthology 2021*. Louise Carson has two haiku in the spring/summer issue of *Autumn Moon Haiku Journal*, 4:2.

Ellen Chang-Richardson

Towers, by VII (Collusion Books) launches June 3, 2021. VII is a creative poetry collective based on

the unceded, traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg. VII is Manahil Bandukwala, Ellen Chang-Richardson, Conyer Clayton, nina jane drystek, Chris Johnson, Margo LaPierre and Helen Robertson. Twitter @viipoetry Riverbed Reading Series launches its second season. Our next event will take place on Wednesday, August 18th at 7:30pm Eastern (4:30pm Pacific/6:30pm Central/5:30pm Mountain/8:30pm Atlantic). Riverbed is an experimental reading series that sits at the intersection of literature, music and performance.

My debut poetry/essay hybrid, "Storm Surge," appears in *Room Issue 44.2: City Rhythms*. Issue 44.2 is edited by Isabella Wang."

[Order Towers](#)

[Riverbed Reading Series](#)

Order Room Issue 44.2: City Rhythms

Patrick Connors

Patrick Connors first full collection, *The Other Life*, will be released in July by Mosaic Press. It is available at a [30% discount until the official release](#)

Julie de Belle

A prose of mine was chosen and matched to a visual artist to interpret, among many...an interesting project of collaboration between art and prose. [The exhibit](#) goes in until the end of May.

Joanne Epp

My new poetry collection, *Cattail Skyline*, was just published by Turnstone Press. The recording of the

online launch is available on McNally Robinson Booksellers' [YouTube channel](#).

Susan Ioannou

A Spring Surprise. Last year, I saw advertised The Ontario Poetry Society's "Spring Peepers" contest. What a cute name, I thought, as images of first crocuses tipping up through the soil came to mind. I had few poems to enter relating to flowers or other signs of the earth reawakening, but thought I would give a try to my poem "Frog Love", celebrating the mating serenade. It was only months later that I discovered spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) are actually a kind of chorus frog. The poem won first prize. I am happy to announce that sev-

eral of my eBooks, from *Poems on Geology, Metals, Minerals, and Mining* to *Mother Poems: Love's Long Journey*, have been accepted by Indie Ontario to be available on the [BiblioBoard Library mobile and web platform](#) with just one click of a button.

Elena Johnson

Elena Johnson's poetry collection, *Field Notes for the Alpine Tundra* (Gaspereau, 2015), has been translated into French. [Notes de terrain pour la toundra alpine](#), translated by Luba Markovskaia, was published in March 2021 by Jardins de givre. Johnson wrote this collection of poems at a remote ecology research station in the Yukon.

LCP CHAPBOOK SERIES

poetry for everywhere



Alisha Kaplan

Alisha Kaplan's debut collection of poetry, [Qorbanot: Offerings](#), a collaboration with artist Tobi Kahn, is out this Spring from the State University of New York Press. "A dynamic dialogue of poetry and art that reimagines the ancient, biblical concept of sacrifice."
alishakaplan.com

Penn Kemp

"Penn's new collection, *A Near Memoir: new poems* (Beliveau Books) launched on Earth Day, April 22! Four poems from *A Near Memoir* ("Drawing Conclusions", "A Convoluted Etymology of the Course Not Taken", "Celebrating Souwesto Trees" & "You There") appear in [Beliveau Review, Vol. 2 No. 2 Issue 5](#), out now on.

Poetry London chose Penn's poem, "Called, Culled, Chosen, Caught", as the 2nd place winner of their 2021 contest. A video reading will be up on [poetrylondon.ca](#). Judge Phil Hall wrote: "Jack Spicer used the metaphor of poet as radio, picking up frequencies. Here he is invoked by synchronicity, and then rejected. This poem thinks fast from line to line as it plays at tuning, then finds and defends its stance. It uses space to imply a hesitation of steps— not by logic, but by something close to it — logic's intuition—as based in the writing act."

Penn participated in three National Poetry Month Readings in April, sponsored by the League. [The Free Press has a marvellous article up:](#) <https://lfpress.com/entertainment/local-arts/london-poet-penn-kemp-marks-womens-day-with-call-to->

action with a [video link](#), The Owen Sound Poet Laureate Open Mic series features Penn on May 20, 3pm, 2021, sponsored by the League. Host: Richard-Yves Sitoski. Her next reading is on September 5 for the [Red Lion Reading Series](#) in Stratford ON.
www.pennkemp.weebly.com
www.pennkemp.wordpress.com

David Ly

Editors David Ly (Mythical Man) and Daniel Zomparelli (Everything Is Awful and You're a Terrible Person) were for submissions of poetry and short fiction for a new anthology dedicated to the queerness of monsters, to be published by Arsenal Pulp Press in fall 2022. (*Now closed to submissions*)

Monsters in pop culture have become LGBTQIA2S+ icons over time, and queer writers have long infused them into their work. The Babadook, Pennywise, Ursula, Freddy Krueger, King Kong, Medusa, witches, demons, and more have been queered to different degrees since their inception, and this anthology aims to showcase this and all things monsters.

Carol MacKay

Carol L. MacKay was announced the winner of the 2020 SCBWI Magazine Merit Award for Poetry for her poem, "Moving Day Villanelle," which was published in the Irish children's magazine, *The Caterpillar*. The awards "are presented by the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators annually for original magazine work for young people. Each year, the SCBWI presents

four plaques, one in each category of fiction, nonfiction, illustration, and poetry, to honor members' outstanding original magazine work published during that year. The works chosen are those that exhibit excellence in writing and illustration, and genuinely appeal to the interests and concerns of young people." Vancouver Island Regional Library also selected Carol's poem, "A Tailor Visits Englishman River" as one of ten selections for their inaugural 2021 "Poem in Your Pocket Day" project.

Diana Manole

"My three poems about the COVID-19 pandemic have just been published in "Le Nouveau recueil" in Gilles Mossière's English to French translation: "Shrimp Fried rice with a Hint of Saffron," "Bliss Molecules," "Recoding Grief": <http://www.lenouveaurecueil.fr/>

The English originals have been published in 2020, as follows:

- 1) "Shrimp Fried rice with a Hint of Saffron." *We Are One: Poems from the Pandemic. Anthology*, ed. George Melnyk. Calgary, Canada: Bayeux Arts, 2020.
- 2) "Recoding Grief." [The Blue Nib](#) Literary Magazine. 25 May 2020.
- 3) "Bliss Molecules." [WordCity Monthly](#), Nov. 2020, Issue 3 (Calgary, Canada). Nov 7, 2020

Blaine Marchand

Blaine Marchand's seventh book of poetry, *Becoming History*, will be published by Aeolus House Press of Toronto in August. Poems in this collection have appeared in *By-words*, *Verse Afire*, *The Nashwaak*

Review and *Vallum* were prize winners in the W.H. Drummond Poetry Contest. He is currently on work on various series of poems – on aging (Old Growth), on cancer (Finding my Voice), on the experiences of the life in the period of Covid and on his interactions with the landscape along Ottawa River (Promenade). A poem, Infectious, from Old Growth, was a Judge's Choice in the 2021 Drummond Poetry Contest.

Susan McCaslin

Susan McCaslin's most recent volume of poetry, [Heart Work, was published by Ekstasis Editions](#) (Victoria, BC) in Dec. 2020 and launched virtually in Feb. 2021. Susan has read from the book at four zoom events across Canada and will be reading for the Spoken Ink Poetry Series (Burnaby Arts Council) on May 29, 2021. In the Fall of 2020, she edited the last poems of fellow poet E.D. Blodgett (1935-2018), a posthumous volume slated for publication by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press sometime in 2021-22. Daily meanders along the Fraser River outside Fort Langley, BC with her Australian Shepherd, Rosie, and the occasional hugging of ""mother trees"" have helped her through the isolation of the pandemic. Cosmic Egg, a hand-made, limited edition chapbook [for the Alfred Gustav Press](#) (Vancouver, BC), ed. and publisher David Zieroth, was published in June 2021. Susan's poem, "Retiring Into the Greater Work," won "Judge's Choice" in the Dr. William Henry Drummond Poetry Contest, Cobalt, ON, June 2021.

Her most recent volume of poetry, *Heart Work* (Ekstasis Editions, Dec. 2020), has been reviewed in the following:

[Sage-ing: The Journal of Creative Ageing](#), Okanagan Institute (No. 35, Spring 2021), 25-27. (includes excerpts from the poems and photos in the volume)

The Island Catholic News, Pat Jamieson, Vol. 35, No 1, 2 & 3, Spring 2021, p. 17.

[The Vancouver Sun & The Province](#), April 24-25, 2021, by Tom Sandborn. Digital version April 23.

Bruce Meyer

Bruce Meyer's 67th book will appear June 29 from [Ace of Swords Publishing in Montreal](#). *The Hours: Stories from a Pandemic* is a collection of short stories that are set in various pandemics (not just the current one). The pieces chronicle the challenges faces by individuals and the ways in which they overcome those obstacle. Bruce Meyer's 66th book was launched in early April. [Grace of Falling Stars \(Black Moss Press, 2021\)](#) is a collection of poems that examine the concept of joy, especially in childhood and adolescence. The book was edited, designed and produced entirely online by the Interns of Black Moss Press and the Publishing Practicum at the University of Windsor.

Renee Sarojini Saklikar

My new book, [Bramah and the Beggar Boy](#), book one of my epic fantasy in verse, launches in July 2021. My hero, Bramah, adopts an orphan beggar boy and together, they time travel to help a planet ravaged by climate change.

Brian Sankarsingh

The readers of the *Stouffville Sun-Tribune* have voted Brian Sankarsingh - BrianthePoet - for Best Local Author in Stouffville in the 2020 Readers Choice Awards

Cynthia Sharp

Cynthia Sharp and Candice James offer a retrospective from their years of poetry, then are joined by poets through North America to honour Earth Day [in this Youtube video](#). Thanks for listening!

Cora Siré

My new collection of poetry is entitled "*Not in Vain You've Sent Me Light*" and has just been published by Guernica Editions. [Here is the link to the publisher's website](#)

Lindsay Soberano-Wilson

Lindsay Soberano-Wilson released her debut chapbook *Casa de mi Corazón: A Travel Journal of Poetry and Memoir* (Poetica Publishing). With life moving at a slower pace and travel coming to a halt due to the pandemic, Lindsay Soberano-Wilson crafted a hybrid journal of poetry and memoir about how her sense of community, identity, and home was shaped by her past travels. *Casa de mi Corazón: A Travel Journal of Poetry and Memoir* (Poetica Publishing) is the story of a Canadian woman on an inner and outer journey to find home. As the granddaughter of Spanish Moroccan immigrants and Romanian Holocaust survivors, she travels to Israel and Europe (1997-2005) to explore her roots. Inevitably, home is rooted in her rich Moroccan Sephar-

dic culture, concluding the memoir with a bittersweet eulogy to her late grandfather, Marcos Soberano. The [Book Launch streamed](#) via her platform @Poetry.Matters on FacebookLive on June 17. Please visit lindsaysoberno.com for additional information about the book. “

Naomi Beth Wakan

To celebrate my 90th year, [Shanti Arts has gathered a selection of my sixty years of poetry writing poetry](#) in “Wind on the Heath”. Feeling I should somehow add to the celebration I published “Scattered Leaves” a collection of tanka accompanying the photographs of retired librarian and ardent walker, Alison Fitzgerald. Then as a little icing on the cake, I felt I should gather many of the writing prompts I have given in my workshops over the years to encourage people turning to writing as an outlet during the pandemic. It is called “Write Away! (prompts for a healthy life)

Janet Vickers *Grief and Shame*

215 Children

Some as young as three
sent for ethnic cleansing
in church run residential schools

what would a child say
about who she is
when she is three
(or thirteen)
removed from the place
and family she was born into

electricuted by empire
disciplined by the undisciplined
authorities with power
but no conscience

in what century did the teachings
of a Palestinian rabbi
become a structure
for self denial, misogyny
the primary emotional weapon
against the various colours
of nature

its fish, its flora
its roaming mammals
and the alpha primate
organized and taught
to torture those
who are different

to make everyone
part of the economy

and where in that dying body
hanging from a cross
for three days and nights
until he drew his last breath
was the love for those tortured children
buried in mass graves?

What kind of supremacy
is this whiteness?”

Writing Opportunities

Please note: This is a curated list of opportunities. For a full list of all writing opportunities updated on a monthly basis, please [subscribe to Between the Lines newsletter](#) from the LCP.

Calls for Submissions

Parliamentary Poet Laureate Poem of the Month Program

In her role as Parliamentary Poet Laureate, Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer is highlighting the work of Indigenous Poets from Canada through the Poem of the Month Program. Each month, one poem from a published Indigenous poet will be posted to the Parliamentary Poet Laureate website.

To apply, please send one original poem of any length and a short biography about yourself, along with your contact information to LOPPoet/PoetBDP@parl.gc.ca.

