

News from the Feminist Caucus, by Anne Burke

Please plan to join us at the League of Canadian Poets Annual General Meeting and National Poetry Conference June 9-11 in Toronto. The Caucus Business Meeting and Open Reading is Friday, June 9, 9 a.m. This is free and open to all. Our panel follows at 10-11:30 a.m. This month, news from Susan McMaster, an introduction to our four FAB Fem Caucus panelists, as well as Toronto Poet Laureate Anne Michaels and Anne Szumigalski Award Essayist Marilyn Dumont; poems by New Members Christopher McCarthy and Carol Steel, reviews of *Admission Requirements*, by Phoebe Wang, *Leaving Howe Island*, by Sadiqa de Meijer, and *What Lies Behind*, by Luann Hiebert; *Herizons* submissions guidelines.

Borealis Press is pleased to invite you to the launch of  
**Lizard Love: Artists scan poems by Susan McMaster**

45 artworks by 18 artists interpreting 32 poems -- including Ottawa artists Ellen Drennan, Claude Dupuis, Pat Durr, Gwen Frankton, Alrick Huebener, Roberta Huebener, Juliana McDonald, Morel McMaster, Betty Page, John Tappin, Marie Tappin, and Paula Zoubek.

**Hear what they have to say about poets! Eat cake!**

Black Squirrel Books & Café, 1073 Bank St., Ottawa  
Tuesday, 9 May 2017, 8 pm

**In conjunction with TREE READING SERIES  
Feature readers: Dane Swan and Susan McMaster**

See details: Susan McMaster has published some 20 books, magazines, anthologies, and recordings,  
and is a former president of the League of Canadian Poets.  
Photos: DS Tree reading series; SM at Tree 2016, Pearl Pirie

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## **Feminism | Revisit, Revise, Revolutionize:**

### **A Two-Part Harmony**

#### **PART TWO – Revolutionize**

The goal is to gather honest, in-depth responses about your real-life experience with Feminism. Please answer the following questions.

Does Feminism exist?

Do you believe that Feminism differs among genres?

How does the granting system support and/or negate the Feminist plight?

How can we as a caucus better support intersectionality?

How can we improve our language and advocacy to ensure the inclusion of trans people and those who are gender non binary?

Equality must by definition be intersectional, how can we best get there from where we are?

How do we increase diversity in LCP membership?

**Feminist Caucus Panel Co-Chairs** Vanessa Shields & Charlie Petch  
**Feminist Caucus Chair:** Anne Burke | femcaucusburke@yahoo.ca  
**League of Canadian Poets Contact:** Nicole Brewer | nicole@poets.ca

#### **2017 CONFERENCE PROGRAMMING, SCHEDULE, AND TICKETS**

*Times and venues subject to change; unless otherwise noted, all events will take place in the CSI Building meeting rooms at 192 Spadina Avenue in Toronto. <http://poets.ca/conference/>*

**Full conference ticket:** \$195 members/\$235 non-members

For individual event prices, please see the schedule below.

#### **FRIDAY, JUNE 9**

Registration desk and member book display open

**9:00 am – 10:00 am:** Feminist Caucus Business Meeting and Open Reading (All Welcome)

**10:00 am – 11:30 am:** Revisit, Revise, Revolutionize: a feminist caucus panel (public panel; \$25\*) — panellists: Adebe deRango-Adem, Janice Jo Lee, Paulina O’Kieffe, Andrea Thompson; moderator: Susan G. Cole

**12:00 am – 1:00 pm:** Welcome lunch with Anne Michaels (members only)

**1:15 pm – 2:30 pm:** Self-promotion for poets (public panel; \$25\*) — panellists TBA

**2:45 pm – 4:00 pm:** Language, form, thought, and poetry (public panel; \$25\*) — panellists TBA

**5:00 pm – 7:30 pm:** Anne Szumigalski lecture, delivered by Marilyn Dumont (public event; \$85/\$70 for members\*\*); tickets include catering and limited drink tickets

### **SATURDAY, JUNE 10**

Member book display open

**9:00 am – 12:00 pm:** League of Canadian Poets Annual General Meeting (members only; light breakfast served)

**12:30 pm – 1:30 pm:** Lunch and open mic reading (members only)

**1:45 pm – 4:30 pm:** Poetry master class session (full members only; \$65) — facilitator TBA

**5:00 pm – 7:00 pm:** Annual awards ceremony and presentation (public event; \$85/\$70 for members\*\*); tickets include catering and limited drink tickets

### **SUNDAY, JUNE 11**

**12:30 – 3:30 pm:** New members poetry reading (free public event; venue TBD); League members who have joined in the last 12 months and wish to read at this event should contact [nicole@poets.ca](mailto:nicole@poets.ca) before May 15, 2017.

\*Panels are open to the public, and cost \$25 each or \$60 to attend all three

\*\*Members are welcome to purchase additional tickets to these catered events for their guests; guests do not need to be League members

**<http://poets.ca/conference/>—**

<http://thetorontoquarterly.blogspot.ca/2010/08/toronto-poets-5-questions-series-adebe.html>



**Adebe D. A.** de Rango Adem is a writer whose words travel between Toronto and New York City. She recently completed her MA at York University, where she also served as Assistant Editor for the arts and literary journal, *Existere*. Her work has been published in various North American sources, and she won the Toronto Poetry Competition in 2005 to become Toronto's first Junior Poet Laureate. Her debut poetry collection, *ex nihilo*, was published this year by Frontenac House, one of ten manuscripts chosen in honour of Frontenac House's Dektet 2010 competition, using a blind selection process by a jury of leading Canadian writers: bill bissett, George Elliott Clarke, and Alice Major. *Ex nihilo* is currently on the longlist for the Dylan Thomas Prize, the world's largest prize for writers under 30.

