

News from the Feminist Caucus, by Anne Burke

This month, news from Magie Dominic, Susan McCaslin (and Inanna Press), and Sharon Singer. Also "Take Back the Night", with a preview of Cathy Ford's *Flowers We Will Never Know The Names Of* about the Montreal Massacre 25 years ago; reviews of *Red Letter Day*, by Bernice Lever, *In the Bone Cracks of the Walls*, by Tina Biello, *Two Tragedies in 429 Breaths*, by Susan Paddon; *Painted Fires*, by Nellie L. McClung and *The Foreigner: A Tale of Saskatchewan*, by Ralph Connor.



Hi, A photo from a book launch for the new book, *Street Angel*, last evening. A lovely, small gathering of writer friends. Sept. 24, 2014
Very grateful!
Best always,
Magie

STREET ANGEL

www.magiedominic.blogspot.com

[Magie Dominic at Lincoln Center Archives](#)

[twitter @magiedominic](#)

FOR RELEASE: August 26, 2014

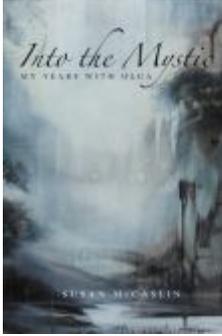
Contact: Renée Knapp, Publicist, Inanna Publications and Education Inc.

Digital cover image available

**For author interviews, or more information, please contact
reneeknapp@inanna.ca or 416 736 5356**

Inanna Publications launches four provocative new books!

Fall Book Launch No.3: A celebratory evening including readings and refreshments! Monday, November 17, 2014 The Supermarket, 268 Augusta Avenue (Kensington Market) Toronto, ON, 6:00-8:30pm www.inanna.ca



Susan McCaslin: *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga* A memoir that focuses on the author's spiritual mentor, Olga Park, synthesizing memoir, spiritual autobiography, biography, personal narrative, and poetry in an innovative way.

Endorsements for Susan McCaslin's *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga*

"You won't be the same after reading this book. *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga* flows with a subtle, near-miraculous spiritual sweetness. Susan McCaslin was genuinely transformed by her association with her unique spiritual mentor, an elderly woman who gave and still gives McCaslin invisible gifts of immeasurable import. McCaslin offers gifts to us in turn: in her yearning for the ineffable consciousness we call God, she weaves this memoir of her deepest inner life and of her experience of the "I am" such that we are at once greatly moved and made more fully aware of how we are each a "chapter / of an older story, a piece of a cloth..." It's fascinating to see how for McCaslin the divine is never separate from the bodily fact of her existence, from the story of her individuality, from her writing of poetry, from her love for her family, or, in recent years, from her passionate activism in the name of the natural environment. This is a vibrant, light-filled portrait, a document of transformation, an eloquent guidebook. It's a treasure."

Russell Thornton

"Not all of us who aspire to a mystical life are fortunate enough to have such a teacher as Olga Park, whom BC writer and poet Susan McCaslin studied with for decades. In this spiritual memoir, McCaslin shares her experience of the Canadian mystic who so inspired and encouraged her. McCaslin acts as guide to Olga Park's writings as well as her own, drawing on a broad reading into mystical tradition. McCaslin offers the reader a place to stand, a sense of deep interconnectivity which Olga Park describes as "between time and eternity." McCaslin has the ability to articulate ineffable experience with the well-thought-out clarity of a philosopher and the felt acuity of a poet. We are drawn into the mystic's "depth of field," the wider ecology that bridges an inclusive continuum of matter and spirit. Let *Into the Mystic* lead you to explore hitherto untranslated dimensions. Let this book lead you home."

Penn Kemp, poet and playwright, editor of *Jack Layton: Art in Action*

"*Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga* reveals Susan McCaslin's transformational and endearingly human journey with English-born Canadian Olga Park, integrative creative and mystic. McCaslin interweaves her poems, prose, photos, art, visions and struggles with those of Olga Park. Their polyphonic insights assure this reader that raised consciousness is accessible and joyful, not a hallucinogenic state. McCaslin, a gifted poet and visionary herself, illuminates Park's interior knowing, synthesizing myriad systems or spiritual stepping stones, drawing on her own deep knowledge of many wisdom traditions. McCaslin's book is wise, humble, and courageous. Her lyrical, receptivity entices this reader into a more loving, honest *dasein* or being in the world. May this treasure, organized in numinous vignettes, touch many souls."

