



The Fault  
of Sages

Allison Grayhurst



# ***The Fault of Sages***

***Allison Grayhurst***

***Edge Unlimited Publishing***

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# **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, placemating 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.

## **Building Walls of Personal Mercy**

**It is us without the air -  
leverage, no height,  
clinging to discipline not  
because we fear we will float, but  
to stop ourselves from sinking  
into the immense dead mire dread, boulevards  
of toxic fumes rising  
from wastelands, landfill sites gone  
under water into our heart-space,  
body-space, collapsing.**

**It is us blind to the fullness of fun,  
proclaiming praise on a settled angel's shoulders.  
Around a field, running to milk  
the burning lungs of their breath,  
touch duty with presence of mind, to do service  
so curtains don't close like sealing metal sheets,  
least moving becomes momentous, then impossible.**

**Take fruit from the windowsill,  
it is our ripeness cradled in the lonely early morning –  
prayers, a battle against a threatening tide.**

**Watch the birds with me,  
make peace with the emerging worms.  
We know our place, what can save  
and what is substitute.**

## **Feminine revising**

**I am not ready  
to empty the closet  
and carry my wardrobe to a grave.  
Not ready also to harvest  
the hummingbird's song, touchdown  
on dark gravel -  
cheek pressed against sharp rock  
and no one to lift me, link arms, walk me home.  
I am not ready for an erratic heart rhythm,  
setting flame to the partition between that rhythm and death.**

**I still have children, a lover of wedded dignity,  
animals that need me in spite of my  
malfunction and heartbreak.**

**Break everything ever written. The trees are naked.  
Faces are naked, cursed by love. Culture is never  
worthy, never a strong enough opponent against fear.  
This time the spell is different - a scourging wave  
upheaving the weather, ancient occupations.**

**I am not ready to cross through this transformation,  
over pathless territory, fluctuating temperatures, changing  
more and more,  
not ready for the monastery or  
to watch the angels bleed.**

**I am not ready to give up my home,  
to bury my key under a brick  
while brutes push past me, break down  
the front door.**

## **Drift**

**Held still**

**like apple butter held  
smooth on the tongue, catching  
grief in a cage, on the surface  
of a name – would it be  
kissing or pinning a broken coat-zipper  
together – once the fog has left is there  
anything left to hold out for? Hold still for,  
like a hooked fish releasing the struggle?  
Being alive in the dream-state ambiguity,  
meaning full then meaning naught and  
how old are you?**

**Your horse, Dee, steady**

**in the sunlight, glinting a wild connectivity,  
intelligence gleaming across a chestnut coat,  
bowed head, permission to pet granted and then  
sleeping in a stall, talking outload when everyone else  
had gone home. It was not a dream,  
not until she was gone and then it was a dream  
lost, and maybe never there.**

**People love their trees**

**the ones they think they own. But I never loved a tree like  
I loved the willow tree in my Montreal backyard. I never  
loved anyone who hadn't died at least a hundred years  
before I was born until**

**there was you, rounding up the stones from every table,  
sitting alone only to stand up again before the seat  
warmed, and 'perfect' made sense but nothing ever expected.**

**Dee and the willow tree. I left my body and flew  
into the sun.**

**Why can't I leave my body and fly into the sun,—  
meals taken care of,  
sex and you, a beautiful summer star.**

## **Die Together**

**I close the distance.**

**I know this love like I know  
bird voices, the safety-net of death.**

**Reach, go deep into the skin,  
in aggressive desire, categorizing each intonation,  
a sculptor's scheme. I will make you a mountain,  
a colossal height, forming.**

**I will undertake a breathing soliloquy, a measured  
chemistry for you.**

**Moon making, matching forces, destructive impact,  
then hot surrender - neon blast infusion.**

**Flesh and favoritism**

**blooming tight in the right spot, tight in the pulsing glory -  
no sin, no signed paper,  
no plywood to haul or candy.**

**Lava moulding, speak only of this experience, only  
close the distance and reap.**

## Alchemy completion

Far enough  
to line the bed with  
lavender clouds,  
pull off the covers  
and be entombed.  
Fine sleep and soft  
tenderness warming limbs,  
wetting where it warms,  
soon to cool – breathing like  
singing, lines smeared into  
unified devotion, matching frequencies,  
backward, forward leading toward a tower  
to leap off of, a bed to stretch on, sink into.  
It is holy, mud-caked, drawn curtains torn  
from their rod. It is thinking in intonations  
and shades, a cascading buzz riveting from  
bone to bone – two spliced and joining opposite halves,  
a power equal in its mercy. Far enough,  
just there, drawing breath on the summit, dissolving  
boundaries in sensual elevation, far enough  
continuing, collapsing, swallowed  
into the pitching current.