TTQ- Your debut collection of poetry *ex nihilo* has been described by some critics as being bold, beautiful, intimate, political, and idealistic. How would you best describe the poetry contained within *ex nihilo* and explain how you came up with the title for the book?

ADEBE D.A.- *Ex nihilo* (Frontenac House, 2010) is involved in questions surrounding art and identity as creations *ex nihilo* (Latin for "out of nothing"). It is also a book attuned to the presence of ghosts, bygone eras, and figures from old times that reappear in our lives on a daily basis, while maintaining, at its core, the will to move onwards. ...how it is possible that we can be "beyond gender" when on average, men still make more than women in the same positions and domestic violence is not a thing of the past. I speak from a North American context on this one, and, as some cultural theorists have argued, from a positioning that signifies a particular understanding of feminism that does not include the larger matrix of race, culture, and ethnicity. I am currently co-editing *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*, an anthology on the experience of mixed-race women in the 21st century, to be published later this year by Inanna Publications. In this project, I've been able to navigate, through the stories of others, what gender and race – and being both gendered and racialized – means today: its challenges, as well as empowering aspects. Whether the present truly offers equity amongst the sexes, and whether this can ever become a viable global reality, is in part dependent upon whether or not the rights of women can transcend the theoretical plane. In saying we've moved beyond gender, we also say that women's rights are a thing of the past, and no longer a viable political project.

Posted 30th August 2010 by [The Toronto Quarterly](#)

For reviews and other information on *ex nihilo*, visit the Frontenac House website. To purchase a copy visit your local independent bookstore or online at Chapters/Indigo, and Amazon. You can also visit her blog at [www.adebe.wordpress.com](http://www.adebe.wordpress.com) ([here](#)).

## Janice Jo Lee



**Janice Jo Lee** is a Korean-Canadian, folk-roots musician, poet, and theatre artist from Kitchener, Haldimand Treaty territory. Lee is a powerful vocalist who creates soundscapes and songs using her voice, guitar, trumpet and looping pedal. She is a hard femme queer radical known for being disarmingly hilarious, off-the-cuff and fearlessly

honest on stage. Lee's new album *Sing Hey* is a vocal and acoustic showcase with songs themed on feminism, poverty, and friendship. She has toured across Canada as a solo act and facilitated over one hundred workshops on storytelling, songwriting and activism.

In 2015 Lee was the City of Kitchener's Artist in Residence, received the Oktoberfest Woman of the Year Award in Arts and Culture, and received an Ontario Women's Directorate Leading Women, Building Communities Award. Currently she is recording her third studio album and writing her one-woman spoken word musical comedy called *Janice Lee and the White Supremacy Smackdown*. A documusical about her journey titled *The Legend of Sing Hey*, directed by Becca Redden is set to release in Spring 2017

<http://janicejolee.ca/>

**Andrea Thompson** is a writer, teacher, activist and mentor, who has been a mainstay on the Canadian spoken word scene for the past twenty years.

Thompson's poetry collection, *Eating the Seed* (Ekstasis Editions, 2000), has been featured on the reading list at the University of Toronto, and at the Ontario College of Art and Design. She is also the co-editor of *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*, an anthology released by Inanna Publications in the fall of 2010.

In 2012, Thompson received a Masters of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph, with a full-length fiction manuscript for her thesis. Her debut novel, *Over Our Heads* was published by Inanna Publications in the fall of 2014.

Working in a variety of forms, Thompson's poetry has been featured in the film *Slam Nation*, on Bravo TV's *Planet Poetry*, TVO's *Imprint*, Carolyn Weaver's *BioLibrary* and on a variety of CBC radio programs. A popular performer at venues and festivals across North America, Thompson's work has been featured on film, radio, and television; and included in magazines, literary journals and anthologies across Canada.

Thompson's poetry is hybridist and unique - blending elements of jazz, blues, spoken word and traditional literary verse into a style all her own. In 2009 she was awarded the

Canadian Festival of Spoken Word's Poet of Honour for Outstanding Achievement, and in 2005 her CD *One* was nominated for a Canadian Urban Music Award.

In 2008, Thompson wrote and performed her one woman show, "Mating Rituals of the Urban Cougar", which she toured across the country as part of the Canadian Fringe Festival series. In 2009 her essay on the history of Spoken Word in Canada was published by Edition Malestrom (Brussels) as the prologue to the book *Le Making of d'un Homme* by Dwayne Morgan.

She is currently teaching Spoken Word and Poetry through the Ontario College of Art and Design University, Workman Arts and is a supporting member of the WordSpell collective ([twitter.com/WordSpellTO](https://twitter.com/WordSpellTO)).

<http://andreathompson.ca/bio>



**PAULINA O'KIEFFE** is a Toronto entrepreneur, project manager, spoken word artist, aspiring writer, community consultant, program facilitator, youth activist and mom of 2 and self-proclaimed travel junkie. The Founder/Artistic Director of Guerrilla of the Word Paulina has been performing spoken word poetry and using it as a means to teach young people in a number of communities about self-education, expression and empowerment for the last 11 years.

When she is not having epic adventures with her two kids, you can find Paulina immersed in a number of projects from consulting community organizations on growth and development to laying down tracks in the studio.