The Hellebore Issue 8 Youth Empowerment: Submit micro poetry, lyrical poetry, flash fiction, flash CNF, blogs, hybrid, or visual art that relates to the following topics: adolescence, young adulthood, joy, self expression, relationships, gender, friendship, family, culture, school, memory, mental health, navigating

trauma. Open to ages 13-26 only! Let's give teens and young adults a safe and supportive space to share their literature and art. Issue 9 Latinx & Asian Kinship: Submit micro poetry, prose poetry, flash CNF or flash fiction that explores Latinx and/or Asian identity, culture, and history. Issue 10 Mental Health: Submit micro poetry, prose poetry, flash CNF, comics, genre-less, or hybrid work that de-stigmatizes mental health. General Submission: If you have other work for consideration that explores different themes, you are still welcome to submit. **Deadline is July 25, 2021.** [Find out more](#)

Arc accepts unsolicited submissions of previously unpublished poetry in English, or translations of poetry into English, on any subject and in any form. **Submissions period is available until July 31, 2021.** [Find out more](#)

The Maynard is accepting poetry submissions for the Fall issue. **Deadline is July 31, 2021.** [Find out more.](#)

CP Quarterly Submissions for Issue No. 13 (Summer 2021) are now open. Our acceptance rate averages around 34%. **Deadline is August 28, 2021.** [Find out more.](#)

CV2 Announcing a call for submissions to Vol.44.3, the Winter 2022 issue of CV2: The Daddy Issue We're looking for poems that explore daddy energy in all its forms. We want poems about your leather daddies, your step-dads, your memories of watching Maury Povich announce who is or is not the dad. Give us your big dad energy and your dead-beat dad energy. Your experiences of having or becoming or losing a daddy. We want your role-play poems and your BDSM poems. Your meme poems and your poems about celebrities who are daddy AF. Poems about your sugar daddies and your glucose guardians. Poems that contain your dad jokes and your dad pain. We want all the fun and all the hurt that comes with the term and no holding back. Send us your daddy poems and we promise to give them a big daddy hug. Please submit no more than 6 pages of poetry, with each poem starting on a new page. Please submit just once and submit all your poems in a single submission. **Deadline is September 16, 2021.** [Find out more](#)

Subterranean Blue Poetry We look for Symbolist, Surrealist, Imagist, Beat progressions and the New Goth. If it bangs in the dance it's in. Optional Pay-What-You-Can Reading Fee (\$1 per Poem, up to 5 Poems). Everyone hears back from us. We pay \$10 per Poem, \$20 per Of Poetic Interest . . . article, and \$20 per Masthead Art/Photo in the month of publication. Thank you to all Contributors, Readers, and Supporters of Subterranean Blue Poetry. Deadline: Open. [Find out more](#)

Beliveau Books Seeking chapbook submissions by BIPOC poets, to be published in August 2021. [Find out more](#)

Beliveau Review Open to year round submissions of poetry. No listed deadline. [Find out more.](#)

Bywords.ca Current and former Ottawa residents, students and workers are invited to send their unpublished poetry to Bywords.ca for our monthly poetry magazine. We pay an honorarium. Published poems are considered for the John Newlove Poetry Award. No set deadline. [Find out more.](#)

Antigonish Review Open to general submissions. The quality of the writing is the chief criterion. We also consider it our mandate to encourage Atlantic Canadians and Canadian writers - although excellent writing can come from anywhere. We also welcome new and young writers. No listed deadline. [Find out more](#)

Geist Accepting submissions of a maximum of 5 poems. No set deadline. [Find out more](#)

Plenitude Accepting submissions of up to five pages of poetry. No listed deadline. [Find out more](#)

Q/A Poetry Journal Q/A Poetry exists to amplify the voices of womxn and nonbinary poets, and to expand the subjects deemed "appropriate" for womxn to be writing about. Send us your poems on your postpartum body, spider veins, lip hair, your favorite liquid eyeliner.

er, your anguish over glass ceilings, your sex work, your ode to stay-at-home tedium, your list of your most beautiful and unlikeable qualities. No listed deadline. [Find out more](#)

The Queen's Quarterly seeks submissions on any topic that presents a novel perspective and point of departure for thinking about our contemporary world. Whether fiction or non-fiction, a premium will be placed on singularity of voice, accessibility of ideas and relevance to issues of common concern. Honoraria are paid, editorial services are provided and the chance to kick-start a national conversation is on offer. No listed deadline. [Find out more](#)

Awards and Contests

The VMI Betsy Warland Between Genres Award For a book published in Canada in 2021 that is a hybrid genre, or straddles two or more genres. The winner will receive \$500 at a ceremony at The Vancouver Writers Fest in Fall 2021, presented by judge Wayde Compton with Betsy Warland, special guest of honour. Two Honourable Mentions (no cash prize) will also be awarded. Deadline is July 30, 2021. [Find out more.](#)

The Antigonish Review Writer of the Year Contest Submit your poetry today. There will be One (1) winner and three shortlisted writers. The winner's work will appear in three issues of the 2022 publication year, followed by an interview with the editor in the fourth issue. The three (3) shortlisted writers will have poems published in the first

issue of the 2022 publication year. Guidelines: Poems may be on any subject. Total entry not to exceed 5 pages. Entries might be one longer poem, or several shorter poems. Your name must appear ONLY on the cover page. The fee for first entry is \$30.00 CDN. Your first entry fee includes a year subscription to The Antigonish Review. **Deadline is October 2, 2021.** [Find out more](#)

CV2 The Foster Poetry Prize

The Foster Poetry Prize (formerly titled the Young Buck Poetry Prize) is awarded to the author of the single best submitted poem, along with \$1000 and publication in CV2. Four honourable mentions are also awarded, each with a cash prize. 2021 Judge for this contest is Jónína Kirton. Deadline is November 1, 2021. [Find out more](#)

Job & Volunteer Opportunities

Shab-e She'r, Toronto's most diverse and brave poetry and open mic series, is looking for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) volunteers to join our team. Among the desired qualifications are:

- Experience organizing and/or volunteering for literary events
- Some poetry writing experience and/or publication
- Familiarity with literary scene in Toronto and/or Canada
- Familiarity with Shab-e She'r core values and format
- Commitment to long-term consistent volunteering

- Social AND Online skills
 - Professionalism
- Please send your cover letter and résumé to Bānoo Zan. In your application, please detail how many of the above-mentioned qualifications you meet.

Please remember that you will be interviewed before being admitted to the group. And, depending on the case, you may need to present a VSS (Vulnerable Sector Screening) or police check.

Don't forget to spread the word.

Thank you,

Bānoo Zan

Founder of the Series

Residency, Fellowship & Grant Opportunities

Edna Staebler Laurier Writer-in-Residence

Applications for a 10-week winter 2022 virtual residency, commencing Jan. 17, 2022, will be accepted as of June 14, 2021. The deadline for applications is July 30, 2021.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

All Canadian writers of established literary reputation in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction or drama are encouraged to apply.

The following criteria are required:

- Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada.
- Established literary reputation with critically well-received work.
- Professional teaching or public speaking experience.
- A clear plan for how to adapt residency activities to a virtual medium (eg. Zoom, Facebook Live, MS Teams).
- Willing to engage with the pub-

lic one-on-one and in group settings.

- Active participant in the writing community.
- In the midst of a new writing project intended for book-length publication.

The following criteria are considered assets:

- Experience in writing in more than one genre.
- Experience in working with youth.
- Experience in working with the public and with beginning writers.

Access Copyright Foundation Call for Professional Development Grant Applications.

The Foundation offers grant funding to facilitate professional-development opportunities for Canadian writers, visual artists and publishers as well as staff members at arts organizations. Deadline to apply is April 1, 2021. [Find out more.](#)

The Banff Centre is underway in reopening their programs, residencies, workshops and more for on-line. Stay tuned for more details. [Find out more.](#)

In Memoriam

The League of Canadian Poets has a large community that has stood strong for over 50 years. Over these past few months, the League has lost members and friends from the poetry community. We'd like to take this chance to remember Heather Spears, Mick Burrs, and Fraser Sutherland.

If there is a poet who has recently passed that you would like to pay tribute to, please visit our [In Memoriam](#) page on poets.ca.

Remembering Heather Spears

For more tributes, photos and memories of Heather, please visit [Remembering Heather Spears on poets.ca](#)

Heather was a fine and caring person, a wonderful poet, a light of shining energy. I'll certainly miss her and remember her with love.

-Susan McMaster

To say that the death of Heather Spears leaves the world poorer is both a cliché and a truth. Many TWUC members who did not know her personally will remember her sketching us at TWUC AGMs. I met Heather through TWUC, and at more or less the same time my partner (Timothy J. Anderson) and I got to know her better through our publishing work. We quickly



became friends--she had the gift of forming deep and direct bonds with people that obtained despite geographic distance, as she spent

much of her time latterly in Copenhagen, coming to Canada yearly to teach workshops and visit friends and family across the country Heather was a poet and fiction writer on top of a vibrant visual arts career. Sketching was her core practice. She famously sketched children in war zones (one of her books was *Children of the Intifada*) and babies in NICUs (often making sketches for parents if a baby was at risk or died, which they appreciated as they had no other image of their child). Another of her books was a brilliant collaboration with a neuroscientist to look at art and the nature of vision. Her astonishingly original speculative//far-future fiction was full of thought, vivid imagery, rich literary language, and wild innovation.

As a person, she was clear-eyed and energetic--nay, dynamic! Even in her eighties she was spry enough to get down on the floor to sketch on huge sheets of paper at her workshops (and probably in her studio to, though alas, I never did get to visit her there)--then she would spring up with vigour to look anew at the subject or model. She always seemed to see the world with ""newness""--not childlike, but Zenlike--and her art reflected that immediacy of vision. I admired that, and tried to learn from her to see more simply, without filters, in my own work. She was a true original, a kind and good friend and colleague, and a significant talent.

-Candas Jane Dorsey

"Ah, what a beautiful woman in all her kindness, compassion and

talent. Heather lived such a rich life that lives on, all her talents explored. In AGM after AGM across Canada, Heather caught us in the moment, in the delivery of our po-



ems and in our attention as we listened to speakers. I very much admired the way Heather took advantage of meetings to present us as we are: a gift that was almost shamanic in its power. So much was conveyed by the compassionate attentiveness and skill with which Heather drew us, drawing out our essence in a few lines, immortalized. (Does anyone else admit to diving into the garbage pail to pull out some of the rejects Heather had tossed into a ball? I'd spend the rest of the meeting attempting to smooth out the creases in some of my favourite drawings!)
Mona Fertig quotes a special anecd-

dote from Heather's 2010 letter to her: "When in Toronto at a student work camp 1955? I took my paintings to show Fred Varley, then an old man, a hero of mine, he looked at my drawings and said he could not teach me anything, except to stop cross-hatching ""You learned that at the VSA [Vancouver School of Art] didn't you?"" and said to just ""do this"" and wiped a shadow in with his thumb. I have done so ever since. He looked at my paintings and said ""One day you will discover colour."" But I did not, and finally gave up painting for drawing."

Heather Spears was a woman who followed her own many paths to the end! Here's to the community of poets, living through the dimensions of time.

-Penn Kemp

"Heather was such a remarkable person and, to my mind, a sprite-like character. Maybe it was her bright blue eyes and small stature. But Heather had an impish curiosity about things. It always seemed magical to me how she would be present at League panels during AGMs, hunched over a piece of paper, her head bobbing up and down. After the presentation, she would show us how in a complex and yet simple crosshatch of lines, she had captured the likeness of the panellists - sometimes individually, sometimes scattered across the page. It was only later I found out how her early interest in drawing began as a child of five and of her training in both Canada and Denmark. Heather's poetry had a similar

memorable and haunting quality to it. It was at the League AGM in Kingston in the late 80s that I first met her. I bought her Pat Lowther-Award winning book, *How to Read Faces*, which seemed to me a perfect title given her constant sketching over the weekend. At another AGM I bought her collection *The Word for Sand*, which also won the Lowther Award. Her poems had a deep humanity to them. The lines were infused by her strong visual eye. Like herself, her poetry could seem personal, private, yet they spoke with a clearly compassionate and engaged voice.

After one AGM in Ottawa, I arranged some readings for her, including one at my son's high school. Her reading included poems from two of her books, *Drawings from the Newborn: Poems of Drawings of Infants in Crisis* and *Drawn From the Fire Children of the Intifada*. This reading raised the ire of some parents of students at the school, who felt it was not age-appropriate, my son reported back. I asked him what he and the students in his class thought. They were fine with it. Later when I mentioned this to Heather, she simply shrugged. Heather was a socially committed poet and artist who looked into the face of death and suffering and drew inspiration from it. She was someone who would not flinch, I have not seen Heather for decades but my memories of her at League events remain as fresh as I had just talked to her a few months ago. She was unforgettable. I am sure that all long-time members of the League will feel a deep sorrow at her passing

-Blaine Marchand



She was our shoulder to cry on; our friend, our eyes and ears as well as the song we frequently had in our hearts. Her poems unfolded in melting eloquence...with layers of meaning, alive with nuanced emotion, and rich and vivid imagery that would caress the senses with invisible hands and skin that felt like expensive raw silk... Sometimes her poems could be extremely tactile poems and often they could be like scorpions - their bite was in the tails that would suddenly whip around and plunge their meanings into your very soul.

-Raul da Gama

“Heather was the sort of person who made everyone feel as if their relationship with her was special. I

say this as her daughter, but I know her numerous friends felt the same. She somehow had time to devote to each of us. Yet I was aware that she had an existence on another level, where her creative drive dictated her actions. At the same time she was as earthy and present as you could want, sharing chocolate, obsessed with scrabble, enjoying tiny shots of whiskey, laughing at britcoms.

Her letters (I was raised in Canada), and later her emails, were full of succinct observations and vivid imagery... someone “brought his psychologist to the party, a thin woman with eyes like drills.” When Heather described something, she shared the interesting, funny parts. I read mostly science fiction until

I was about 18, when she started sending me Canadian literary fiction, with the strong suggestion that I try it – I did, and it really elevated my appreciation of language. I loved her poetry and how she could make me see the world and myself in new ways. When I decided I wanted to write, she was my tireless editor, supportive and generous. When I had some small successes, she was as pleased as I was. I built her website, heatherspears.com, now completely dated, and did webmaster duty along with several devoted friends over the years. I worked with her on various projects – in later years she was technically challenged with her computer and the web, but when it came to what she wanted on web pages, or the layout of a brochure, her directions were impeccable. Those of us who helped with blogs, fixing gmail, finding lost files and making updates know the fond frustration we felt at times, but we all knew how important it was that she could do what she needed to do.

I followed all her adventures; one of the last was drawing bell ringers at Oxford, along with crawling up ladders into cramped belfries to see the bells. She also found the time to draw Tolkien's grave for me, complete with the little remembrances people had left.

During the pandemic I found an old note in a book I was donating. She'd written a web URL on it for me, a place that listed fiction markets, and I decided it was time to renew my writing efforts. We had fun discussing edits on Skype calls.

One of my happiest recent memories is from 3 weeks before she died, in the hospital, my brother assisting with a video call. I was thrilled to be able to report the publication of an anthology containing one of my stories, and another one accepted the day before. She cried out in delight, laughing and telling me I must be "so chuffed."

There are so many parts of her life that I won't ever know about, wish I'd asked more about. I thought we had more time.

-Lesley Morrison

"Heather Spears was an exceptional poet and artist; in both art forms, she was a perceptive, but gentle and compassionate observer. I cannot claim that I knew her well, but I liked her very much. Her eloquent endorsement graces the back cover of my collection Passenger Flight, and I am happy to own one of her sketches of me performing at the LCP New Member's Reading years ago. Leafing among the books of hers on my shelves, here's a poem from her Selected that says much about her relationship to us all:

PAYING ATTENTION AT POETRY READINGS

I am always moral
at poetry readings
I pay attention, or I try
I always get lost
i begin to arrange the hair of the poet
or to trim (or eliminate) his beard
I press his trousers
I am fascinated by his fingers

I love his pleasure and his disarm-
ing smile
at a particular phrase
I love the little pieces of paper stick-
ing out of his books

Some poets are austere
they read impatiently
they frown
they do not ingratiate
they dare you to alter their appear-
ance by one thread
they look at you
suddenly
under this kind of pressure
I am dismayed to find
I have again lost track of what they
are saying

It is necessary for the poet
to be present
it is to be hoped
that an audience of twelve or over
(twelve being a respectable, even
apostolic number)
and that the poem, having been as
it were reborn
foundering among the chairs
will be received here and there
by the large if fallible pale ears of
the listeners
cupped for it like hands

---We will all miss her quiet and
supporting presence.

