News from the Feminist Caucus, by Anne Burke

Do you have a book to review or you have written a review? Now you have more options! The League website at www.poets.ca contains a new page (and more) for reviews of poetry books (see guidelines). This Caucus Report regularly reviews and previews titles on a monthly basis. Room Magazine also seeks reviewers. Founded in the Spring of 2012, Canadian Women in the Literary Arts (CWILA) takes its inspiration from the organization VIDA, which publishes an annual accounting of reviews of books by men and women, and shows continuous and profound gender gaps in American journals. Now a Reviewer in Residence has been appointed to help stimulate discussion and promote our books. Let us enjoy and celebrate this Winter Solstice!

A powerful achievement from an important voice in Canadian poetry, Fight Fire With Spirit: Selected & New Poems is Carolyn Zonailo’s twelfth poetry collection. West Coast poet Carolyn Zonailo has lived for the past twenty years in Montreal. She is also the author of ten chapbooks and one book of prose poems. Carolyn Zonailo founded Caitlin Press in 1977. She has an M.A. from Simon Fraser University, where her literary papers are now archived. She has served on the councils of provincial and national writing organizations. Zonailo is a life-long student of mythology and Jungian psychology. The Goddess in the Garden (2002) was a finalist for the A.M. Klein Poetry Prize. She currently divides her time between Vancouver and Montreal.

From Glen Sorestad,
As many of you know, over the past three or four years I have been sending out a new poem to mark the Winter Solstice. Here is this year’s poem, along with the fond hope that its arrival will find you in festive spirits, looking forward to spending some time with those you love. Best wishes to you for 2013. Nearing the First Day of Winter.

Hi Anne
Not sure you will know that it was me who sent you a calendar in memory of Jay Macpherson. A friend of hers in US made them every year and made one more - that she sent me and I was delighted and asked her to send others out for me as gifts. She didn't charge except for the work. Thought you would like it. She is Anne Tracy. I also had one sent to the League office. Again I must miss AGM in 2013 and feel terrible, as I was to have spoken about Jay, but there is a big 9 day series of events in Edmonton...All is well, am working very hard and also baking etc for Christmas of course - family will be here - and my brother is here from Canada for a month. love and Merry Christmas! Heather Spears.

from Susan McCaslin: I’ll be sending a new collection of poetry off to my publisher soon, and continuing work on a memoir. I invited poets from all over Canada and beyond to submit tree poems, more than 200 of which are now suspended in the forest as the forest’s anthology. We’ve managed to garner a lot of publicity and support, so continue to hope for a good outcome. We’re looking forward to being together at Christmas and remembering how blessed we are in family and friends. Peace to all.

Dear friends,

Attached is our bookmark for the upcoming book, Jack Layton: Art in Action. We are looking for donations and pre-orders to complete this project. I sincerely hope you can
support this inspiring project celebrating such a great man and his ongoing legacy as well as promoting Canadian art and culture through the stories in this book. Please do donate generously. We very much look forward to hearing from you.

If you have any questions about the project, please do contact me. Yours very truly, Penn Kemp, Editor *Jack Layton: Art in Action*

There is a resource of archival materials on poets Charles Olsen, Adrienne Rich, bpNichol, and others. This title examines the relationship between poetry and community in four studies of Black Mountain College, the Caribbean Artists Movement in London, the Women’s Liberation Movement, and the Toronto Research Group. The author Stephen Voyce is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and a member of the Digital Studio for Public Humanities at the University of Iowa.

*Mommyblogs and the Changing Face of Motherhood,* by May Friedman, an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Ryerson University, is about an online community of parenting and maternal life-writing for contemporary 21st Century practitioners.

*Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity,* by Lorraine York, who is the Senator William McMaster Chair in Canadian Literature and Culture and a professor in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Making extensive use of unpublished material in the *Margaret Atwood Papers* at the University of Toronto, York demonstrates the extent to which celebrity writers must embrace and protect themselves from the demands of the literary world, including by participating in – or even inventing – new forms of technology that facilitate communication from a slight remove. This informative study calls overdue attention to the ways in which literary celebrity is the result not only of a writer’s creativity and hard work, but also of an ongoing collaborative effort among professionals to help maintain the writer’s place in the public eye.
Healing Home Health and Homelessness in the Life Stories of Young Women, by Vanessa Oliver, who is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Mount Allison University, contains life stories about women's access to health services, their understanding of health and health care delivery, and their health-seeking behaviours. This previously marginalized population of youth-centric and youth-positive approach is intended to effect real-world change.

Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma, edited by Gabriele Rippl, et al. Exploring life writing from a variety of cultural contexts, Haunted Narratives provides new insights into how individuals and communities across time and space deal with traumatic experiences and haunting memories. From the perspectives of trauma theory, memory studies, gender studies, literary studies, philosophy, and post-colonial studies, the volume stresses the lingering, haunting presence of the past in the present. The contributors focus on the psychological, ethical, and representational difficulties involved in narrative negotiations of traumatic memories.

Haunted Narratives focuses on life writing in the broadest sense of the term: biographies and autobiographies that deal with traumatic experiences, autobiographically inspired fictions on loss and trauma, and limit-cases that transcend clear-cut distinctions between the factual and the fictional. In discussing texts as diverse as Toni Morrison's Beloved, Vikram Seth's Two Lives, deportation narratives of Baltic women, Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster, Joy Kogawa's Obasan, and Ene Mihkelson's Ahasveeruse uni, the contributors add significantly to current debates on life writing, trauma, and memory; the contested notion of "cultural trauma"; and the transferability of clinical-psychological notions to the study of literature and culture.

Documenting First Wave Feminisms: Volume II Canada – National and Transnational Contexts

Nancy M. Forestell is an associate professor in the Department of History at St Francis Xavier University.

Maureen Moynagh is a professor in the Department of English at St Francis Xavier University.

Documents by Indigenous, Anglophone, Francophone, and immigrant female activists demonstrate the richness and complexity of Canadian feminism during this period, together with its first volume, Documenting First Wave Feminisms.
Contesting *Bodies and Nation in Canadian History*, edited by Patrizia Gentile, who is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies at Carleton University and Jane Nicholas who is an associate professor in the Department of Women's Studies at Lakehead University. From fur coats to nude paintings, and from sports to beauty contests, the body has been central to the literal and figurative fashioning of ourselves as individuals and as a nation.

Founded in the Spring of 2012, *Canadian Women in the Literary Arts* (CWILA) takes its inspiration from the organization VIDA, which publishes an annual accounting of reviews of books by men and women, and shows continuous and profound gender gaps in American journals.

To join CWILA please complete and submit a form. Membership is by annual "pay what you can" donation with a suggested donation of $25. CWILA membership is open to any individual who is interested in promoting gender equality and a feminist perspective in the Canadian Literary Community.

*Room* is Canada’s oldest literary journal by, for, and about women. Published quarterly by a group of volunteers based in Vancouver, *Room* showcases fiction, poetry, reviews, art work, interviews and profiles about the female experience. Many of our contributors are at the beginning of their writing careers, looking for an opportunity to get published for the first time. Some later go on to great acclaim. *Room* is a space where women can speak, connect, and showcase their creativity. Each quarter we publish original, thought-provoking works that reflect women’s strength, sensuality, vulnerability, and wit.

Congratulations to the winners of *Room’s* 2012 Fiction, Poetry, and Creative Non-Fiction Contest!

Our thanks to everyone who submitted their work, and to wonderful judges: Cathleen With (fiction), Miranda Pearson (poetry), and Kathy Page (creative non-fiction).


Our upcoming issue 36.1, Mythologies of Loss, is so full of reviews of books by Canadian women that we ran out of room to publish this list of what *Room’s* editorial collective (affectionately called Roomies) are reading. So, to help you warm up on a winter evening, here’s our reading-list of books by Canadian women:

Become a reviewer for *Room*

*Room* would like to add to its roster of reviewers, so if you would like to be considered, please send a short bio and a sample review of a poetry book (500 words) to reviews@roommagazine.com.

Room offers a small payment of $50 for reviews that are published, plus two copies of the issue in which a review appears. Generally the book review editor will contact a reviewer to see if she would like to review a particular book, which is then sent to the reviewer.

Poetry:
1st Place: "Wilhelm Roentgen (X-rays, 1895)" by Kelly Cooper, Belleisle Creek, NB
2nd Place: "Early Detection" by Annathea (Tia) McLennan, Montreal, QC
Honourable Mention: “Lying In Bed In The Morning” by Gillian Wallace, Ottawa, ON
Fiction and Nonfiction: We welcome previously unpublished pieces under 3,500 words, written by women over sixty. Submissions may be sent to us any time during the year. Several readers will review your submission, and we will respond to you within six months. Multiple submissions are accepted. If you want to send more than one piece, put them in separate emails.