<https://therideordieproject.com/core-writers/paulinaheadshot/>

**Exploring the stories of women who live by a ride-or-die philosophy**

<https://therideordieproject.com/contact-us/>

**Anne Michaels** (born 15 April 1958) is a Canadian poet and novelist whose work has been translated and published in over 45 countries. Her books have garnered dozens of international awards including the Orange Prize, the Guardian Fiction Prize, the Lannan Award for Fiction, the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Americas, as well as the Trillium Book Award. She is the recipient of honorary degrees, the Guggenheim Fellowship and many other honours. She has been shortlisted for the Governor General's Award, the Griffin Poetry Prize, twice shortlisted for the Giller Prize and twice long-

listed for the IMPAC Award. Michaels is the current Poet Laureate of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and she is perhaps best known for her novel *Fugitive Pieces* which was adapted for the screen in 2007.

**Marilyn Dumont** was born in Alberta. She has published three award-winning books of poetry, including *A Really Good Brown Girl*, which won the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award in 1997. She is of Cree/Métis ancestry and is a descendant of Gabriel Dumont, a political and military leader of the Métis during the 19th century.

## **Poems by New Member Christopher McCarthy**

### ***Song***

*what brio*

*mothers have!*

Nancy never wanted  
more new things, shoes  
things you put on feet to  
walk on the rug perfectly.

Dress and go out to dinner  
walk dark, colourless  
across an abyss  
that's been worn out  
over & over & over  
like birdsong.

*Christopher McCarthy*

*Sibyl*

water—  
blue & green  
down  
lose at sea  
grieve.

Our mothers burn  
with fire  
let them be  
whisper  
honey-eyes  
sewn shut  
sorrow splits  
longing  
constant shifting  
within, without—*princep de l'infern!*

Which words describe  
clenching fear  
lodged deep  
churning within?

Loss follows us:  
move mountains  
pass oceans  
heads in trees

swallow tongue—white faces sprout  
we set ourselves ablaze  
& smell smoke  
water or fire, or both.  
Drown many  
bodies burning  
swollen  
bleeding  
naming—Sibyl  
water  
blue & green.

*Christopher McCarthy*

*The Right Moment*

whispers blow  
crumbs of loneliness  
pieces break from insides  
tears surround the world  
the world goes on & on  
    budding lovers flourish  
    aging couples furnish  
welcome greener grasses & other sides.

Right now a boy is wondering  
if his parents will get a divorce  
    *divorced parents*  
is he one of them? *No*  
    *don't ask, simply wait*  
eventually parents die.

In the right moment wind spins  
& God twirls around  
& hearts hook new bodies  
& drink drink after drink  
of grapemash wine  
& dance mockingly  
    *What is love*

*Christopher McCarthy is a clerk in a quiet office. He lives & writes in Toronto.*

## Poems by New Member Carol Steel

### The Late Season

At the edge of the field,  
wild asters wither.  
Goldenrod and  
yellowed grasses  
bend seed heads.

Brazen colours burst  
reveal brown silhouettes.  
Darkness shrivels the days.

In the dusk light,  
the chickadee flits  
to the feeder,  
sings,  
takes one seed  
at a time.

**Carol Steel**

Published in *Galleon* III used with permission

## **Common Mergansers**

We heard them coming,  
    notes out-of-tune,  
        flying low and straight,  
  
racing their shadows  
    over the water.  
        They splashed down  
  
to drift and to fish,  
    in front of the cottage.  
        “There’s something about  
  
these ducks,” you said,  
    “they take every damn trout.  
        Fishing isn’t as good  
  
as it used to be.  
    Nothing is.”  
        I felt the mud,  
  
cold sludge  
    between my toes,  
        the strike of your hook.

**Carol Steel**

Published by *The Antigonish Review* Volume 46 used with permission

## **Brother**

Late August already, and the mountain ash  
sways, weighted with fruit, clusters of orange.  
Colour so bright, it stops my breath.

You have been gone thirty years today  
and have missed my two marriages and one long  
divorce. I sat in that smothering house,  
restrained inside my own ribs, until the memory  
of your words pulled me out,  
gasping.

Late goldfinches exchange ragged feathers  
for fearless wings. Hydrangeas bloom.  
Sturdy white blossoms deepen dusky pink.  
This season bursts into the one coming  
and the air is delicious.

## **Carol Steel**

Published by *The Nashwaak Review* Volume 34/35 used with permission

## Between the Wedding Dinner and the Dance

Bootleg booze is free  
in the back of a truck,  
behind the inn.  
Men stagger, bark  
laughter, have  
intentions. Women

juicy, in sequined  
second-skins,  
heels, tattoos, smiles,  
send signals,  
search their cells.

Woman A: *Hallowed.  
Hallow. Hallowed be thy  
name. Now, I get it.  
I always thought it was  
Hollow.* [ she laughs]

The other women circle  
and chant. *Hallowed,  
Hallowed, Halloowed.*

Round as beer caps  
the syllables roll  
over in the darkness.

Man A: *Jesus H. Christ,  
have one more drink  
before we go in to  
the dance.*

Woman B: *What's in  
the glass?*

Man A: *Vodka  
a shot to loosen you  
up to make your ass  
move when we dance  
make me want to fuck  
you harder in all your  
hollow places.* [he howls,  
stumbles, falls]

She wipes a frown  
onto the back of her hand,  
stilettoe stomps  
toward  
the inn.

Man B, a new man.  
[follows, murmurs]

*He doesn't know  
a thing  
about a woman  
like you. [fingertips  
on the small of her back  
as he opens the door  
to his tango]*

**Carol Steel**

Published in *Galleon IV* used with permission



### Biography:

Carol Steel lives in Riverview, NB. She won the Individual Poem Category, First Prize, three times in the Writers' Federation of New Brunswick competitions and has been published in *Galleon*, *The Nashwaak Review* and *The Antigonish Review*. She retired early from mental health promotion management to focus on writing poetry, and is currently working on her first poetry collection.

