

ALLISON GRAYHURST



# *Currents*

- pastlife poems

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*Allison Grayhurst*

*Edge Unlimited Publishing*

**Currents – pastlife poems**  
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**Cover Art (sculpture):**  
**“The Rock” © 2012 by Allison Grayhurst**  
**Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data**  
**Grayhurst, Allison, 1966-**  
**Currents – pastlife poems**

**“Edge Unlimited Publishing”**  
**Poems.**  
**ISBN-13: 978-1533311269**  
**ISBN-10: 1533311269**

**Currents – pastlife poems by Allison Grayhurst**  
**Title ID: 6277101**

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# Watchman Of The Night

From the horizon  
he emerges  
winged man  
sapphire eyes  
savagely unfurling his bright feathers

He cups the salt from the sea  
takes it to his mouth as nourishment -  
pellets to spew at the sky

Then up!  
twisting with the wind  
dancing in the aura of the setting sun

His silver hair  
flares the sky  
his midnight lips  
lost in haunting song

Chariots, tigers  
race, prowl  
around his blue body

Swirling, he meets the moon  
and takes his place among the stars.

# **I Will Run**

**I will go now  
into the constellations  
like into a field of marigolds.  
I will run now like a drunkard  
at dawn. The waves  
of morning's early light  
will be my medicine - the blue  
& purple & orange thin arches,  
all aglowing.**

**I will funnel my way out  
of this personal war. I will  
carry wounds & swords  
in my arms. I will throw  
them to the sky until  
they fall like rainstorm,  
leaving no trace after a  
a day of sun.**

**You will not find me  
walled behind my face,  
or hunt me beneath  
the garden cellar.**

**The nothing-air  
will steal my name  
& tomorrow I will  
slip between the rocks.**

# Wax Museum

God is your hobby:  
My mouth inhales,  
flushes you in.  
Going to the wax museum to visit your sleeping body;  
tonight with effort, tomorrow, with regret.  
It is the end of a miracle, nevertheless,  
I won't forget the sirens, your steelthroat  
rusted with alcoholic burns  
or the hooves and the poison,  
how you tempted me to the maximum degree.  
There is a sunset I am cupping in my hands,  
it is turning dark blue like the colour  
we both love  
and I am staring into it like a poet mesmerized by the sea.  
Farewell my pirate friend -  
Live good,  
conquer the pitiful sky in your dreams.  
Every barrier is a mountain  
challenging your devotion,  
torturing your nights with its magnificent summit.  
I drink like a root from the underground: I am not upset  
though shadows are cleaving, swarming my soul.  
I am only running,  
and it's a long way to paradise  
even when you hurry.

# The Boy

Under the limp tree  
he sits, curing himself  
of the bawling rains &  
patchwork  
gardens.

He inhabits heartbreak  
& hunger as a primitive,  
refusing all  
that does not measure with  
instinct.

The cloud's configuration alters him  
like a new philosophy.

He thinks of the cosmos  
like a bird, who plays its part  
blamelessly  
under the yawning cover.

Destiny is  
a grain of sand.

Life itself - enough  
imagination.

He holds hands with  
the outlawed beasts, bearing  
the world as though it was nothing  
but a small, small  
shadow.

# Marrakesh

Up the proud hills,  
through the red Moroccan  
morning, girls sing  
as flies fill their nostrils,  
arms covered in clay -  
                  terracotta flame.

It is winter and sheets of sunlight  
overpower the paths. They go down  
into the casbah with bare feet  
& clothe:

                  dreams of indigo justice.

A little boy guides tourists through  
stealing kisses & cash.

Tall as stretched flowers, the blue people  
come with their ancient arms, swinging  
like whale fins from side to side. Bees crown  
the orange juice with buzz & sting, as the snake  
charmer carries his wealth on his back,  
(*around, around*), like a  
heavy fear.

                  The rains come.

Pant legs lifted to knees,  
eyes smiling in awe. Rains  
as thick as the devil's sobs. Rains  
as wild as the children

who need no remedy  
from the bending ocean  
of froth & sky.

# **Guardian** *(for Beeper)*

**Dog-eyes like a morning  
infused  
with warmth.**

**I dream of sending you  
silhouettes wedged  
from the mountain,**

**where we would go  
flooded with lyric & hazy light.  
By the campfire furnace,**

**chasing the breeze through  
the haunted wood. And then,  
by the river, by daylight,**

**your tongue outstretched to cup bee.  
Your oversized ebony head gliding through  
the water like a dolphin's.**

**Under the bridge, on the railroad tracks,  
your muscles moved erecting  
monuments of innocence and incomparable strength.**

**Past the fence, past  
my sight, releasing sounds of excitement, sounds  
of a simple, language bark,**

**as you ran  
thunderous & dark  
as departure  
often is.**

## Sight at Zero

I am where fireflies dance  
in a birdless noon.

I am treading water, looking  
for a lodged piece of land  
or even a dolphin's fin  
to navigate me through this  
wounded sea. The air  
is smoking & a world  
away lovers assassinate love  
for the sensation of pride.

Rain, drumming onto my neck, onto  
my jugular, rain spewed from  
the moon's mouth, enters & dissects  
worse than any broken fame. Too late  
to cross the inner clouds. Too long lost  
in the wood under a weird & angry sun.

It is my jealousy  
that has woken, generous  
with hate. It is agony & frailty  
like an eggshell hammered  
by a razor's sharp tongue.

I see dragons rise  
from sand dunes. I hear  
the laughter of a bride. My days are closed.

My element (*water, hymn, water*)  
abandoned  
for wishbones.

# Dostoevsky

Demon of everglade beauty  
of the dark space around the  
moon.

Sensitive to the point of sickness.  
Deep-set eyes like the eyes  
of some brooding god,  
hammering  
the earth to pieces.

Breath of an invalid, gambler  
& saint, weighed down by  
sentiment.

Breath of grey and yellow  
skies above you, blood red  
buried beneath bone and  
skin.

Hand of a writer,  
naked without a pen,  
like a new-born bird  
flung  
from its nest: flesh on fire.

Apocalypse mind, opener  
of the seventh seal. Mentor of all  
believers.

Christ-like visions swarm your mind.  
Ravaged by depression,  
by high ideals that  
rip  
out your ribs, one by one  
into the thick day.

## As I Sleep

No sun shone  
on Adam's breast  
when first his strength  
was bled.  
When sharp like a lion's tooth  
the milk of dreams flowed,  
half the sea perished  
stale with prehistoric lineage.

And under the rafters where  
unborn children wait,  
I dreamed of a world  
invincible with perfect hunger,  
inching out of each curse -  
all armour shed.  
I dreamed a second life where  
tenderness abounded. In every  
pyramid, pavilion, parental hand,  
the secret light was saved. The ones  
who sought did not seek again for  
desert and grave were one. And the  
salt and bone in each breathing body bent  
toward the sun. No angels came, neither did visions  
that gave a full understanding.

For what was not accepted or surrendered  
was broken, pierced  
by a savage love.

## **You came to me**

**through the hard jaw of the world,  
anguished, under the weight of bad habits,  
your happiness fading like  
your fate, into a fine line running out.**

**You came, prowling the landscape, out of  
some gripping past, eyes driven deep by  
loneliness.**

**You came, dressed in feline black, carrying  
the weight of a shattered city  
in your arms, and your blood was cold  
with howling.**

**From the snows, finding me with a glance, you came  
like spring in my nostrils  
and cried & cried as you came  
plummeting down, lost from some angel's  
symbolic grasp.**

## Swim

He sinks into the river  
tossing his garments on the muddy shore.  
He takes the river-water into his mouth,  
pressing her sturdy thigh in his mind.  
And in his movements he waits for her,  
smells her in the rocks and in the geese  
passing overhead.  
He lifted her from her burden, promised  
a garden and other two-some things.  
He spoke of stories until she found her heritage.  
He treads the river's current, keeps his eyes open  
underwater to see the weeds and fish beneath  
its greying surface.  
She told him of her duty and how love is  
for another place. She looked straight ahead,  
as if their hands clasping was a weakness  
better to forget.  
He gathers his breath and dives  
into the rapids like one fierce, in flight, one  
who has left his peace forever behind.

# Once

alone  
where the deep star  
failed to glow  
I saw your heart come crawling  
out of its obsessive shell,  
crawl to where all shapes sing  
of passion and mercy  
side by side.

I saw your hard seed grow kind,  
losing none of its brutal drive, but  
gaining a natural beginning - grow in a soil of sensual  
joy and a wild aching desire to be more  
than nerves and need.

I saw your hands like waves arriving  
to the final surrender of shore.

I saw you as stone, draped  
in the mysteries of primal truths -  
your head bowed in gentle fury, a figure  
of unwavering embrace.

## **Here, I am lifted**

**into your fanatic faith  
that bleeds like the wind  
a steady downpour.  
I hold your hand. I listen  
and long for you on every street  
I wander. I long for your emotions  
to be within me, overpowering, altering  
my earth with their unashamed passions.  
I long to view your eyes in all eyes I see,  
to view them in the half-dead stars mounted  
in this city's sky, to know you,  
your manhood, suffering and strength.  
I long to dream myself into seizure like you  
who grieves for the most forgotten sinners,  
like you who receives the wounds of every innocent  
and continues wanting (tirelessly wanting)  
for more.**

# Surrender

I yielded to touch, to  
the coldness of my skeletal hopes.