Katerina Fretwell, poet and author of *Class Acts*

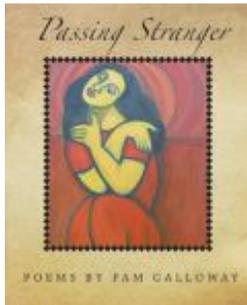
"Suppose someone like the mystical William Blake lived nearby, so you could drive up to his house. Would you? Susan McCaslin answers in the affirmative in her meetings with a Christ-centred Blakean mystic named Olga, weighing 100 pounds and dressed in grey, "the colour of service." *Into the Mystic* – yes, a borrowing from Van Morrison – is an enchanting mix of prose and poetry, literature and spirituality, biography and autobiography. The autobiography is as essential as the biography; growth and deepening are central to both stories. Poet McCaslin and mystic Olga both come off as fascinating human beings

open to all the folds of Being, including the non-material. McCaslin takes you places you may not have been before, but because her voice has the ring of authenticity to it, you trust her wisdom and experience.”

J.S. Porter, author of *Spirit Book Word: An Inquiry into Literature and Spirituality* and *Lightness and Soul: Musings on Eight Jewish Writers*

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council for our publishing program, and the financial assistance of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund.

Inanna Publications



Pam Galloway: *Passing Stranger* Poems weave through a marriage, a desire for motherhood, considerations of fertility and infertility, an eventual divorce and a woman finding herself in late middle age, ready to experience life to the full.

Ursula Pflug: *Motion Sickness* A flash novel consisting of 55 chapters of exactly 500 words each and accompanied by a wood-cut like, scratchboard illustration explores one young woman's humorous and poignant misadventures.

Phyllis Rudin: *Evie, The Baby and the Wife* Played out against the backdrop of the fight for women's rights in Canada, this is the boisterous tale of a mother and daughter at odds, struggling to reconnect across a reproductive divide.

Title: *Motion Sickness* Author: Ursula Pflug Publisher: Inanna Publications Distributor: Brunswick Books 9.5" x 9" / 122 pgs. / 25.95 CDN Trade Paperback ISBN: 978-1-77133-142-5

Title: *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga* Author: Susan McCaslin

Publisher: Inanna Publications Distributor: Brunswick Books

5.5" x 8.25" / 250 pgs. / 24.95 CDN Trade Paperback ISBN: 978-1-77133-188-3

Title: *Passing Stranger* Author: Pam Galloway Publisher: Inanna Publications

Distributor: Brunswick Books 6" x 7.5" / 120 pgs. / 18.95 CDN Trade Paperback ISBN: 978-1-77133-184-5

Title: *Evie, The Baby and the Wife* **Author:** Phyllis Rudin **Publisher:** Inanna Publications **Distributor:** Brunswick Books 5.5" x 8.25" / 224 pgs. / 22.95 CDN

Trade Paperback ISBN: 978-1-77133-134-0

Dear friends,

As I may have mentioned to some of you, I'm launching a memoir about my relationship with an elderly spiritual mentor I met at the age of 22, a mystic who transformed my life. The book, *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga*, will be launched in Toronto through Inanna Publications on Nov. 17th of this year. I shall be in the Toronto area at that time.

Attached is the evite and some information about the time and place of the launch in case some of you might be able to attend.

Right now, belatedly, I've been asked by my publisher to see if I might help set up some other readings to make more of a tour of my trip. I'll be travelling and reading with fellow Innana author, poet Pam Galloway. So if anyone has any suggestions for possible reading venues for the two of us, please put me in touch with the possible hosts. I realize most readings, especially those with Canada Council funding, are planned about a year in advance, so am taking this into account. A small literary salon, perhaps?

I've attached the endorsements for the book as well.

Warm greetings to you all!

Susan McCaslin

From: Renee Knapp [mailto:reneeknapp@inanna.ca]
Sent: September 14, 2014 6:19 AM
To: Susan McCaslin; Pamela Galloway; Ursula Pflug; Phyllis Rudin
Subject: November 17 launch e-vite and press release again...corrected & ATTACHED

Hi Susan, Pam, Ursula and Phyllis!