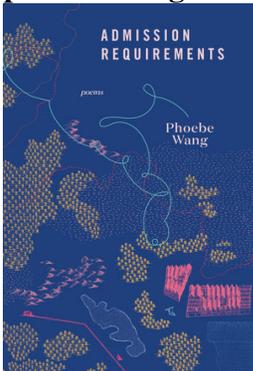
<http://carolsteel5050.blogspot.ca/>

One of the methods I've used to learn more about writing poetry is to copy a poem by someone else, then study how that poet created the images and made the poem work. It sounds simple, but isn't.

Sometimes I learn something new about how to write, the importance of enjambment for example, the uniqueness of where the poetic line ends, or keeps hanging until the next line.

<https://prayerbench.ca/poetry-presence-spring/>

<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/547924/admission-requirements-by-phoebe-wang/9780771005572/>



**Review of *Admission Requirements*, poems by Phoebe Wang**  
(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2017) 106 pp. paper

“Tea Garden” and “The Japanese Garden” are poems which use material found on the University of British Columbia’s Botanical Gardens website. In the first, nature has been subdued. In the second, the Nitobe Memorial Garden, impartiality is impossible but transparency can be found.

In “The Chinese Garden” (Montreal Botanical Garden) she recalls a prior visit, as well as her grandfather’s craft, in terms of guided tour. “I wasn’t always a stranger here.” (p. 4)

“The Quarry Garden” refers to the Evergreen Brick Works’ Lower Don Project. There are dry specimens, plaques, and volunteers. At “The Stone Garden” she discovers “forged organs”, “oracle bones”, and “dumb tongues” (p. 44)

“Historical Re-enactment” in Fort George National Historic Site, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario is described in poetic terms as “sweat, fear, and tallow.” (p. 29)

In “Gift Economies” the poet considers railway tiles to shuttle women to the Fraser River’s canneries. (Compare *Steveston*, a poem by Daphne Marlatt). She self-consciously regrets the years wasted without writing, now worthy of recording. This culture of morning miso, a pattern of refusal, demurrals, “You always meant to accept./ To dwell on your reciprocal gifts/” (p. 5)

Prompted by “Application Form” the poet associates the categories of naming, ethnicity, identity with aliases. The “here” begins with the basics, “I stuff my mouth/ with consonants.” (“Permanent Status”, p. 10) A bookcase became “the door to another kingdom” (“Sudden Departures”, p. 12) Of the question “*Where are we from?*”, she acknowledges “There’s the short/ version and the long-way-round version”. (p. 13) The poem goes on to record Chinatown, college boarders, “They never saw our shrines, or ate our fruitful offerings.” (p. 15) Of “Where did it come from” (“The Same Old Story”, p. 17) in “Guiding Lights”, she observes, “The beach was a sheet of marbled paper,/ wrapping up its initial offer.” (p. 18)

“Portage” and “The Cartographer” draw from *An Acre of Time*, by Phil Jenkins, (published by MacFarlane, Walter & Ross, 1996) and David Hackett Fischer’s *Champlain’s Dream* (Knopf Canada, 2008). The poet as would-be biographer interviews her subject with additional questions: “Disregard your maps, not because they bleed.” (p. 21) However, her self-portrait describes women “in self-sovereignty”. (“Self-Portrait of a Diasporic Subject”, p. 22)

Kin assemble to recount “where they’ve been and what they’ve seen.” (“The Canadian Exhibit”, p. 24) The poet’s mother “determined/ what belonged and what didn’t” (“Possession”, p. 27) “We rifle the beach for foam pearls” (“Wreck Beach”, p. 32)

In an ekphrastic poem, a government-tailored beautification project is the pretext for a spontaneous family picnic. (“Still Life With Fallen Fruit, after Mary Pratt’s ‘Jelly Shelf’” painting, p. 25) Some of the contexts are: watchtower, patrols, airlifted, surrogate, cautionary tale, every morning a narrow escape.

“Yard Work” is a long poem which begins *in medias res* “I’m in the midst of it”. The setting is mock archaeological, family burial grounds, “exhumed”, anchors and mowers. The tense is conditional, the historic “progressive past”. (p. 34) Colonial and/or nomadic optional. In briefer poems, she acknowledges forefathers (“Scotch Broom”) but is alone (“Jack Pine”). What is native and non-native (“Invasive Carp”) The miniature “knots and boles” (“The Dwarf Trees”, p. 60)

“The city is burning its birthday candles” (“Night Ferry”, p. 42) “The evening’s served on a blue-grazed platter” (“Another View”, p. 45)

“Custom Design” is a centre-justified poem inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Living Room for the Francis W. Little House, 1912-1914. However, the point of view is in the third person: “She customized a life”, “she slashed partitions”, after which the shift is to

prescience, “I was the shape of things to come.” (p. 46) Another such poem is “Still Life With Dream Interpretation” after Lu Shou Kun’s Zhangzhi Is Free”.

In part II “Portage”, a long poem, is arranged by “i. Survey”, “ii. Display”, “iii. Developments”, “iv. Barterings”, “v. Source”, “vi. Founding Fathers”, “vii. Burdens”, “viii. Jam”, and “ix. Lachine”. This is another example of the pseudo-objective distancing the persona of the poet explores, embracing the otherness of scientific or historical scholarship, while elaborating the storytelling with diasporic details and the— at times—overwhelming sense of dislocation she feels.