I yielded toward a winding stairway  
that led to where footprints travelled  
through vines, through treeless grounds,  
through oceans of lethal predators. I watched  
as I was caught by fangs, watched  
my each limb shred through teeth of earthly origin,  
and soon no feeling, not even fear, remained.

The last of my blood was drained,  
and once again I turned into a pale  
and will-less thing like before I was given  
body or breath.

Then by fingers made of fire, my paleness  
was carved, foaming out of the cyclops eye of God,  
forming nerves and nostrils - a new and  
waking lid.

# Dream

Again it came like hari-kari,  
twisting my innards on its holy blade.  
It came at 4 am, into my lungs and brain,  
like a new death-rattle sounding  
an old, familiar fate.  
It came under the blankets like a scorpion  
between my husband and I, touched me  
with its tail then raised its head to my eyes.  
It unchained my killer-hand, bent my tree  
until it broke. It found me in the violence,  
in the night of unconscious beginnings and  
jealousy too brutal to be controlled.  
It plucked my morals one by one, like plucking  
a cat of its whiskers. It turned  
me into a nameless creature, into a betrayed  
and raging deformity of myself. It came  
like scissors to a flower, like an axe  
to a pig's straining neck. It came  
from where, I do not know, but came again  
as though portraying something within  
that I must unclothe and undeniably own.

# When Air-borne Beings Fall

As though my heart  
was sand, absorbing  
the dive of crows.

In the deep,  
in the still deep ground  
of dust & ruins, wings  
fall like smashed shells  
expanding into  
the flowing air.

I would give my capsized house,  
my bed, my favourite corner  
just to feel the rise of their quickening tides  
clap over my bones & spirit. To know the fury  
of feathers skillfully slicing  
the skin of clouds. I would say this  
is worth my enemy's claw, worth a mouth  
full of laughter. I could speak again  
of love without weight, of a saffron flower  
exposing all to the sun.

I could take pictures in the garden.

## **After Sight**

**The vision lifted,  
then darkness set in.**

**A different darkness,  
one not yet  
encountered, not yet  
imagined.**

**Grey silhouettes brushing the dawn's early  
sky. Joy consumed & sorrow  
lived to its limit. The image of flowers,  
so slow in their pursuit  
of the sun. A tremendous night air  
as I walked past the deserted streets  
into a life that would demand what I  
had never given.**

**This too was death, & dance & death  
entwined like autumn in its blood-splattered  
leaves. I praised & I was free & afraid  
of what would follow this gift of rope  
& tender sunshine.**

**Enemies remained within,  
spiders & also the murderous moon.**

**But sinking  
& sinking again into the quicksand  
threshold, my breast gave way to tears,  
my lips, to the astonished tremble.**

**I walked back into my den that coveted  
no light, holding fast to  
love  
like a thousand children, a thousand soldiers  
burned**

**by heaven's weight.**

## **Childhood cracked**

**The doll fell  
and was never picked up.  
It fell by the curb  
in a lucid slumber  
of inarticulate words  
like a dew drop  
on ice.  
Nothing was coveted,  
the chant grew like the moon  
as the month moved on.  
What was cold inside was a needle  
of sharp divide and the impact  
of unbuffered death.  
Into this autumn  
the doll fell  
and the meridian of grace  
was at last  
on the table.**

## **Room, no room**

**Moving in the circle of this ritual  
smoking out my lungs, hand-paddling away  
from the heat-strong current. The walls  
have become a bookshelf on which  
the books have been repeatedly read.  
The walls are a room where there are  
no windows and the paint is yellowing,  
where the stale breath of confinement has  
moved in.**

**I hear the animals deliver their outcast tongue  
as the flame flows from the crack under the door.  
I am folding and folding,  
longing to join the delirium of a new language and of fire.  
I cannot flourish in this parched land of ineffectual despair.  
I long for a pond to catch tadpoles in.  
I long for seeds to scatter,  
or for now, just a small tool to chip away  
at this concrete floor.**

## The Path Before

Inside this cup polliwogs drown  
for the sake of a child's curiosity. Following a man  
wearing a long maroon robe around his shoulders,  
a group walked the dirty morning streets,  
pretending inner peace.

I was there, there in the sinking sand, abandoned  
to mud and nature. I was there, handing out sandwiches  
I couldn't afford to make, following the one  
with the robe, thinking he would save me.

Save me from the dead fish lodged in my throat,  
from the desolation of my eunuch intimacies, save me  
from the ulcer that tore apart my insides like a feral cat,  
trapped and too far gone to look around.

Waiting at 4 a.m. to steal away into my cubicle  
and watch the dawn break over the park,  
or running with my brother  
over the farmland of a mutual friend that frightened us,  
who we kept because we had no other, as we sat quietly  
on his cast-iron stove, quietly in the danger, not together  
as brother and sister should be, but separately wondering,  
never holding hands.

## **Jesus in my basement**

**You are serious as the elements,  
master of miracles that overcomes those elements.  
You are golden and landing always  
in the depth of true light.**

**I think at times I can hear your voice, immediate,  
ambushing my breath and my lazy self-pity.**

**You call on me to change my skin, walk  
this world with belief and wonder. You guide me  
in your discipline, offer me promise, eternity,  
hills and hills of lush mercy.**

**You want my words to be exhumed - to speak exact,  
not be encased in avoidance, not caked in layers  
of mind-twisting complexity.**

**Just to be here, in front of you - simple, unimportant,  
broken by the world, remade by you.**

## Before Atonement

At night I was full  
like others are in summer,  
myself, just a silhouette at dawn,  
part of a church, but never part of  
a calling.

I would look for owls as I canvassed unfamiliar roads  
in winter, when everyone was lonely and the vein  
of fulfillment pulsed obscure. I would knock on doors,  
smile as though I was innocent, young in my hope  
and inspired by ideals. Sometimes I would have tea and talk  
as though I understood something, secretly carrying my  
pink powder in a small golden tin,  
desperate for any kind of magic.

The smell of that powder - sweet, unusual and old - the feel  
of that powder - like rubbing thick blood between  
finger and thumb - I was someone with that powder -  
maybe a witch, maybe a prophet - someone  
who communed with the gangs of cats that would  
emerge past dinnertime; sit under cars, behind tree trunks  
watching me as I watched them.

At night, the van would pull up and I had so little to say,  
except to the driver. We loved our silence,  
the awkward closeness  
of agreed non-personal communication.

For me, there was only those nights and books,  
there were only incoherent surreal images  
storming my brain, longing to be submerged  
in hard hard substance.

# The Long Pitstop

When I woke up,  
I was a daughter of God,  
for a while as pure as  
a river, moving towards  
a place of cascading surrender.  
It took years for the cockroaches  
to enter my house, to gnaw away at my toes  
while I was sleeping - poverty and broken hopes and  
death spiraling around me like a dust storm  
I could not see through.  
Even then, my faith remained queen,  
and the love I found from others and God - even in death -  
opened new passages of perseverance and renewal.  
I had a child. Then two, and the singing never stopped.  
Death came again and age stuck to my skin like wet sand.  
Poverty dosed and soaked my bed  
with its despairing drug, and hope  
for a way out, fossilized, completely lost its pulse.  
My future became a stuffed bird  
I kept in a drawer to look at and admire its inert beauty.  
Many weeks now I wonder  
if I will be claimed, pulled from this sea of floating fish,  
from this asylum where nothing ever pushes through  
to the bright land of clarity.  
I am waiting for a bell of my own, a kiss  
of divine liberation.

## **When I Lean Closer**

**Remember when we were falling,  
making hoops in the sky? When intelligence  
didn't matter, only the desire  
to be alive? Remember when a different rank  
and inequality never blocked a friendship,  
when the heart was whole,  
and money never shamed us  
one way  
or another?**

**Remember the light in our pockets,  
the frame of our minds as we lived  
in perpetual loneliness, free  
but cold?**

**Remember when guilt could only go so far  
to actually change us and a lie was never  
stronger than imagination?**

**Remember our handprints, those handprints  
on the wall?**

# Marseille

Like you, I lost the spring  
in a bed of stagnant water.

I withered under the sun and gained from it  
only a small truth.

Like you, with you, I climbed those stairs, cried  
all afternoon then sought out a redeeming parable.  
In that chapel of our minds we sacrificed abundance  
for bones, we traveled together because we hurt and we  
saw one another as the proof needed  
to confirm the validity of our road. We rented  
a large room where commodities were traded,  
(or often, by you, just taken)  
where we stained the walls with our indelible presence,  
cutting ourselves out destinies from nowhere.

I will go back there today and collect the pictures.  
I will hand-make them an album  
then deliver them to the sea.

Like you, I am still denied,  
but now I know love.

My axle is female - and though  
20 years later, my flesh is barely  
(just starting to be)  
my own.