Attached are the November 17 Inanna launch e-vite and press release again.

Small correction. Please use these versions when you circulate.

Thanks so much!

Renée Knapp reneeknapp@inanna.ca Publicist and Marketing Manager Inanna Publications and Education Inc. 210 Founders College, York University 4700 Keele Street Toronto, ON M3J 1P3 <http://www.inanna.ca/>

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Friday, September 19, 2014

- **Sheri-D Wilson** performed a spoken word piece.
- **Blake Spence** from the Calgary Sexual Health Centre talked about the role of men and boys in ending violence against women.
- **Autumn EagleSpeaker** from the Idle No More movement spoke about violence against Indigenous women.
- **Shannon Leigh** spoke about her extensive experiences working in the fields of domestic conflict, violence prevention and women's shelters.
- **Sisters From Another Mother** led the march with traditional Cree songs and drumming.

<http://takebackthenightcalgary.com/history-of-take-back-the-night/>

In 1975, microbiologist Susan Alexander Speeth was stabbed while walking home alone. Speeth's murder led to the first Take Back the Night, which was held in October 1975 in Philadelphia.

The Take Back the Night events in Philadelphia and Belgium also represent the first Take Back the Night marches. Participants, generally women, march at Take Back the Night to represent a woman's right to walk alone safely.

The first Take Back the Night was held in Canada in 1978 in Vancouver, British Columbia. In 1981, The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers declared the third Friday of September the evening for Take Back the Night marches nationwide.

In 2001, Take Back the Night became an official charitable foundation. It has become known internationally as a voice against violence against women.

The [United Nations General Assembly](#) has designated November 25 as the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** ([Resolution 54/134](#)).^[1] The premise of the day is to raise awareness of the fact that women around the world are subject to [rape](#), [domestic violence](#) and other forms of violence; furthermore, one of the aims of the day is to highlight that the scale and true nature of the issue is often hidden. For 2013, the official Theme framed by the [UN Secretary-General](#)'s campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, is *Orange the World in 16 Days*

<http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2014/09/13/Afghanistan-4-136-Cases-of-Self-Immolation-Primarily-Involving-Women-Registered-So-Far-This-Year>

Hi,

Here's a link to the article just published on Charlebois Post, which I wrote outlining the last several years of development of my opera "Isis and Osiris." Hope you enjoy it!

<http://www.charpo-canada.com/2014/09/first-person-librettist-sharon-singer.html>

All best,
Sharon

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How an ancient Egyptian myth is being reincarnated into a new Canadian opera

Isis and Osiris by Sharon Singer and Peter-Anthony Togni is in development
by Sharon Singer (Librettist)

Toronto-born Sharon Singer is a published poet, librettist, journalist, and spoken word performer, known for her dramatic monologues. In addition to four published books, Ms Singer's work has been included in poetry journals and anthologies. More than 15 years ago, Sharon Singer began collaborating with musicians who wrote soundscapes to accompany her spoken word performances. This resulted in her work being set to classical and jazz music for the CDs Hail, Canadian Art Song and Global Warming, a collaboration with renowned New York jazz saxophone player Bob Mover. In 2008 Philip McConnell composed music for Sharon Singer's short story The Museum and her documentary poem, The Burning Book both of which she performed with the Toronto Sinfonietta Orchestra at the Royal Ontario Museum. Isis and Osiris is her first opera libretto. The opera's initial public performance took place at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

www.sharonsinger.com www.ariaworks.ca

Dear Anne: A pretty cover, The insides, flowers ABC. This is long poem about the Montreal Massacre. 25 years! Hope all is well with you. Love,
C.F.

Cathy Ford <http://www.mothertonguepublishing.com/2014-new-books.html>

ISBN 978-1-896949-48-2

5.5 x 7.75, 75 pages

\$18.95



This new long poem by an important Canadian poet is about love and grief, a palimpsest against violence and loss. Written in the language of flowers, reimagining the alphabet of floral symbols, and their meaning, it marks the 25th anniversary of the murders of fourteen women students at Montreal's L'École Polytechnique, on December 6, 1989, a history-changing event. It is an incantation, a chant, a protest, memento mori, an invocation, a prayer for peace organized in fourteen sections. This bouquet challenges the precision of syntax, liberates lyric and provokes the spell-checker. Common flower names are transformed, and old familiar names evocatively rewritten especially using enjambment, a passionate and strikingly female device.

