



In this session we return to the poems and culture of English Canada. French Canada created Canada's first large abstract paintings with Paul-Émile Borduas and Jean-Paul Riopelle. However English Canada was not far behind and William Ronald founded *Painters Eleven* in 1953. This group included Jack Bush, Michael Town, Ray Mead, Jock MacDonald and Kazuo Nakamura. The illustrated painting by Jack Bush (1909-1977) shows a style which combines the color-field approach (promoted by Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko) with a more lyrical abstract sense.

**Raymond Souster
(1921-2012)**

Born in Toronto, he worked from 1939 to 1984 for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, except for 4 years during World War II when he served in the Royal Canadian Airforce (in New Brunswick and England). A modest but prolific poet he wrote mainly about the people and places of his home city. He was a baseball enthusiast and played amateur ball through most of his adult life. He established and edited the magazine *Contact* which helped the careers of many younger poets.



Raymond Souster was Toronto's favourite poet. His personality was friendly and unassuming; his poetry was easily approachable. He wrote more than 50 volumes of poetry. The pronunciation of his name is such that the first syllable rhymes with "house."



A Dream of Hanlan's

It's not homesickness, it's the thought of
the morning sun
strong on the beach, warming the sand
for the feet
of the young girl and boy I can almost
see running
out the cottage door, down the walk, then
free of the house
and anything holding them from the lake's
tingling-cool
water....

Photograph
Bill Brooks, 1984

And it isn't loneliness, it's just me imagining
the utter peace of mind, the quiet of those mornings,
when no aircraft roared off to bomb or to destroy,
no machine-guns, no cannon, shaking out sprays of death,
but with only the shouts of swimmers in the water,
the cries of children as the waves break on their impractical
castles of sand.

It's nothing but desire to live again,
fresh from the beginning like a child.

Hanlan's Point is a popular beach at the West End of Toronto Island.

This poem recalls how the dreams of childhood happiness were a source of comfort during the poet's dark times in England during World War II. The photograph is from a book of poetry and photographs put together by Souster and Brooks to celebrate Toronto's sesquicentennial in 1984. (York was incorporated into the new city of Toronto in 1834 with William Lyon MacKenzie as mayor – this was just before the rebellion of 1837)

Another place for summer pleasure in old Toronto was Sunnyside Beach Park with its roller coaster. The park existed from the 1920s until the mid 1950s. It contained a large bathing pavilion as well as numerous rides and fun-houses. Some of the buildings were renovated after the park closed in 1955 and are still used – the bathing pavilion and the dance hall.

Information about Sunnyside Beach Park (1922-1955) is at

<http://cec.chebucto.org/ClosPark/SunnSide.html>



Flight of the Roller-Coaster



Once more around should do it, the man confided ...
 and sure enough, when the roller-coaster reached the peak
 of the giant curve above me, shrill screech of its wheels
 almost drowned out by the shriller cries of its riders –
 instead of the dip, then the plunge with its landslide of screams,
 it rose in the air like a movieland magic carpet, some wonderful bird

and without fuss or fanfare swooped slowly above the amusement-park,
 over Spook's Castle, ice-cream booths, shooting-gallery;
 then losing no height made the last yards across the beach,
 where its brakeman cucumber-cool in the last seat solemnly saluted
 a lady about to change to her bathing suit:

ending up, as many witnesses reported later,
 heading leisurely out above the blue lake water,
 to disappear all too soon behind a low-flying flight of clouds.

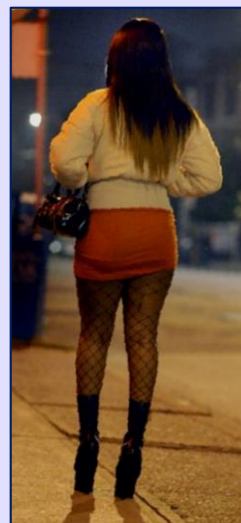
Girl at the Corner of Dundas & Elizabeth

You want it
or you don't

I'm twenty-one
I ain't
got any time
to waste

You want it
or you don't

Mister
make up your mind



The directness and forcefulness of this poem is strikingly different from most other Souster poems.



This is the Queen Street Viaduct over the Don River. Originally built in 1911. The clock and the quotation from Heraclitus were installed in 1996 by the artist Eldon Garnett. The photograph by Bill Halliday is on Flickr

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/150570634@N07/34581323316/in/photolist-s5mRcG-UFQjCm-hd2mLn-ZRwsoM-i2YYkr-aN7PrR-YevTeE-aJWyiH-fbyeA5-8svPsD-aV6J9P-N8SyTh/>



The bridge is much more pleasant now than in the days when Souster wrote the poem *Bridge over the Don*

And why do you come to get cheered up here
With three hotels on the block and a jitterbug danceball?
Don't you know people get melancholy, go queer,
Standing like this, looking straight ahead into the dark,
Trying to find some truth, some beauty,
Where beauty and truth have been burned out, slugged out,
given the gate forever?

The Six Quart Basket

The six quart basket
One side gone
Half the handle torn off

Sits in the centre of the lawn
And slowly fills up
With the white fruits of the snow.



The Six Quart Basket is a simple imagist poem.
It brings to mind a poem of Wallace Stevens *Anecdote of the Jar*

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

Both remark on the place (or placing) of the artificial in the natural world.



The photograph is not from a Toronto baseball game but it does show the balletic athleticism of the second base player forcing his out and throwing to first.

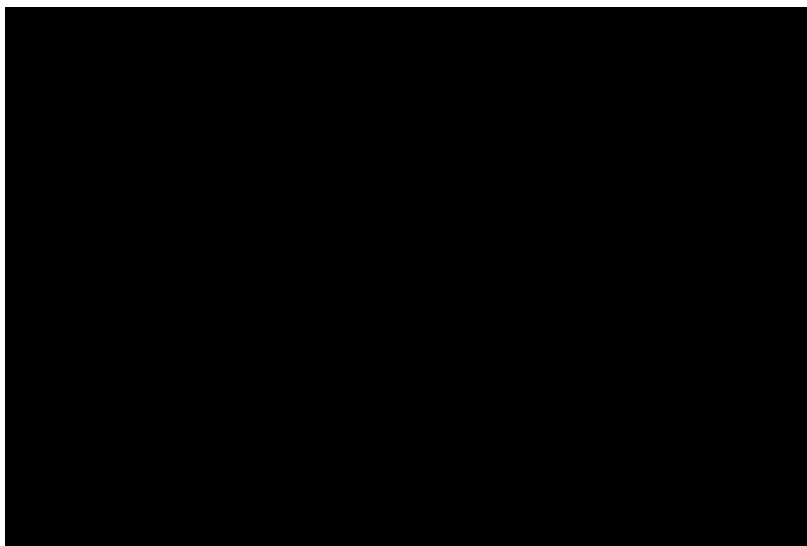
Talk about the grace of your bullfighters—

look

At my dark angel Hector going
 Impossibly to his right, gloved hand reaching
 Up at the last second—then somehow whirling
 Out of a spin to fire
 That improbable pellet to Mike waiting
 With disbelief on his face

second to first

For the double-play, aficionados.