## Sleep

When did you own me,  
pull rank, throw me in the waters  
and command my limbs to forget how  
to swim? When did it happen, a month ago?  
Two towns ago? After I completed the mission.

Veins in stone, under skin, gauging the surface  
of the Earth, rivers to maneuver across,  
toxic currents unreckoned with.

How did it evolve into this obscene tumour,  
blocking my view, deforming my youthful joy?  
You are through with me – a deep cracked dish,  
breeder of bacteria.

Fiddle away. Eternity is dying in the pockets  
of my lungs, madness  
infiltrating my chi.

How did you do it, did I let you? I must have  
let my guard down when doing the laundry, counting radio  
channels, mopping the spill.

I am still reaching but you are gone, very small  
in stature and shrinking. When did you own me, gently  
press my face into the pillow, gently  
promising a dream?

# Gestation

Thumb across the surface -  
cheekbones changed,  
eyelids re-shaped.  
So many ways to die and be re-born,  
endless incarnations  
from a limited source of malleable  
weight and density.

On a hilltop, swinging, over and back  
from an edge - crashing water below,  
beat-up concrete blocks,  
dead fish polluting the shore.  
I dreamt of owning wings like everyone else has, but  
I never was an eagle or angel, I never had a name  
for the sacred space in the early morning,  
floating around through changing  
landscape-imagination, sometimes  
nightmares more solid than when asleep, sometimes  
immaculate colours, touching with my tongue  
the sensations of a song,  
notes rising like shields, urgency,  
chaotic wanderings.

Still secret and still cultivating,  
thumb pressing into the surface,  
forming shadow, a mound of awakening flesh.  
Ritual of communion, discovery as  
rich and wide as lovemaking, watching  
for a trace of motivation to ignite  
my waning discipline, swinging high  
to land in the waves when I jump,  
high enough when I jump  
to out-manuever the rising pile of rubble, to land  
with ability, moving under the surface.

# Hereditary

Buckling up, keeping pace  
never knowing when the heat will rise,  
and overtake your sanity with its little alien  
leaf worms burrowing into shallow crevices,  
making crevices into canyons, unmanageable and ripe  
for more irreversible destruction.  
Normal as the sun and its radiation,  
glory be the farce, biology, a pre-disposition  
for madness, suicide  
at 4 am – gunshot to the head  
all for a ruined reputation or for love  
lost during an Indian monsoon season.  
A child playing early morning, opening doors,  
a door, four-years old finding his father,  
dead on the floor - blood pooled, drying,  
vacuumed out blue steady eyes.  
It was right for that boy to become a man who  
turned to God and charity and  
not to status, right that he knelt every night for his  
five children, never knowing he would make it through  
the violent revolutions, make it through losing  
money, home, country and dog.  
He made it through,  
but not long after that. Not long after  
the boat ride across the Indian, the Atlantic oceans,  
leaving Eastern philosophies for a cold rainy winter pavement,  
he died, giver of coal, on a doorstep,  
finally home, in a country where he no longer belonged or  
could find a way to honour the majesty, the tenderness  
of what he built before.  
Fingertips tingling too long  
and lasting to not be a disease,  
What does the chaos filter into, focus on,  
transition to? The sky is green  
against an even greener tree.

**You count to the minutes through each day -  
this thing, that thing, to do, get through,  
not for yourself, but because you are committed,  
because you love and know the consequences.**

**Dandelions under chaos,  
fold the covers –  
go back into the  
dream.**

## **If there is anything open**

**I will return  
from infinite dying  
and the conscious swallow.  
I will say – I will not want,  
be a daughter of the root and caterpillar climb.  
If there is anything worth keeping  
I will keep it on the kitchen table  
feed it blueberries, honor its language,  
and biology.**

**But if is only echo, tell me clearly  
so I can shut my eyes, turn and open them  
elsewhere, find joy in sweeping the stairs  
or typing in a mantra – all night, humming without erratic  
fire or appetite. If my hands are only hands, let them  
be clean, ungrasping, useful, in other ways, holding out  
to offer, to receive, surrendering  
bread, the stone, a smile.**

## **Say good, say goodbye**

**Bright in the box in the cupboard  
where the keepers of conscience and trivia  
highjack the pacing depths  
to replace it with an easily peeled-off  
sheen. It is time to bloom,  
to say goodbye to books and playballs of requisitions,  
decoding philosophy and revelations in tune  
with taking a stance.**