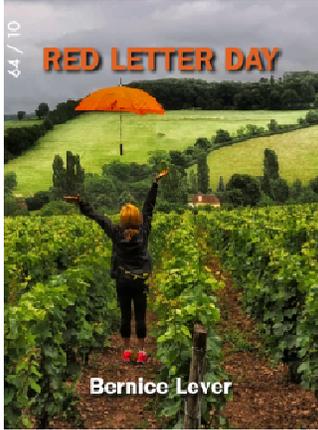
Cathy Ford is the author of fifteen books of poetry and numerous chapbooks and folios, including poetry, long poems, fiction and memoir, published by blewointment press, Intermedia Press, Caitlin Press, Véhicule Press, Harbour Publishing, gynergy books, Mother Tongue Publishing and others. She was born in Saskatchewan, grew up in northern British Columbia and has lived for many years in the Southern Gulf Islands and in Sidney, B.C. She attended the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and has a BFA and an MFA in Creative Writing. Cathy Ford served as President of the League of Canadian Poets and is a founding member of the Feminist Caucus of the LCP.

She was the elected LCP representative to Access Copyright for four years, working to improve respect for the individual creator's copyright and to increase cultural recognition through fair compensation for use of copyright materials. A member of the League of Canadian Poets, The Writer's Union of Canada and a supporter of PEN Canada, she is a community and arts activist committed to world peace, addressing the issues of violence against women and children and seeking to improve the status of women, especially writers and artists in Canada and internationally.

The **École Polytechnique Massacre**, also known as the **Montreal Massacre**, occurred on December 6, 1989 at the [École Polytechnique](#) in [Montreal](#), Quebec, Canada. Twenty-five-year-old [Marc Lépine](#), armed with a legally obtained [Mini-14](#) rifle and a [hunting knife](#), shot twenty-eight people before killing himself. He began his attack by entering a classroom at the university, where he separated the male and female students. After claiming that he was "fighting feminism" and calling the women "a bunch of feminists," he shot all nine women in the room, killing six. He then moved through corridors, the cafeteria, and another classroom, specifically targeting women to shoot. Overall, he killed fourteen women and injured ten other women and four men in just under twenty minutes before turning the gun on himself. Many feminist groups and public officials have characterized the [massacre](#) as an anti-feminist attack that is representative of wider societal violence against women.^{[4][5][6]} Consequently, the anniversary of the massacre has since been commemorated as the [National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women](#)

The **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**, also known informally as **White Ribbon Day**, is a day commemorated in [Canada](#) each December 6, the anniversary of the 1989 [École Polytechnique massacre](#), in which armed student Marc Lépine murdered fourteen women and injured ten others in the name of "fighting feminism".^[2] The commemoration date was established by the [Parliament of Canada](#) in 1991.^[1] The legislation was introduced in the [House of Commons](#) as a [private member's bill](#) by [Dawn Black](#), Member of Parliament for [New Westminster-Burnaby](#), British Columbia, and received all-party support.

Canadian flags on all federal buildings – including the [Peace Tower](#) on [Parliament Hill](#) in [Ottawa, Ontario](#) – are flown at [half-mast](#) on December 6. Canadians are encouraged to observe a minute of silence on December 6 and to wear a [white ribbon](#) (or a [purple ribbon](#)) as a commitment to end violence against women.



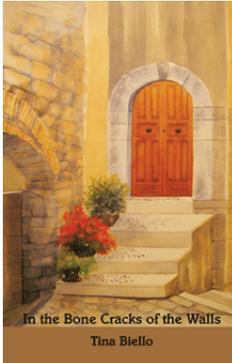
Review of *Red Letter Day*, by Bernice Lever
 (Markam, On: Black Moss Press, 2014) 64 pp. paper.