The epistolary texts of “The Child Bride: A Letter” after Li Po about an arranged marriage, “negotiated/ like a trade alliance”, ostensibly refers to Madame de Champlain, wife of Samuel Champlain (p. 61) “and we breathed in unison, a choir” (“Rites of Passage”, p. 63)

In “The Cloud People” we encounter “still/ wet canvases” before “we saw the bigger picture.”(p. 64) A trick of light impacts vision (“Flight Path Above Bow Valley”). Scenic views are challenging to find (“Low Visibility”). Across the city there are “Suspensions of Power”). Clear notes “striking the same chord” (“Blue Irises”). “Winter’s gone/ into overtime”. (“Dufferin Grove Suites”, p. 71) Victorian names but ethnicity is still affordable. “There” is a remembered place. (“Conversation Pieces”) There is no cause for alarm (“PSA”). “Your drone eye” is where it should be (“Latitude”). She seeks escape (“The Pre-Existing Structures”). City restrictions on cultural property are relinquished. Documents inform “Loft Conversions”, with found material from *Reasons for Designation – 40 Westmoreland Avenue*, Toronto City Council, Heritage Preservation Services, 2007; Dog Day Developers website; “West 40 Residences; and *The Book of Occasional Services* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004.) A “paved paradise” is city-side (“Career Path”). Sentences require inflections, until no explanations are needed. (“Lesson Plan”). The sky’s “split screen” precedes our landing. (“Future Prospects”). “No real threat was posed” (“Best Behaviour”) despite her father’s rages “that shook him like a shadow puppet.” (“Swimming Lessons”, p. 88)

She wrote an homage after John Everett Millais’ Ophelia, a painting. “The milled edges fly, changing course mid-air,/ but you don’t wait to see if they land.” (p. 91) “But below and above us, lines were holding up.” (“I Hear It’s Raining”, dedicated to the student protestors of Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution, a series of protests that took place from September to December 2014, p. 92) “The impassive counters/ we’d waited at, and been waited on?” (“Still Life With Disappearing Act”, p. 94) “A distant relation asks about my job or my parents” (Visiting Relatives”, p. 96). “Regional Transit”, from a York Region Transit/ Viva billboard next to Highway 7 and Bayview Avenue, promises “*Bringing the future into the present.*” (p. 97) School is formulaic and constricting. (“Rising Tide”) The poet puns, “coats at the cleaners were unimpressed” (“The Birds Went First”)

The cover images are in the public domain from an Amsterdam museum. The poet offers, “I conjure you drawing in the margins/ of your schoolbooks” which can be an admission of the book design. (p. 20)

Wang previously published in numerous journals, such as *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Canadian Literature*, *Maisonneuve*, *The Malahat Review*, *This Magazine*, and *Diasporal Dialogues*' TOK 6: *Writing the New Toronto* anthology. Her first chapbook *Occasional Emergencies* was published by Odourless Press in 2013 and she was the 2015 Grand Prize winner of the *Prism International Poetry Prize*. Her second chapbook *Hanging Exhibits* appeared in 2016 with The Emergency Response Unit before her debut collection of poetry *Admission Requirements*.

<http://www.oolichan.com/de-meijer-leaving-howe-island>



**Review of *Leaving Howe Island, poems* by Sadiqa de Meijer**  
(Fernie, B.C.: Oolichan Books, 2013) 72 pp. paper.

Part One “Great Aunt Unmarried” is a series of linked poems demonstrating figurative language, for example the alliteration of “Home with herring from a harbour truck” (p. 14); the landscape as the bloodstream, slow embolisms, a patchwork, “rivers mapped/ to the veins of our wrists.” (p. 14) The poet adopts a foreign language, “Strandbeesten”, the mobile beach creatures by artist Theo Jansen, in an unfamiliar landscape; the diction of “*tatwa*”, “*Folo Modern*”, “*Schip!*”, “Friesland”. (“She spoke to me by accident// in the dialect” which the poet describes as “of bovine melancholy in the vowels”, p. 23). Others are: “*Kandij*”, “pseudomorph” and “cephalopods”; time was “clock-war”, “No, gods of clocks. She tests the trajectory of mirror, binoculars, // mirrors again” (“Bloodbottlers”, p. 20). There are the character of Roald Dahl’s book *The BFG*; television’s “Brandenburg Gate/ or Rwanda”. Twin beds are “abridged”, while “Lawn chairs emerged”, with “Words below, but aimless”. She avers plastic, refers to oval images of ancestors, especially “Such quicksilver// light.” (p. 15)

In “There, There”, a mother’s tone of voice with promises she makes (“Hush”) are compelling, with tactile imagery, luscious personification, and metaphysical conceits. Then the recurring motifs of manufacturing “water widened/ by machines” in the harbour, “bank machines”, “shirts mended”, and “men shackled”. The unnatural or mechanomorphic will be replaced by the natural “Or the two circulations: systemic, pulmonary? Or opposite shifts in the same factory.” (“Dag en Nacht”, the title of a woodcut landscape by M.C. Escher, p. 63)

In the imagist poem “Nocturne”, socioeconomic class is interpreted by “thrift store’s rack”, “substrate/ of adequate homes”, “a row house”, but “every home is a drywall/ tent”. By way of contrast, the suburbs are far from normal, despite their pretentious residents. (“These People”) In an ode to the City, “my name/ is an absence in a park bench,” (p. 44) “Because there was and there wasn’t a city”, the poem title is from artist

Jamelie Hassan's work, "Because... there was and there wasn't a city of Baghdad." A public pool, the dead end street, "A ghetto-blasters spoils/ ghazals". (p. 45)

The title poem alludes to "dear lady/ of the harbour" (her muse) and her reading the "languageless" a coined term, their passage reduced to its elements, "*where/ are we going?*" and the clipped rejoinder "*across*". (Note: Is it the poet mother or the child in utero who will announce "*we're here*", in "Saint John", p. 59) Her memory of place and then time, "that was downstream, upstream in time". In "There, There", the persona of the poet offers, "I'd need you then, unfolding, comma of root and leaf." (p. 40) See also: "live in me, unclosable/ parentheses" (p. 52) While the sky is "a steel ceiling", the ferry "a cradle of cold/ metal". The city is sprawling, but "poker-faced" (p. 42)

The persona of the poet as unpaid volunteer elaborates on protest marches, canvassing, standing still awaiting recognition; a docent, a coffee from the staff-room. She hid evidence of puberty. Images of "an inferno", "fireworks", "questions like bricks", "frugal feelings" ("The Widows"), "my voice an ambulance", (p. 52).