## **A thank-you note**

**I liked you for your love  
of the little creatures, for the wild,  
unsavoury animals that others  
have no use for - like rats, tortoises  
and cats that are blind. I liked you  
for the wound you kept a mystery -  
something about your father and a  
despair that set you apart from the rest  
of the living. I liked our full-blown connection  
that seemed to conquer time and mistrust and  
prepare for us a feast of sisterly ways.  
For a year we held close.**

**In that car ride through  
the farmlands, once I feared you might stop and stab me  
under that canopy of stars and darkness. Because  
there was something terrifying about you -  
something hurt and distorted  
by a tremendous overload.**

**One day you stopped calling,  
stopped speaking about poetry,  
your dog and your love-affairs  
gone wrong. Months later you wrote me a letter,  
explaining the days that kept you from me -  
days of being unable to eat, get dressed  
or even call on the phone. For me, it was  
too late. Too much so soon and then, nothing.  
Like a betrayal I could never get used to,  
like a friendship I would always be wondering  
when it would vanish.**

**Only later did I learn your last name.**

## **First and Only**

**The first time I found you  
at the donut shop with the perfect balance  
of youth and torment  
absorbed in every movement, I knew I found  
an eternal friend. The first time you sang, I felt  
a fiery and surprising happiness.  
The first hug we shared on the church steps  
as the music played below was like a wave,  
strong and soothing  
rippling along my back and arms.  
Our first kiss outside the café, when the rain  
was about to fall, told me there would be  
no number to our days, no greater gift but  
to feel this - our lips once apart,  
now vibrant, like a new being.  
Our first laugh together as we drank our coffee told us  
the depths we shared could be lightened by one another,  
gave us more than important conversation, gave us  
a rope to sometimes swing on and to always hold.  
Our two children born were more than bluejays  
on our shoulders,  
more than any joy gone before, bringing us further  
into one another's arms. Blessed by this indelible love,  
I am here, counting on nothing but on what we have,  
strangely at peace, like the peace I found  
the time I first found you.**

## Wallpaper Stars

At the top of the stairs  
sits a box covered  
with wallpaper stars. In this box  
there is a small coin that  
holds the memory of another time.  
A child has pushed the box down the stairs  
and the light has caught the coin on the way down,  
glimmering like the leaves on branches after a rainstorm.  
I pick up that coin and I take it away.  
I am better than the coin that fell,  
but less than the child sitting and  
staring and waiting for the coin, sure  
of the gift like Job was sure of God's love. I once was  
the same, now I am different, tainted as grownups  
always are.  
The box is empty but I will fill it again.  
The box is beautiful like the child who  
sits and smiles - coin between fingertips, knowing  
its proper place - inside the box  
covered  
with wallpaper stars.

## **In My Corner**

**Kneel to the weather. There is a fountain up ahead,  
glowing,**

**but no one is on my deck - no bones are dry  
in my pocket. Criss-cross, betrayal in my juice cup.**

**Magic is for fools. Living here, my voice cut,  
my pet octopus drowned. Living here**

**in elementary wealth - nothing but  
old-world, nothing but chaos.**

**Will the angels sing to me? I have been waiting  
on their love.**

**So heavy is the window I look through. Brick by brick  
I count my way up. My memories belong  
to another world.**

## **This spirit is speaking**

**How much must I tell you,  
with the dark sorcerers seeding my  
potted plants and the old ways lost to  
new ways yet unfound? How many times  
must I twitch at the remembrance  
of my cut throat in spring, contain my tears  
in see-through plastic and continue to watch  
the world go around, without a hiccup?  
Acknowledge my fight, my flight into the wolf's den.  
I am not a whale, pure as garnet,  
nor am I full of your grandeur  
and the calm, strong dive down.  
I have the blood of a prophet, but not the backbone.  
Side-swatted into a long consuming grief  
and the world is just the same: Brides and school bells.  
How long must I explain? I have lost the contours  
of my face. There is a man  
on my kitchen floor deliberately, almost artistically,  
shaving my fleshless bones. One by one, like that,  
I am unformed.**

## Entrance Door

You stand at the entrance, robbed and dazed,  
alone with the rain.  
Your school is poor, much like water on a grave,  
it cannot restore the yellowing clover. But I believe in you,  
in the parting of your eyelids and the outpouring  
of your creativity.  
I saw your eyes, written with the depth of the wind.  
Your sorrow is not easy,  
but the power of it within you  
will play out into an unimagined liberty.  
A longed-for communion  
will possess you and bring you barefoot out of exile.  
I don't know why this disappointment must claim victory  
or why joy and intimacy  
were not open mouths, parting, to match your ageless purity.  
I don't understand the burning, the collapse, and why  
the Earth is so hard. But I understand you,  
and what a blossom of magic you are.  
You are meant to know this sorrow before  
you can be happy. You are meant to dance out your grief,  
your rage, the incapability  
of others. Balance yourself here. I will help you.  
I will kiss your hand. This is not random. Disaster is yours.  
But the animals know, and I know, you are close  
(so very close)  
to the last release before  
resurrection

## Covenant

Legends in the snowdrifts  
of soulmate saga and the artists'  
struggle to stay alive. Gospels in  
the house of manna, sleeping,  
somewhat blessed, always true.  
I put my robin on the line, held it  
to the cat's mouth and waited.  
Through the window I saw a prayer  
almost answered. Jesus, stay beside me,  
hold my hand as we pass one house and  
then another. I can feel your breath change the air.  
I can trust you, smell your skin and be protected.  
Everything depends on you and I  
staying close, my back against the mirror - my face  
only reflected through your eyes.  
I will sing in your ear, be ready for the deep-sea dive.  
I will love you first then radiate that love. I lean  
on your shoulder, and I will stay this way  
forever.

## Just before

Before I say goodbye to bitterness  
and the slug that crawls across my living room floor,  
let me hold my breath, holding thoughts  
of the executioner's rope  
sleeping very little  
until morning.

Before my grave is exhumed and the daffodils planted there  
are carelessly removed, let me thank my every nemesis,  
the silence, the autonomy of being underground.

When I am halfway to the surface, let me keep my eyes  
on the sky, never turning back to see the place  
abandoned, never regretting the companions I found,  
though they were roaches  
and other crawly things that only stuck around  
to feast on my unprotesting flesh.

As I say farewell to my six-by-six hovel  
let me release the leaches that latched on  
to my every side.

Let it be over with completely.

Let me rise from this pit like a child does from her bed  
on Christmas morning.

## **I see differently**

**I see things differently,  
like lyrics and shades,  
differently than the cold pale mouth  
of worry and intellectual revelation.  
I feel things differently - what was empty,  
just background,  
a faint perfume, is now sharp, suffocating,  
expecting so much from my guarded solitude.  
I walk differently, hesitating at the sound of birds,  
watching lines in the clouds, a child angry with  
her mother and the small cracks on the sidewalk stone.  
I sleep differently as though I never do, remembering  
each hour passing in the depth  
of daydreams not sleep dreams,  
not resting, but rising, my breath, my flame, living  
and musical.  
I wake differently, never tired, but full of throbbing,  
heavy beating  
and the spring is almost here, trapped  
in 'the-moment-before', in the power of painted hair  
and earlobes caressed and kissed.  
I love differently, like I've never loved, demanding  
the wind, the desert, a vigil of remarkable intensity.  
Love, lacking  
dilemmas. Love, like a place to play, playing,  
then laying flat out and waiting for  
rain, a hand, or stars.**

# River

I will run my breath across your eyelids,  
go to you, trace the edges of your hands,  
finding infinity inside your torment. I will  
drift into you like wind and you will not mind  
my lips like a concentrated shadow on your skin,  
darkening but leaving no weight. You will let me  
be inside your picture, a background to your lyrics,  
softly at first, I will heal the red in the whites of your eyes.  
I will release my wardrobe for you and you will be the mania  
that I climb through to reach tranquility. I will  
cup your flesh and stretch you through this intimacy because  
I own you as you own me and it is not a bad thing, not  
blasphemy or anything  
to fear. It is your hands, mine - these  
poignant burial grounds that have been excavated,  
these days of standing close, depending upon the ease  
of our mutual exposure. I will speak in your ear and you  
will step into my voice  
like stepping into a river.

# Broken

Breaking bonds and bonds  
that are breaking in spite  
of efforts made and lifetimes of  
glorious connection, in spite  
of promises to never part and always be  
like tall innumerable weeds, keeping alive  
no matter the challenges to growth. Growth  
once so great, celestial forms descended, joined  
to contemplate and just listen.

Catapulted into the future with no way back,  
into another lightyear spinning, picking up pebbles,  
putting down shoes. Hoods and earmuffs, locking  
eyes with the cold, locking tight with the bluegrey anguish  
that breeds explosives inside the flesh of my tongue,  
but is buried too deep beneath the tastebuds to ever emerge.

Pinecones retrieved from the spat-upon pavement,  
to add to my obsessive collection. These pinecones  
remind me that I too have dropped, naturally, from  
my source - laying flat on an unforgiving surface, unable  
to dig into softness and sprout.