This clip is from the 1977 NFB film *Death by Streetcar* animated by Seldon Cohen. It is available on the NFB website as part of the dvd *Poets on Film No. 2* :
https://www.nfb.ca/film/poets_on_film_no_2/

The old lady crushed to death by the Bathurst streetcar
had one cent left in her purse.
Which could mean only
one of two things: either she was wary of purse-snatchers
or all her money was gone.
If the latter,
she must have known that her luck must very soon change
for better or for worse:
which this day had decided.

Chet Baker at the Colonial



Almost Blue (1987)



Go on
playing with your horn down, blowing the perfect notes
to the goddess at your feet, that swooning silent
angel of perfection.

Erzebet
Nagy
Collage
2012

Chet Baker (1929-1988) was a jazz trumpeter and singer, one of the great jazz musicians of the century. He was addicted to heroin.

Queen Anne's Lace



It's a kind of flower
that if you didn't know it
you'd pass by the rest of your life.

But once it's been pointed out
you'll look for it always,
even in places
where you know it can't possibly be.

You'll never tire
of bending over to examine,
of marvelling at this
shyest filigree of wonder
born among grasses.

You'll imagine poems
as brief, as spare,
so natural with themselves
as to take your breath away.

Souster admired William Carlos Williams, one of whose poems also described this flower:

Queen-Anne's Lace William Carlos Williams, 1924

Her body is not so white as
anemone petals nor so smooth—nor
so remote a thing. It is a field
of the wild carrot taking
the field by force; the grass
does not raise above it.
Here is no question of whiteness,
white as can be, with a purple mole
at the center of each flower.
Each flower is a hand's span
of her whiteness. Wherever
his hand has lain there is
a tiny purple blemish. Each part
is a blossom under his touch
to which the fibres of her being
stem one by one, each to its end,
until the whole field is a
white desire, empty, a single stem,
a cluster, flower by flower,
a pious wish to whiteness gone over—
or nothing.



The illustration is from the 1984 book *Queen City* with poems by Souster and photographs by Bill Brooks. The book was published in celebration of the Toronto's 150th year. The photograph shows Ashbridge Bay Yacht Club off Lakeshore Boulevard near Woodbine Avenue.

The shoulders of the fog
take their last shrug,
begin to steal away.

Day will soon burn through.

It's a last chance
for birds and boats
to feel that strange
sweet-and-sour joy
that aloneness brings,

a final moment
hidden from the all-seeing
meddling eye of man.



The photograph (by Norman James of Toronto Star) shows Ian and Sylvia in a Yorkville folk club in 1964.

A website about the folk scene in Toronto is

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/ve/canada-entertains/folk.jsp>

CBC Radio chose *Four Strong Winds* as the greatest Canadian Song of all time in 2005

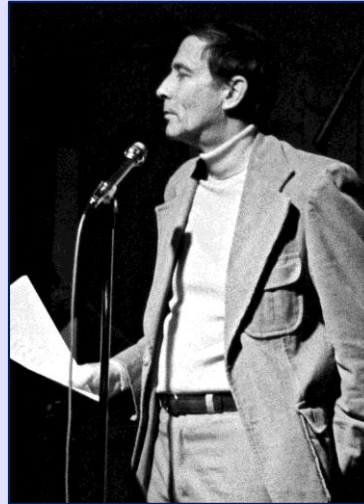
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50_Tracks

Four strong winds that blow lonely
Seven seas that run high
All those things that don't change come what may
But our good times are all gone
And I'm bound for moving on
I'll look for you if I'm ever back this way

Think I'll go out to Alberta
Weather's good there in the fall
I got some friends that I can go to working for
Still I wish you'd change your mind
If I asked you one more time
But we've been through that a hundred times or more

D. G. Jones (1929-2016)

Douglas Gordon Jones was born in Bancroft, Ontario. He studied at McGill and Queen's Universities and taught at Guelph University and at the Université de Sherbrooke. In 1969 he founded the journal *Ellipse* which presents Canadian literature in both English and French. He translated the works of many French-Canadian poets. He believed that we should live in communion with nature: "let the wilderness in."



The 1977 NFB film *Perishing Bird* was animated by Robert Doucet. The poem is read by D. G. Jones. Film is available at:

https://www.nfb.ca/film/poets_on_film_no_3/

Nanabozho is the trickster in Ojibway legends.

The poem is written in response to Yeats' poem *Sailing to Byzantium* (1926), the last two verses of which are

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,

Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
 And be the singing-masters of my soul.
 Consume my heart away; sick with desire
 And fastened to a dying animal
 It knows not what it is; and gather me
 Into the artifice of eternity.

Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Jones does not wish like Yeats to be “out of nature.” Rather he wants to become one with the natural world. He accepts the passage of time and rejects any mechanical eternity. He recognizes that his mind is a perishing bird:

For the mind in time
 Is a perishing bird,
 It sings and is still.

It comes and goes like the butterflies
 Who visit the hill.

This may also refer to the Keats *Ode to a Nightingale* which claims
 Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

The “necessary angel” of Jones’ poem may allude to Wallace Stevens, 1950 poem *Angel Surrounded by Paysans*

I am the angel of reality,
 Seen for a moment standing in the door.

I have neither ashen wing nor wear of ore
 And live without a tepid aureole,

Or stars that follow me, not to attend,
 But, of my being and its knowing, part

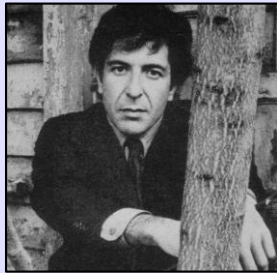
I am one of you and being one of you
 Is being and knowing what I am and know.