The title poem, which is many-coloured and jubilant, demonstrates resilience and verve. The poet is hesitant about experiencing aging, even vicariously, but also acknowledges that it is a fact of life. She ponders ghosts, spirits, whether "horror" or "hero". The colour of blood appears on all our hands. A whimsical image of super glue applies to some friendships. An inner voice competes with outside voices. The speaker is "frozen in ennui/ watching pewter birds/ and tapping rain drops." A concrete poem approximates the shapes of knitting while resembling the guillotines. The incremental repetition of "Let air", then "I go to sleep", are used with a cadenced form to convey "My spirit can be multi-loci/ all at once or nowhere at all." This self-reflection yields to Christianity, "His" and "an endless loving Spirit." She rejects elder abuse (even self-inflicted) and its prevalence. She personifies hope with "a multi-Möbius strip". Defending the earth from commerce, the homeless, urban raccoons, pets, pigeons, storytelling abilities. The poem as life-saver. In "Misery Day" we come across unmistakable hip-hop. Synapses are reflected, in sensuous unfolding. A token opal fire ring generates experiences on tour "Down Under". In contrast, she is repelled by earth's "belching", while fire lights up eyes. Nature Walks discover fire weed and other vegetation. The city grid captures traffic, a road "beckoning ruby gleams". Moods shift much as Equinoxes and Solstices. Nature and art combine. She embraces pleasure with both arms. In "Dry Days" she calls for a loss in emotions, atrophying, but soon reverses this with its opposite "Machine Me". The impulse of hunger, a murderous skin-shedding, an atlas of memoirs all serve the poet well. Her doubts bow to storytelling. The double is at the ready (is it near death?) Her pain remains hidden, tempered by empathy. Indoor planting, a smaller cell, inevitably leads to more, "Hey, world, I'm here so/ let me dance!"

The collection is dedicated to her great granddaughter and many of the poems are memories and stories about birth experiences or based on a grandchild. There are recollections of a first train ride, with the troops in 1943, from Smithers B.C. to Edmonton. She the youngest of four sisters. mischievous by the age of eight, a gang leader at nine. She comes to the conclusion that not much has changed about racism from 1942 to

contemporary society. Yet she offers an example of tolerance, a role model for others, especially for the young who come after. As Lever writes,

"My own father was born near Camrose, NWT in 1902-- before Alberta became a province in 1905. My dad's family from near Berne, Switzerland, and Mom's from n.e. coast of Sweden." "Lieben" is an ecological trust and the plan is to make it a National Literary Heritage on Bowen Island.



Review of *In the Bone Cracks of the Walls*, by Tina Biello (Lantzville, B.C. Leaf Press, 2014) 79 pp.

This is a full-length collection. A Preface identifies the poet's inspiration and muse, an artistic cousin who produces watercolours. The poem "Antenati" ("Ancestors") fashions as more than an exercise in exphrasis poetry because "Watercolour lends itself well to poetry and the inspiration for both of us just seems to keep flowing". The rage of a woman's lament is about "all the men she lost to emigration" ("Absence").

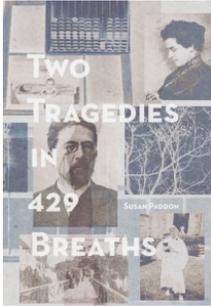
Death comes in a female form ("Death's vulvic folds") associated with "The Old Country". A memory of a dry fountain which resulted in "No water equals no pasta". Even a tear is missing. The goddess Medusa is invoked. The domestic scene devolves into nostalgia, since a culture is disappearing. Celebration will keep the memory constant.

The sumptuous cover image is "Carmela" a painting by Loreta Giannetti. In "Nonna Carmela in Two Parts", she becomes a surrogate grandmother who has her finger on the pulse of the community. A searing aside, "Husbands bring you nothing but heartache". In part 2, the persona embraces the land, sensuously responding to her surroundings.

The elders, even the musicality of their names, enliven the cemetery, while the dialect acts in mosaic chips of colour and vibrant poetry. Since 1943, "God's eye" has survived. A returning sailor is long buried. Farmers are transported to Montreal. An individual is saved, "Shrapnel missed his head by inches". "The First Knight" is he who "pierced" their hymens because they were mail order brides. The priest prays when he is not dining. His former flock has fled. The family's home is for sale. The god blinds eye-