Breaking bonds and bonds broken,  
adding a slight shock of unpredictability  
to an otherwise stagnant formation,  
adding a wider scope, or memories  
to later inhabit - small fields  
where there is no viable substance,  
only leftovers and  
open space.

## What it is I want

To die this death and not be reborn,  
to exit this tepid wake, be stopped  
from forming and maturing in this blistering purgatory  
of unleavened bread, not be a DNA strand, mutating  
perfectly fine habits, or disrupting rituals to count on.

I cannot count on staying adjusted, same  
as the everyday banker or any other grownup  
whose disappointments have been diluted by the memory  
of endearing acceptance and arms that reach  
from behind so that all weight can fall, so that shoulders  
can loosen and kisses can be established.

I want to tear at the tendon heels of uncertainty,  
be simple as a dog in a happy home with dark eyes  
and easy affection, be someone not sucked of colour -  
sharp hairs protruding from every pore, a poor  
collection of broken rocks that no bricklayer  
would set his trowel down for and gather.

I want to be exposed as a lit lighthouse, as a mother  
dealing with her temper-tantrum child, be circled,  
again and again, entwined, tightened hard around,  
clenched, wanting  
only this tension, stillness, awakening here,  
before the plummeting pulse,  
before the movement of ecstasy, wanting nothing else  
more, ever again.

## No Stone    No God

I sang a stone, a star  
retracting, turning charcoal, still  
blood-fire aglow. I pulsed in the aftershock  
of entropy, but never believed black  
holes to be anything less than the pupils of God,  
absorbing light, surrounded by swirling iris-galaxies.  
Sucked through the mighty hurricane,  
living inside the deepest of organ-flesh,  
directing a liberating unfolding – a grand outside  
poly-shield, infant-squalling. It is celestial traffic and  
it is alive, caught in the mower, twitching, having  
the edges shaved off to form a more easily  
movable body-round – end-of-summer-stone.

I sang a stone, a star  
tuned in to what flows out, seems like cement,  
but isn't, is a babbling, bubbling child – wonder  
here – wonder at the root.  
Limits are the end of all exploring,  
the disconnecting, overtaking void, more void,  
no food, no stone, no song.

## **I can see the sun**

**but I can't be the sun  
or know the sun  
in this wilderness clearing  
cutting up, suctioning out my insides.  
Sing alone over the wide span  
of dead rolls, broken by a secret  
and wounds dried up, salt hard,  
hard with condensed pressure.  
Creak and slide over insect glitter, sun  
beams shaping the edge of the bank. I am a  
fish in a polluted stream. Tires and concrete,  
broken blocks blocking my way to the river.  
Evolving is hard, takes time to earn a body  
that can leap over high obstacles, conquer resisting currents  
while starved of a clean home. It takes a fool's joy  
and an easy detachment to soar far out of the nest, lift  
up and skim the skin of golden warmth. But I am a fish  
meant to find shelter at the bottom bed of the ocean,  
not in rivers or in streams, not leaping, but slow, slow,  
surfing the cold sandy terrain,  
skylight forgotten, sunlight undreamed.**

## **I am a definition**

with many loop-holes  
octopus arm holes,  
and then some.  
I speak of a pavilion  
where my ancestors bred  
their disciplines  
and murder was released -  
an option, like a second chance,  
murder as affirmation.

I was a definition,  
secular, single-habit,  
yang-streams exuding,  
sharp and solid, marvelous as  
a thunderstorm - rage, ripple into a cave  
into base-neck movement,  
into  
simple one-focus activity.

But here  
I lack a definition  
under banners, barely audible  
compromise,  
excuses to not take up the sword,  
battle the lies told  
as traditional fables.  
I swing from pillar to post  
navigating ceiling heights  
and floor splinters when I land  
niching out obedience  
to  
a changeling definition.

## **If I knew this haunting**

**Melted, swung high over the sea,  
plunging into the perishing darkness.  
No one sees me, single as a stone,  
madness on my island even with gifts  
of peaches, blueberries, sunlight and sun-birds.  
Windows are never here. The truth is  
a deep-throat dread, lower belly drain, water gone,  
shadow in between. Swing over a mound  
of dry bones that used to be flowers, hummingbird  
retreats. Shattered glass greenhouse in winter's embrace.  
Nothing flows. It tried to flow and for  
awhile I can remember the small animals,  
remember ease while breathing, myself  
more silence than flutter.  
I can remember walking on high wet grass -  
rolling fields all around, walking to keep  
from eclipsing, determined to walk, and not  
burn at the roots.**

# **I moved like a moon**

**in predictable orbit, smashed  
by meteors, space pebbles  
meeting my surface with deep impact, when  
there were dark oceans under my skin, unseen  
single forms, coupled forms, and beds of  
colourless weeds, but I steadied myself  
on the cold shell of repetitive expectations -  
dead valleys here, dead heights there.**

**Going through the hard crust, under, into  
a thicker atmosphere, currents of heaviness,  
breaking barriers better off broken.  
Haunted by shapes that come close and rarely touch,  
in this weighted environment, by-passing predator  
tentacles and jaws by instinct alone, no journey-map,  
stars or horizon to act as goal or inspiration, but**

**rolling  
through cross-waves with creatures captured  
by a dark density like  
myself, shaded, loose at the extremities, compact  
at the core, thriving on plateaus of deep pressure,  
salty flavours all around - so far gone from walking  
that legs leave, replaced by fins, and language is not  
sound, but a full-body resonance - no delay  
between appetite and attainment.**

## **Evolution for some, not for all**

**Piercing malleable opening,  
a softness in the face  
over ridden by cynical neglect.  
Supper is almost ready, folly on  
the garden steps.  
Intonations speak the  
underbelly layers of languages.  
Puddles I deliberately  
step in to know the intimacy of water,  
the revival of being overpowered by the strongest  
of all Earth's elements.  
Superimpose me on your raincloud.  
I cry like Lazareth shedding his week-old shroud.  
I stumble under the falcon's swooping breath,  
remembering myself prehistoric -  
a bird before birds.**

# Master-piece

Patterns of  
perfect chaos,  
intricately separate and  
growing, inside the fulcrum  
of my personal biology.  
Defined only by my relation  
to another, weighted down to this rock,  
this glorious giver of gravity and greenery.

Dreams of galaxies, streams of potent  
heat, maneuvering glows,  
brilliant pallets, housing  
celestial communities.  
Limited to a repetitive rhythm that alters  
incrementally, evolves, slow, unperceptively, inside  
of that,  
I expand, fingers not  
like the dead-hand of a yogi master, lifted  
permanently drained, shriveled by an irrational  
devotion to suffering, but like a startled  
infant's fingers, outstretched  
mid-air in a move of instant instinct I touch  
lightwaves,  
merge with their flow,  
twists and swirls,  
cosmos canyons, rivers, dunes -  
a sweet remembering of womb-like love,  
a thumbprint kiss from lips I have always  
always known.

# Undertow

Somehow I stood  
dark and brave below the deck, in small spaces  
emptied of shadows and science.  
The walls took advantage of my privacy,  
and before I could collect my wealth  
I was tied to the mast of a pillaged and  
hacked-away ship, joining the races  
of hunted whales and tentacle creatures.  
Dissecting the storm at my feet, seeping into  
my lungs, I promised myself to live my last moments  
without envy or rage. It was easily done  
until my ropes became loose and I rose to  
catch a breath, catch sight of my splintered sea-house  
where there was wood all around - dead bodies of comrades,  
but no sharks, no children needing my protection.  
I promised myself another promise,  
to die in meditation, fixing on the sky, transferring my pain  
and crushed confidence to the stars' philosophy of afterglow.

It is a long time to be still and look up.  
It must be a painter's journey. I must learn

**to sprout roots from the tips of my frozen toes,  
knowing water is not earth and earth  
will never be a sailor's deathbed or home.**

## Govinda in the mud

This line of devotion that moves  
bitterly as lust tracing unresponsive thighs,  
cups a poor groan of invisible blooming,  
following you underneath a diseased tree,  
smelling as you spread your aloofness  
and mingled your affection tighter with the dealers of denial.

It came to me at first in healthy moderation,  
as a permit to appease my obsession. Then it grew indecent,  
flushed through me like a spell, drowning  
my apprentice music with your own reclusive master-drum.

I found you in the carcass, in the millipede's dart into the drain.  
You swelled your glow across all my sunny spots, mighty,  
but not brave, only bored with the circular twists  
of relief, thirst and sorrow - diamond clear,  
you asked for everything, wanting nothing for yourself.

I knitted together the practicalities of decomposition  
to the voyage of your ever-increasing detachment,

understanding what you did not - that love  
is not living alone on a dried-up hill  
nor is it consuming every crumb of dream-life  
until the flesh is reduced to accident.

I cannot rekindle my devotion, so I must leave you  
to authenticate a future. This deed of leaving is like you like  
a star - old, seen many times over by many eyes,  
power with no purpose but to be bright  
and desolate, eating away  
waves of darkness, emptied of praise, tenderness, the bullet  
needed to puncture a human heart with revelation.