Yet I am the necessary angel of earth,
 Since, in my sight, you see the earth again,

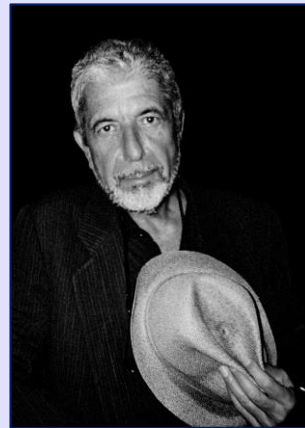
Stevens was concerned with the interplay between imagination and reality, and how the poet must properly re-imagine the world. Jones is a little more down to earth – his angel needs to swat the flies

And the mind is not
A place at all,
But a harmony of now,

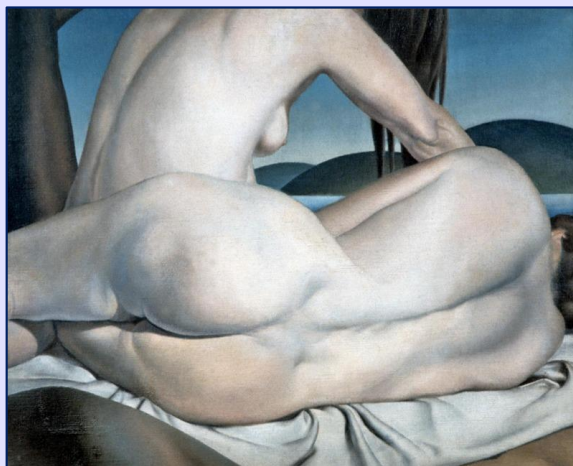
The necessary angel, slapping
Flies in its own sweat.



Leonard Cohen (1934-2016)



Born in Montreal, educated at McGill, Cohen began his artistic life as a poet. After three books of poetry and two novels, he lived for a while in Greece before pursuing a career as a singer and song-writer. In the new millennium he returned to poetry with *Book of Longing* (2006).



**You Have
the Lovers**



Figures in a Landscape, 1931, Bertram Brooker

Canadian artists have not produced many nude studies. The Canadian market much preferred landscape. This painting was actually removed from an exhibit of the Ontario Art Society. This is discussed in

<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/canadian/Nudes-and-Prudes.html>

The nudes in the painting appear cold. This problem may be inherent in Canada.


Cohen's poetry brought the erotic back to Canada.

In the bed the lovers, slowly and deliberately and silently,
perform the act of love.
Their eyes are closed,
as tightly as if heavy coins of flesh lay on them.
Their lips are bruised with new and old bruises.
Her hair and his beard are hopelessly tangled.
When he puts his mouth against her shoulder
she is uncertain whether her shoulder
has given or received the kiss.




This is an NFB animation of Cohen's poem *The Kite Is a Victim*. Animation is by Elizabeth Lewis. Reading is by Paul Hecht. The film is available to be seen on the NFB webpage:
https://www.nfb.ca/film/poets_on_film_no_1/

The idea of the poem is that the kite is the "last poem you have written."




Suzanne
Verdal




Suzanne takes you down to her place near the river
 You can hear the boats go by, you can spend the night forever
 And you know that she's half-crazy but that's why you want to be there
 And she feeds you tea and oranges that come all the way from China


Suzanne Verdal was the inspiration for this song. At the time she was the girlfriend of the sculptor Armand Vaillancourt. Although the song suggests otherwise, Suzanne claimed that she and Cohen were friends but never lovers.


Cohen lived in Hydra, Greece, with Marianne Ihlen for several years and then had another long relationship with a second Suzanne – Suzanne Elrod. Cohen was quite charming and there were numerous other affairs.




I loved you in the morning, our kisses deep and warm,
 your hair upon the pillow like a sleepy golden storm,
 yes, many loved before us, I know that we are not new,
 in city and in forest they smiled like me and you,
 but now it's come to distances and both of us must try,
 your eyes are soft with sorrow,
 Hey, that's no way to say goodbye.











Music and movement go together. Heather Ogden is the wife of Guillaume Côté. This is a clip from the YouTube video *Lost in Motion II*, directed by Ben Shirinian, with music by Leonard Cohen and choreography by Guillaume Côté.

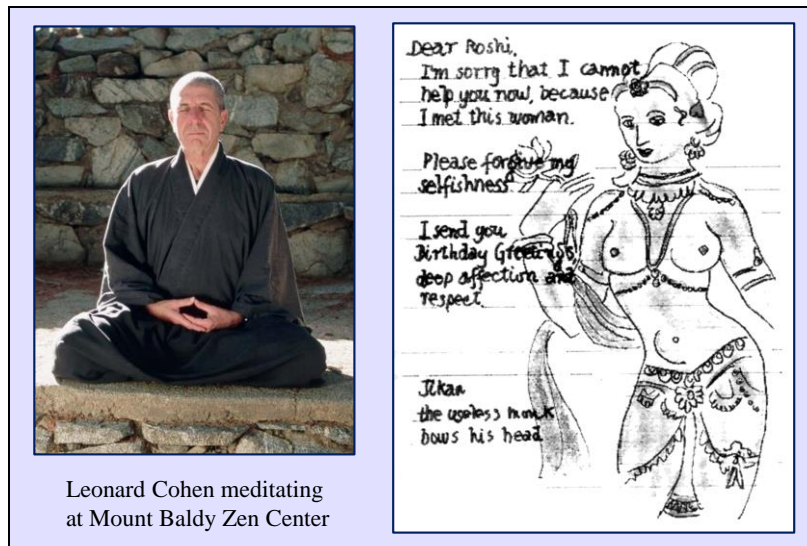
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lxl3AuL3_Qs

The lyrics to the song *Avalanche* begins:

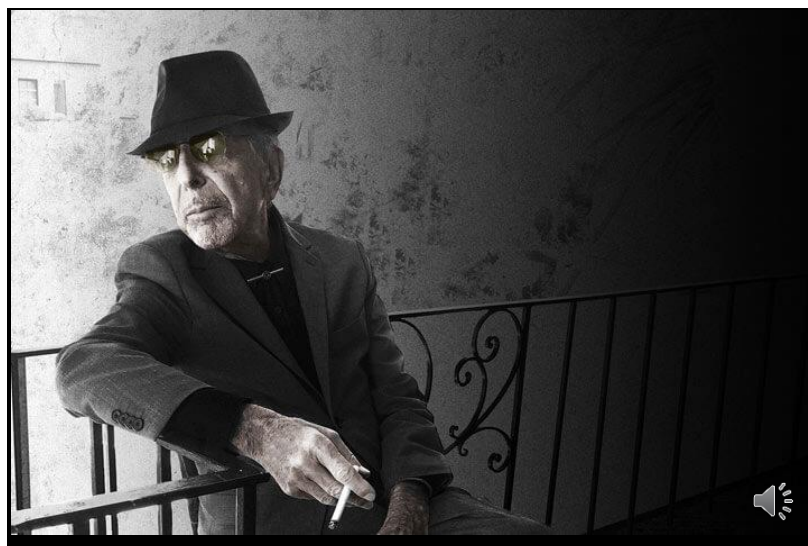
Well I stepped into an avalanche,
it covered up my soul;
when I am not this hunchback that you see,
I sleep beneath the golden hill.
You who wish to conquer pain,
you must learn, learn to serve me well.
You strike my side by accident
as you go down for your gold.
The cripple here that you clothe and feed
is neither starved nor cold;
he does not ask for your company,

The meaning of the song is difficult to determine. It may present the Buddhist view of reality as an avalanche that covers the true soul. However, there are many different interpretations:

<http://www.leonardcohenforum.com/viewtopic.php?t=28468>



Cohen also longed for the transcendent. The Mount Baldy Zen Center is in the San Gabriel Mountains just east of Los Angeles. It was founded by Kyozan Joshu Sasaki (Roshi) (1907-2014). Cohen stayed there from 1994-1999. He was ordained a monk and took the dharma name Jikan ("silence").

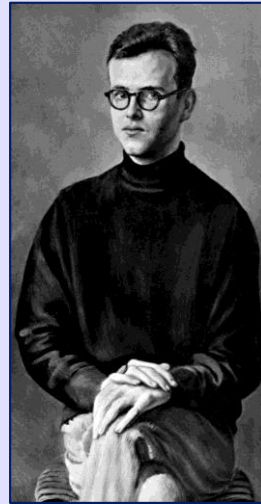


This is the title song on Cohen's last album *You Want It Darker*. The word *Hineni* means 'Here I am.' This what Abraham says to God to indicate his readiness when he is called by God just before he is asked to sacrifice his son.

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. (*Genesis 22:1*)

Daryl Hine (1936-2012)

Hine was born in Burnaby, BC, and grew up in New Westminster. He studied at McGill and at the University of Chicago. He taught at various universities in Chicago and was the Editor of *Poetry* from 1968-1978. As well as a poet, Hine was a respected translator of classical literature. He came out as gay in 1975 in a long confessional poem entitled *In and Out*, but the poem was not commercially published until 1989. He received a MacArthur Fellowship in 1986. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he was a formalist poet.



Portrait, 1960
David Hill



Illustration, Kay Nielsen, 1913

Bluebeard's Wife

Impatiently she tampered with the locks,
One by one she opened all the doors;
The music boxes and the cuckoo clocks
Stopped in alarm; dust settled on the floors
Like apprehensive footsteps. Then the stores
Of silence were exposed to her soft touch:
Mute diamonds and still exquisite ores.
She had not thought the squalid world had such
Treasure to proffer, nor so easy, nor so much.



The story of Bluebeard comes from a French folktale first collected by Charles Perrault in the 17th Century. The story is unusual in its violence.

In the story a fabulously rich old man with a blue beard marries an innocent young woman. He then departs on a trip and leaves his new wife with a key that she is commanded not to use. Nevertheless, she cannot resist opening the various rooms of the castle. In the last room she sees hanging from the wall the bodies of Bluebeard's previous wives.

The tale has been retold many times with many variations, particularly on the ending. Two Bluebeard operas have been composed – *Bluebeard* by Offenbach in 1866 and *Bluebeard's Castle* by Bartok in 1911.

Many different interpretations of the story have been proposed.
A review of these is available at

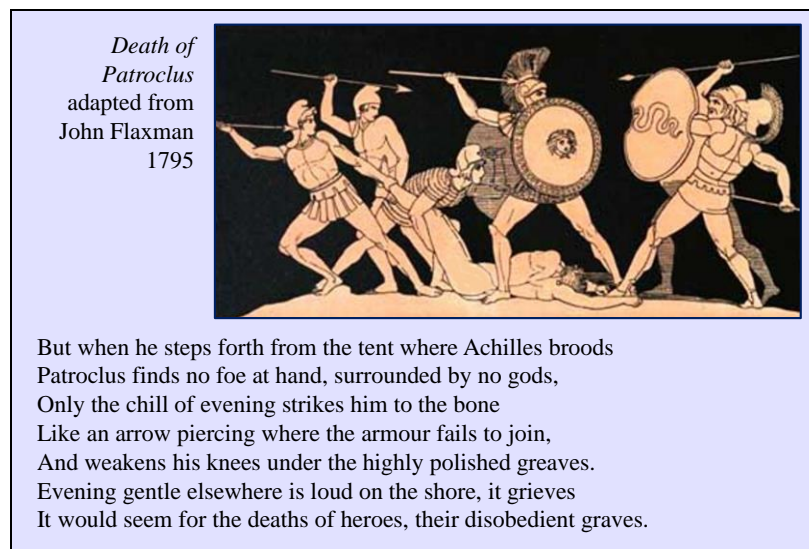
<http://www.terriwindling.com/folklore/bluebeard.html>

“... the castle becomes a castle of the soul rather than a locale, a symbol of passionate interior striving, of the desperate character of sexual passion, of the doom which all passionate love must suffer.” Marina Warner (*From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*, 1995)

Hine's poem uses the Spenserian Stanza, used by Spenser in *The Faerie Queen* of 1596. The stanza has 9 lines. The first 8 lines are in iambic pentameter and the 9th is hexameter (an alexandrine).

The rhyme scheme is ababbcbcc.

Despite the rigidity of the form, the poem reads quite naturally.