-Brian Campbell

Artist and poet Heather Spears
cared intensely about others, the
face of the other, the otherness of
others and our common obligation
to greet the faces of others with
respect. As a visual artist, she man-
ifested her compassionate gaze
through her sketches. I would call

her, along with the philosopher
Immanuel Levinas, a phenomenol-
ogist of the face, la visage. In Total-
ity and Infinity Levinas writes, "The
face is a living presence; it is expres-
sion. . . The face speaks." With a few
deft strokes, Heather penetrates to
the very essence of her subjects,
connecting with their living pres-
ence, their irreplaceable otherness.
At a League of Canadian Poets
AGM and Conference I attended in
Toronto sometime in the nineties,
I noticed Heather quietly sketch-
ing her fellow poets as they stood
erect, slouched, or leaned at a lec-
tern reading their poems. I later
learned she had sketched me as
well as so many others. I saw my
sketch on the wall at a subsequent
League event. I later learned about
her poignant drawings of newborns
in crisis, through which she drew
attention to the most vulnerable
among us and proved herself an
artist whose work unites art with
social-political concerns.

Heather's last gift to me came as a
complete surprise.

In 2015 our dog Penny was run over
by a truck, instantly, brutally killed
before my husband's and my eyes
just after Christmas. We endured
the harrowing night ride to the pet
clinic. Then we had to inform our
daughter, who was in Germany at
the time, that Penny, the mini-Aus-
tralian shepherd she had picked for
us from a litter as a pup and then
raised, was gone. Penny was only
five.

A bit later I posted a notice to Face-
book friends about the circum-
stances under which we had lost
Penny. Heather responded imme-

diately, suggesting that, if I could send her a photo of Penny, she would be glad to create a sketch of our dog and mail it to me from Copenhagen. Deeply touched, I offered to pay her for her work, but she refused. She only allowed me to cover the postage.

Today Heather's deft, coloured sketch of Penny graces our hallway. I am forever grateful to Heather for her artistry and magnanimity that keep our memories of the inimitable Penny alive.

-Susan McCaslin



Heather Spears has been a friend and correspondent for twenty-plus years. I refer to her in the present because her creative spirit continues.

At the League's AGM in 1993, in

Montreal, I was asked to chair the 1994 Feminist Caucus Panel – "Belle letters – Beautiful letters". It would address correspondence and letters. I had two simultaneous thoughts – I wanted a small panel, and with gentle people. Anne Burke came to mind instantly. She said yes. I thought of Heather but hesitated asking her because I never thought she'd say yes. I looked for Fred Cogswell and spoke to him in a Montreal hallway and he said yes! I then clumsily asked Heather as we were crossing a busy Montreal street together. She immediately said yes. She'd been wanting to ask me. Within one day the panel was complete – Heather in Denmark, Fred in eastern Canada, Anne in western Canada and me in New York.

In Montreal Heather drew a flurry of magnificent sketches, as she did yearly, and posted them on a wall at the conference. Her 1994 drawings later became the "Belle letters – beautiful letters" 1995 chapbook cover. The cover drawing includes Anne Burke and Fred Cogswell, and a bouquet of wildflowers I picked on a walk with Di Brandt somewhere before the panel.

(The originally planned cover drawing included - Anne Burke, Fred Cogswell and Magie Dominic. But for a reason known only to God, not to me, I made a copy of the original drawing, then removed myself from the copy, leaving the wildflowers, Anne and Fred. The copy became the chapbook cover.

I left the original drawing intact, thank God!! I don't know what I was thinking! Maybe I wanted the wildflowers to be symbolic.)

Heather and I shared a long lasting

correspondence which included photographs of her life in Denmark and mine in New York, our homemade Christmas cards, and in July of last year when we shared thoughts about the impact of the virus on our lives and our families. Her daughter lives in New York.



Heather's essay in "Belle letters – beautiful letters" is titled "The Poem as letter – audience and intent". She quoted several poets and their various reasons for writing. She wrote – "Take poems for the dead. Most poets address the dead at one time or another – and do so to celebrate them. Often they are addressed to a dead parent. There is a particular memory,..... " and she quotes the first four lines from Pat Lane's poem Fathers and Sons:
"I will walk along the long slow grass
where the desert sun waits among the stones
and reach down into the heavy

earth
and lift your body back into the day."

Dear Heather: Your grace, kind generosity of friendship, your genuine caring, all your beautiful letters, your magnificent gifts of writing and art, will remain with us and reach into our every day.

With love,

-Magie Dominic

Dearest Heather,
The last time I saw you, you had invited a number of writers over to your place in Frederiksberg and had served up a mean apple pie. I was so grateful that you welcomed me into your community with open arms, even though we hadn't known each other for very long. I am so sad to hear of your passing. I will remember your warmth, inspiration, artistry and good company - and look back fondly on those dark nights in Copenhagen, surrounded by friends.

-Shirley Camia

I was lucky to have met Heather and to have spent some time with her in the 1990s when she visited the Okanagan where she had family at the time. I'd arrange a reading for her at the college where I was teaching so she could access some funding and we'd have dinner together or lunch and I'd get to hear her read her poems and talk about her process and her drawing. She had a memorable way of looking at you. A gentle, back and forth sort of intensity. I'd not call it probing because that would be too invasive, nor direct because it was not

Remembering Mick Burrs

assertive, but her gaze was palpably there, flitting, negotiating, supported by a warm smile at times, questioning, holding an invitation to be seen by her. I think of her gaze when I read her poems which are so often about witnessing and seeing and then, through the power of the imagination, transforming embodied experience into another way of knowing. Some of her most startling and wonderful poems are about what witnessing some things, especially human acts (to quote the title of one of her books), does to you. In her poem "Necklace" from *The Word for Sand* she protects us from what seems to be a horror: "(his head in the necklace and what happened)/ ... it's in my head permanently/if this were a real poem/ I would describe the event/ so you could see it like I do--/ be lucky in your life, this isn't/ a real poem". Of course it is a real poem and of course our minds, almost against our wills, see and imagine some kind of horror. When I was putting together a nature poem anthology, I selected one of her poems called "How Animals See". Heather imagines the way bees see: "they keep the real real,/ their tiny manifold eye/ closing in on/ the actual valuable/ planet, terrible in neon and violet." What is real, what is seen, how imagination mediates our beautiful and terrible relationships with each other and the planet- this was Heather's territory. Seeing was her nature, and seeing with imagination on fire was her practice. How much our world will miss the manifold ways of her wisdom.

-Nancy Holmes

For more tributes, photos and memories of Mick, please visit [Remembering Mick Burrs on poets.ca](https://www.poets.ca/remembering-mick-burrs)

For more than three decades we would run into each other at poetry events, readings and celebrations. Mick was always a passionate contributor and presence, with his enigmatic smile, his generosity of spirit and his very fine poetry. He will be missed by those who loved and respected him as a man, a poet, a friend. I am sure he and Linda Stitt are sharing a lovely pot of tea and offering poetry to the angels. Rest Well.

-Gianna Patriarca

I was really sad to learn of Mick's passing. I saw him just before the lockdown. Xeroxing my work, Mick came into the shop and recognized me. He was interested in what I was doing.

We went for a beverage at the Miles Nadal Centre.

We were able to reminisce and share philosophies, opinions, remembrances, conversations about being Jewish, American, humour and things that inspire the spirit.. I read Mick's work later in his career realizing that his work is a bridge from one place to another. By place I mean place in time, places

between two countries, place in history, place settings.

Mick seemed to hold time in his hands and then elucidate all that that moment contained. It was fascinating and charming.

Often we would meet at Julie MacNeil's and I would have the privilege of driving him somewhere. That adventurous spirit was so clearly expressed in his poetry.

May his memory be a blessing

-Honey Novick

Mick Burrs was a great poet. More than that, he was a loving person, who brought out the best in everyone who encountered him.

He edited my poetry from 2013-

2017, and on an informal basis after that. But he was more of a friend than a mentor. We ate lunches, went to baseball games, attended poetry readings, and bigger meals at the home of his longtime friend, Kent Bowman.

I became a better poet from working with Mick Burrs.

I am a better man for knowing him."

-Pat Connors

Mick Burrs was an interesting and committed poet, with a mind open to all kinds of possibilities. I enjoyed his work a great deal. He was also a lovely person and always positive and supportive, especially of any experimental or cross-media collaboration -- and

also, and especially, of novice or shy poets. A man with grace. I will miss him.

-Susan

McMaster

My closest connection with Mick was in 2007-08, when we co-edited the anthology *Crossing Lines: Poets Who Came to*



Canada in the Vietnam War Era. Having become friends after he moved to Toronto from Saskatchewan, we eventually discovered that both of us had the idea of gathering poems by the many poets we knew who emigrated to this country from the U.S. between 1965 and 1975. We were surprised to find more than 80 such people, whose writings had been, and were continuing to be, woven into the fabric of our national literature. 76 ultimately had poems in the book. As an editor, Mick was both meticulous and passionately engaged. Determined to help fellow poets perfect their poems, he was exceptionally insightful, patient, and conscientious. He could dig his heels in, even to the extent of overcoming one distinguished contributor's resistance to further enhancing what was already a signature poem. He encouraged two hesitant late-blooming poets to submit poems to the anthology which turned out to be very fine and proved pivotal in their going on to publish multiple books of high quality. I also knew Mick to be one of the gentlest and kindest people I have encountered. He was extremely generous in mentoring others and revealing the secrets of poetic craft. Not being a self-promoter may have limited the profile of the beautifully-wrought poems he continued to write, but, besides having great admiration for what Mick did for other poets, I am confident as to the enduring worth of the body of work he has left us.

-Allan Briesmaster

Mick edited my poetry collection "Children of Ararat" expertly, and I

remember his patient gentleness, thoroughness, and empathy. Financially poor, he was rich in spirit, and I only came to know about his dementia too late to leave anything but voice messages for him that I doubt he heard with any firm remembrance of me. I have a brief tribute to him in the memoir I am currently writing. His name will never leave the stones around his grave.

-Keith Garebian

NOTICE: PARENTS TO BE

In Memory Of Mick Burrs (1940-2021)

The fierce eye of a female robin
fixed on her famous eggs
the nest I believed was abandoned.

Sometimes I long for fur
but lately it is feathers I wish
covered the body I live within.

What it must feel like
to have under you the young
the heat of your body will
bring to that crucial moment,
beak through the egg's shell.

Out where the air also contains
my hope, which is
made up of a wish,
no crow or bluejay is hungry
enough to steal what she
and her mate, keeping guard
in the woken budding oak,
deserve to feed
and soon fly south together."

-Chad Norman

I remember Mick so well from League AGMs and conferences. He was the most engaged person -- he listened really attentively to what people were saying to him, and to their poems. He offered his own ideas as a contribution to dialogue, not as position statements. What came across was always warmth and kindness. I miss his presence.

-Alice Major

Mick had such a quiet passion for poetics and a life on the fringe. He embraced the struggle always knowing that he'd never quite have the full acceptance of his family members, but he carved his own path into the wild wood where with such gentl ease, he aimiably swung any of its darkness to light. Always willing to take risks with his work, he supported everyone and read everything. Open-hearted and without judgement, what I most admired about Mick was his breadth of knowledge, his honesty as he came across with such child-like innocence that in the growth and exploration of poetry; he understood profoundly and spiritually that the intellectual critical eye could be a debilitating pause taking our breath and words away from inner emotional truths.

-Sonia Di Placido

He was the first person I met at the League meeting in Regina. He was sewing his chapbooks when he asked me if I loved poetry. I was so shy back then that I could hardly speak. It was life changing to join a tribe of poets which has lasted for years and years. He stayed at

the public library in the winter. I reviewed his first full length collection *The Blue Pools of Paradise*. When I was an undergraduate it was during the Vietnam war. So faculty in the English Department had fled the U.S. However, Mick and I did not discuss it until very late in our friendship. He told me about the name "Steven" but I could go on calling him "Mick". We published so many of his poems in *The Prairie Journal*. He was wise beyond his years. He was a kind, sensitive, gentle man. When he edited *Grain Magazine* I sent him many submissions, including a play. He had astute comments on all of them. He was loyal, always soft spoken, renewed his subscription; he said what you do is important because it is about the region. With Joe Blades, Brenda Niskala, and Dennis Reid, we met up with Mick in Saskatoon, during our cross country readings tour for the *Open Twenty-Four Hours Anthology*. rob mc-lennan was on tour with us and the CBC came along to document the trip. Those were the best of times and I am very grateful for them.

-Anne Burke

Mick was so welcoming when I joined the League of Canadian Poets in 1990. One time when Mick's train crossed through Parry Sound, we met at the station and exchanged poetry books! Another time, Mick and Sharon came to Parry Sound to do a reading for our Poetry Bash. Mick's poetry was exquisitely lyrical and so was his friendship.

-Katerina Fretwell

I produced the CBC morning radio show in Regina from 1985-88. Every now and then, when I needed a commentary on a tricky or sensitive issue, I'd ask Mick if he had views; he always had views, and they were always sharp and considerate and delivered on deadline.

He was kind to me; kinder when he learned that I wrote poetry in addition to working as a journalist.

I loved him.

-Joe Fiorito

I met Mick Burrs at the League of Canadian Poets AGM in Toronto in 2001 and we became very close from then to the end of his life. In 2002, during a trip to Toronto from Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Mick encouraged me to do my first chapbook, "The Last Years of the Natural World." When he moved to Toronto in 2005, we started collaborating constantly, performing our work together, and supporting each other in our projects.

In 2008 the Royal Ontario Museum sponsored the concert, named after Mick's poem, Through the Roof of My Heart It Rains, in honour of Holocaust Education Week. Set to classical music by the late composer Philip McConnell, the work was performed twice at this event, once by Ottawa soprano Doreen Taylor-Claxton and secondly by Mick, both with the Toronto Sinfonietta Orchestra. Philip McConnell also set two of my works to music, which I performed as spoken word at this event, accompanied by the orchestra.

Doreen Taylor-Claxton created the project "In Need of Song" in 2006. She gathered work from Canadian

poets and presented it to Canadian composers who selected the poems they felt inspired to set to music.

James Wright chose Mick's "Quilled Sonnet," while Colin Mack selected my poems, "Mist," "Becalmed," and "Destiny" to create the song cycle The Names of Water. These works were recorded for the much-lauded CD "Hail, Canadian Art Song" (Cansona Arts Media, 2006).

In addition to being an award-winning poet, Mick was also a playwright whose plays had been produced on CBC Radio, Saskatchewan.

In Toronto, he teamed up with Guy Doucette who produced a number of Mick's new one-act plays. With his playwriting expertise, Mick was my mentor and strongest supporter through the many years of development of my opera "Isis and Osiris, Gods of Egypt." He made many exciting suggestions as he read each draft of the libretto, and attended the first workshop of the opera in Walker Court at the Art Gallery of Ontario. In 2016 "Isis and Osiris, Gods of Egypt," had its World Premiere at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in Toronto.

