

Native Poetry in Canada

A Contemporary Anthology



EDITED BY JEANNETTE C. ARMSTRONG
& LALLY GRAUER

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back roads

i travel the back roads in dust covered vans
roads rough, wash board bone rattling rough
dusty, with loose gravel scattering from passing cars
spider webbing the windshield
coming upon small towns with a lottery ticket centre sign
on the only store not boarded up
small dark hotel sits empty, rooms unused
bar room holds peaked cap men hands dark from soil
dust caked jeans, cracked leather wallets empty
drinking on weather's promises
stepping outside, watching the circling clouds
listening for sounds of thunder
i jump start the quiet room when i enter
long black hair dishevelled from wind and dust
dark tanned skin almost invisible in the dim lights
blue jeans faded and tattered with grass stains
work boots, water stained, worn leather fraying at the
seams, steel toe visible and heels kicking up dust
the room remains silent as i sit down with four white men
suddenly i'm visible on these back roads

1991

He Likes to Dance

he likes to dance
long hair flying wildly
in the dark
feet moving to music in the silent room
he likes to dance
laughing loudly in the roomful of silence
dark eyes flashing madly
in smoke filled bars
colored lights throwing his shadow
on beer stained floors
he likes to dance
to music in his mind
creating visions from his dreams
living his lies in the daytime
he likes to dance

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at night he wanders the streets
seeking relief in smoky rooms
by caressing strangers in dark alleys
accepting money from old men
spitting out their sex
washing the taste away with whiskey
erasing the memory with needles in the arm
and in the early morning darkness
alone in his room
he likes to dance

1992

something you said

it could be anything
the way someone laughs
or the scent of a certain perfume
i can never remember the name
maybe when i'm just starting to wake
and i'll reach beside me
to the empty side of the motel bed
but i feel the warmth of you
sometimes it's a song
it was our song
when we were young
and we'd walk outside
to a night full of stars
and the song would follow behind us
it could be anything
a whisper, a cough,
or the way your breath would catch
like that time we saw mountains
riding in that train
racing the sun to the ocean
sometimes the smell of sweetgrass
will find you walking beside me
like we did last summer
united across this country
and i could see the pride
in your eyes
and i'll smile

duncan mercerli 205

the duke of windsor

it's a thursday kind of night
 a feeling of rain in the air
 and the blues are calling
 i enter harry's place
 wiping the heat off my face
 then you slide in the door
 strutting
 seeking the light from a stranger's eyes
 and the temptation of the music in the night
 enters a restless soul
 and she yells as she walks in the door
 i've got to hear me some blues
 been walking all day
 and i'm tired as i can be
 so let those silver strings caress me
 till i can't scream anymore
 and et enters dancing
 wearing someone else's clothes
 kicking off his borrowed shoes
 with two different socks
 he glides he kicks up his heels
 he shakes and he yelps out a song
 just like a little dog
 the moon ain't full and the tide is still low
 and the world has got the blues
 bouncing off the walls on garry
 staggering the cars with a guitar sliding
 down st. mary all the way to main
 it's the 70's all over again
 with wall to wall brown
 on a thursday night just before the harvest moon rises
 on the castle of the blues
 and the duke staggers out before the streets roll up
 a harp solo still playing in his head
 the duke strides into the morning
 humming a nothing song into the setting night

1997

Mercredi, Duncan
 Cree

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Daniel D

*My name is E
 Ruth Jamieson
 Nations lands
 the band regist
 Tuscarora. I al
 plays, poems, an
 Those of spoken
 my home at the
 Toronto.*

Daniel David
 Toronto to at
 in Fine Arts. I
 British Colum
 for playwright
Delicate Bodies,
 published the
 General's Awar
 (published 1989
 1998), *Almighty V*
Indian Medicine S
 Excellence in A
 Terry Goldie, M
English in 1992. He
 Until he wen
 "old established
 interview with F
 land, and to the
 poetry, especiall
 Light of Dawn" a
 intense sensual
 community and
 "was Christianize
 he has said that
 probably is rootec
 and reading the
 Hartmut Lutz). C
 distinctiveness of
 including "respect
 were calling ourse

European thief, liar, bloodsucker.
I deny you not. I fear you not. Your
reality and mine no longer rankles me.

I am moved by my love for human life;
by the firm conviction that all the world
must stop the butchery, stop the slaughter.

I am moved by my scars, by my own filth
to re-write history with my body
to shed the blood of those that betray themselves.

To life, world humanity I ascribe
To my people... my history... I address
my vision.

1969, 2000

Performing

Ishudda got 'n Oscar
for all the lies I told,
all the masks I wore...
But they don't give
Indian women Oscars
for dressin' like Vogue Magazine
and drippin'
honeyed English.

Remember Ta'ah
I speak brocken
Ink-lish tooh?

Now

I am

speechless...

1972, 2000

Maracle, Lee
Stol:lo, Métis