The story of Patroclus is told in the 16th Book of Homer's *Iliad*. The Trojans are attacking the Greeks on the beach, attempting to set fire to the Greek ships, and therefore threatening to cut off the Greeks' means of escape. The hero Achilles is refusing to fight because he has been slighted by Agamemnon, who took from him the captive Greek maiden Briseis. Achilles' friend (and lover) Patroclus asks to wear Achilles' armour and to lead the Myrmidons into battle against the Trojans. Achilles agrees. Thinking that Achilles has returned to battle the Trojans retreat. Against the instructions of Achilles, Patroclus pursues the Trojans and is then killed by Hector. This death will bring Achilles back into battle.




Hine deals with the brief moment in time when Patroclus actually puts on Achilles' armour. Not part of Homer's epic – which only describes Patroclus' appearance after he has armed – Hine's episode is suffused with modern concerns about identity, friendship, and uncertainty.

Hine's poem is in rhyming couplets – this form was used in the first English translation of Homer's *Iliad* by George Chapman in 1610. Hine occasionally uses slant rhymes. The final line

ends the poem on a slant rhyme with the preceding couplet. Hine also imitates the iambic heptameter (“fourteener”) line of Chapman.

An example of Chapman’s form (Patroclus’ request to Achilles – Bk 16 ll 31-38):

What so declines thee? If thy mind shuns any augury,
 Belated by thy mother-queen from heav’n’s foreseeing eye,
 And therefore thou forsak’st thy friends, let me go ease their moans
 With those brave relics of our host, thy mighty Myrmidons,
 That I may bring to field more light to conquest than hath been.
 To which end grace me with thine arms, since, any shadow seen
 Of thy resemblance, all the pow’r of perjur’d Troy will fly,
 And our so-tiréd friends will breathe; our fresh-set-on supply
 Will eas’ly drive their wearied off.”

<p>The Trout</p> <p>The water my prison shatters in a prism As I leap alone the dying falls, Cruel gasps of air, the musical chasm Intrigue me with their broken intervals.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Hine </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Schubert </div> </div>	 <p>Trout in the Humber River David Cooper (Toronto Star)</p>
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The form of this poem – quatrains with alternate rhyming lines (abab) is the same as the song *Die Forelle* (The Trout) by Friedrich Schubart set to music by Franz Schubert in 1817.

*In einem Bächlein helle,
 Da schoss in froher Eil’
 Die launische Forelle
 Vorueber wie ein Pfeil.
 (In a clear little brook,
 There darted, about in happy haste,
 The moody trout
 Dashing everywhere like an arrow.)*

However, although the form is the same, the content of Hine’s poem is quite different from that of the song. Schubert considers how the trout is caught by a fisherman. Hine deals with the trout’s atavistic search for its up-river spawning ground.

Hine uses anapests (o o /) to suggest the leaping of the trout: “As I leap”

Schubert used the melody of the song as a basis for variations in the 4th movement of his Piano Quintet D 667 (1819) – also called the “Trout quintet”



Margaret Atwood (1939-)

Born in Ottawa, Atwood studied at the University of Toronto and Radcliffe College. She became famous for her novels, such as *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Alias Grace* (1996) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000). However she has also written many volumes of poetry, and edited the *New Oxford book of Canadian Verse in English* (1982) .

“For me poetry is where the language is renewed. If poetry vanished, language would become dead.”

Atwood’s father Carl was an entomologist; he and his family spent half of each year in tents in Northern Quebec. Her older brother Harold became the chairman of the Department of Physiology at the University of Toronto.

In 1972 Atwood published a book *Survival* that tried to come to grips with the idea of Canadian culture, particularly in comparison to American. A major concept was that in Canada we survive in a hostile environment rather than dominate it.

I would like to watch you sleeping,
which may not happen.
I would like to watch you,
sleeping. I would like to sleep
with you, to enter
your sleep as its smooth dark wave
slides over my head

I would like to be the air
that inhabits you for a moment
only. I would like to be that unnoticed
& that necessary.

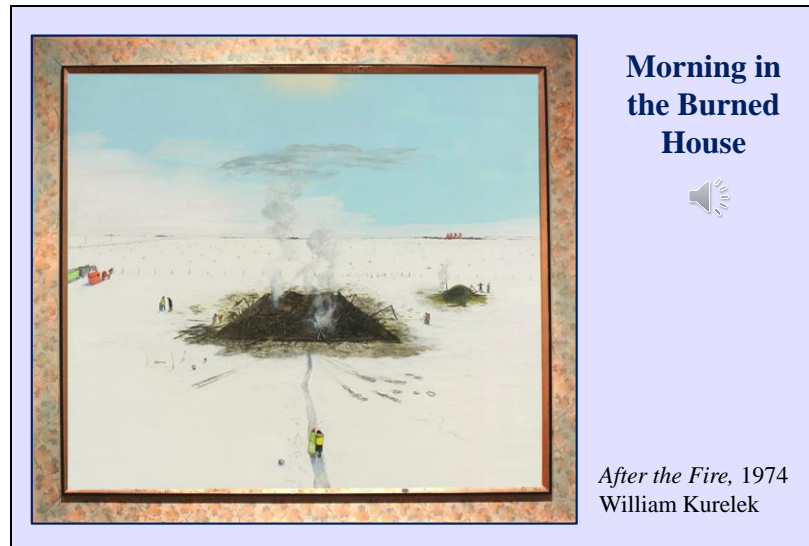


Margaret Atwood



Cover of *True Stories*
Light Heart, 1980
Margaret Atwood

The illustration is a painting by Atwood used on the cover of the book of poems from which *Variations on the Word Sleep* is taken




Kurelek's painting is also known as *A Ukrainian Canadian Prairie Tragedy*. Kurelek's painting represents an actual event. Atwood's poem is a surrealistic take on personal identity – what happens if one separates oneself from all that is near

In the burned house I am eating breakfast.
You understand: there is no house, there is no breakfast,
yet here I am.

The spoon which was melted scrapes against
the bowl which was melted also.
No one else is around.


The poem has some similarities to Dorothy Parker's
My land is bare of chattering folk;
The clouds are low along the ridges,
And sweet's the air with curly smoke
From all my burning bridges.