As a confirmed pacifist, Mick did not eat "four-legged creatures," and was even loath to kill an insect. His gentle kindness permeated his being. Mick lived in the worlds of imagination and inspiration, yet when he worked on his poems, he was incredibly diligent, often doing more than 20 drafts to get it to the perfection he sought.

An amazing and unique person with great generosity, Mick found something of worth in every person he met, and every poem he read or

listened to. He was a mentor to innumerable poets, encouraging and editing their work. Many went on to publish their first books because of Mick's encouragement, diligence, and brilliant guidance. For me, it was a great privilege and honour to know him.

-Sharon Singer

Remembering Fraser Sutherland

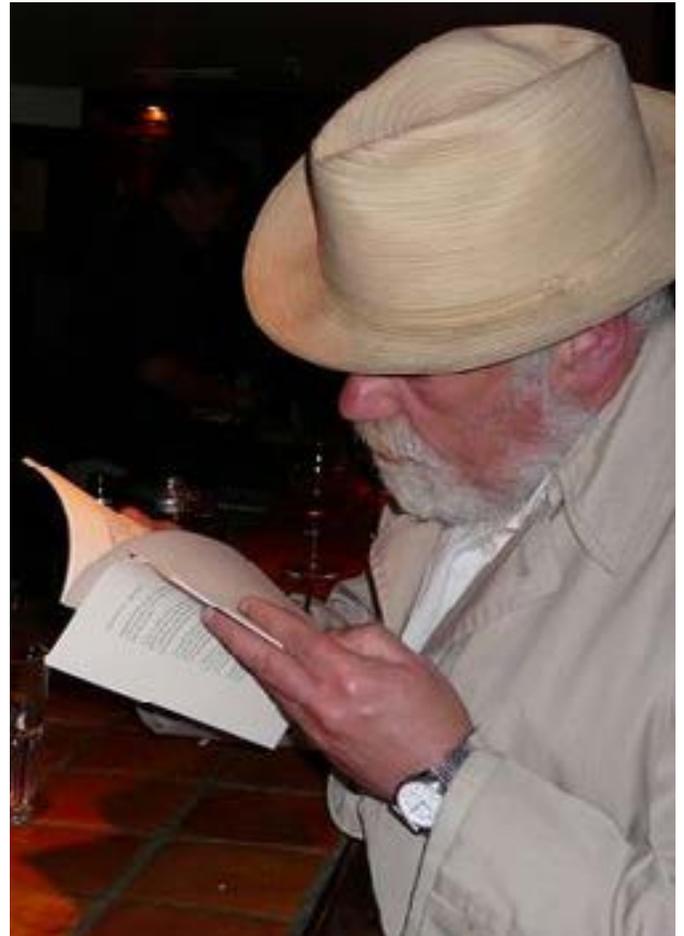
Fraser was one of the first supportive people I met in the literary community many years ago. The scene was much less inclusive than now but Fraser always made me feel welcome. He encouraged experimentation and strong opinion. Your influence is felt, Fraser, you made a difference to me!

-Anonymous

Fraser was not only a fine poet as well as a thoughtful man-of-letters, he was a kind and helpful friend to many people. In fact, two of the most disagreeable writers I have ever met ran into trouble and were befriended and assisted by Fraser and his family. (I have in mind Scott Symons and Edward A. Lacey.) I assume that Fraser was raised a Presbyterian; I know he was a Christian

because of his unstinting kindness and forethought. He was one of a kind and very kind he was.

-John Robert Colombo



One time when I was struggling, Fraser said the most interesting people are those you struggle, which made mine meaningful. We both read at the Green Lantern in Halifax when we lived in Nova Scotia and his wife Alison comforted me during my divorce. Fraser took my mosquito painting in lieu of payment for editing my manuscript. I'm sad we lost touch.

-Katerina Fretwell

On Resilience

from The 2021 National Poetry Month Blog

Even though National Poetry Month was a few months ago, we felt it was important to share the heartfelt and moving work that our NPM Blog contributors wrote on the topic of resilience.

Please enjoy the *On Resilience* collection, featuring writing by:

Britta B

Adèle Barclay

Bertrand Bickersteth

H.E. Casson

Liana Cusmano

Amoya Ree

jaye simpson

& Vironika Wilde

The Golden Bed by Britta B

: listening for sirens : flash-backs bounce passed : you spit net fluently : you don't live with any bookshelves : you don't school with any kids who look like you : but you understand why it feels like poor punctuation defines you : you've never seen idioms made in your image : out of what twisted music you were pushed : what rattles and

ricochets : as necessary as what breathes one hard unaltered spark : there's an atlas you deserve and their hardcover yawn is not made to fit you



: you get good at being singled out : enjambment is your armour : is freedom : what you do for yourself when you are made clumsy and invisible : what questions and curses : what carols you catapult : is freedom : to a blank page : the steel you resist : whipped : bounced : the golden bed of your ether : namelessness listening : is there

: pressed to ear : you wait with headphones : behind bedroom

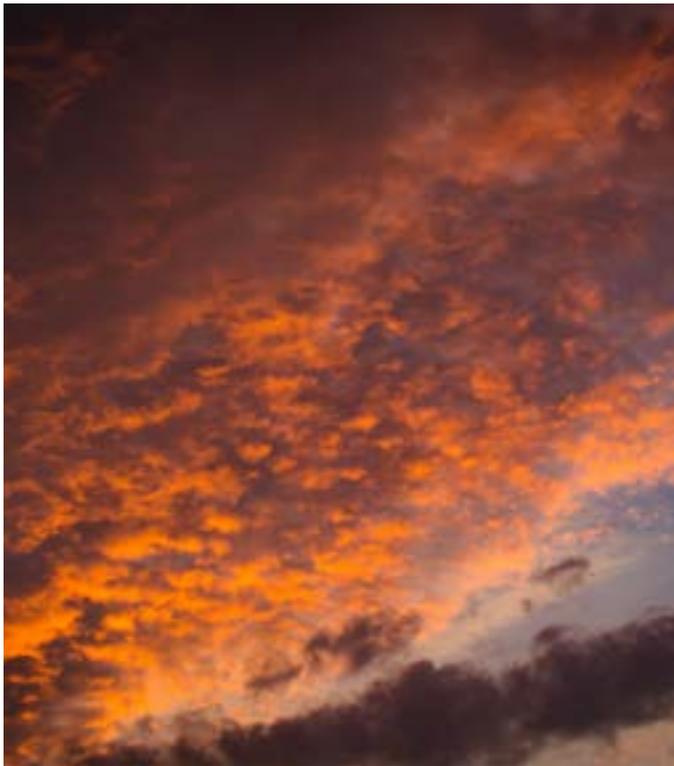
walls : envying the last chapter of violent autobiographies : the brittle crash of tectonic plates : upheaval of keepsakes like school-day portraits in plastic gold frames : *your oppressor and your craft* : a relationship to constraints sustains you : you live an illiterate debt and read the arrows inflating your torso : both target and secret : propels you from the place grammar functions to dysfunction your inner voice : you keep a private collection of daydreams and lyrics : you carry whispers not yours to slick : you scratch apologies on yourself : you reveal an essay written in jazz trumpets and asthmatic lungs : you have to work twice as hard to exhale : you ask guiding lights for advice : you are afraid

: to admit what you call beauty : what you can't say out loud : what you can't hold down : what you must not put into plain paragraphs : more cuss words and a wrinkled grocery bag of tinsel : a strip of grammatic dynamite : there's a certain amount of power you can replenish : you can't control the contraption but you can imagine yourself belonging to a brilliant and more desirable spin : it all depends on what you listen for when you are most alone : the quality of voice you speak : to yourself : how carefully you read

: the fractures of a family you stanza together : the sporadic spell : a piercing call to memorize details navigating what was not meant to survive you : if you reach one lifetime elsewhere : if you expect bet-

ter for other beings : you double : is fuel for self-grasping : your parents have not failed you : the prismatic has failed your family history : you are a product and a people : you must personify hidden glaciers of this knowledge to break its fever : to dismantle its grey legacy : your notebook unites names of ancestors and painters : experts and self-selected kin : there are new daydreams and lyrics to collect : you keep moving across the page : despite rejections and imperfections

: between you : and hard listening : is stolen territory : is grammar : is capital : is a world not made to fit you : the world you deserve is perplexed : is celebrating : and maybe sometimes : someplace you don't have to keep bulletins of affirmations : someplace not programmed by empires : someplace you recognize an abolished hierarchy : a diluted fear : no recessive and abusive patterns to taste you : until then : this current : this constitution builds debt : this grammar needs numbers : this cosmetic resilience : cologne and all-inclusive vacations : this gravity of extraordinary suffering : this desire to misunderstand suffering : to cover the stench : neglected ethics of listening : sometimes it asks you to speak on behalf : preservation is not wanting to bother : is not wanting to be bothered : is not tempted to volley weapons in all directions the way flower petals grow : your intelligible slant and slang : here is you : is trinket of choosing : is not going back to serving hatred the way they scripted you



squeeze through : emotion moves
the material : when you put a pen
in your hand : you don't have to tell
it what to do

: a whirl that fits your body :
from the first needle on the track :
from warm up to cool down : from
biology to social impressions : you
deserve a turn that doesn't ne-
glect you or shrink your light : you
deserve total loves : you deserve
plums and some brink of relief :
you deserve all the directions your
crown of flower petals grow : your
intelligible slant and slang : here
is you : new telephone wires that
sputter : that speck : that spark : is
all you need : is not going back

: is summoning forward : is
not possible to return to what you
never possessed : you're some-
body nobody in your family has
ever been : you disrupt architec-
ture : books arch into irises with no
rooftops : you enter and graduate
capacious meditations : student
to all language giving language :
is yawning and belonging enough
: is this scribble how far you can
stretch : you have chores : not only
your chores : chores beyond and
inherited : chores between your
chores : bridged chores : endan-
gered chores : how you rattle *the
light of the ear* : in what name you
give a future : how you keep mov-
ing across the page

Britta Badour, better known as
Britta B., is a Toronto-based spoken
word poet, performer, emcee, voice

: archaic cadence tries to talk
you into unbelievable obedience :
a violent home is no different than
a protected wilderness dominat-
ing airtime : the grammar is no
safer than your body : bodies like
your body : these stadiums of bod-
ies : these courtrooms and towns :
theatres : clubs and synagogues of
bodies : bodies *visible* not venerable
: bodies resilient : not healed : bod-
ies stuck in twisted music : bodies
competing for breath and regular
respect : pitied bodies : bracketed
bodies : starved bodies : bodies traf-
ficked and attacked : granting bod-
ies : what new grammar you hear
them making : follow with a finger
: return : punished bodies : bodies
that are missing : bodies your day-
dream reaches for : just because
you can't believe what's happening
: doesn't mean you indulge denial
: can't be entertained by this dizzy
you're observing : sometimes you
don't have nothing but a voice you

actor and teaching artist.

Her works have featured in print, in sound and onstage across North America in notable spheres such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, CBC Arts: Poetic License, The Walrus Talks, TEDx and The Stephen Lewis Foundation. She is an alumna of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity Spoken Word Residency and 2018 Toronto Arts Council Leaders Lab Fellow.

As an artist educator, Britta facilitates artist-training seminars, poetry workshops and social justice programs in partnership with organizations like JAYU, Poetry In Voice, Prologue Performing Arts, League of Canadian Poets and The Power Plant.

Britta is currently a Creative Writing MFA candidate at University of Guelph.

Resilience is a Scam by Adèle Barclay

Resilience is a scam.

What I mean by that is the way we toss the concept of resilience around like we're reaching for a small blanket to smother a raging forest fire feels suspect to me.

You're so resilient.

You're so, so strong.

I've heard these refrains countless times throughout my life as if resil-

ience were a trait, a quirk, a preference. I have an alto voice, own a part-Bengal cat, and like Studio Ghibli films. I am also apparently strong and resilient due to the abuse, trauma and loss I've endured. I oscillate between wearing these emblems of "strong" and "resilient" like badges with pride and shuddering in an effort to shake them off.

Yes, life is absurdly hard. And yes, we possess the resilience to weather it. But why do we treat resilience as a mark of one's character, a measure of someone's innate aptitude to face disaster, and, by extension, an assessment of their worth?

Resilience implies its shadow that we are less comfortable confronting—trauma. To be resilient means one has encountered life-threatening circumstances and survived. A car crash, intimate partner violence, systemic racism, death threats, poverty, ongoing childhood abuse, a pandemic.

Physiologically, survival means a nervous system made a snap decision about whether to fight, flee or freeze that helped in the preservation of the body it is wired through. Survival also means the threat didn't succeed in its goal of killing us for whatever reason. Laying bare survival makes me skeptical resilience is all that personal or something that's even completely within our control. I think resilience as a laudable personal attribute is a myth we tell to convince ourselves that us clawless, thin-skinned

mammals have more control than we do.

At our best, I think we focus on resilience in order to honour the fortitude and skills it took to survive trauma and to, importantly, remind us we are more than the devastation we've lived through. I want to celebrate the brilliance and resources of survivors without minimizing our experiences. The issue with treating resilience like an admirable character trait suggests that those who didn't survive were somehow lacking when faced with circumstances they really should've never had to bear.

I worry we often hold onto the term "resilience" as a way to avert our gaze and not grapple with the omnipresence of trauma—how it's woven into daily life and how pervasive suffering, oppression, and violence are in our society. I worry that when we focus on resilience we veer towards toxic positivity and repress the uncomfortable and tangible effects of trauma.

Don't tell me about what almost killed you and how it impacts you today: let me tell you that you had the strength to overcome it and now trauma is tamed and resides solely in the past.

Treating resilience as a positive, personal trait mandates that individuals must survive ordeals or else they are flawed. If you emerge from trauma, you are a hero. If you don't, you are a tragedy. Either way, these two disparate narratives are

dehumanizing and serve to gloss over the nuance and messiness of survival as if it were simply a hill to climb. If someone fails to climb that hill, they must've not had the gumption. But what happens with the topography is a chain of mountains?



Our framework for resilience casts the individual as a solitary character—a lone David defeats Goliath with underdog savvy or Ophelia succumbs to a watery destiny ordained by the genre of Shakespearean tragedy.

What if we could bear witness to each other's stories and acknowledge the complex variables that aided in our survival and the parts of ourselves we lost? What if we afforded those who didn't survive the dignity of a full and expansive narrative no matter how untidy, no matter its implications for how we treat each other. I don't want trauma porn and I don't want a feel-good narrative. I want to know who you are, how you live and learn about those you love who didn't make it.

What doesn't kill you will make you stronger. Sometimes what doesn't kill us kills us in time.