The collection is dedicated to Linda Ross (1948-2000). The opening epigraph is “beside her grave” which extends to 1) “one year later”, 2) “black against black”, 3) “fire-gutted house—”, 4) “outdoor performance—”, 5) “just think—”, and 6) “her low-cut dress”. An alternating imperative binary of “Tell” and “Take” concludes:

Tell a poet, for a poet dismantles secrets, hides the pieces in schemes and tropes. What you want no one to hear, the poet will surely reveal, but none will believe a word

(in. “Advice To One Bursting With A Secret That Mustn't Be Told”, p. 11)

There are six sections. In 1 “Prevailing winds”, the tile poem compares the orchestra and maestro with a clothesline and dog barking. A “real man” weeps at the funeral of the boy. Poltergeists appear during chemotherapy. A concrete poem juxtaposes in italics vernacular speech. The scene is an Intensive Care Ward, with spring flowers, framed by a prose poem “Tombstone”.

In 2 “Between maroon and indigo”, the title poem follows the doings of a gargoyle, with violets, and the owl. This tempest is “shivering and vertiginous” (p. 28) Laundry must be done, although the weekend may be jubilant. A found poem about the proverbial womb was “plundered from” Gregory Bett’s “Plunderverse: A Cartographic Manifesto”. An angel (of death?) rests in the Public Gardens. Another gargoyle, in a second documentary poem, acknowledges “Notes to Beattie Elmer’s Sonnet VIII, ‘After she left him, he’” (the title) and provides for an allusion to a haiku.

There is a consciously epigrammatic cadence to much of Berger’s poetry. The tanka is a poem in the Japanese verse form of five lines containing five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables respectively and haiku with seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables. The paradelle limns incremental repetitions to great effect, in a variation on the villanelle (the latter has five tercets and a quatrain, all on two rhymes, and with systematic later repetitions of lines one and three of the first tercet.)

In 3 “The Woman in the carpet”, the title poem unfurls much like the carpet in “hand-spun fibers”. An abused woman endures the red letters he drew into her skin. Her eyes are swollen and blue. This Show & Tell grows cosmic. A goddess of ancient myth arises.

In 4 “The opera of her life”, a loop is “loquacious”, while

A poet tried to process the writing form
but the interrupt twitched weirdly,
toggling between random errors of pathos.
(*The Most Proper Discussion*, p. 51)

The title poem features a Soprano who, during her coda, is silent. However, the poetry carries the leitmotifs. The poets reflect the world “in repeated sonic babble” which happily coincides with “Patterns of Regret”. The Philosopher’s Stone appears alongside “this poem, which is not yet polished.” (p. 55) The Oprah Book Club “nixed it”. (p. 56) However, opinions vary: *Women’s Wear Daily, London Literary Review, Madison Avenue*, in addition to *Medical Records and Emerge* at the hospital. A blue knife belongs to the torturer, while a man dies of bronchial insufficiency. A concrete poem displays a concentric array of “Constrained Responses”.

In 5 “Beautiful Homes of the Horsy Set”, the title poem deals with the Derbies and Horse Beautiful. A centred poem depicts an indoor garden and false hope of spring. The carnal and venial resembles an arachnid, bedbugs, spiders and the like. Time is at a premium. The tiny premature baby turns outspoken teen. The Christmas galaxies are constructed from manual labour which she rejects. The First Peoples are identified during a tour of Wanuskewin Heritage Park, Saskatchewan. A Ode to “My Inner Self” extols the fashionable clothes which she rejects, for a smile, wearing “nothing at all”. (p. 75) A day off from housekeeping, a catalogue of chores, makes way for date night. A wounded bird speaks (“Pigeon”).

In 6 “The ABCs of desire” the poet adapts T.S. Eliot’s “Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” to a blog, “like an OD’ed addict on a gurney”. (p. 81) Even CVs “exaggerate, prevaricate, or lay wounds bare.” (p. 83) A woman wishes for her boyfriend while a man wishes for his. This approach differs from “How Do They Do It?” about gay sex. A *paradelle* is a modern poetic form which was invented by United States Poet Laureate Billy Collins as a parody of the villanelle. A paradelle reappears in “Their Hearts” to address “the next Don Juan.” (p. 86). In “My Ex-Wife”, “After Robert Browning” the poet voices a single father’s plaint “I’m a weekend dad/of course”. (p. 87) He refers to “Oh, and she’s a poetess!” a Nature Girl, a Madonna, all images of women. A pheromone a room pulsing in the afterglow. The pair debate a whale or the ferry. A final gargoyle, a cinephile, “this poem’s for you”. (p. 92) The title poem depicts asexual angels, anti-androgynous, regaling the reader with alliterations in “Wholesome women” and the like, as well as spinning the consonants “p”, “b”, “d”, and “o”.