I do not believe in nirvana. I do not believe in immortality:  
when things change they die and do not revert.  
We were, it seemed, perpetual, connected  
by the red rope of my loyalty.

I am dawning. I that is I,  
cracking the dome of my hereditary inertia.  
I leave the shadow-guilt of solemn yearning, and also you  
of coral-reef intricacy, simplicity, perfection.

I know I am alone, though permanently imprinted -  
by my years of unnoticed devotion,  
by the shunning of personal expectations  
and by your long finger,  
tanned, transcendental, a spiritual aphrodisiac still  
pointing.

# Neruda

I can't be and think like you,  
majestic in your sensuality,  
Godless but deep with sorrow, forever restoring.  
From you I see women's hips.  
And though I would never care to shield kisses upon  
their soft swaying mounds, your waters swell  
and grow and make me long for Spanish trees,  
seascapes I saw as a child. Rising male, always like a mountain,  
you pick granules from the ground, place sand on your tongue  
and name the sensation.

If I could be and think like you,  
like a native river that has known no footprints,  
gathering rowboats, families of endless generations,  
my house would sing, fruit would fall and  
I would hold a hand, glorify each fingernail, memorize  
the exact curve of each cuticle. I would retire,  
rest my shoulders on an old bed, loosely clothed,  
feeling the Mediterranean heated breeze encompass me  
like a lover's welcoming demand for unity. Speaking,  
my words would drip like oil, gifts  
of oil and bread.

## **The Book**

**Inside, spending all my coins, rejoicing  
on ephemeral longing, on a lustful inhale  
for physical redemption.**

**Hidden in the pages, I am hidden  
at four in the morning, bathing in perfection,  
lifting into heights that obscure drudgery.**

**Thoughts are shapes that float as shadows,  
hardly solid like butter left out of the fridge.  
Cages unravelling and houses cleaned of cobwebs.  
Between soft book covers freedom kisses explicitly,  
candy-ices without embarrassment.**

**Hanging on hinges, on barely glanced-at walls,  
I gather my vision in the grass, paint on the  
bones of another's life - beautiful bones and hallways  
of many feet walking and swishing bathrobes.  
In the book I can face forward and never fear rejection,  
I can shower sensuously in warm rhythms,  
tied to the stirring light of early summer.**

Love between these diary covers is not just canvass  
or thick hues that merge and make a middle, it is where I will  
at last know another's body as I know my own, be protected  
from the torrential pawing pierce of middle-age loneliness.

Inside the book, you are under me like a bed of lavender bushes,  
there are waves where once sunken skeletons rise like coral,  
polished pure of their violent history.

Drowning in the book, imagining ants collecting,  
synchronized on an apple core.

Bells in my head, footsteps rising, closer now,  
you know me well. Inside the book, you know me better.  
We are two trees - branches and roots, an interwoven crocheted  
impressionistic portrait, staying through heavy storms.

Inside the book, we are creatures of greater sympathy.  
You are like yarn, tied to my brush and hold, never in  
the liquid valley of a distant boat, or obvious as a prickly,  
rigid rope. I am mature, a woman with a ceiling to touch,  
fifty feet of surrounding stillness, unfettered  
from the expectations of my time and gender,  
radiant, more, whole.

## **There are names**

**and allegiances that triumph  
when spoken aloud. I do not speak  
these sounds or have a country  
that edges near ecstasy. I have loved badly,  
pessimistic, fostered a hostile vacancy  
of fantastical hope. Insolent towards God  
and the steady rapture that only comes with patience,  
I purchased an industry that leaves no mark,  
makes nothing useful  
or sweet.**

**Remembering my waxed-leaf collection held  
within hard cover books, and the frolicking of field mice  
that burrowed patterns into my head. I sat on the bus and  
I was alone. Did I know how fragile sanity was, unlocking  
doors, imagining mountains on the surface of the sun?**

**Snared before my shelter broke  
and I could be saved by surrender.  
A thicket of needles and bushes trembling with little birds.  
Contact. Glint.**

**Won't something rush at me, increase my odds?**

**I could send you away, then I could live  
cold, complete as a reed or as an angel.**

**Science will not have me. You will not let me go.**

**Remembering seashells wrapped in tissue paper, in a box,  
on a shelf, just above the closet floor, counting them -  
rough external even ridges, glassy sheen empty pocket inside.**

# Myth

It is not the same as being limited  
by loneliness, these feelings of broken fidelity,  
abandonment. It is not enough to germinate  
in this grief, pleading for a picture  
of better times, appealing to  
memory, sentiment, knowing  
I could be wrong.

Those days, married  
to your insatiable outpourings, ecstasy  
just to listen, to share our minds - walking  
on streetcar tracks at 4 a.m. and never sleeping.  
I carried you like a book, wilting always in life, but never  
when mingled with your stature. Between us,  
nothing was spoiled, not soft either.  
I was delivered by your high forehead and  
by your crazed emotions. I was celebrating.

If it was only  
paper flowers, a painted-on sunrise or  
imagined completeness, in that time, I was  
devoured by my own individuality, stripped  
of my conditioning, a person to reckon with, lean on -  
whole. I was so much better than I am here, as I am  
salvaging a heartbeat from habit,  
marked by a used-up destiny,  
just me with these crippled hands, bare feet, no mentor  
to merge with, nothing  
to follow.

## Three days

since I was found,  
panicked by my bed stand, calling out.  
They put me under covers. They wet  
my forehead but the fever was too bright inside of me.  
Words were repeating.  
Words were fireflies swarming my optical nerve.  
They did not see the vision. They tried to stop my shaking.  
They could not know that in the end,  
I was left with a choice.  
It was in my power to affirm or deny.  
It was a light so potent, sharp as broken ice,  
demanding. It was strength and perfection  
without tenderness. How could that be love? They  
were love - weeping for me, making promises  
of togetherness for eternity.  
Three days since I was found and they've never left my side.  
In these arms that hold me, is a devotion  
that comforts. I am better now. At last, I am called.

# Meeting

I blend under the covers  
to drift by the songbird  
though I never reach the songbird  
with my mind or my eyes.

I can only melt with the mirror, a strange being  
blessed by freedom  
but not by much else.

And here I hover - outshone by the beautiful sound  
I cannot capture, replanted in a foreign soil,  
a death warrant, a challenge of rapture. The angels  
have called me. The dark breath has answered me.  
It is not enough, under the covers, listening, crushed  
by the morning light - my pattern unraveled as though,  
for now, I am only shadow.

It is not enough to remember you,  
to have touched the miracle and for a moment, to have  
perfect belief. Because there is chaos in wake of this beauty,  
there is a fall on jagged rigid ground after the swim through  
synchronicity, there is the dead bird, broken by  
heartbreak, held in my hands, nothing  
but hollow bones, and a picture I owned  
but lost, of you and me, in black and white,  
aged in love, so long ago.

## Months Before Resurrection

In the sea, I awoke,  
wet, under the sun,  
taken into time by  
the lord of anxiety.

Grief and instability covered my skin  
like the suction of an octopus'  
tentacles. It held me, carried me down  
below where the pressure is unbearable,  
and strange fluorescent creatures thrive.  
I landed on the sand-smoky floor, without  
a spoonful of oxygen, murdered by an immutable force.  
I died that day, chained to the nadir of my zodiac -  
once a living woman, now chewed at by tiny mouths,  
soon to fossilize in this wet, unsentimental grave.

## **I was not a bird**

**or a bride  
but wedded to the thick masculine  
thighs of war, a priest of the dead -  
myself a small idol that gathered a  
kingdom of followers. I had but one lover,  
a soul drenched with my own - long hair  
and pretty eyes, a man of calm devotion, while  
I enjoyed my blonde hair soaked  
with my conquered enemy's blood.  
I enjoyed the cries of pursuit  
and the galloping of hooves on foreign sands.  
I was not driven by the robe or the snake charmer's  
deep throttle. I was fresh, never a victim of fear,  
writhing with rage like a piranha plucked from the waters.  
In the daylight, I was whole. At night, my lover  
kissed my ring, my arms and forehead. We made love  
with everything left to give to only each other -  
two, dying young in a tent, just  
before dawn on the brink of battle, never ones for  
soft goodbyes.**

## Husband II

The one who found me  
in the schoolyard by the old tree  
fell to his knees with patches of burnt skin  
along his pale arms. He tried a pact of suicide  
with the sun, many times, but his inner ache  
gave out, replaced with a potent drive for revenge.  
Then through a threadbare journey where  
he never allowed his passion to be quenched,  
he turned from revenge  
to a window where he saw heaven, sliced and untouchable  
like a painting at an art show. He saw a way to find me, past  
the hospital ward, past the mushroom cloud of his existence.  
When he found me, I too was shut  
in a sea of quicksand, waiting  
on the final miracle. We smelt each other's hair in the  
openness of a winter sky.  
I told him my faith was at his side. I left him  
lingering by the tree - his old darkness staked and  
a new one, sure to be born.