Even further, when we label individuals as resilient heroes and tragic figures we efface context and community—how survival is actually incredibly communal and interdependent. My fate is bound with yours and yours in mine. It's a terrifying obligation. This accountability asks us to reflect on how we show up for each other and how we fail to. And more overwhelmingly why?

Resilience is more three-dimensional than we realize. It's depth surpasses its casual status as an adjective for a commendable trait. Resilience is a complex indicator of how we care for or don't care for each other in foundational moments. What I mean is resilience is less individualistic than we perceive it to be. Resilience is the product of support, community, resources, infrastructure, privilege. In other words: resilience, just like trauma, is a social conundrum and not just a singular phenomenon. This understanding of resilience as born from social, cultural, communal forces is hard to digest because it's a reminder that we are responsible for one another.

According to the Adverse Childhood Experiences study (ACEs), individuals who experience or witness traumatic events before the age of 18 are more likely to deal with negative effects on their health and well-being, including cancer, heart disease, chronic ill-

ness, mental illness, addiction, among others. They are also more likely to incur further trauma in their adult lives due to this early exposure to adversity. Trauma begets trauma.



This research also found that what helps children survive and thrive despite these traumatic events—what helps them cultivate resilience—are protective factors. These protective factors are safe, stable

relationships that mitigate the detrimental consequences of early trauma. Teachers, coaches, neighbours, grandparents, siblings who offer children safety and care and thus a reprieve from the adversity they are facing at home are, in fact, nurturing resilience. Similarly, when a child feels a sense of belonging to a group—friends, extracurriculars, other families—that welcomes them, resilience develops. These mitigating measures encompass big and minute gestures—a parent who offers their kid's friend a safe place to land when they get kicked out, a warm and encouraging teacher who tells students they matter, a neighbour who lets the kids next door come over for dinner several times a week. (Thank you, Mrs. Johnson!)

The ACE study illuminates that resilience is fostered through community. And so the onus of survival and resilience shouldn't rest on an individual's—on a child's—shoulders but on communal systems. Who did and didn't show up for the kids in their communities? The ACE study is by no means comprehensive—it neglects to include many traumatic scenarios, including domestic violence perpetrated by women and racialized violence. But it's a start. And we can use the study to conceptualize resilience as a protective measure instated by a community, not a trait someone is burdened with having to possess or to strive for in isolation. In a neo-liberal capitalistic society that pits us against each other, severs meaningful connection,

and frames oppression as a thing of the past or a rare event, it's easier to situate resilience—much like pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps success—as the result an individual choosing to buck up instead of recognizing it as a complex and communal dynamic.

I both pine for and reject the distinction of “being resilient” like a Year Book superlative. I want proof I am special in my survival, but suffering is so very common. I've learned being thought of as brave will never soothe me or make up for who and what I've lost.

How, then, do we extend care and cultivate safety—both interpersonally and structurally—in our communities? How do we practice cultivating resilience collectively?

Acknowledgement is a start. Instead of telling people they are resilient and strong, we must carve out space for complex trauma and defy the facile narratives we've inherited that demand we make traumatic experiences palatable.

We need to reject the laurels this world that doesn't care if we live or die tries to grant us when we have the luck to survive it.

We need to come to terms with the fact we are intimately beholden to each other.

Adèle Barclay's essays and po-

ems have appeared in many North American journals and anthologies, including *Vallum*, *The Heavy Feather Review*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Walrus*, *glitterMOB*, *The Pinch*, *PRISM*, and elsewhere. She is the recipient of the 2016 Lit POP Award for Poetry and The Walrus' 2016 Readers' Choice Award for Poetry and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her debut poetry collection, *If I Were in a Cage I'd Reach Out for You*, (Nightwood, 2016) won the 2017 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize. Her second collection of poetry, *Renaissance Normcore* (Nightwood, 2019) was nominated for the 2020 Pat Lowther Award for Poetry and placed 3rd for the Fred Cogswell Award. She was *Arc Magazine's* 2018-19 Poet in Residence, Canadian Women in Literary Arts 2016 Critic in Residence, and the University of the Fraser Valley's 2020 Writer in Residence. She is an editor at Rahila's Ghost Press and teaches literature and writing at Capilano University.

Broken and Beaten Things **by Bertrand Bickersteth**

Can you consider something resilient if it's broken? This question emerges from my tendency to confuse persistence and resilience. There is a relationship, after all. To me, they are both impressive. Both have to do with a certain staying power. Both invoke a kind of underdog, against-all-odds achieve-

ment. But there is at least one key difference between them: choice. As a five-year-old, one of my prized possessions was the LP version of Disney's *Mickey and the Beanstalk*. I loved it so much that it was an instantaneous choice for show and tell at my daycare centre. As I stepped out of the car, gem in hand, the disc slipped out of its sleeve and shattered on the concrete sidewalk. I had been holding the record upside down. Annoyed, I asked my Dad to quickly put it back together before we went in. He looked at me silently. "Daddy," I prompted impatiently. He calmly explained to me that that was an impossibility. "We don't have a choice," he said. "Broken is broken." It was a harsh lesson. I burst into tears.



I have been struggling with an analogous experience in my adult life: a harsh lesson about persistence and resilience that has emerged over a lifetime. I was born to a small family in Freetown, Sierra Leone. I was an only child until I was nearly 10 years old. My mother, on the other hand, comes from a

large family. She has three siblings and a multitude of cousins, uncles, and aunts, who all think that four is a ridiculously small size for a family. Her father has seven siblings. Among them are two sets of twins. Funny enough, my grandfather appeared to take pity on his prospective wife when they got married, because, like me, my grandmother comes from a family of two siblings. I myself have only managed to eke out a single son.

In fact, there is a common experience I've had when I encounter my extended family abroad. (Though, to be fair, it is not limited to just them.) We will exchange pleasantries, catch up on each other's lives, and sum up our achievements appraisingly. And then, somewhere after the initial hug but before the invitation to dinner, there is usually a hiccup in the exchange. We will be chuckling amiably about some common story our children share when, teasingly, chidingly, my relative (or friend) will reprimand me for only having one child. "They need someone to play with! Why are you being so stingy?" And then, still chuckling amiably, I will shrug and simply say, "one is all that came." More chuckling, but a shift will have taken place and there will be a slight pause before the banter resumes. "Well," my cousin smiles hopefully, "you must keep at it." I will simply shrug again and wonder to myself: can you consider something resilient if it's broken? Or, am I confusing resilience and persistence again?

When I was a graduate student in the early 2000s I was enthralled by Ben Okri's novel, *The Famished Road*. Okri was Africa's representative of the relatively recent genre of magical realism, which had asserted itself definitively on the global literary map in the 1990s. The novel's protagonist is a wispy, fragile boy whose head always appears to be in the clouds. As it turns out, there is some truth to this predicament. Azaro, the novel's focus, is an *abiku*. In Nigeria, the Yoruba people attach this label to spirit children who persist in tormenting their parents, particularly their mothers, by resisting the fullness of human life. Instead, they take a gulp and rush back to the spirit world to share their adventures with their mischievous spirit friends and mock the fragility of human existence. It is the Yoruban cosmological explanation for children who die too young, or as infants, stillbirths or miscarriages.

It is a poignant narrative worldview, rich with myth and magic, which attempts to account for a mysterious but all too-human experience. Okri's masterstroke was to take this Yoruba narrative tradition and give it a unique twist. Azaro is not the usual *abiku* who delights in taunting his parents with hope and anguish. He is an *abiku* who has chosen to stay in the human realm. What's more, Azaro still has one foot in the spirit world. As a human, he is actually unstable, vulnerable, awkward. More importantly, the spirit world is still accessible to him.

He witnesses it juxtaposed over the ordinary lives of his human family. He sees spirits suddenly interject themselves and, unbeknownst to humans, affect the regular course of people's everyday lives. In this way, Azaro's vision completes the ordinary mysteries that elude the rest of us. The doings of spirits, on the other side of life, explain enigmas at the heart of our lives.

But some mysteries seem too deep, maybe too human, to be explained. My wife and I met in our teens. We instantly satisfied something absent in the other and have been cleaved to each other ever since. Who can explain the sudden certainties of teenage hearts, still beating, still certain after all these years? These days, I am no longer surprised by the austerity of German weddings and she has learned to understand a smattering of Sierra Leonean Krio. Some mysteries have plagued, though. The vaulted platitude of a friend, still in our teens, who insisted to my wife that it was not (biblically) natural that she and I be "yoked." The sudden reversal of an apartment's availability, in Vancouver in our twenties, when we arrived in person to view it. The simultaneous self-certain and probing declarations, in our thirties, from strangers to my wife of her generous choice to adopt our one and only child (who she actually gave birth to). Certainly, these occurrences are mysteries, too, birthed by the baffling priorities of our unaccommodating, unimaginative, and thoroughly unmagical society.

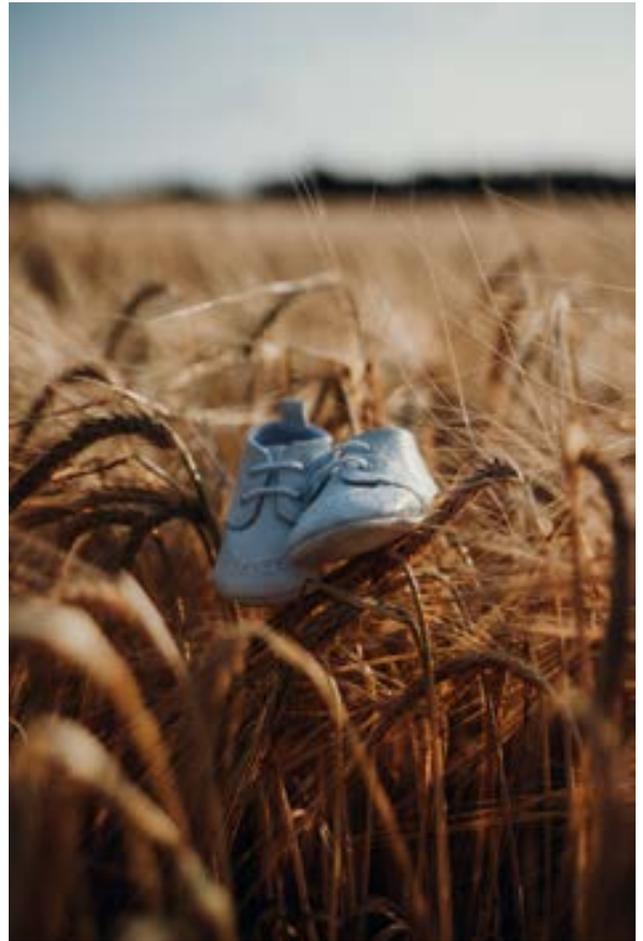
It was as a teenager that I first dabbled in poetry. I was actually more drawn to song, but I didn't play an instrument so I worked with words and anticipated my celebrated arrival into a duly awaiting music industry. It is not surprising that so many of us try our hand at poetry at this age. I think it has something to do with the resilience of the teenage heart: always on the verge of feeling beaten, always ardently beating. This line between the bold and abashed teen is naturally evoked in the ambivalences of poetic language, its particular music, its certain (and uncertain) syllabic dissonances. Most of us take a few stabs at it in these vulnerable years, but most of us don't persist with it. I, for example, didn't.

I didn't have to. My lived experience seemed to provide all of those syllabic dissonances whether I liked it or not. I grew up in a country where I was taught to believe racism didn't exist. And I did believe as much for the first twenty years of my life. So imagine the poetic contortions I experienced when that landlord turned me and my wife away. Imagine the metaphor suggested by a friend's use of the word "yoke." Imagine, even, the certain syllabic dissonance evoked by the word "friend" in these circumstances.

"Are we going to keep trying?" is a question I never asked my wife. It was never a question I felt there were words to ask. Only absence. And at the heart of that absence

were two things: my wife's unfathomable struggle with a persistence or a resilience that only she could understand. And the spirit child, laughing with her spirit friends, that only I could see. For the first time in our lives, since we were teenagers, we were being separated, forced into different experiences. And here's something Ben Okri's novel didn't reveal to me, something I learned through this new imbalanced relating I shared with my wife: *abikus* are imperfect taunters. Or rather, they have a weakness that makes them vulnerable to their own taunting. After all, they are the only spirit creatures who elect to cross the line to experience human life. It is not just for the sake of teasings and tauntings; there is something in us that appeals to them. There is some mystery about humanity they cannot solve from the spirit world. Perhaps it is our weakness for hope. Perhaps it is how consumed we are by death. Our mortality must look like a broken thing to them. And how, they must wonder, does a broken thing keep breaking? Or, are they confusing persistence with resilience?

And there is my spirit child: the daughter I never had. She fills my dreams and haunts my poems. In fact, poems were my way of coming to terms with this fully female experience that I could know nothing about. As a Canadian, I was never allowed to feel comfortable in my Black skin. As a man, I cannot feel comfortable contemplating my maleness, especially in the wake



of my *abiku* daughter. But that is what my poetic turn compels me to do. And that is what eventually brought me back to poetry. It was a tentative return. Poems I wrote during those times of wordless despair are the guiltiest poems I have ever composed. I feel they are a betrayal to my wife who is not a poet and has no ingress to certain, syllabic dissonances. She has only dissonance. Unworded and all-encompassing. And also, more accurately, I do not know what she has. In this matter we are on divergent sides of the spirit world. Our daughter comes and goes between us, time and time and time again, but my maleness is an obtrusion. Even now I am the miscarriage, mansplaining my way through her experience,

slyly sidling with metaphor and glorying in poetic prose as my respite. And no, I do not feel comfortable in my skin, but I will have to simply sit with that because my discomfort has never compared to my wife's unfathomable (to me) struggle.

Only now, just out of our forties, do I see a new relationship with this stubborn torment from my past. Just as I see the yearning in my *abiku* daughter for something she does not want to want, I have been returning to *that* series of poems I worked at when she used to visit us so often. They are, fittingly, sonnets. The strict limitations of the form mirrored something in me that felt helplessly confined. But like dazzling spirit creatures, poems can beckon a forbidden magic on the other side of despair. Somehow, there is a kind of freedom hinted in those rigid rhymes. Somehow I persisted, like two teenagers who lock on to each other and instantly mature in love without even knowing what maturity is.

And I hear her heartbeat. Beating with me. Beating in me. Beating me. And I don't know what a man's relationship is to miscarriage. I don't know who is crossing what line here. I don't know the right words to stave or save. I don't know any words at all in this space that is not meant for my Black body. I cannot answer my daughter or explain why broken things keep breaking. I can only wonder. At the mystery of two lifelong teenagers. The singular son that was sown between them. The persistent daughter who will

not stay, who will not go away. The resilient poetry of a broken heart, beating.