Berger’s Selected Publications are, in addition to *Dismantled Secrets* (Wolsak and Wynn, 2008), are: *Compromis* (HWN, Florence Buathier, transl.), (Écrits des forges, 2006), and *How We Negotiate* (Empyreal Press, 1999). Some of the Anthologies to which she contributed are: *Carpe Diem, Anthologie Canadienne du Haïku - Canadian* (Les Éditions David and Borealis Press, 2008); *Sun Through the Blinds: Montreal Haiku Today* (Shoreline, 2003); *In Fine Form: The Canadian Book of Form Poetry* (Polestar, an imprint of Raincoast Books, 2005); *The Paradelle: An Anthology* (Red Hen Press, 2005). Berger was an audiologist at the McGill University Health Centre in Montreal. See:  [http://poets.ca/members_Maxianne Berger](http://poets.ca/members_Maxianne Berger)


One half expects to encounter the number of waking hours an individual experiences during a single lifetime, but the subconscious is more creative and productive when a different measurement scale is employed.

The collection begins and concludes with Leonard Cohen whose *Spice box of the Earth* collided with the 1960s and 1970s youth movements. Now the
postwar baby boomers are older but not wiser and Mr. Cohen’s raspy renditions of “Sisters of Mercy” endure, the Lyrics to “Hallelujah” not withstanding.

In “winter itch”, she is truculent in sleep, buried in her own skin which she will subsequently slough. The concrete poem “grip” adapts left-then-right-justified lines to express “i”/ “we”/“you”/ “it” declarations, while “words eclipsed the sun”. (p. 21) This is January in a northern climate and a bus heads northwest. She envisions “a deer skull adrift/on a small boat of ice.” (p. 25)

In “alchemy”, the sun causes “a slow thaw”, spring following “my sour winter coat”. (p. 29) On a train, a man waves to her. There is magic and laughter. However, the lake is personified,

[it] swallows,
licks its lips
before we can tell
what it has taken under
(“Melt”, p. 33)

The poet catalogues an Audubon survey of bird species and each has its own nursery rhyme (“owl survey”). In the title poem, “the sleeping life”, they migrate and leave predators behind. In parts II and III, she observes them in different array and how they only halfway sleep (with an eye always open). She envies those who sleep well and deeply. There is the shift in time zones, the lack of lovemaking, and finally “i fall asleep inside a poem”. (‘writing to sleep’, p. 48) Instead of January, she recalls sleep in summer.

In “peripheries”, the geometry of sleep (or lack thereof) is further examined: night driving, in New Orleans, and birds alight. Backpacking, birdsong accompanies her, a bicycle heads homeward. Nature contains many lessons in love which she shares (“teaching lake winnipeg”, p. 63)

In “writing you”, composition seems simpler than a real relationship. The section begins before this, in wishes and sadness. A man has chosen her, despite or because of her creativity. He shares her insomnia, in order to keep her company. (“night watch”). She explores the scene of his childhood, as if on a pilgrimage, to ascertain the history of houses. She dreams of a secret house they can share. (“burn” and “homecoming”). She exchanges her adulation for Cohen to “you’re just like leonard cohen”, her beloved.

Kerry Ryan lives and writes in Winnipeg. This title was her first full-length collection of poetry and was short-listed for the Aqua Lansdowne Prize for Poetry. Her second book, Vs., a collection of poems about women’s boxing, was published by Anvil Press in 2010.


The collection is dedicated to her sister. She tells a story about her family (such as the domestic violence, “in my brother’s letter” and community, “cousin comes in from the bush”) and retells the narratives of her tribe. The phrase: “n’chi mis” means “little sister”. Hunting of moose, trapping, and crafts are occupations interspersed with drunken rages.

There is a stunning series devoted to ceremonial rites, beginning with a concrete poem shaped as two stanzas for “butterflies”, followed by a centric poem about immersion in baptism. As the
poet awaits her rebirth at age eight she observes others. The poet is ambivalent about her conversion. Yet these ceremonies are personified as active agents of change. Residential school has not erased Cree lullabies but her mother has learned Elvis’ blue suede shoes. Her “kokum” is her grandmother. Joseph Smith is a prophet, but not hers. There are “good girls” as well as “good boys”. However, the more common are sinners. She is a “wild-girl” who has been forbidden to go barefoot. The Cree, Dene, and Ojibwe have been sexually abused and battered. Someday she will leave the North but the North will never leave her.