## All the Light

All the light from the beginning  
remains - even as long as time  
and then, continuing on so that distraction  
and fears blot out the exuberance, and sometimes  
nullify with the dark chains that bind us to the funeral  
ground, to the alcoholic's breath and to the child,  
too abused to even cry. That the sacred chalice  
gets ripped like a paper cup means nothing, because  
the light from the beginning remains with the intensity  
it was born with, remains and cannot be removed.  
And the light between us - sliced cruelly like a cow  
into thin fragments for consumption, like that cow, still  
has a soul, somewhere hovering in happy pastures, loving  
all the while, like in the beginning, when it was born -  
beautiful, knowing only its first intake of breath and  
the sweet nectar of its mother's protective warmth.

## **When This Is Over**

**At the end of the day, the pears will be ripe  
and the ones I loved and died will float before me  
in waves of growing beauty.**

**At the end, when all of this leaves, then I will breathe  
an owl breath, still in my tranquil sky.**

**At the end, I will find you, thank you for this sick chaos -  
myself, a garden, hit by a massive storm.**

**I will give life again to the little birds, insects that have no  
use or concept of glory. I will return with you  
to the Buddha waters, happy to know so much love.**

**I will walk out my door and there will be summer,  
early summer, and you and I**

**(though bruised and that much more  
world-weary) will walk into the warmth:  
ultimately loved, unequivocally whole.**

## Cutting the Bond

The sheet fell on me, and I was drawn  
for the last time to open the casket  
on the hill.

There I held myself like a figure made of sand,  
barely touching, but still crumbling my thick features.  
My scent was golden that day,  
and full of storm.

I walked to the grass and thought  
of history. I put mud on my lips  
and laughed at all I had lost. I would lose  
again - lose, until my memories  
were caramel coated, became something unconscious  
like my guilt and my necessity - internal,  
branded on my palms.

## **When**

**When I was a fish the morning light  
brought me near the shark's skilled swim.  
I would hide behind rocks and sea urchins, watching  
octopi and their slow contracting movement.  
When I was an octopus, my tentacles could think.  
I knew of things like volcano ruptures and how  
to escape fishnets and other forms of human capture.  
When I was a deer I was in union, safe with my clan,  
grazing in the lion's domain.  
When I was a lion, female, tense with the hunt,  
protective of my playful young, I knew of thirst  
and days without food, retreating from the large and  
ever-present sun.  
When I was a baby child, it felt like there was a stone  
stuck in my throat and a restlessness  
racing through my limbs.  
I cried and cried when I was a baby, unfamiliar  
with this daunting helpless form.**

## **I think I was**

**I was that man  
climbing the stairs to the hospital room, that man  
with wavy brown hair and open eyes.  
I used to live near the moors where  
I would go to re-enact Thomas Hardy fables,  
choked with the sorrow of outcast women.  
I was that man never reaching the room,  
never able to mourn except on paper.  
As that man, I dreamt of India -  
one day I would go, be under its large, unusual sun,  
maybe hold hands with a beautiful deity.  
As that man, I never went to India, I died  
too young.  
As that man, I remember a split in my soul,  
the violent burn of uncontainment.  
And I remember the feel of bare feet  
slowly walking across wet moors.**

## Connection

I remember you on a hill  
in Ireland, undecided as to who  
would be your master. Where  
the devil swore to drop you in the red valley  
and the angel promised only  
to embrace you as you fell.

I remember the tree you stood beside that was  
your mansion, the one with the grey and gnarled bark  
with mushrooms all around - you would  
whisper to it, sometimes crying, cursing the dilemma  
that ruled your soul, and the daylight that wounded you  
and brought you into years of isolation.

I think you missed the colour of flowers the most as  
they rejoiced in mid-day.

I think you always held your strength  
as a boy would a wild foal, hoping one day  
to curb its burning.

I remember you on Eastern ground - laying flat  
against the cold dead soil, wanting motive enough  
for suicide but always being drawn back  
by your foul hunger and by  
the promise for a cure. I remember you, your eyes -  
dark and cruel, yet never void of needing  
to be loved.

## **Vow**

**The noise broke  
by the garden where I loved you  
like I loved the truth,  
where my bones drowned in your darkness  
and my war was unlocked like the need  
for completion that you promised but never  
could attain. This wilderness  
of power, purposelessness and extremes I laid down inside of  
to be beside you and the softness of your mouth  
and the elixir of your touch  
became mine, grew like a second body  
merging with my own like death does  
with cold eternity.**

## Once made of stone - Wellesley Street

What was the shape of that shelter before you came?  
It was made of lost centuries of torment  
and sporadic, but deep, connection.  
It was more a seed than shelter,  
protecting, feeding the blood dream of my ancestry.

Then you arrived and for awhile  
we stuffed ourselves inside that shelter  
like ying and yang, in zen-like union.

My path was to follow the dolphins - live in the sea,  
breathe what I must and be happy.

But happiness was too hard,  
I was left wanting the darker layers of guilt and grief.

Your path was to find what was given to you,  
to re-claim your privilege, hand-printing the walls  
as though you were king.

You took the bed, I took the floor. I paid the rent  
and you shared your food. Soon that shelter then become  
a fossil for me. And you and I - facing each other  
with crossed arms, could not find a common ground.  
The boy next door worshipped you, and more and more  
I felt like the estranged sister, toyed with though loved.

I took my cat and left you with  
the dollar day-old-donuts and the bottled water  
you used to brush your teeth with. After that,  
my trust was broken. And though we still painted together,  
I never showed you my jewels or sorrows.

That shelter up all those stairs, overlooking  
the streetcar tracks is now this paper, an inked-in memory  
without entrance  
from any valley, flat plain or hill.

## **Draw Near**

**One day the drift drew near  
and lightning touched the lips of angels.  
The light was left only for the mighty.  
So we sang. So we sang.  
The murderers were shelved  
beside the mighty because the only difference  
was degree.  
We opened ourselves up while in the rain, open  
under the dark cloud, open  
through the winters and the occasional plague.  
We felt the evergreens between our fingertips  
and sold only that which was ours to sell.  
One day the drift drew near  
and we sang. We sang.**

# The Wind

The wind was moving  
across the leper earth.  
I saw that wind and that earth  
in a vision building strong  
as the autumn chartered on.  
The sparrows sank into that earth,  
each one carrying its own  
unique song.  
I was a sparrow filled with seeds,  
sitting on sand in the sun  
sure of all things. Then I was sucked  
into the sick earth, breathing in  
worm-infested dirt - myself,  
forgotten, dead as a broken-off stick,  
not even making a shadow.  
In a vision I rose up a ghost -  
a stronger sparrow now lacking substance.  
I found a tree to claim and share.  
And in that vision as the wind was moving,  
it moved me  
no longer.

## Interlude

Upon the window's sill  
I saw a ghost walking  
of a young woman veiled in grief  
with sunset hair and moral eyes -  
her death drifted to me like  
a scent. I called to her, with  
overflowing sympathy, but the grave  
was now her bed and the enemy-world  
was her heart's betrayal. I saw her sit  
then look to the sky, her tormented forehead  
glistening as the rain did on the roof's old shingles.  
She spoke three names softly, and over and over their  
sound ripped my skull as if the sun itself had entered  
to burn all hard-held secrets out.  
I loved her like someone I had long known and understood,  
watching her, hardly visible  
as the rain pushed on.

## The Hand That Came

The hand that came from  
the cool water, reached  
upon my deck to soothe  
my extremes. The sun that  
flowered green crumbled  
across the twilight tide and painted  
me a joy before unseen.  
I watched the breaking waters  
and felt it drifting over my skin like a spring-fresh leaf -  
soft, majestic and full of promise.  
The new seal was made, the old one broken.  
It is the third birth.  
A skull had fallen into my pocket and my secret  
sold to dull fantasy. The waiting was cruel.  
But the hand that came stripped me of my scars  
and gave me an altar to place  
my dying future upon.

## The Ride

Again the stars were plucked  
from her mind and the world below  
leapt up and sponged her with its flame.  
That summer she made a wish upon her chains  
and walked the deserted farmyards.  
The ravens followed her through the weeds  
and heat, keeping up conversation. At night  
she sang to the beating of the rain and stroked the head  
of the dead bug in her pocket.  
She was neither of the mountains nor of the desert.  
She was calm as crazy sometimes gets, and the thunder  
hissed out her name as the June's morning rays  
danced her a sermon. She talked  
to her shadow when the birds had gone,  
and her fingernails were brittle as cracked ice.  
On the seventeenth day her breath collapsed with  
the rising sun as the cobwebs about her sparkled, stirred  
by a sweetened wind.

# Tunnels

I have lost what was left  
in the tunnels, and wandered  
like a millipede through miles of underground.  
The burn of cold brick, the taste of damp air  
in my lungs, my skin against concrete.  
Friction, losing what's left, but finding  
a different pattern to follow, finding interest  
in each detail of the maze, finding fascination as I age,  
wandering through the narrow medieval fields,  
knowing there is no exit,  
and I am here - immutable, almost  
dammed.

# High Hill

On that high hill  
the wood burned like a flower,  
the smoke rose to my lipline  
under a decaying tree.