Born in Sierra Leone, raised in Alberta, and formerly resided in the U.K. and the U.S., **Bertrand Bickersteth** is an educator who also writes plays and poems. In 2018, he was longlisted for the CBC Poetry Prize. His debut collection of poetry, *The Response of Weeds*, was published in 2020 and was named one of CBC's best books of poetry for the year. He was also named one of CBC's six Black writers to watch for in 2021. His poetry has appeared in several publications, including *The Antigone Review*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, and his nonfiction is forthcoming in *Prairie Fire* (2021). He lives in Calgary, teaches at Olds College, and often (always, actually) writes about Black identity on the Prairies.

18 Interpretations of Resilience by H.E. Casson

1. Resilience is a coin

On one side is strength, on the other, vulnerability. We're not one or the other—we're both. The more vulnerable we are, the stronger we're required to be. Flip a coin. If we land on vulnerability, we lose. If we land on strength, we're praised. I stand on edge, vulnerable and strong, trying not to tip.

2. Resilience is a bouncy ball

Not just any bouncy ball, mind you. A *super* bouncy ball. Physics be damned. That round wad of delight was guaranteed to bounce back higher with each rebound. Determined, we would climb up the slide at recess or, if the grown-ups were out, even dangle over the edge of a balcony. Working to avoid the garbage bins and abandoned shopping carts, we would drop the ball and wait for it to soar up past our heads, into the sky. What a taste of disappointment as each bounce was halved and halved, finally stuttering and rolling out onto Thorncliffe Park Drive. Resilience is like that. It obeys the laws of physics. It's not an infinite resource. How high we bounce back is often a measure of how elevated we are when dropped, of how smooth the surface is on which we land.

3. Resilience is a weapon

You should be more resilient! Look how resilient you are! This is a chance for you to show some resilience! This weapon shares a sheath with *willpower* and *personal responsibility* and *strength*. Resilience is a word that's used to shift the evidence of our societal neglect back onto the individual. Once resilience is lodged in your back, you can't pull it out.

4. Resilience is a contest

You have to look like you want it more. You have to be grateful. You have to make only good choices from shitty options. Why should we help you? Why should we feed you? Smile nice. Don't lose your

cool. Don't wail snot-tears in the social worker's office. You are the next contestant on the price is righteousness. Comb your frickin' hair. We can't see you as a winner, they say, if you don't see yourself as one.

5. Resilience is a jellyfish

If you observe it, you'll be inspired by its grace. If you try to capture it, it will sting you.

6. Resilience is a polyhedron

How many faces it has can be determined by innumerable factors: how long you've been alive; whether you have a family or were able to build one; whether the community you live in was created so your body can access it; whether an education was given to you or you had to pilfer it. Different faces of resilience are needed for different challenges and vulnerabilities. The less you need a face, the more likely you are to have it at your disposal.

7. Resilience is a lottery ticket

If you can't pay, you can't play. If you don't play, you can't win. Sometimes you win. Oh please, let me win.

8. Resilience is a religion

It operates on faith in something unseen. An apology that may never come. An accommodation that could welcome you into a space where, previously, you could not go. Another human checking yes on your housing or student loan or job application. If you light a candle and concentrate, if you write the word *resilience* and bury it under a flower, maybe you'll be okay. Praise

resilience, most glorious and immaterial. Praise resilience, most infinite and impossible.

9. Resilience is a magic trick

It's sleight of hand and misdirection. It's wiggling your toes so you don't feel the needle prick or drinking a glass of water so you feel less hungry. It's singing too loud when the temperature dips rather than crying from the cold. Look over here! See this free movie playing in the park? That's your best birthday, even if you didn't have a place to go home to. Is it still an illusion if the trick works?

10. Resilience is a lie

In science, resilience promises the ability to return to your original form. To be pressed or dropped or cut and, in the end, be much as you were when you started. Those of us who have been pressed and dropped and cut know that we don't return to our original form. Each time we're assaulted, we come back different. Our bones are softer, our skin harder. Our neural pathways are rebuilt, lines are deepened until our defaults are set to survival mode. We cry too much or not at all. We carry pain in our joints. We clench our jaws and grind our teeth flat. We become smooth where we were rough and rough where we were smooth. We shed the skin that showed the bruises, but the memory stays. Maybe pain is resilient. A thing that always returns to its original form.

11. Resilience is a seized opportunity

Like the opportunity to write this

out, even though I find the topic frustrating and befuddling. I worry that I'm seizing this opportunity incorrectly. What do I know about resilience? I know I'm the sort of resilient that doesn't make for good stories. I don't fight. I flee, I freeze, I fawn, I faint. There's an entire genre of film for those who find resilience in uppercuts and swordplay. Every comic book I read tells me survival looks like invulnerable skin and gadgets that immobilize those who seek to harm you. There are no comic book about heroes who run away from danger, rather than towards it. There are no franchises about warriors who grow dizzy when challenged or cry when they're angry. Still, I try to seize this opportunity. I try to put down on paper what I can't live in practice. The truth is, I'm not resilient. I'm just tired.

12. Resilience is a glutton

In order to live, resilience needs to be fed. Perhaps this is where poetry and resilience best intersect. When I was in high school, I accidentally stole a copy of Maya Angelou's Poems from the library. I took it out and, before I could return it, found myself living in a group home miles from my school. I lost my year, my home, my family—but I had poetry. Where my own stores of resilience had dried up, hers were there, preserved. When my resilience was waning, I fed it with her music, pressed between two soft covers and set to loop. I read so many books during those hardest years, expanding my resilience with the portable records of other survivors.

13. Resilience is a braid

The more strands you have, the stronger it is. It's always easier to help someone else with one than it is to do it for yourself. If you learn how to do it young, you'll never forget. It's harder to learn when you're older. You'll end up tying knots and tearing strands. Still, any braid is stronger than no braid, right?

14. Resilience is a gift

You'll splurge on someone else, even if you never splurge on yourself. Maybe I wouldn't buy myself a \$12 bath bomb, but for someone I love? Not even a pause. We can survive for someone else when we can't survive for ourselves. We gift our endurance to our loves, our children, our friends, our neighbourhoods, our communities. We stay for them. In return, they might gift us laughter, hope, constancy. We regift these scant resources to each other. We add a new bow and a card that says, *I'm glad you're still here.*

15. Resilience is an unopened letter

Until it's opened, it can say anything. It can say, "I'm here for you." It can say, "You're accepted!" It can say, "You overpaid last month, so your gas will stay on." Resilience is potential and hope. Even when it's false, it can lift you.

16. Resilience is a promise

If you're here tomorrow, you'll have the chance to try again.

17. Resilience is a meal

Remember the last meal that you

ate alone, one that nourished and sustained you. Did you grow the vegetables? Slaughter the meat? Forge the cutlery? If not, then you didn't eat alone. We feed ourselves with the work of others. Resilience is like that. To do it alone is impossible. Building resilience is like building a meal. It's not a solitary affair, even when we do it alone in our homes (if we have homes). Building community resilience is like building a community kitchen that feeds anyone who's hungry. Community resilience acknowledges our interdependence.

18. Resilience is a poem

It doesn't always rhyme or please the ear, but if it can find a place in your brain to live for a while, it's done its job.

H. E. Casson (they/them) is a queer writer and voice actor whose words have been shared by *Taco Bell Quarterly*, *Serotonin*, and *Malarkey Books*. Their voice can be heard in *Moonbase Theta Out*, *Disenchanted*, and *Seminar*. They believe in kindness, in fine prose, and that the pigeon is nature's greatest single accomplishment. Visit them at hecasson.com and as [@hecasson](https://twitter.com/hecasson) on Twitter.

The Various Stages of Disbelief: Surviving Lockdown as an Introvert Without (Completely) Losing Your Mind

by Liana Cusmano

For those of us who are introverts, the prohibition of large social gatherings will not have affected us as much as it does our more extraverted counterparts. However, those of us who live alone quickly found ourselves trapped in the feedback loop of our own thoughts, stir crazy and cabin fevered, with ample time to rethink, redraw, reconsider and rework various thoughts, feelings, memories, and recollections. For many of us who are artists, writers or poets, our relationship to our work became one of catharsis that, if not managed carefully, became a self-sustaining whirlpool of insulated monologuing. The introvert's lockdown experience can be split up into the following stages.

1. Denial

Tell yourself that, as an introvert, the countless recess periods spent scribbling down childish poems alone in a corner have primed you for this absence of human contact. The poor social skills that kept you from making very many friends in high school are the same ones that will help you enjoy a forced embargo on interpersonal interactions. This won't be so bad. The government is overreacting. Your family

is overreacting. You're a little worried that caught between the four walls of your apartment (where you live alone, obviously) is the perfect breeding ground for memories and ruminations of past professional failures, unrealistic creative projects and recently-ended love affairs. But



you can handle this. It would be an introvert's failure on your part if you failed to handle this. You are going to thrive in this lockdown. For an indeterminate period of time you will not have to scrounge up excuses for why you don't want to jump up and down to noise in a crowded room, or pay for drinks too weak and too expensive to drown out conversation that is searing your prefrontal cortex. You are not going to spiral into self-pity or self-loathing either. Relating to a solipsistic character straight out of Dostoyevsky's muddled brain is an indulgence you quit half a lifetime ago when you were fifteen years old, still young enough to know your own arrogance and to tell yourself you would outgrow it. You commit to warding off any psychological spiral with all that self-care bullshit your psychologist

keeps pushing on you – long walks on the mountain, eating well, following a routine, annoying your downstairs neighbour with regular indoor workouts. You immediately reject the possibility of baking bread.

2. Anger

At yourself. Why can't you hold it together? As a teenager you would have given up your top marks for an entire year, maybe two, if it had meant a fraction of this much alone time. The distractions and obligations of the outside world that you tell yourself prevent you from writing poems or reading novels or playing music are gone. You do write poems, you do read novels, you do play music (your downstairs neighbour is aware of this). But gone too are the shields those distractions and obligations were against your own highlight reel of most embarrassing moments, your own litany of all the tasks you still haven't accomplished, your own internal running commentary about how you are not doing enough, not working enough, not being enough. You are in an echo chamber of your own thoughts, the dam that keeps your memories, doubts and fears at bay is broken. Your mood plummets, and you are furious and devastated when you make simple mistakes – you bought the wrong kind of tomatoes after waiting an hour in line at the grocery store and now your botched bruschetta single-handedly makes you unworthy of your Italian heritage. Going to the grocery store is now voluntary ex-

posure both to deadly disease and to that horrible I-lost-my-mom-in-the-grocery-store feeling of terror. The distress is a high, brittle scream in your entire body as you scan the shelves for canned artichokes; as you do your dishes alone in your apartment; as you trip and stumble on the mountain nature paths. Your psychologist reminds you of 'best friend voice;' talking to yourself the way you would a best friend who was in your shoes, and you are angry that you are stuck with yourself as your own best friend. Your mom is on the other end of the line, you talk often. But that lost feeling is still there. Your poems don't make any sense.

3. Bargaining

Maybe if you had said I love you when you knew it was true, you wouldn't have been as frightened of how powerful the words could be. Maybe if you'd apologized sooner, waited longer, been less impatient, things would be different. Maybe if you hadn't made that mean comment in the snowy parking lot three months ago that drained all the laughter from her eyes, trying and failing to fall asleep wouldn't be a solo venture right now. That's what this is about. You are alone and it is your fault. Isolation has manifested this truth into a never-ending replay of the same conversations, the same facial expressions, the same words that were said and unsaid and never said. Dreams, memory and reality are all blurred together. Maybe if you had been more understanding,

more honest, more courageous, maybe if you had realized not everyone is cerebral enough to hope that other people can read their minds. Maybe if you had realized that people can't read other people's minds. It takes two people to make decisions that may not always have been good ones but that made sense at the time. Did you go for a walk on the mountain today or did you dream that? Maybe if you rub your hands raw with hand sanitizer, you'll forget how it felt to have her skin on yours. If you work on it, it will be better. You know it feels like it will be like this forever but it won't. You know you have your family, your friends, your goals, your downstairs neighbour. If you stick to your routine, you'll feel better. If you constantly clean your apartment, you'll feel in control. If you're patient, someday some things will no longer hurt, and others you will have learned to ignore. You try to playdough a poem out of your feelings and the result makes you cry yourself to sleep. If you work on it, it will be better. But right now it is a sad piece, and not even very good.

1.2 Denial

Cycle back to denial because nothing is meant to be linear in this life. You've stopped your Zoom therapy sessions because both you and your psychologist are tired of your bullshit, and because lots of other people need her help way more than you do right now. You don't really need anything right now. Other people have it much worse. You are an arrogant and pathetic caricature

of melodrama. You scrounge for the gratitude that you can not go to a bar as a pantomime of dysfunction and look for someone or something that will banish every feeling from your body. You prop up your structures with a brittle and empty willpower, you colour-code your to-do lists and stick to a schedule of Discord group chats and co-watching movies. Your poems are dead and empty but you write them anyway, you tell yourself this is a new style of just abstractedly writing down random words. You haven't been to the mountain in weeks and tell yourself that it's because you don't need it anymore. You knowingly but inadvertently whittle your body down to bits and bones, barely there. Why eat if you'll just get hungry again later? Why not make yourself a smaller target for the knives you wish you could put in your own back? Why not just tell people you're fine when they ask you how you are? Everyone knows that nobody is fine. Everyone knows that everyone is lying.

4. Depression

You are overwhelmed by the sick, abandoned feeling of being alone in a sweltering apartment, knowing that your entire lifestyle has become a form of self-harm, a dizzying, destructive coping mechanism for all your hopes and failures and regrets, all the relationships and interactions that still burn in dreams and memories, unstoppable and uncontrollable. You lie on the floor of your apartment in a puddle of pain and rage. Try to fall

asleep face down on damp sheets with ice packs on the back of your neck and shoulder blades. It's summer now. This has been going on for months. Have six Zoom meet-



ings in a row. Go for a walk. Have a pre-coffee Zoom meeting at 5 am because your most recent collaborator lives eight time zones away. Go for a walk. Don't bother buttering your toast. The squirrel in the tree by your window is your only lunch-time companion. Take the fifteen minutes between meetings to cry. Go for a walk. Check your email. Go for a bike ride. Zoom meeting with the editor. Fold your laundry. Don't wear a helmet. Zoom meeting with a friend. Go for a walk. Zoom meeting with the volunteer coordinator. Zoom meeting with yourself – you've mixed up the dates and see only your own name on the screen. Lie in bed awake at night, stare out the window until the sun comes up over the mountain.

5. Acceptance

5 am dirty dishwasher honesty.

In this gentle quiet,

memory is a self-inflicted blow to the back of the head.

Old wounds have been reopening by mistake,

gashes gaping and clamping

like broken Venus flytraps, wounds that are

sewn up and torn apart,

sewn up and torn apart,

sewn up and torn apart.