This collection was Winner of the 2009 Aqua Books Lansdowne Prize for Poetry/Prix Lansdowne de poésie.

Deerchild is Cree from South Indian Lake, Manitoba. She lives in Winnipeg and is a member of the Aboriginal Writers’ Collective. Some of her writing was published in POST-PRAIRIE: An Anthology of New Poetry (Talonbooks, 2005) edited by Jon Paul Fiorentino and Robert Kroetsch. As a member of the Aboriginal Writers Collective, she is featured in two collections, “urban kool” and “Bone Memory”, and they’ve released a live spoken word CD, “Red City”. She has published in Strong Woman Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival (Sumach Press, 2003).


This collection is not paginated except for pages or leaves. The breath pause is employed with striking imagism. The poet’s preoccupation with place, in the first-person and third-person voice, contrasted with sound, “a single line of lyric on the radio/ where are you now?” as well as the compelling power of scent.

Behold a younger sister and an older sister, her singing is the means of telling revelations about “a side room of the parish gymnasium” and “the grip on the bedrail.” This setting dissolves into “a northern prison”; the eros of a prayer cloth, a child, an operatic-like “wingbone soprano”. The elongated, undulating line-lengths yield to compressed encomiastic phraseology; then expand again into wide-ranging, elliptic delineation of hummingbird, hawk, goldfinch, dream-finch, “us and the world”. The child, but not the war, was preventable, all of that inevitable wanton waste. The poet explores scansion by centred and right-justified arrangements, a singing of desire, and the breathing of a now broken-open body. Then silence, not ringing laughter: “there are words for suffering words for beauty no language has deciphered //there are words”.

Shauna Paull is a poet, educator and community advocate. She completed an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia in 1999. Since then, she has led creative writing workshops at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts in Deer Lake Park, Burnaby, and at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design. In community, Shauna works together with migrating women for equality, mobility and labour rights. She recently led Poetry for the People workshops at the Rhizome Cafe.

Paull has published in Room of One’s Own, Other Voices, Canadian Women’s Studies, and Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal, and elsewhere. Her publisher was Ursula Vaira.
This collection is intended “for the ones called girl” according to the poet. “Scout” is the name of the main character in To Kill A Mockingbird. “Boy Scout” refers to the boy would-be troops of the British Boer War. Girls were an afterthought (in Guiding and Rovers). The Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) is a youth organization for girls in the United States and American girls living abroad. It was founded by Juliette Gordon Low in 1912 and was organized after Low met Robert Baden-Powell the founder of Scouting in 1911. The GSUSA is a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

The poet, who is preoccupied with the structure of language, has found inspiration in an article from the New York Times on the daughters of migrant workers associated with the defence industry. Are their projects related to becoming targets for nuclear and atomic weapons? She adapts a documentary poem from the Girl Scout Pocket Songbook, 1956 and another newspaper account of the mid-west Camp Scout murders, 1977.

The setting shifts to the North American Bird Book, a woodsman’s massacre, a Hunter (and girl as fawn or doe) in Yosemite. The signs and symbols of woodcraft, catalogues, italicized prose poem in a stream-of-consciousness; The Sierra Club, even Amelia Earhart’s final radio transmission (what is a girl?) depict the disastrous nature of the picturesque, popular psychology and self-help gurus.

The first section, devoted to “jane doe live girls! and woodlands”, is under revision (since typography visibly obscures the topic). The second section “domination pollen” and the Girl Scout Pocket Book, 1956 provides for “Laura” who is Mrs. George W. Bush, on invasive plant removal for a pseudo-environmental movement. (“And still, no one can tell you what a plant is”) is about her right-to- read project. The Brownie context offers social media comments, including Family Fear Factor and feckless punning on “bush”.

The third section focuses on the idea of wildness with the four corners of a map, for The Amazing Race. The collection concludes with a Coda to “Survivor: North Coast (Shelter Cove) and a single word: “repeat”.

There was no biographical note on the poet. Writer and visual artist Yedda Morrison was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her books include Darkness (Make Now Press, 2012) and Crop (Kelsey Street Press, 2003). She has performed and exhibited her work widely and is currently represented by Republic Gallery in Vancouver, BC.