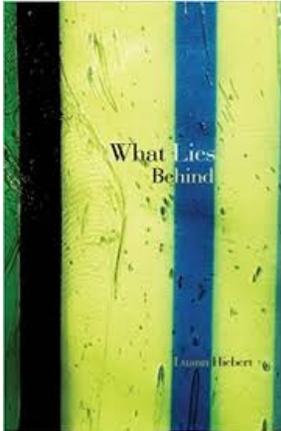
What once was and what are now ("January"), a juncture "between how old/ I imagine and am?" (p. 54) a simile for the train which "moves like a lit room through the night" ("Corridor", which borrows its premise from the poem "Afsluitdijk", by M. Vasalis (the pseudonym of Margaretha Droogleeve Fortuyn-Leenmans). The first line is a translation of Vasalis' first line, except that the vehicle in the original is a bus, (p. 54). The imagist poem "Nocturne", is one in which de Meijer envisions "each road we took/ and take", remade/ from hawk to hawk". (p. 56)

She contemplates the sameness of pools in different cities, while undertaking "the fluid element", as a sense of rescue from drowning. ("Community Pool at Noon"). The time is described as Arcadian, mid-day, in terms of from the archive, and antique. Some companion poems "Neonatal" and "The New Father" express "our mother tongue" (p. 60) She embraces the incremental repetition, "nurse, change, soothe", this commonplace work. Indeed, "My child wakes and wakes." ("Dag en Nacht", p. 63) She reverts to "the interval/ between a mother and her child" but "I force myself" ("Jesse's Farm", p. 64), a prose poem and/or stream of consciousness. With "no registry of toddlers" ("Lake Ontario Park") but "Picture Books" about the "Homemade little human", a somewhat altered phrase from Herman de Coninck's poem "Poëzie" (p. 67).

Language appears random ("What Crows Say"), personified in "a search for phrases", "Even the words know it" (p. 67) and "Yes," the concluding poem, "The wind/ lifted the word and blew it." (p. 68) reminding me of an Irving Layton poem "while someone from far off / blows birthday candles for the world." (The Birth of Tragedy)

This collection was a finalist for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award and the Governor General's Award in Poetry. Sadiqa de Meijer was born in Amsterdam. Her poetry, short stories, and essays have appeared in many journals, including *The Malahat Review*, *Geist*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Riddle Fence*, and *Poetry Magazine*. Her poems were anthologized in *The Best of Canadian Poetry in English* 2008 and 2014 (Tightrope Books) and in the

2012 international anthology *Villanelles* (Everyman's Library). In 2013, her series "Great Aunt Unmarried" won the CBC Poetry Prize. She lives in Kingston and, according to the poet, "dreams of everywhere— of landscapes held in memory, in books and paintings, in faces and hands."



**Review of *What Lies Behind*, by Luann E Hiebert** (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2014) 93 pp. paper.

This is a consciously metaphysical collection which deftly brushes the natural and the supernatural spheres.

The poet acknowledges the influence of Struan Sinclair's *Automatic World* (Doubleday, 2009) in her poem "watch the train" and Anne Carson's "The Glass Essay" in *Glass, Irony & God* (New Directions, 1995) in "you don't get it."

This is language-based poetry, what Amy Lowell of *Poetry Chicago* might have called a variant of prose, before imagism was contemporary. Syntax plays a significant role, as does scansion, with double entendres and bon mots.

There is a concreteness to the all lower case letters apportioned to left- or right-centred columns. In "white as morning", the text is aptly centre-justified wind is a feathered wave, on my snowcold face. (p. 22) "raven beauty" is centred and describes distant flights & foreign sights by a crow. (p. 42) In "what crow" the colour black is reserved, "shit/ hit", what the crow said, "*squawk squark yawp caw*". In "you did it again", the poet intones the moon and its vanishing. The moon in "a smudge" of time is replaced by the sun. In "the hunt", light "stalks", "creeps", "seizes", black on white. (p. 46) An empty day is when "he is not here"; ebb and flow of "lunar tides"; a proposition, in "would you", an encounter set in the metro train. (p. 50) In "when I read you" an erotic embrace and grace (p. 51); in "reading lamp", language and scripts, prose, mis-readings, pages, his story. (p. 52) with invitations in "the corner chair", bookshelf, a tome, and covers. (p. 53 )

Another poem "the curve rains deep" is right-justified and plays with "cursively", "pervious", "curvature, bent nearly out of shape". (p. 54) In "you are..." a "blizzard-busy", january, cum union calendar. (p. 55)

"light rails" is a poem which replicates the sound and patterns of movement, "trails", "miles", speed of "sight" rather than light, "-less prairied mindscape." The central comparison is between train rails and "brain crossing" which follows along, more or less, on a track in time. (p. 23) Coincidentally, Einstein demonstrated the theory of relativity by describing a point of observation with a moving train. "watch the train" elaborates on "screen", "station", "schedules", and train metaphor. Memories "choose" reference points along the train brain trajectory.