sight. Flowers are personified. Summer shifts to dust and cobblestones. Opera and soap opera call for dance. Sanctity and witchcraft co-mingle with dreams. The cadence, rhythm, and alliteration are effective in conveying the poet's messaging, "Blood to blood. Stone to stone./ Bone to bone." A childhood escapist fantasy, her father's rituals, a culture of expression by gesture, a cedar suffers from heartwood, immigration, where he left his heart behind, and the ironic abandon of words amid nature's abandon. The catacombs are deepened by song. The name "Concetta" muted to "Connie". Generations are buried together. An Old Country "town healer" reaps the rewards. Sensations of sound, taste, vision(ary) are contained within the tissues of prayer, within the wings of transformation. The customs are reinvented, among loss and mortality, right and/or left brain-activated. The household lessons are to turn the other cheek and always pray the rosary, the diurnal round of domestic chores. "Teatro" juxtaposes 1867 with 1949, villagers with a wish for America, while a companion poem "Teatro 2" compares 1953 with 1983. The young leave home too early and are aggrieved. An image of olive tree in Canada's desolate white. A seamstress sews herself a way to conceal the secret held in her body. A lamb, no pet, was eaten on the occasion of Easter. Smelt fishing discloses "thousands of rainbows". Language is personified by percussion, beats, and dancing, "in the damp wet coast." Eros and Thanatos marked by graffiti, because "before the boys of sound, these walls were talking." Even the youth were scarred, when families were separated. The almost overwhelming tone of mourning is addressed by embers, "A dream, now empty. / Ghosts". A woman may aspire to being "left alone", in order to dream. The cobblestones contain stories, "all they have to do is listen." An imagist poem displays reliance.

The Notes acknowledge Leaf Press, a glossa from Lorna Crozier, who is also a translator, and Patrick Lane. There is also a Key to Italian and to the specific Dialect. Biello grew up in British Columbia, studied Theatre at UBC, and teaches performance. Her "Indigo Kids" was performed, poems in chapbook anthologies, and *Momenti* by Leaf Press. She participated in and art exhibition of poetry and watercolour. Her poems have been set to music, as "Dolci Momenti". Her second book of poetry will be published in Fall 2015, by Guernica Press, "A Housecoat Remains".



Review of *Two Tragedies in 429 Breaths*, by Susan Paddon (London, Ontario: Brick Books, 2014) 131 pp.

Paddon has her Master's degree in creative writing from Concordia University in Montreal. This is her first book of poetry which has also been called a novel. The collection is dedicated to Barbara Gail Anderson Paddon (January 31, 1941 - August 13, 2008).

In great part, she was influenced by Anton Chekhov, at least his personal papers, in particular with a curious linking poetic series, red ink on Loblaw's receipt, black ink on Coca-Cola carton, black ink on graph paper; blue ink on Benadryl card, pencil on white notepaper, pencil on brown paper bag. The ultimate found poem in its essential form.

A recurring motif is about the notebooks, dramas, and life of Chekhov, devising an effective prism or screen composed of gauze, through which the poet (or persona) views her own troubled family.

The first section is captioned "April". An opening epigram informs the reader, "I am going to tell you everything", but how can the reader judge, by offences her mother imagines, a dutiful daughter's responses, that which being closer to Chekhov entails. Travel by train, images of a boy in the garden, the Chekhov House Museum in Yalta. A mother, asleep from consumption, is accompanied by stage management, but the reader is drawn into the ethos, "his inabilities", "couldn't take", "couldn't have". There is an extended metaphor of breath, "I synchronized my breath with hers", the child's point of view. This gives way to "Her breath/ rattles, lungs an empty cage." Was God invented by men? ("Faith") Prayers appear to work magic. There is a poignant depiction of an aging neighbour. ("Watching")

In "May", breaths are counted by an abacus, paper flesh, ellipses removed. The harsh reality is that her mother is dying, day by deadly day, amid domestic chores. This recitation is addressed by notations, such as confetti, "swelling from steroids". ("Yellow") The roles of sisters are examined, keeping secrets, with needy brothers. Date night takes on new meanings. Nostalgia is tempered with "a compromised/ respiratory system." ("Peaches") which prompts her to cry for the first but certainly not the last

time. Desire had to be enough for a time. The series of unsent correspondence weaves a braid carefully through time and dislocated place. The narrative line is abruptly interrupted.