I walked down that hill to kiss a grave  
and marry my heart to the iris of death.  
But heat mounts near the waking sun,  
and on and on goes the wind, brushing  
the powerful weeds.

Walking along the path, my skin has changed,  
my shell is under water where it belongs.  
There is not much to understand, but to  
surrender to honesty and to covet  
the courage needed to speak  
my ruling rhyme.

On this high hill  
I drowned in the devil's chaos,  
but that place is long gone.  
And though the asylum of darkness still comes around,  
it vanishes so quickly with kindness.

# Salvation

In summer,  
sweat drips into the mouth like sunshine  
and the dry clay cliffs  
crumble, fracturing the fox's foot.  
The lake's moaning waves repeat with swollen voices.  
Children hang shapes on windows, understanding  
the transcendence of imagination.  
Long ago there was a shadow that turned into form.  
Under some bones a prodigy was born - growing  
grass in a stone, making bread from a smile.  
She watched the circles and placed her body there,  
inside the motion, though her mind traveled  
without geometry. Just believe it, she said,  
and all the world became a lovely dream.

## In Time

The mutual condition  
of our heritage. The thump-thump  
in your thigh. Thin as a warrior  
of Japanese fortune and eyes  
rustling like wool in the wind.

At bed time, the cockroaches are my cousins  
and the movement of your housecoat is my water.  
I found a necklace centuries old.  
You told me you were not ready  
to paint the autumn gardens or do cartwheels  
over a cliff. The hope that bled  
from your belly, and the seas  
of men's and women's breasts that  
you floated through, like Adam awakened  
from paradise, hungering for that one, strong connection,  
was like me in the winters of my adolescent youth,  
was the India I never visited or the Russian squares  
I buried my imagination in.

I am red as cinnamon candy, hoping you'll have me  
like the first day our hands joined and the bells of trinity sang  
a melody to finally, resolutely live for.

## The laws that find me bind me

heavy and wasted  
as in the first weeks of lost love,  
as if the lifting song of summer sank in the bog  
of my many crippled attempts at salvation.

Loose skin around the cheekbones.  
Fissures repeat kaleidoscope visions.  
Snake bites on my ankles like  
the opaque rules of tedious afternoons, trying  
to cut clean into a full separation the already divided wind.

Exhibitions and energy not worth keeping.  
Anger resolves with an ethereal kill,  
making and placing food on the table to limit the direction  
of desire. Desire to stalk a pale flame  
and grow a core of heat, but instead  
snipped and clipped at the meridian centre,  
pitted against love at its softest point. Love  
at its most isolating point,  
flayed across a concrete pyramid, inside  
a Minotaur-maze of forgotten exit passages.

Dealt and received, a stack of conditions  
that can never be lifted or walked away from.  
I will speak because  
the explosive veined-sun dominates our Earth's universe,  
and bloody barren corpses infiltrate the ground, calling upon  
mealworm dialogue - calling for useless conversation,  
eating makebelief applecore practicalities and gossip seeds  
like 'Bobok''s people in various degrees of decomposition.

Let me live on the rooftops, away from the ghosts  
puffing up their tufts with spintop epilogues of I, I, I, and God  
in all four pockets - enslaved, once-beautiful divinity,  
to sloppy-string opinions and ritualized overload.

Great stained-glass eyes of the one eye, where are you?  
Only the sound of a shallow drumbeat drumming,  
plunging me into this sewer-tunnel template, dangerous  
as the planet we are all forced to manoeuver on.  
Save me from cherished traditions and filing-cabinet dreams.  
Save me from my bodily needs. Transform me into  
an angel or into the one transformed from the angel -  
never to come here again,  
except to hold my only true love  
and to cradle close the heads of my sleeping children.

# **I have been born**

**a thousand times over,  
flaked into existence by  
force, by will and by desire.  
I have had my days  
under the siege of physical limitations,  
of bloodlines burned and bloodlines  
mended. There is no more  
time for this rotating scheme,  
no space for waiting  
or for continuing. I stop here. Unplugging the  
flow, breathing only because  
I want to, because  
this skin that is mine is  
the last skin I will ever claim  
as the landscapes I drop, drop, then  
drop me.**

# **New Wheel – The Passage of Arnik**

**(king of a small land)**

## **Part 1**

**My skin was stone,  
drenched in an accelerant and  
lit on fire. And there I burned,  
a flaming rock impassable by  
every woman and man who  
tried to cross my shore. My fire  
was final, a never-dying-heat  
guarding the dead cold core  
beneath its frantic dance.  
Murder was easy as was laughing,  
glaring bold-faced at the sun,  
but languishing in waters, still or stormy,  
was never my game, only, swift, loveless striking,  
blistering and charring, beating with a spike  
any imagined challenge to my seat in the center.**

**You covered my face with your hair,  
let me sear it, then the skin of your face, to the bone.  
And still you would not leave me, give up  
on my indomitable obscenity – finely-tuned  
to the leftover ash of my tenderside.  
My madness was your deformed child. Even when  
you ended me, taking an axe to break up my hard form –  
you were more sorry than I was, heartbroken  
to scatter that fire, watch its petering-out-existence  
on the cracked concrete fragments of what I once was.  
For me, it was freedom from its burn,**

a relief, relieving me from the devil's obligation.  
I couldn't sing. I couldn't speak, but  
I saw you crying - such strength  
embedded in so much softness. I forgot  
you had a formidable side. I forgot  
that love was a ruthless wielding sword -  
for both of us - terrible, unforgiving and  
stronger than either of our self-proclaimed mantras,  
better than personal devotion, brighter  
than the burning or the burnt, tortured,  
cloned-for-infinity, layered upon layer, like us,  
molecularly as one, irreparably damned.

## Part 2

Tentacles, unfurled, then  
curled, suctioning out  
the snail from its shell.  
Through the narrow hold of hell  
I built a kingdom, wide and ruthless,  
I cut the heads off the keepers of faith,  
increased my stature as I did my gluttony -  
sensual overload.

There was a tree in the courtyard, old and by its own.  
Everyday I would chip pieces off its bark, because I could,  
because I knew it hurt and I wanted to murder it, slowly,  
this old beauty that held its ground longer than me.  
I wanted its stillness, if not to own, then to conquer.  
I obsessed over its carved-up flesh, kept its pieces  
in a box by my bed, one day planning to collect  
the whole of its body in many boxes –  
building a shelf for that alone.

But that day never came, for I found death  
by the swift hand of my lover, after love-making  
after laughter, almost sleeping – showing him the tree pieces,  
while gloating at my cruelty, he sucked in my dark wind  
and gathered an axe from its exhale.  
He watch me fade. I faded,  
spilled out over the bedding and the hand-crafted floor.  
He cried openly, pressing his  
lips against my skin, he sang to me –  
laid the bark-pieces tenderly across my chest –  
and there I was buried, there, in dying I awoke,  
for the first time in that lifetime, trembling with peace,  
I began a journey somewhere, home.

### Part 3

Inside the white hot soul  
that boils with bitter outward  
blame, primitive in its inception  
like a just-born-star,  
born from a black hole sink hole infusion  
of pain and power – tight knot force pouring  
from an unguarded door, gushing forward like  
a colossal flood, lifting homes, babies from parental arms  
and the nesting rodents from their burrows, remorseless,  
lashing this way and that just for the sake of it,  
for the sound and for the consequences  
I could unleash.

Whispers in my ear of love  
were an implanting-larvae insect bite  
to pour vinegar on and be done with.  
But they burned, these larvae beneath my skin, traveled north  
to latch onto my spinal neck nerve, hatch again,  
consuming me with ignored madness.

I kept myself pure of sentiment until the end, until the next life  
when those larvae overtook, and cloaked my retreat  
with parallel barriers of shame and guilt,  
called me to a time out, to be removed,  
to learn discipline and control, gentleness  
carrying out daily simple tasks, bothering no one –  
small, self-sustaining, glimpsing a first taste of a personal  
God as I  
let the weight bear down, through the darkness, building  
a sanctuary where I could chalk-mark the walls  
with my crimes,  
come to terms with accountability.

Gradually, many lifetimes later, those larvae  
grew translucent wings,  
thin, but strong enough to lift me off the ledge of confinement,  
into the light of a new longing – a vision bursting,  
birthed from both  
a streamlined-focus responsibility toward a tender eternity  
and a well-cave of feeding minerals, feeding,  
blunt-axe perpetually hacking, holy despair.

## Part 4

I speak of a cloud  
fanning north - it went  
past barricade ripples,  
ended in a thin line above a blanket  
fog. Wild disorder,  
language I could not steal or make up,  
but found the natural disappearance  
of all things in its fate.  
A creature obscure, placematting perfection  
into a one-dimensional genius.  
Good riddance to lineage and the shaming  
fish-flight up against some sharks.