"Chuf chum" is replete with *onomatopoeia* a spoken word poem on CPR and CNR "l-o-n-g-o-ne". (p. 27) An icy sun, in "sun flowers" (both the noun and the verb meanings) arrests light in winter. The sun is, by turns, "freeze-dried", it hesitates, beaming "a stiff light", which chills in December. The metaphysical scene depicts how trees are northern pose and time appears to stand still, followed by an admission of "a stand/ of contraries"; while I love "not with standing" (meaning supine or lying down) and/or a compound meaning of "withstanding", completes a suitable tableau in nature and art. She embraces our polar burden. (p. 5)

The title of "tracing" is, in part, of her hands tracing snow in the bank. The poem relies on personification "tongues of snow blow", tracks "trace", "prints" linger like impressions; the mind a doorframe. Gardening means "staking faith", and seeds for seedlings, referring to multiple meanings. (p. 4)

She also indulges in half rhyme "freckles" "speckling", "flecks" and "reflect". There is much word play, "look who's looking", while conjoining "looking back at me/me/ looking back", the noun "makeup" and verb phrase "make up". The punning of "un becoming" and "becoming"; the uncertain state of "I am not" ("I am" reinforced by the unfinished closing bracket. The pose is a mirror-like image of mother and daughter "I see/ my mother see she/ grows in my face/". (p. 3) Nature or nurture, a conundrum, an imperative mood throughout.

In "hoarfrost" the verb phrase of "catching ones breath" is in the second person . Note "breath-burrs" and "frost furs", while "I live on/ the line", signifying both poetic and in nature. In "its got to be" the poem is enfolded by "the right shade of blue", twilight is between the dinner hour, hence "the evening-hungry sky"; "linen lie", we fold into each other. (p. 7)

In "sour apples", "autumn's burden" and "blessing" are comparative, as "(*so sour & oh so sweet*". A "winter mind field" interrupts "the morning after", with sounds and shadows, emotion adrift. "thought I saw you" is a recurring phrase associated with "the page", "a new leaf", "stirred ink blots" (p. 10); "thought" and "thirst" combine, exchanging glances. She explores this relationship further, in the function of the poet ("poems out of line"), "words twist", with "cord lengths", but remain "out of line". "bloodlines" reflect the "in" and "out of line", to be turned in vein and arterial, "emerging". (p. 11)

A deviation on the theme is "apple pie & salsa" a fooder's fadish delight in which she coins "cheek appeal" and "sun-toil cherrity." (p. 19) Yet, "it's not the cheer", a poem based on what it's not and "nor" throughout. Pumpkins are personified as "prairie pearls" and "those startled eyes". (p. 20) "a yellow leaf" reproduces the e-motion arising from the concrete to the abstract "into the blue/ cool of now".( p. 21)

In "hung out to dry", the conceit of laundry fashions poetry (completely) "out of line" and "hung", since her poems too hang or depend on the line, words both "fresh & wet pinned". Of herself or another, "(this preposterous poet)", the lines are "luandering"

(punning on her first name which is "Luann") or a coined term; "publically" is either deliberately misspelled or intended to convey "lick", without shame. (p. 12)

The poem "lining" uses the noun or verb in the progressive tense, which alludes to the "page", "a hand-stitched book", of the Biblical or popular culture coat of "many colours", the poet wears well. (p. 13)

The poetry is composed of accumulations, secretions, and accretions. "to make a bee line" generally means a direct approach, in haste. This is revisited, as "how to make", an instructional guide, but the result reflects a paradox of when a straight line can, ironically and simultaneously, "be bent". The imperative voice of "string a line" asks the reader (and/or bee) to participate. The images of "sunshot", "well shod", and otherwise "shot", even with good intentions, according to William Blake, is the paved path to hell). The onomatopoeia of bee sound reflects "spell-bound bee", and variations on "get", like "Luanns' quest". (p. 14)

"drag on fly" combines the noun and verb phrase in a centre-justified piece which relies on alliteration and assonance, a type of calligraphy, like an insect cum butterfly, "pen/ - sive/ lines" and "quad quills", "lines miles", "(in)visible, gravity defied". (p. 15)

"glory-dawn" begins with the sun, moves to "catch earth's praise", half rhyme of "fly" and "spies", with "tongue's sweetness", much as the poet cherishes "its whirring tale. "

"prairie" is a poem which contains affirmations, meditations, in a zen pose of word webs, such as "grain gold", "night shades", and "grape wine", to name only a few. (p. 17)

The sound of silence ironically echoes ("echo echo") "there there", "calls calls", until homonyms hear here, a place to begin. ("landscape of home", p. 18) "under the belt" revisits what once defined home, such as hay and grain, all gone now. The earth is personified with "breath" and "grave bones"; their voices, rooted blend with "everbreath" and "everspring", coining "deadtothisword".

The poet draws on arithmetic, such as multiplication and division. In "if time", the poet explores "no time is.../ all times being/ being all times/ times all being/ times being all." In this manner, she associates the conditions of time with living and dying. The garden and the gardener offer a metaphor for "time-lessness", "self-lessness", "already", "colourwonder"; death is "deracinated", which is defined as: "to pull up by the roots; uproot; extirpate; eradicate" to prepare for the resurrection and "humans blossom". (p. 30) Regarding division, she considers *Slovenly Love* by Meira Cook. The camera always lies, because of what remains hidden, thus divides and multiplies the lies. Film ("she catches my eye") "surf face" (surface), words, worlds, "white-on-black movies". "looking glass", moon shine ("raise your glass", p. 35)

"Breathe" appropriates your word and my mouth with enunciation of consonants. (p. 31) The title poem likewise reclaims: "what lies behind/ the lies we hide/ behind. (p. 32)