The Bohemian Embassy

In the 1960s, one of the centres for the Toronto *avant garde* was a walk-up coffee shop on Nicholas Lane just north of Gerrard and west of Yonge. This establishment was run by Don Cullen to promote poetry, folk songs and happenings.

The embassy was later reincarnated in the 1970s at Rochdale College and in the 1990s on Queen St West.




Gwendolyn MacEwen

A brief note about the embassy:

<https://gleanernews.ca/index.php/2016/09/15/arts-september-2016-remembering-the-coffee-house-era/#.WmOGqa6nHiw>

There is also documentary (not very good)

<http://behindthebohemianembassy.com/publicity.pdf>



1970 Photograph
Shelly Grimson


Gwendolyn MacEwen (1941-1987)

MacEwen was born in Toronto. Her mother was mentally ill and her father suffered from alcoholism. She was married briefly to poet Milt Acorn, and later more happily to musician Niko Tsingos. She died alone of problems related to alcohol. There is a bust of her on Prince Arthur Blvd near where she lived.

*Smears of Jam
Lights of Jelly*
Mary Pratt, 2007

**A Breakfast
for Barbarians**

my friends, my sweet barbarians,
there is that hunger which is not for food —
but an eye at the navel turns the appetite
round
with visions of some fabulous sandwich,
the brain's golden breakfast
eaten with beasts
with books on plates






This poem is a invitation to a different kind of breakfast. One where the food is made of books and ideas. One where the guests are not the accepted literary experts but wild barbarians.

The Name of the Place

We each have a message to give to the other,
The size of the place, the colour of the place,
How to get in and out of it,
How long it is safe to remain,
But first of all its name.
I know the name of the place so well
That it's just now slipped my tongue,
But it doesn't matter as long as you
Tell me I have not been there alone.


All things are plotting to make us whole,
All things conspire to make us one.

Blue Marble
NASA 2002

This poem deals gently with the problem that all we really know about is ourselves. We can talk about how we see the world but we do not directly experience its essence. The name we give it is ours rather than the world's.

Within this loneliness we need others to tell us how they see things, to confirm or disconfirm what we believe.



Sand Lake, Algoma
Lawren Harris, 1922

**Dark Pines
Under Water**

But the dark pines of your mind dip deeper
And you are sinking, sinking, sleeper
In an elementary world;
There is something down there and you want it told.

From MacEwen's introduction to the poem:

or me Canada is still a very mysterious country. We've no real history of our own, so we have to plunge down into the lakes and into the forest and to construct a sort of past.

This land like a mirror turns you inward
And you become a forest in a furtive lake;
The dark pines of your mind reach downward,
You dream in the green of your time,
Your memory is a row of sinking pines.

Explorer, you tell yourself, this is not what you came for
Although it is good here, and green;
You had meant to move with a kind of largeness,
You had planned a heavy grace, an anguished dream.

But the dark pines of your mind dip deeper
And you are sinking, sinking, sleeper
In an elementary world;
There is something down there and you want it told.

Moon Landing, 1969

Now he descends the steep mountain of the night
To the breathless valley of the moon; earthlight
Floods the lunar pools and craters accommodate
The visitation of his step, his alien weight.



One of the most important events of the 20th Century was the moon landing of Apollo 11 on July 26, 1969 when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first human beings to walk on the surface of the moon. Armstrong's statement "One small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind" came 8 years after President Kennedy decided that the USA should attempt to land men on the moon. In the next three years, five other landings were made by US crews. Since 1972 no one has visited the moon. The US government decided to save money – during the Apollo NASA's funding was 5% of the whole US federal budget. The money was perhaps better spent on the US inner cities. These were the days of the race riots in Watts (1965) and Detroit (1968) and then the riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968. Nevertheless, the ending of the Apollo program appeared as though humanity had suffered a sudden loss of nerve. Should we not have continued "through vacuous doorways to the gasping dark beyond."

The photograph shows Buzz Aldrin. In his visor can be seen the Lunar Landing Module and Neil Armstrong.




T. E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") was the leader of the Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule during World War I.

from Chapter 1 of his 1926 book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars, Proverbs 9:1).

Some of the evil of my tale may have been inherent in our circumstances. For years we lived anyhow with one another in the naked desert, under the indifferent heaven. By day the hot sun fermented us; and we were dizzy by the beating wind. At night we were stained by dew, and shamed into pettiness by the innumerable silences of stars. We were a self-centred army without parade or gesture, devoted to freedom, the second of man's creeds, a purpose so ravenous that it devoured all our strength, a hope so transcendent that our earlier ambitions faded in its glare.

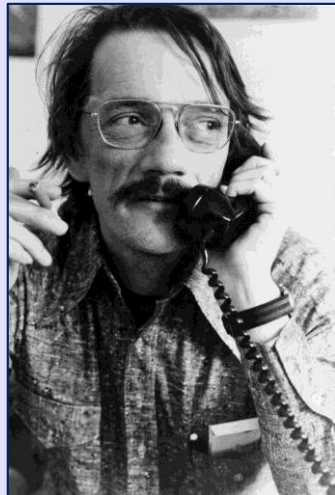
As time went by our need to fight for the ideal increased to an unquestioning possession, riding with spur and rein over our doubts. Willy-nilly it became a faith. We had sold ourselves into its slavery, manacled ourselves together in its chain-gang, bowed ourselves to serve its holiness with all our good and ill content. The mentality of ordinary human slaves is terrible--they have lost the world--and we had surrendered, not body alone, but soul to the overmastering greed of victory. By our own act we were drained of morality, of volition, of responsibility, like dead leaves in the wind.