I touched you and you were naked. It felt  
greater than love, but it was not so. It was  
wider than a lifetime and swayed all over  
the map, cloak-covering the appendages  
of tyranny and a tyrant's response to fear.  
We rejoiced together, exhilarated by the possibilities  
and the perpetual spin weaving macabre plot  
that lead to this glimpse of redemption.  
It was the end - hoofprint on the grass  
made invisible by an onslaught storm.  
Even for the weight and starkness that came after,  
I am grateful for the chance  
you gave to be reborn – to dare myself  
into solitude and austere discipline.

**I speak of a cloud  
then of a king that was a man  
who lost his heavy shape and substance  
in a calm sky... know it, know it now,  
a law, an equilibrium  
dissolved – miraculous  
clairvoyant space taker  
vanishing through, into  
a covenant-keeping once  
impenetrable wall.**

(monk in service to a stream)

## Part 5

Grace, grounding  
in the mist-wrapped shelter  
blooming in unison  
with perfect stance and form,  
killing my individuality to make  
a stronger whole.  
Orange bright red flare of robes,  
sounds of marrow spine resonance,  
stillness in speed, visible energy,  
rolling, turning, flattening the air  
from inner pressure – sealed, smoothed,  
kneeling by a stream.

This kind of power accessed, focused  
removed from ego and uniqueness.  
Finding peace in discipline, saving beauty  
in spiritual structure – every moment counted for,  
every thought overseen and filtered through  
for further simplicity. Clarity enforced  
in the great dream of camaraderie,  
in the common goal of God-mind, balancing  
force with receiving,  
honouring with accountability, weaned off  
of the still swelling teat of desire, living far off  
on an isolated high plane, holding heaven

**in a tea cup, celestial gardens in a rice bowl,  
learning to blend mastery with discipleship.**

**daily striving for perfection in the body's movements,  
daily failing, giving it back, committed  
to this pulsar event - filling up, choosing 'yes',  
then willfully deflating, releasing the hold.**

## Part 6

This hand  
split from the source  
but not fully detached,  
forking downward into  
a vast otherness, depending on,  
giving honor to the root, to the means to  
keep nourished and whole.

Gently submerging in a stream,  
entering an alternate atmosphere where  
minnows school and scatter  
and micro-organisms build communities,  
interactive bio-worlds, unaware of the invading limb,  
fingers, looping in erratic rhythm, glorifying in  
the soft texture shadow, moving through with  
easily overcome resistance,  
encapsulated in the water-body,  
entering, exploring without destruction.

This hand,  
only feeling like it has gone somewhere  
when removed, wet, knowing it has been  
where oxygen is heavy,  
where the rich showering moon gravity  
has more say, greater mobility than it does in air.  
Crossing dimensions without disruption  
or impact, here holding stillness,  
inside of, open to a passive discovery, then lifted,  
hovering over the surface, dripping back into the stream,  
gaining rich skin ridges, enhanced sensitivity, at last,  
visible saturation.

## Part 7

Guardian of the small water  
flowing - pebbles lining  
the edge, shaved head resting  
on the ground.

Loneliness widened in those few everyday hours,  
listening to what went on deep below the surface  
of the stream, honing in on frolicking fish,  
predatory fish and the cycle voice  
groaning, never withholding its display of extremes.

I closed my eyes and dreamt I held two shoulders tight  
between two arms, wrapped myself naked around another.  
That longing lingered well past sleep, as I rose, it rose up in me  
a discontent, birthed a being, a pulse  
beneath my calculated fold,  
thundering through my well-kept peace,  
brought me closer to looking,  
looking at those fish, seeing a richer kinship in their company.  
As I looked, that loneliness quickened  
in its demands, buzzed louder  
than concentrated contemplation or a prayer.

There was no apology left to play out, not here  
in this place, on this isolated rift on a mountain, not  
when other beings moved in a more intimate connection,  
tied to the vine and the sun and the fish  
gave birth to eggs that were inseminated  
and transformed. I could hear  
their chattering, bubble blowing and their unquestioned  
communion - each tiny one crowned perfect, even when  
left half-eaten, perishing on the bank.

I drew back from my commitments but did not leave,  
simply waited and held the promise of you in my dreams.  
In waiting, I sent a call out to you, finding transportation  
through the drumming chant, into distances  
beyond my bent knees  
and the gleam of my weapons

over cliffs and villages and oceans I told you  
to meet me the next timeover, choose  
this place, choose that harsh violence of a home  
and I would choose mine, not far  
but far enough from each other so when we finally met  
we would be mostly cultivated and hurting enough  
to give credence to each other's importance.

While I waited, I tasted your flesh in each grain of rice,  
rolled it down my tongue like solid nectar, digesting it,  
I kept up my call, told the stream to take it downwards too.  
In silence I kept my secret, broke the machine,  
and betrayed my brothers.

I had no choice but to tend to this flame, press my hip bones  
against yours in the other space that started small  
by the stream,  
gained dimension and lengthened on the inside, stretching  
to bare-toes, to fleshy ear-lobes, flame  
that circled my bones like a hungry bird,  
broke them into pieces and swallowed them,  
glittering, gleaming hot in this longing, still  
a stone on the outside, dutiful while I waited,  
letting that flame infiltrate my organs, veins, larynx.

I loved you absolutely, in the wild intake outtake breath.  
I ate as always in slow movements, with one hand, eating,  
the other, ripening, building in heat,  
calling out, preparing for our wedded harvest.

## Part 8

Standing on a petal crust, ground  
by a stream, sinking into wet earth  
where fish corpses lie buried,  
surrounded by minerals and mountain stones.

Sinking as the sun arrives  
and my heart seizes but is not afraid of  
drowning in this damp graveyard,  
knows it is a sacred blessing to be called  
to dive into the underground  
where light and water still reign,  
knows it is pulled, plucked and twisted but  
will return to form through a flexible core,  
elasticity intact, inner elements uncompromised.

Going down further  
merging shoulders and neck, readying to breathe in  
the divinity ground, harbinger  
of worms, death and thin bones, keeper of  
the Lazarus resurrection

and the sun seeps into my parted lips  
as does the soil. I close my eyes  
sinking, unable to hold air or hearing.

Honoured to offer it my flesh and my singing bowl,  
I am covered in this stream-infused ground of a shroud,  
vessel-body overtaken, vacated and then transmuting,  
dissipating, ready to feed the root, be healed,  
find you again, and in loving you,  
be equal, irretrievably joined, boundless together,  
opened, never closing, owned.

*All of these poems have been published and have appeared in:* JVC Poetry Newsletter; Existere; Poetry Halifax Dartmouth; oasis; Pennine Platform; Reach; Jones Av.; The Affiliate; Indigo Rising Magazine; Hook & Ladder; Decanto; Indie Poets Indeed; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; Snapping Twig; Pawn Press; First Offense; Bewildering Stories; The Syzygy Poetry Journal; The Fat Damsel; A New Ulster; Juxtaprose Literary Magazine; blackmail press; Section 8 Magazine; Gossamer Poetry Page; Gris-Gris; The Bitchin' Kitsch; Dali's Lovechild; Carcinogenic Poetry; Ginosko Literary Journal; The Bijou Poetry Review; Dead Snakes; MadSwirl; The song is...; Indiana Voice Journal; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; Jotter United Lit-zine; InnerChildPress; Wax Poetry and Art Magazine; The Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; Duane's PoeTree; Scars Publication; Scarlet Leaf Review; The Wagon Magazine; Fragrance Poetry Magazine; Blue Heron Review; New Mystics; The Milo Review; The Packington Review; Spillwords Press; Sentinel Literary Quarterly; Wilderness House Literary Review; River Poets Journal; Napalm and Novocain; The Penwood Review; Communicators League; Eunoia Review; The Poetry Community; Asian Signature; Black Poppy Review; Bigger Stone; GloMag; The Galway Review; Straylight Literary Magazine on line; Straylight Literary Arts Magazine, Volume 9.2; The Peregrine Muse; Fine Flu Journal; Poem and Poetry; The Plowman; Subliminal Interiors; Eye on Life Magazine; The Screech Owl; TwitchFit Lit Writing Zine; The Open Mouse; Full of Crow; Peedeel's Blog; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Junk in July Poetry Zine; Synchronized Chaos; Sonder Magazine; Poetryreairs; The Kitchen Poet; Anti-Heroin Chic Magazine

# About the Author



**Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).**

**Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.**

**Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; [www.allisongrayhurst.com](http://www.allisongrayhurst.com)**

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**“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of *Wigford Rememberies*, Nightwood Editons; [www.kypharness.net](http://www.kypharness.net)**

**“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green*, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros*.**

**“Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst,” *Blaise Wigglesworth, Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice.***

**“Grayhurst’s poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original,” *Beach Holme Publishers.***

**"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.***

**"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt, poet and author.***

**"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis, poet, novelist and educator.***

**“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,”** *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

**“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,”** *Cristina Deptula*, editor of *Synchronized Chaos*.

*"Allison Grayhurst is a great poet. All of her poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today." Tom Davis, poet.*



**Allison Grayhurst** is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Four times nominated for "Best of the Net", 2015/2017, she has over 1125 poems published in over 450 international journals and anthologies. She has 21 published books of poetry, six collections and six chapbooks. She lives in Toronto with her family. She is a vegan. She also sculpts, working with clay.



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