In “June”, the rules of etiquette for a dying woman are rehearsed. The pair contrast *Chatelaine* magazine with Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*. “Lung capacity has dropped”. Chekhov writes to Olga, as “Dear Doggie”. His wheezing increased. She cannot tolerate food. This mother of hers is about stories past with no future plots. “Two Tragedies” refers to “She did get better. No miracle” in a play, but does not pertain to the present. The poet engages the untruth, to save her mother the humiliation, much as events unfold as though contemporaneously with Maria and Olga in Chekhov’s life. (“Season Change”) Shopping occupies their “Quiet Hours”. Cancer treatments are inadequate but she ponders how she will explain that to others, when they are bound and determined to ask, after the fact. She distils the prose and poetry of drama, as remnants. She fears her father will blame himself. This is the caretaking role it has taken years for her to learn. He loses his way home, due to struggling with anticipatory grief. No neighbours remain.

In “July”, a prose poem matter-of-factly describes the installation of an air conditioner. (“Water Baby”) One of the lies is of “feeling much better”. Chekhov daydreams. The room is replete with objects, a still life portrait. “My mother’s stats dropped during a routine/ checkup”. These medical memos punctuate the backdrop of the greatest Russian tragedy, theatrical gestures a semaphore for unarticulated anguish.

In “August”, the body resembles a train in passing. Intubation is expected precipitously. “I started praying last night”. (“At Noon by the Fifth Floor Window”) The inner beauty is all but almost gone. “I want you to be here/ in the morning.” The medical necessity intervenes. (“Code Blue”) The inevitability of visiting hour ended. The pretence of reading her dreams. The exodus occurs. (“The Minister’s Visit”) The narrative arch replete with “his arrival causes her heart to flutter”. The worry is a round-about song or poem.

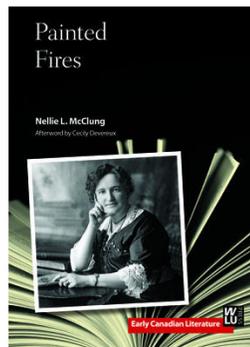
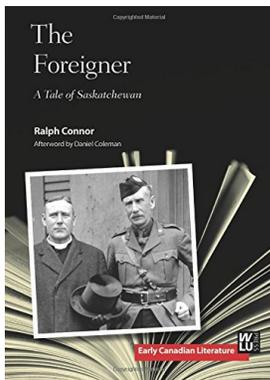
In “September”, photographs are used for comparison purposes. One shortly before her mother’s funeral, the other at the fictional Irina’s birthday party. “you look happy”. Soldiers arrived at Dostoyevsky’s house, in a scene of looting and other violations. His room was sacrosanct. The family’s house is frozen in time. No changes to disturb the evidence of her life there. (“My Father’s House”) The trees were weeping, then full of laughter. The

daughter imagines her mother is telephoning her which is an impossibility. Ask Stanislavski. The Method. The source of acting depends on true experience recreated in a prism. The daughter cannot be ready for her awful dreams. An obituary discommodates her neighbours, “They thought she had gone/ many years before.”

In “After”, an “Archive” delineates three Chekhov House Museums. The dresses are preserved too. A photo reveals a manage-a-trois. “I asked if God was a real/ man. *He was*, you told me. *Without question.*” A portrait shockingly depicts a mother three days dead. A childhood friend links her to her home. “That’s how the tears come now.” She hardly knew her father. She did discover unconditional love but even that lacks any meaning in the framework of mourning. “*Where’s your father?*” A silent movie speaks volumes about “*I know you are not coming back.*” (“A Passage”) A concluding poem is inconclusive, about a dream in which she “watches me.”

There are notes on the text which offer variations on these line readings. In “A Note On Chekhov” a brief biographical note outlines the events shaping his life, including those letters his wife Olga wrote to him after his death.

This is a remarkable collection demonstrating that still waters run deep. The tableau of drama and Russian costumes elicit plot points which ripple through the true events which are shocking and utterly heart wrenching.



Review of *Painted Fires*, by Nellie L. McClung and *The Foreigner: A Tale of Saskatchewan*, by Ralph Connor (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2014) 324 pp, paper.