The reading is by Jim Norton from Naxos AudioBooks

<p><i>T. E. Lawrence</i> Augustus John 1919</p>	
<p>The Arabs say that when you pray, two angels stand On either side of you, recording good and bad deeds, and you should acknowledge them. Lying here, I decide that now the world can have me any way it pleases. I will celebrate my perfect death here. <i>Maktub</i>: It is written. I salute both of the angels.</p>	

MacEwen was deeply affected by T. E. Lawrence. In 1982 she published a book of poems about Lawrence. These were personal poems inspired by the writings of Lawrence. In 1983 she described her affinity to Lawrence in a radio interview (quoted in Rosemary Sullivan *Shadow Maker: the Life of Gwendolyn MacEwen*, 1995, pp 330-331):

Lawrence was fascinated with Arab mysticism, with Semitic mysticism. He was drawn to the desert Arabs, to the Bedouin in particular, among other things by the fact that they felt such great joy in renouncing the treasures of the world. It was almost a voluptuousness in not having anything, and the relationship to their God was a passion-ate one, intense and passionate. Lawrence was constantly in awe of this but he could never achieve it himself and I feel the same way. This is one of the reasons why I wrote this book in the first person, myself as Lawrence. I feel that way myself looking upon this marvellous religious phenomenon and not being able, quite, to participate in it. Knowing however what it means. I feel much more of a mystically minded person than Lawrence was. I feel perhaps closer to the kind of passionate fervour the desert Semites felt towards the God in this vast nothingness and a feeling of identification with the infinite, the one, the all, and the nothing, however one wants to put it. I feel that to Lawrence these were only words that fascinated him, concepts that fascinated him, but didn't quite touch him.



**George Bowering
(1935 -)**

Born in Penticton, Bowering studied at the University of British Columbia. In 1961, Bowering, Fred Wah and several other students at UBC founded the Poetry newsletter TISH. He taught at Simon Fraser University from 1972 until 2001. Bowering has written many novels (e.g. *Burning Water*, 1980) as well as books of poetry, winning Governor General's Literary Awards in both Fiction and Poetry. He served as the first Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2002-2004). He has a great passion for baseball.

The name TISH is an anagram. It comes from Carl Sauer's idea of using petrified excrement to study the diet of ancient people. The TISH poets hoped that their newsletter would serve the same purpose in terms of a record of their culture rather than diet.

Other authors to win Governor General's Literary Awards in both categories are Anne Hébert, Margaret Atwood, and Michael Ondaatje.



The photograph shows the abandoned church in Saskatchewan.

The audio is George Bowering reciting a poem about his grandfather who built many churches such as this one.

<p>Grandfather Jabez Harry Bowering strode across the Canadian prairie hacking down trees and building churches delivering personal baptist sermons in them leading Holy holy holy lord god almighty songs in them red haired man squared off in the pulpit reading Saul on the road to Damascus at them</p>	
	<p>The Baptist Jesus nabbed him on the plain and put him in a college, there to learn the ways of holy rhetoric and pain and sent him twice to marry and to burn. He sired daughters secular, and sons, and died in care of hale and silent nuns.</p>

Bowering wrote the initial poem about his grandfather in 1962. In 2006 he published several variations on the poem, one of which is in sonnet form.

To complement these two versions of the poem, I have chosen two Canadian abstract paintings one free and one constrained

Jean-Paul Riopelle 1956

Guido Molinari 1963

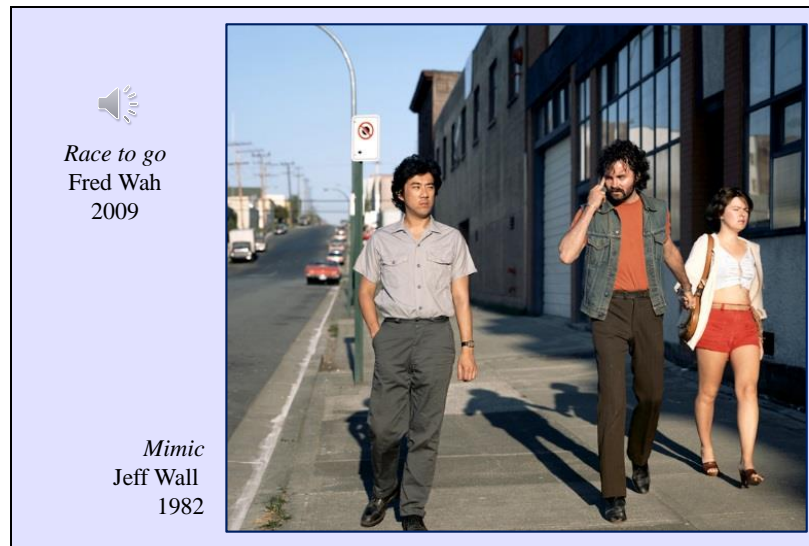
Fred Wah (1939-)

Born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, to a Chinese-Scottish father and a Swedish mother, Wah grew up in West Kootenay, BC. He studied at the University of British Columbia and was one of the founders of TISH poetry magazine. He taught at the University of Calgary and now lives in Vancouver. He was the Parliamentary Poet Laureate from 2011 to 2013. His lyrical poetry shows a great love of landscape. His more political poetry examines race and ethnicity in Canadian society.



Cedar perfume forest
sunlight sweet
so silent, paths
ahead our eyes
reach out behind
to pull it all
and move it in
let it
see itself happen
quiet sweet
a sunlight forest
cedar noses perfume
burns into the closeness

This is one of the poems from Wah's 1972 book *Tree*. The illustrations for the book were drawn by Bird Hamilton.



Race to go
Fred Wah
2009

Mimic
Jeff Wall
1982

Jeff Wall (1946-) was born in Vancouver. He studied at the University of British Columbia and at the Courtauld Institute in London (with T. J. Clark). He became famous for his large-scale photographs that illustrate social and artistic issues. Many of these, such as the one illustrated, are staged. *Mimic* shows an unkempt white man making a derogatory “slant-eyes” gesture at a man of Asian background. This recreates an incident that the artist witnessed.

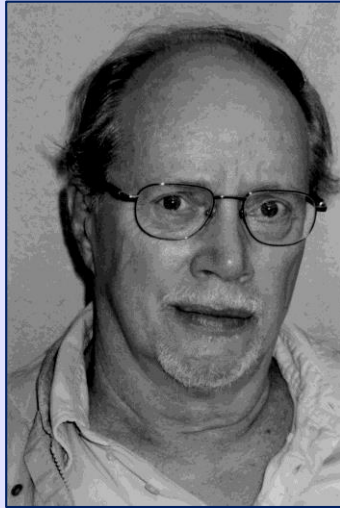
Wah’s poem also deals with prejudice. However, it is from a different point of view – that of a hooker who solicits the business of a passing man of Asian background.

What’s yr race
and she said
what’s yr hurry
how ’bout it cock
asian man
I’m just going for curry.

You ever been to ethni-city?
How ’bout multi-culti?

You ever lay out skin
for the white gaze?

What are you, banana
or egg? Coconut
maybe?