A staccato rush that has exhausted itself.

Stillness now,

*Summer heat on my mangled skin,
my tired bones.*

No desire for

self-harm,

self-destruction,

self-immolation.

Just the self. Whole and unvarnished.

Childlike.

Sacred.

Liana Cusmano, also known as Luca or BiCurious George, is a writer, poet, filmmaker and spoken word artist. They are the 2018 and 2019 Montreal Slam Champion and runner up in the 2019 Canadian Individual Poetry Slam Championship. A participant in the 2019 Spoken Word Residency Program at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Liana has presented their work in English, French and Italian across North America, Europe and Asia. They wrote the short film “La Femme Finale,” screened at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, and wrote and directed the award-winning “Matters of Great Unimportance,” screened at the 2019 Blue Metropolis Literary Festival. They also took part in spoken word poetry tour “I See You,” alongside poet laureate of Edmonton Nisha Patel in the fall of 2019. With work that touches on heritage, queerness, relationships and mental health, their aim is to help others feel both seen and safe. Liana is currently the President of the Green Party of Canada. Their first novel, *Catch & Release*, will be published by Guernica Editions.

Applauding Every Win by Amoya Reé

I’m running another virtual Spoken Word workshop (COVID amirite?) and one of the participants, a

young, queer, BIPOC musician asks me how they can become more resilient. Six faces in the Zoom meeting squares, staring at me, waiting for a response. I wanted to fire off a slew of motivational Pinterest quotes; or reference a poem I love; but I didn’t know how to tell them that just days before we met, I had had a panic attack in front of my 8 year old son. Or that I had been spiralling for weeks – months if we’re honest – struggling with anxiety, feelings of insecurity and inadequacy as an artist, a mother, and as a wife. There is an assumption that those who seem to have it all together, actually do have it all together. We know otherwise right? Because in that moment, my mouth became an anchor for guilt and I said, “I’m not”. Here was a person who was healthy, housed for the night, with access to technology and this digital community we were a part of. And yet, that wasn’t enough. To breathe and exist – to live – was somehow not enough to warrant celebration. This young person was surviving, thriving even, and somehow, believed that they weren’t resilient. I was not only gutted at this young person’s dismissal at their survival, but at my own.

Somewhere along the way of over 365 days of a global pandemic, Western culture has led us to water, not to teach us to drink, but to drown. We have adopted a way of living that prioritizes productivity over person. Where working from home means that the work never truly ends. To be in a constant state of productivity leaves very

little room for community and care. In retrofitted home office spaces, the physical and mental corners we are backed into become the mold, shaping us to be better at adapting. Resiliency is the white film on my tongue after swallowing trauma. Resilience is the residue of grief and turmoil, and now it is a buzzword. We complement each other's resiliency with good intentions, sometimes forgetting that "resilience does not come from maintaining a zen-like response to every experience that life throws at us- it is born from being in touch with what it feels like to fail, from understanding the pain of loss, and from an intimate insight into the experience of being overwhelmed and out of our depth." (Bastain, 2019). While resilience is defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, for many Indigenous, Black & People of Colour, resiliency is a perpetual lesson that transcends time and space. We have been surviving for as long as the earth has required it. For some of us, resilience is our only option. Resilience is not an absence of fear, it is living in spite of it. If resilience is a response to pain, then self-care is the catalyst. As a poet, I have realized that my ability to create has always been how I take care of myself, and others. Artists, creatives, and poets, we are the bridge. We are responsible for telling the stories that our communities cry into us, but we are also responsible for giving them back, fully transformed into hope; into survival; into more.

For me, resilience is my response to having a baby then having a world-

wide pandemic hit a few months later. Or suffering from postpartum depression but not being able to tell your family because some Black families aren't ready for those realities. Or being denied your usual gigs because organizers see motherhood as an ailment to artists. Or expecting to return to your employment after your maternity leave only to be handed a layoff notice. Or expecting to apply for employment insurance just to be told that you are 7 hours short. Or finally having to admit that you need help when the 'normalcy' of life is no longer available for you to use as a distraction. Or not being able to write



for months on end and feeling like anything you do write will never be good enough. Or applying for grant after grant and receiving rejection letter after rejection letter, feeling like you will never be good enough. Or having to explain to your 8 year

old why they killed George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Or having to hear the pain in your baby sister's voice when she calls to tell you that Peel Police killed D'Andre. Or having to explain to your 8 year old why police don't get in trouble for killing George Floyd's and Breonna Taylor's of the world. Or why the SIU cleared the officers involved in D'Andre Campbell's murder and in the death of Regis Korchinsky-Paquet. Resilience comes after the realization that death is always around the corner.

But like Ebony Stewart says, "*My God ain't damned nothing in me*"

So we keep living anyway. We live and we experience it all; good and bad. I had my tough moments. I cried. I screamed. I lashed out at everyone. I felt rage and despair. And then I slept. I dreamed of finding a scorpion and of chasing a white baby rabbit. I allowed myself to feel all the things. I listened to myself. I took time to start doing this thing I call the magic five. It's where I say, outload, five things that are good or make me feel good about my life. It's an exercise in gratitude that I started with my son for when he was having rough moments, now it's for me too. We often hear people talk about "*change your mindset, change your life*", but they never really tell us how hard that truly is. So I found a therapist that I actually like and could afford. I started reading again. I started setting intentions for my days, from things as simple as combing my hair to more complex tasks like answering

emails. I started applauding every win, no matter how small. Did I eat a healthy meal today? Win. Did I drink a glass of water? Win. Did I tell my kids I love them? Win. And then, I started writing again.



One saving grace throughout this last year has been having the privilege to participate in and host virtual workshops. Almost all of the workshops I have hosted have been around mindfulness and mental health through my new favourite art form, Affirmation Poetry. And this hasn't been by choice, it's just been the most requested workshop considering how much all of our lives have changed and everyone is looking for ways to cope and become more *resilient*. It has been emotionally and artistically fulfilling to hold space for older adults and people as young as five years old. It's amazing how something so simple as identity affirming statements help to centre our individual needs and provide access to our own emotional and spiritual well being. I use simple "*I Am*" statements and teach participants how to use literary devices such as metaphor and alliteration to transform

those statements into poetry. For groups with different accessibilities needs, I use a fill in the blank style worksheet. With this method, everyone has a chance to speak life into themselves and feel comfort at the power of their own affirmations, even if they're not writers. I am a firm believer in the supreme magic of words. When we tell ourselves we are beautiful, we see beauty. When we tell ourselves we will wake up tomorrow, we look forward to the morning's first light. So when we tell ourselves that we are resilient, we smile at what we have already overcome.

"How can I become more resilient?"

I never gave that young talented musician the answer they deserved. It's more than just surviving your suffering. It's walking through your storms and emerging a rainbow. Pain is not the only recourse in obtaining resiliency. It's also holding yourself accountable to softness. BIPOC artists know too well the subtlety of suffering. It is in our art, our life's work, it fuels our ambitions and for some, it is tethered to our creativity. But what of healing? What happens when we choose goodness for ourselves?

So to every single artist or creator who will read this, and to that young person in my workshop, and especially as a note to myself:

You do not need to become more resilient. You do not need more suffering. You do not need more pain. Resilience is in your blood.

What you need now is a soft palm. What you need is to be held. What you need is validation for your feelings. What you need is to be heard, understood and appreciated. What you need is stability; a safe home, a warm meal, a loving family. What you need is community and a place for belonging. What you need is to see yourself as the beautiful miracle that you are. What you need is rest. What you need is to celebrate all of your small wins. You deserve applause for surviving the darkest nights. You deserve the kind of energy that causes us to grow and stretch beyond all limitations. What you need is to know and believe that you are *enough*.

—Bastian, Brock. "The Resilience Paradox: Why We Often Get Resilience Wrong." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 20 Feb. 2019, www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-other-side/201902/the-resilience-paradox-why-we-often-get-resilience-wrong.

—WANpoetry, director. Ebony Stewart – "Mental Health Barz" @WANPOETRY. Performance by Ebony Stewart, YouTube, YouTube, 13 Jan. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIGWWPwJINY&t=59s.

Amoya Reé (she/her) is a Jamaican-Canadian performance poet and 2018 Canadian National Champion. Her writing is rooted in her lived experiences as an immigrant, mother, & community worker. Exploring the cultural significance of things like race, mothering and love, she often blends historical fact with present realities, making for a poetic experience that is both informational and inspirational. She be-

gan exploring performance poetry in 2008 & since then she has shared her stories in classrooms & boardrooms across Ontario. Affectionately known as Reé, she sat as captain of the 2018 Toronto Poetry Slam team who were semi-finalists at the National Poetry Slam in Chicago and went on to win the Canadian National Championship in Guelph, Ontario. She has had featured performances at the coveted When Sisters Speak (2019) and at Toronto Poetry Slam (2019). As the Artistic Director of KTV Media, a virtual production enterprise that promotes Black art and excellence, she lends her talents to producing, directing, and hosting virtual arts events and initiatives. Reé was recently crowned the 2021 Toronto Grand Slam Champion and is currently working on her debut collection through support from the Canada Council for the Arts.
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all this out of spite by jaye simpson

There are mornings when I wake up and can't seem to locate myself. I am in a different bedroom in a different house, on a couch, in the backseat of a car, hurtling through time and space. When I finally grab at the fraying edges of this, I crash into my humble apartment in East Vancouver that I share with my partner. In our bed I see they are peacefully sleeping, light snores filling the room. There is soft light

spilling in from the blinds and I take comfort in knowing I am safe even though I know the cost of this. Some mornings I wake up in a cool basement bedroom, my cocoon of warmth fading as I try and quietly get ready for school. I am fifteen again, in a foster home in Langley, listening to the same Regina Spektor song on repeat while trying to fathom surviving the day. It feels like yesterday and ten years ago all at the same time, memories fading quickly and returning in a blink. I am told this is Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, this constant reliving of the trauma I experienced. I am shamed in my emotional response to this stimuli, that my angry want for justice is ill fitting, instead I should let go of the hurt and move on.

Resilience has made me a villain. I



survived and in this reflection I realize I survived many things that never should have occurred. The pain, turmoil and violence I endured in part was intentional, this forced removal and careless placing of my care led to years of neglect and abuse. Still, I wake up in a bed years away. In a messy apartment cluttered with too many clothes, small keepsakes and fear of letting go.

Years of therapy tell me that I will never get the ending I so desperately want: vengeance. My Elders and teachers tell me I will never get an answer, that no matter how many times I ask why, there will never be anyone on the receiving end to my queries. They also tell me I will only ever get to tell them what they did. So I do.

There was a period of time where my silence was abundant, a precaution after too many times slighted with asking for help. A sickening sinking feeling of knowing how many times I had whispered my pleas into ears belonging to people who were supposed to help me, or so I was told. I must say, there is a level of extreme shame in not believing children in my opinion, in not protecting them, especially when they come to you because they have no one else to turn to. These betrayals led to a time of silence, a fear in the truth. How cataclysmic it was for myself to try and communicate that a great harm was being done unto me.

I was conditioned into silence, had it broke into me like I was some wild horse. By this older white woman in Langley who knew how to manipulate like no other. I saw what she was doing but didn't have the language for it and so I began to mirror her. I watched and studied while making the mistakes a child makes: being caught in lies, acting irrationally, slipping up my own plans. I decided on a long game: make it out and prove her wrong while also somehow setting her up

for the whole community to see since no one was believing me. I did not succeed and she buried me in a landslide of unbearable grief that nearly hospitalized me. This unsettling wave overwhelmed me entirely and I couldn't make heads or tails of my situation, I just remember sitting in an ER with such an immense amount of pain I couldn't breathe, heat rolling off of me and her sitting beside me, smiling. Sometimes you do not survive, sometimes you only get to reckon with the ruin and the grief and forage a meager tomorrow out of it. Ultimately I was set up to falter and flail about, destined to be broken down in hopes of recycling. This is common due to the nature of funding within the child welfare system: more bodies means more money. It doesn't matter if we don't survive, our deaths are swept under the rug or thrown out of court, names of our murderers protected. I recall a meeting with my social



worker where I broke down blubbering in that small cafe in Langley, begging her to find me a new placement, that it isn't a great fit. She doesn't even smile when telling

me no and I force myself to contain my tears so the women at the house didn't know I cried. During the car ride back the social worker gives unsolicited advice on how I could make the situation better, placing the onus on me.

The only reason I got out was because this woman had resigned from being my caretaker, claiming I was too dangerous. After that, I never saw my social worker alone, they always came in pairs. When my social worker called telling me of the move I cried out in joy: I was getting out and quickly. I laughed loudly, freely and asked for boxes to begin to pack. Within the hour of the phone call I had packed the majority of my things. In one of our parting conversations, the woman said I should stay away from writing and that I only cause trouble because I was a liar.

It is on February 1st, 2011 that I sit in her vehicle for the very last time, but I remain under her influence for many years longer and do not write.

I had come to realize that I couldn't trust many around me and that no matter what I say or do, it'll be flipped and weaponized against me. A child, begging for reprieve, begging for safety and home while I watched many of my peers not having to fight for the same. I was a young Indigenous queer child who knew something was very wrong and no one was listening, so why bother?

This would remain the truth as I

transitioned, for what truth comes out of a trans woman's mouth? Don't we all scream "transphobia!" at everything? Just another person crying wolf. I had friends, mentors and loved ones ask me if I was sure, if this is really what I wanted and if this was some attention grabbing stunt, that some things you can't come back from. I listened for a long time, didn't want to displease anyone in fear of them leaving me in case of this.

Resilience is a bitterness at times for me, a swelling sour filling my mouth, acid churning in my belly and I can feel my hair lifting at the base of my neck. This resentment pushing me onward perceived as overcoming but is it so if it was purely out of spite? And here I was, exhausted from being kept from basic needs and the ability to self actualize, kept from my own gender, culture and family. I began to respond in the ways I knew: with sharpened teeth and bone.

And oh how devastating the truth could be.

I am not unaware of the reputation my name has accrued to date. I know the whispers and understand the language directed my way, my reputation preceding me. Destruction follows wherever this one goes. I have fought many battles because I saw many problems, folks abusing their power or the system. I turned my resentment into fuel and went toe to toe with social workers, Members of Parliament, Department Heads and police. If me speaking

out could threaten the very fabric of an institution then why does that institution get to exist?

In this I saw so many like myself, Indigenous foster kids being ignored, their stories and experiences invalidated by social workers and team leaders alike. So I used my resilience to fight, to snarl and snap, gnash my teeth and show them the beast they made of me. Anything to protect the kids.

I got used to fighting, even within my interpersonal relationships. Saw the pattern of transmisogyny and refused to be gaslit into complacency. So many tried to educate me on why their violence was justified, chastising me for my shout, never realizing it was a yelp. I recognize the ways my emotional response to violence is turned on me, it's been happening since I was a child. With the very fuel they tried to gaslight me with, I used to burn the bridges so we both could walk away from it. In a way, they got away with what they did because I remain silent to this day.