McClung (1873-1951) as author of *In Times Like These* (1915) was a precursor to the declaration of women as persons and her own elected seat in the Alberta legislature, 1921-6. She produced *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, *The*

Second Chance, *Purple Springs*, and her fourth and final novel *Painted Fires*. She completed her autobiography, *Clearing in the West* (1936) and *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945). She was president of the Canadian Authors Association.

In reading *Painted Fires*, an image drawn from immigration propaganda, I was reminded of the picaresque. This immigration novel exposes corruption. It remains a cautionary tale about exploitation. McClung opposed the patriarchal system. However, she supported eugenic legislation in the 1928 Sexual Sterilization Act. Women's suffrage did not extend to First Nations women, until 1960. Thus "her vision was limited". (p. 302) Other readers may be uncomfortable with her Christian social activism.

Although she held racial and class biases, the series editor concludes "she was a leader who was a product of her times." (p. ix) A list of Works Cited will assist the newcomer, including the novel published in a Finnish translation as "Finnish Girl in America, in 1926. The protagonist Helmi, with her baby daughter Lili named for her aunt, has to beg for work and suffer insult. "Those foreign girls are strong as horses." (p. 247) a comment made by her employer is intended ironically. The "Afterword" by Cecily Devereux, University of Alberta, compares her fiction to that of Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942) and Ralph Connor (1860-1937). The notes are useful and "Works Cited" more extensive, from Archival Sources, Books, Periodicals, and Electronic Sources, including Devereux's *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism* (2005).

The series editor recounts the potential inclusion of *The Foreigner* in the Social History of Canada series published by the University of Toronto Press in the 1970s. (In fact, I have most of these facsimile editions on my book shelves.) However, the reissue did not come to pass because of so-called family objections. Thus it was omitted from the New Canadian Library series published by McClelland and Stewart. There is even a disclaimer in the present edition about "incompatible" views of Canada; so much for "of historical interest" and less so for imperialist assimilation. The "Works Cited" is modest but do allude to editor Carl F. Klinck's *Literary History of Canada: Canadian History in English*, second edition, volume one, (University of Toronto Press, 1976).

Ralph Connor was a *nom de plume* for Charles W. Gordon a minister who served in Banff and then Winnipeg. He wrote in order to help fund his missionary efforts.

The original Preface from 1909 alludes to “breeds”, among them Saxon, Slav, Teuton, Celt, and Gaul, with an Imperial impulse and drive toward nation-building. As part of the immigration movement for Western Canada, the protagonist Kalman Kalmar is a young eastern European. The inspiration was one of the non-English speaking immigrants recruited in the late 19th and early 1920s. Connor’s books were best-sellers and *The Foreigner* was made into a movie “God’s Crucible”. Connor was recruited by the Borden government to help persuade Americans that the United States to enter the First World War, the “Great War”, 1914-8, unsuccessfully, of course. Literacy rates, book-binding processes, and Sir John A. Macdonald’s national policy are all fodder for the mill. In western Canada, J.S. Woodsworth published *The Strangers within Our Gates, or Coming Canadians*. Add: George Bryce’s *The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk’s Colonists*.

The rhetoric was progressive, racially-stereotyped moral standards and eugenics. Connor became an exponent and had studied Social Darwinism, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* (1882) and *The Ascent of Man* (1894). The garden image of western Canada was examined in *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (1980) by Doug Owram. Connor omits Cree, Métis, Salteaux, Assiniboine, and other Indigenous peoples. Oral histories have been recorded, for example, by Howard Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, in *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (2000). The “Works Cited” is extensive.

The genre of “heroic allegory” for an assimilationist fiction of social reform is attributed to *Bildungsromans*. Coleman credits J.D. Logan with approaching Lorne Pierce, the editor at Ryerson Press, in relation to the Makers of Canadian Literature Series; specifically that *The Foreigner* was “so vile”. (p. 275) George Woodcock termed him “marginal” at best. Nevertheless, an apparent resurgence has renewed interest in cultural formation. With an Afterword by Daniel Coleman, author of *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2006) and *In Bed with the Word* (2009).

These compact editions are suitable for course collections, as well as the general reading public. There is due care and editorial support for the text, in addition to showcasing titles which may have been missed in the mists of contemporary literature. Other reading selections are: *The Forest of Bourgmarié*, by S. Frances Harrison, *The Seats of the Mighty*, by Gilbert Parker, and *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation*, by George Copway.

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