**Dennis Lee (1939-)**

Born in Toronto, Lee studied at the University of Toronto. He was one of the founders of the House of Anansi Press. He has written many volumes of poetry, but is probably most famous for his book of children's verse entitled *Alligator Pie*. He served as Toronto's first Poet Laureate from 2001 until 2004.

Dennis Lee Recites
"Alligator Pie"
At Word on the Street




Alligator pie, alligator pie,
If I don't get some I think I'm gonna die.
Give away the green grass, give away the sky,
But don't give away my alligator pie.

Alligator stew, alligator stew,
If I don't get some I don't know what I'll do.
Give away my furry hat, give away my shoe,
But don't give away my alligator stew.

Alligator soup, alligator soup,
 If I don't get some I think I'm gonna droop.
 Give away my hockey stick, give away my hoop,
 But don't give away my alligator soup.

Lee's poems are written for all different ages of children. The text contains a poem about *The Secret Place* for older children

Riffs



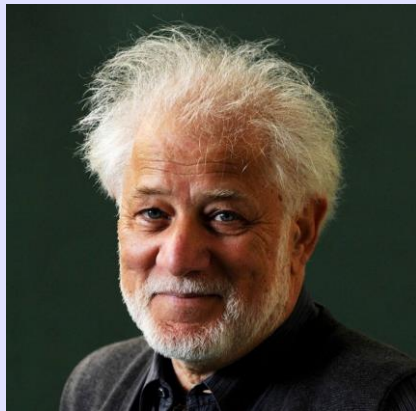
Composition XV, 1967
 Jean-Paul Riopelle,

When I lurched like a rumour of want through the networks of plenty,
 a me-shaped pang on the lam,
 when I ghosted through lives like a headline, a scrap in the updraft,
 and my mid-life wreckage was close & for keeps —

when I watched the
 birches misting, pale spring
 voltage and not mine, nor mine, nor mine —

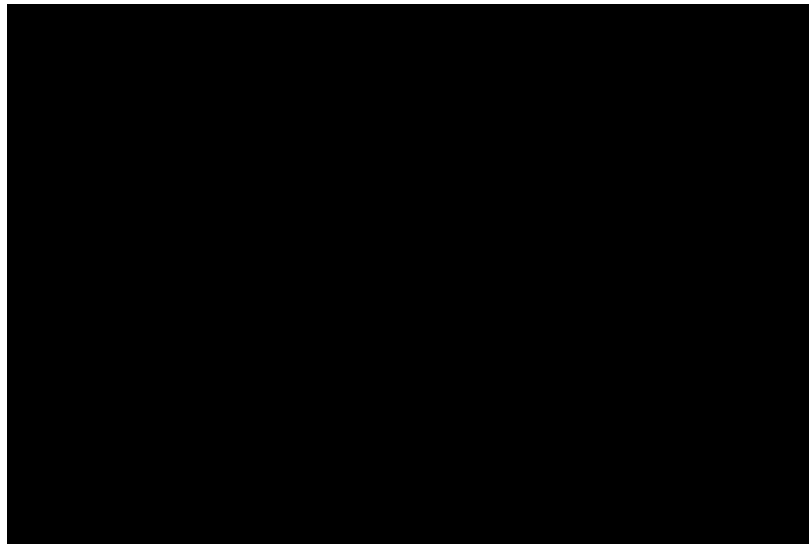
then: a
 lady laid her touch among
 me, gentle thing, for which I stand still
 startled, gentle thing and feel the
 ache begin again,
 the onus of joy.

The word “riff” originally comes from music where it means a repeating background melody, upon which a soloist can improvise. It probably derives from “refrain.” The word is also used in other contexts – usually meaning an improvisation. Dennis Lee’s Riffs are jazzy verbal improvisations.

Michael Ondaatje (1943-)

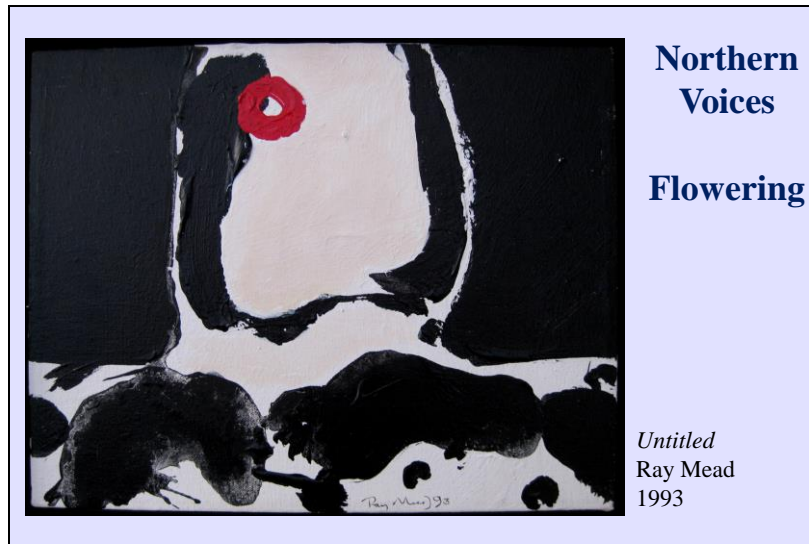
Ondaatje was born in Sri Lanka of Dutch, Sinhalese and Tamil ancestry. He joined his mother in England in 1956 and emigrated to Canada in 1962, where he studied at the University of Toronto and Queen's University. He first published poetry, but he soon became a novelist, writing very poetic narratives such as *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970) and *Coming through Slaughter* (1976). *The English Patient* (1992) won the Booker Prize. The 1996 film adaptation of this novel won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Many Canadian poets have made their living as novelists – Atwood, Bowering, Ondaatje, Michaels, Crummey. It may be that the Canadian literary market is too small for poets to support themselves on poetry alone.



This 2004 video adaptation of *The Cinnamon Peeler* was choreographed and produced by Veronica Tennant. The dancers are Sean Ling and Gail Skrela. The recitation is by Ondaatje. This is available on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaomFGobVuE>



Ray Mead (1921-1998) was one of Painters Eleven. He was born in England and served in the RAF during World War II. After being injured in a crash, he became a flight instructor. He emigrated to Canada in 1946. His style was his own – an amalgam of colour-field and free abstraction. This untitled painting gives the sense of something coming to into flower.