Compare this with "behind the door", as "what lies behind" is also "what lies/ beyond", in a strange sense of secrecy. p. 56

Read "spring", when winter is replaced by spring white & waiting, as well as runoff ice & snow, crocus. In "turn on the heat", (p. 37) there are: winter's bone cold to april extravagance. "in the moment", wherein you hear it heave; in "wasted voices", ("can you hear them"). Try on three key words, rearranging them to examine meaning and concomitant lack of significance (cityspeak). In "i carry", harmonies are for all human(un)kind. (p. 40)

In "what crow" what the crow knows and in "raven beauty" their living art, a woman is unable to recognize. "lay me down" depicts children at prayer. "black & white" displays the words, which she carves from moon, engraving black, then white, then black & white the words. (p. 58) "you don't get it" opens with aloneness, no man lover, your books, "your eyes intruded on by property taxes". ( p. 59)

"blue moon daze" is centred and wraps around the page as a crescent shape (p. 61), one in a blue moon daze is followed by "time will tell", with incremental repetitions throughout, in pairs, thereby left-hand justification accommodated by shifts to right-hand text. (p. 62) "weather wears" uses the device of a positive statement followed by ("or not") but "wearing down the awares" is wholly abstract. (p. 63) "undone" demonstrates a picture of unravelling (a sweater) which is (un)bound by the sound, fibres of every word, doubly knit. (p. 64). "read red" is a homonym for "i read you". (p. 65) "well woman" plays on a wishing well, "wishing you well". (p. 67). "a-lone" offers "I am not", "all-one I am", "a-lone, with you". (p. 68) "mourning air" is a homonym for "morning". a song poem with spoken words. (p. 69 "meno (pause) madness" plays with hormones: "all heyday", "glottis", "glutinous", "dysthymia". (p. 70)

"newsflash" in headlines, imagination, hotflashes, painkiller.( p. 72). "the worth of a woman" deals with "what is", "what is", "so what". (p. 73) "island" is a prose poem, so woman is but man is not (John Donne) (p. 74). "back these bare bones" predicts "*snap crackle pop*" and at the chiropractor. (p. 75)

"life-drops" spent, "bit by bit bitten". (p. 76) "red rivers" numb, succumb, heart.(p. 77) "we a clod" incorporates the visual pattern of an EKG. (p. 78) "in stitches" laughter but that hospital smell. (p. 79) "terminal" at every turn, "*pneuma* we are old/ and newly mothered". (p. 81) "the dark way" proffers grief without spiritual comfort. (p. 82).

"light promises" is centred and drills down into a pattern of burn out. (p. 83) "the dark side of God" is despairing, guilt-ridden, "what good are words": fumble stumble. However, her faith is passionately redeemed. (p. 84) "dream works" rhetorically asks what is dream, without revelation, an angel, without a message. (p. 86)

In "caesarian", a language is reborn, carved for bearing, (p. 87). "toe the line" revisits the poetical line at the centre, "out of", "in waves". (p. 88) "why come back" deals with a relationship which comes and goes, to and from a line of ecstasy. (p. 89) "an end" asks to

begin and at the end. (p. 90) "whispers of grace" refers to sleep rhythms, the breath pause inhale, exhale, in & out (p. 91 "the highest praise" is hallelujah. (p. 92)

Concrete poetry—sometimes also called "shape poetry"—is poetry whose visual appearance matches the topic of the poem. The words form shapes which illustrate the poem's subject as a picture, as well as through their literal meaning. *Concrete*, pattern, or shape *poetry* is an arrangement of linguistic elements in which the typographical effect is more important in conveying meaning than verbal significance. It is sometimes referred to as visual *poetry*, a term that has now developed a distinct meaning of its own. Drawing upon both textual and visual modes of signification, concrete poetry is thus a hybrid between text and image, and forces readers to oscillate between reading and viewing modes.

[www.poetrybeyondtext.org/concrete-poetry.html](http://www.poetrybeyondtext.org/concrete-poetry.html) retrieved April 21, 2017,



Hiebert has a postgraduate research interest in Canadian prairie poetry written by women, *Encountering Maternal Silence: Writing Strategies for Negotiating Margins of Mothering in Contemporary Canadian Prairie Womens Poetry* (2016). Her first poetry collection was shortlisted for the Eileen McTavish Sykes Award for Best First Book (2015) and the Landsdowne Prize for Poetry (2015). She was the featured reader at Winnipeg's Speaking Crow and *Prairie Fire* WORD Festival. She served on a panel at the Carol Shields Symposium on Women's Writing: Festival of Voices. She gave presentations at the Moments of Discovery: A Symposium in Honour of Robert Kroetsch and the Symposium on Manitoba Writing. She is a member of the Manitoba Writers Guild.

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HERIZONS is a quarterly Canadian feminist magazine that delivers the inside scoop on the Canadian women's movement: health, activism, the environment and legal cases affecting women. *Herizons* serves up feminist satire and plenty of news at a glance. Canada's largest feminist magazine is a unique hybrid of non-profit business, feminist publishing and advocacy journalism. *Herizons* is published in Winnipeg and distributed in every part of Canada. The magazine's talented, insightful contributors and its content span the country and the world. Officially, *Herizons'* statement of purpose is: to publish an inspiring feminist magazine that fosters a state of wellness that enriches women's lives; expands the boundaries of feminism; builds awareness of current issues as they affect women, and broadens the influence of feminist principles. *Herizons* aims to reflect a philosophy that is diverse, and one that is relevant to women's daily lives.

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columnist Joanna Chiu. If you think you've got the stuff to write for Herizons, read the guidelines for submissions.

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