This wasn't the same "resilience" I am told I have because I graduated high school and attended post secondary, or when I got a job in the big city or spoke on a panel. No. This was animalistic and I knew how I would be perceived. You wanted a villain? Well here is the backstory.

While attending University, one of my friends convinced me to attend a poetry class, where I could slowly

return to a form that held my truth but also was such a large part of my destruction. A great journey lay before me. I began to transition while studying poetry, discovered new genders and forms in tandem, changed expressions and tones, began to truly shapeshift.

That is how I came to dance among the poets, storytellers and clowns, greedily witnessing them. Surrounded myself with playwrights, painters and architects. I would build myself up, push onwards and have so many rue the day they carved up my flesh to feast upon. I took the slam poetry stages by storm, collecting wins and titles with abundant fervor. I was all passion and rage, fed on my own emotions and acted rashly.

I saw something I wanted desperately: validation and an audience. People who would listen, know the ache, know which parts were bruised and tender. It was in the wreckage of my own flesh on the stage when I realized that much of this wasn't for me. Some stages had been forged on excising trauma in exchange for a rudimentary score on a placard in hopes for recognition. I was surrounded by brilliant talent still, stories vast and abundant in layers, experiences and nuances.

I thank those who helped me return to writing and to a place where I could tell my story in a way that kept me safe, and no matter what protected my audience. If I was going to bring them to hell, I was



going to bring them back. I would balance my performances according to the line up, if things needed to be said: I said them. I would say the uncomfortable thing because I wasn't scared of my own voice anymore and someone had to hear it. I found a way to not be sharp teeth and bones, a way to be gentle and ferocious all in one.

It was with this energy and understanding that I finally returned to a childhood dream: to become an author, and this time it was fuelled by aspirations and spite. I was going to prove as many people wrong.

I was going to thrive. Find joy. Surround myself in love, laughter and healing. I broke down the bits of me that I couldn't fully comprehend, slowly let them play out, came to understand the many trauma responses that I had, filled to the brim with vilified experiences.

I saw the ways I experienced transmisogyny, the many times I was gaslit into submission or defeat. How much of my story remained untold, how much pain I had to endure and in silence for so long. I invested in myself, building relationships with others based in communication and problem solving. It was with this kinship web that I began to weave the fibres necessary for this tapestry.

There are days I wake up in the bed I share with my partner in the apartment we share and I am comforted at the love I am surrounded with. Found family, folks who fought alongside me, sat with me on the long nights, folks I showed up for, celebrated and admired. Regardless of the insurmountable grief I waded through, I find myself in a grove of kinship, this burden no longer just mine to bare. I have

survived when so many haven't and that guilt doesn't ever go away, but that doesn't mean I get to not experience joy, love and healing.

I beg that this never be perceived as resilience, I don't get to experience joy because I am resilient, I get to bask in the glow of it and bathe in it because I get to. Everyone is deserving of such and no one needs to survive a great deal in order to "come on top". It's also not lost on me how I am perceived and the insidious narrative of trans-misogyny even in me celebrating where I am now. To be an Indigenous trans woman is to betray the very nature of white coloniality. Folks tend to forget I survive out of spite and like to tell my stories now.

We know all the truth I could tell.

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they are published in several magazines including Poetry Is Dead, This Magazine, PRISM international, SAD Magazine: Green, GUTS Magazine, SubTerrain, Grain and Room. They are in two anthologies: Hustling Verse (2019) and Love After the End (2020). it was never going to be okay (Nightwood Ed.) is their first book of poetry, published October 2020.

they are a displaced Indigenous

person resisting, ruminating and residing on x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), səłilwətaʔt (Tsleil-waututh), and skwx-wə7mesh (Squamish) First Nations territories, colonially known as Vancouver.

Struggle, Strength, and the Gift of Sensitivity by Vironika Wilde

I contemplated abandoning the topic of resilience within five minutes of research. The adverbs I found in every dictionary definition grated on my psyche: "to recover from a crisis *quickly*, "to return to pre-crisis state *quickly*," "to adjust to misfortune or change *easily*." Doesn't sound like me.

Other definitions made resilience into some kind of rewind button. The Cambridge dictionary calls resilience "the ability of a substance to return to its usual shape after being bent, stretched, or pressed." Definitely doesn't sound like me.

In the 1970s, when Emmy Werner studied the children of alcoholic and mentally ill parents in Kauai, she found that two-thirds of them exhibited what she called "destructive behaviours." These included drug addiction, unemployment, and "out of wedlock births" (God forbid women perform such dangerous rites as childbirth without a stamp of approval from the state). The rest, she dubbed resilient. I

wouldn't have made Emmy's list.

The worst were definitions of psychological resilience as staying calm during a crisis. That not only didn't sound like me, it also sounded like a lie. The only crisis during which I'd stayed calm, I shouldn't have. I should have punched him in the face, pushed him off me, and ran for the hills.

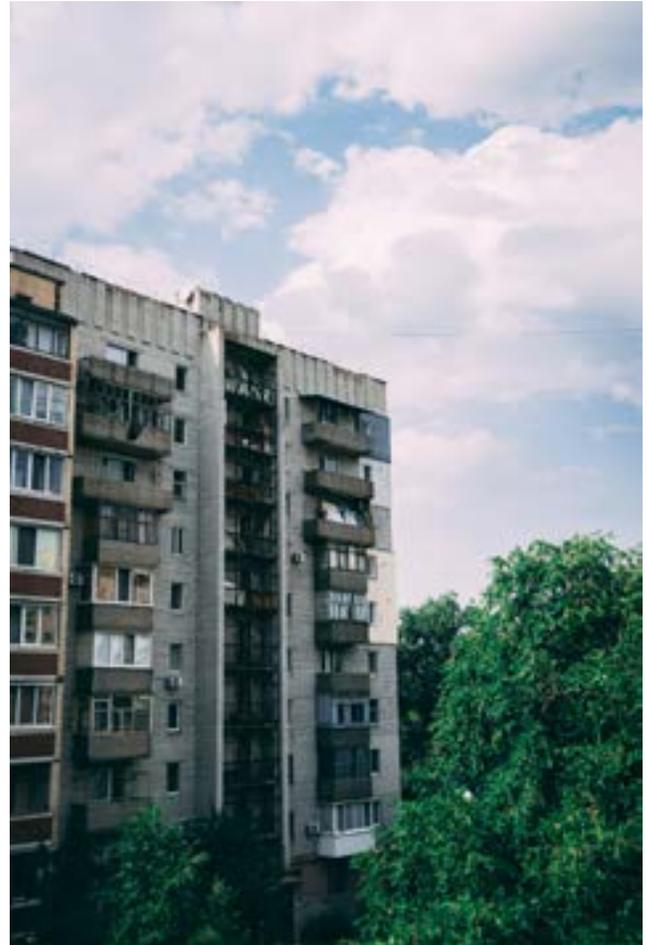
I was left wondering what kind of poet could write about this stoic, thick-skinned, stress-free resilience. Do these poets even exist? Don't we cut ourselves open and use words to drain the poison? Doesn't the poison need to enter us in the first place?

The idea that strong people don't struggle or feel overwhelming emotions is everywhere. It's in philosophy. It's in spirituality. It's all over psychology. It's in the way politicians discredit the self-governance capacity of oppressed communities coming forward about injustice. This anti-emotion rhetoric was starting to sound familiar. It was starting to sound a lot like home.

Back in the USSR

I learned to throw a punch when I was four years old. My dad and I stood facing the tiny balcony of our one-room apartment in Donetsk, my fist whizzing through the air, him saying, "Do it again. Again." Rewind twenty minutes, and I burst through the door crying because some girl stole my cookies. I don't remember the girl, the cookies,

or the tears. I remember my dad's voice telling me to stop crying, to be strong.



The whole "don't cry, be strong" mantra was woven into the former Soviet Union long before anyone heard of communism. I come from a lineage of peasants and indigenous people in Eastern and Northern Eurasia. People who shared one tiny hut for a family of twenty, made jam out of pinecones, and plowed the fields with their bare hands from dusk till dawn. People who laboured on the communal farms, burned their sinuses in the chemical factories, and blistered their fingers laying railroad tracks. There was no time to cry.

I grew up around people with hard faces, merciless reprimands, and heavy hands. But no matter how often I was chastised for it, I couldn't stop crying. No matter how often I was hit for showing belly, I kept showing it all the same.

Here Come the Words

When people ask me why I started writing, my answer is "survival." I had no other outlet for my inner turmoil. The page was my safe space. I could feel as furious or tortured as I felt, and the page was never going to tell me to calm down or shut up.

No one recognized my capacity as a writer until high school. Even then, my emotional topography was an alien place. In grade 9, my drama classmates put on a play I wrote. The script was about a teenage girl whose actress mother gets roles by letting her movie producer boyfriend sleep with her daughter. In the end, the daughter shoots them both in the head. Watching the final performance, I remember feeling disappointed. Where were all the raw emotions I'd experienced writing it? I was surprised that my fellow 14-year-olds couldn't understand the murderous rage of the victim of multiple sexual assaults orchestrated by her own flesh and blood. But I never stopped to ask myself: why on Earth could I understand it?

In an interview with Entertainment Weekly, Rupi Kaur said, "I'm empathetic to a fault, and I've been that way since I was young. It's why I've

always used art, since the age of 5, to funnel my emotions... When someone tells me something terrible that's happened to them, I will begin crying in the first minute because it's so intense that I internalize it."

My family as much as the world around me continued to insist that my most consistent trait—my sensitivity—was also my biggest flaw. In the end, it's no wonder I turned out this way. The universe strives for balance. How could I have been anything else?

When the Artist Stops

It's no secret that artists tend to be emotional. It's also no secret that creativity can help us process our emotions. What doesn't get enough attention is the idea that sensitivity is a gift and that art is a way of receiving that gift. Even if a person is dysfunctional in every other way, they create art despite their self-destructiveness and not because of it.

In my early twenties, I suffered what I later conceptualized as a mental breakdown. A combination of insomnia, anxiety, and drug use triggered adrenal exhaustion and hallucinations. I walked to a ledge and almost jumped.

I was erupting with trauma, trying to process it. I wrote dozens of songs, hundreds of poems, and notebooks of feelings. But art wasn't enough. After an isolating battle with suicidal ideation, I realized something had to change.

So I turned my life upside down. I quit drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. I stripped the dye out of my hair, took my piercings out, and stopped wearing makeup. I also stopped writing poetry and playing music. Over the next few years, I became what I called happy. I stopped hating myself quite so much. I found a way to exist with my natural brain chemicals without struggling to exist every day. But something was off. I'd locked up all the parts of me I considered poisonous. And since poetry had been my way to deal with pain, I assumed the poems were parts of the problem. Worst of all, I fell into a relationship with someone who feared my nature as much as I did. We locked me up together.



The Mess Returns

Somewhere around the 7-year mark in that relationship, poetry reemerged. It was uncomfortable. I began to pine for my first lover, resent my partner, and ruminate on past violations.

As the words flowed, they guided me in a direction I hadn't planned to go. They told me to leave him.

They told me to rage. They told me to dance and sing and cuss and put on makeup if I wanted to. They told me to try every sinful thing so I could *choose* to say "No" instead of saying it by reflex.

Poetry had all the markings of the devil tempting a recovered girl back to the dark side. When I stopped suppressing that which I called unacceptable, it tore through me like a tiger fresh out of the cage. It told me to seek free will. Then, it told me to sit down and write.

What came out humiliated and shocked me. Some days, I would look at myself and think: I've lost it. My mind, my progress—gone. It wasn't until I started sharing my poems that I saw the beauty in it all. I have the capacity to feel so much pain. But I also have the ability to express that pain. And with that, I am able to help those who have never been able to find the words.

The Gift of Too Much

Before I was a writer, I was a student of behavioural psychology. I learned to identify problem behaviours and their functions and replace them. I've often considered my education in applied behaviour analysis to be a waste. But now I see how behaviourism taught me to seek for the *reason*—the *function*—of what is called dysfunctional. When my psychology friends tell me about clients who are difficult to manage because they are delusional, I always ask if anyone has encouraged these people to write. A vivid imagination is a gift.

If someone is misusing it, that's a tragedy. But when society ignores (or destroys) that gift, that's an even bigger tragedy.

Our mental health interventions aim to create "functional individuals." But what is functional? Interrupting our natural sleep cycle with an invasive noise, consuming liquid legal stimulants, spending an hour in a metal box surrounded by other metal boxes on a hunk of concrete—is that functional? Following orders by an authority we would never follow if it wasn't for how our obedience earns us little pieces of paper we trade for feelings of false security—is that functional? Maybe functional *is* the word. A cog has a function inside a machine. Oil it up and it plays its part. I've never been able to do that.

The role of the artist in society is to interrupt mechanistic patterns. The artists' goal is not to function in a broken system. Our function is to disrupt it.

We need people who smell the poison in the air. We need people who taste the blood in the water. We need people who hear the crack in the sky. We need to value the journeys of those who stumble and bruise and break as they carry the weight of the world while the rest of us throw up our hands and wait for someone else to do it.

Resilience 2020

When I was in high school, I obsessively consumed anything I could about 1969 San Francisco. Every-

thing from the protest culture to the anti-establishment music felt like home to me. I thought I'd been born in the wrong era. Then, 2020 hit.

As we continue to address imbalances in our social and personal systems, let's stop equating resilience with emotional detachment. Rage is a normal reaction to oppression. Anguish is a normal reaction to isolation. We feel. We struggle. We evolve. This is the beauty of the human spirit: we are paradoxical, multi-layered creatures. We can look like a mess while cleaning up.

If we can put the creation of a new norm above our assumptions of how that creation process should look, we can allow space for the renaissance that is already under way.

It *is* under way. Even the conversation about resilience has begun to shift. Dr. Rachel Yehuda, for example, believes that PTSD can *coincide* with resilience. She says, "never developing symptoms to adversity is not the same thing at all as having symptoms and bouncing back... To me, resilience involves an active decision, like sobriety, that must be frequently reconfirmed. That decision is to keep moving forward."

These days, adversity is in the air. Everyone keeps wondering when we'll return to normal, but whatever we considered normal is long gone. We are on a trajectory of change. We are rebounding. We won't return to our original shape. We won't do it calmly or quickly or easily. But

we *will* move forward. And that, at the end of the day, is what resilience is all about.

Vironika Wilde is a poet, activist, immigrant, tree hugger, and cat fanatic. In 2020, she released her debut poetry book, *Love and Gaslight*, and spoken word album, *Too Much For You*. She loves getting lost, looking at the stars, dancing, and eating pickles (sometimes, all at once).