**Death, I am a robin's feast with  
dandelion breath  
stalling at the toddler tree  
worshiping what is yet to bud.**

**Death, you made me confused, me,  
the revealer of the signs,  
mountain-top screamer, fencer for  
a fourth-dimensional world.**

**Flat rocks in a circle, gulls circling  
one graveyard, spot  
of significant mourning. Faint lines.  
But God is solid, exact, without  
need of interpretation. Death**

**is only a layer reached  
and removed, when traveled  
then traveled through.**

## **My Lord is Majesty (let me)**

**Blood in urine, the path-flight of  
a plane across a low horizon. Lifting,  
spinning, a dream-drop like floating.**

**The answer “no” is all I am capable of. Kiss  
me, let me be my fragmented self,  
burrow like a termite into tree bark,  
seeking living wood, or be a beetle  
resting on dewy grass long  
before the heat of noon, or like a weed  
straight, tall, uninhibited by the cutter’s twine.**

**Let me be the shape of clunky cluster clouds,  
a berry ripe, rich and easy to eat. Let me steal into  
the veins of a garden rock, follow a squirrel’s pawprints  
up across electric wires. Let me speak before I know anything,  
before dread comes to cave my thoughts into a knot-hard ball,  
sealing me with silencing futility, sucking out  
the heart-beat of magnificent, like a fish flapping  
in the oxygen ether,  
hooked to a string, hooked to a stick, held  
in a small child’s hands. Let me have faith again**

**in spite of this crushing calamity, trust again  
in the companionship of God, protector  
of what keeps me sane, merge with  
God on every road, every forest path  
missed, where the shadows are overbearing,  
and the humidity!**

**Bear me up, Jesus of my master throne,  
I see the light overcome.  
I feel the toil and tear of survival’s whip,  
feel this death come as a swarm of wasps -  
the sound of many waspy legs nearing.**

**Bear me up, be for me like the purity of a washout,  
deafening the tone of insect language, turning  
these horror groans of my stretcher-strapped plans  
into a strange body peace –  
though stung, encased, consumed, bear me up  
wet-cloth soothe me, embrace me through this heart-ache,  
bear me up, give me the strength to surrender  
into this death, into this exhale of absolute release.**



## Chiseling away the template mould

Like cotton spread,  
thinning, rifting,  
my mind was sold to tiny pills, angular  
remedies that did not bother with results.

Saggy eyes, thoughts in slow motion,  
funneling anxiety into walking dreams –  
circulation corrupted, fingertips,  
the tips of thumbs, dead and decaying.

I lie down across the end of this wave,  
I lie down across a weakening buoyancy, see  
two dead angels on the water, immaculately  
spread, those keepers of simplicity,  
seraphims guised as seagulls, see  
connection perfected, the veil  
between dimensions dissolving.

Later, another comes to hover, circle as I lie down,  
mourning. My shoulders are blown, my arms are breached,  
my back tightens and will not ease off. It is snowing  
and it is spring. Angels continue to arrive, solid in their  
grieving grace, circling the blank space that is bare space  
around my head, edging inwards, into corners  
I can finally talk about. Now

I can submerge my torso, my extremities,  
see under water, grow callouses where they are needed,  
hurt as I transform, hurt as I surrender  
forcing myself through  
levels of tight resistance, hurt to not freeze, still  
talking to the angels who crest the water, but I am under  
the water, becoming a seed that consumes itself,  
breaks its shell, sprouts, breaks  
the tethering hold.

# Womb

It is a blood clot  
unknotted, holey socks  
thrown out, birds used to  
a blue sky unleashed - grounded,  
underfoot. A mealworm left  
on the kitchen floor. Sibling animals,  
connected beyond species recognition, beyond  
cultures and ways and voices communicating.  
Sugar cane on the tongue,  
sucked on as a child -  
remembrance of a heritage  
destined to remain as stories embellished when told.

Great moon of the planet I escaped from,  
I almost made it to you, that far, almost sat in your  
crater-circles, gawking at the constellations.  
I made it just past the stratosphere.  
But you know my body then  
was the best it has ever been – gravity had been overcome,  
no hollow bones or connections I could barely bear  
to stomach. As it is, here, in this form, that body has died,  
the soldier in me has died, along  
with the guilt-ridden mushy heart  
and the resulting fury. The light is perfection  
on my back and flowers are here,  
some wilted, some emerging.

## Used blanket

Single rage returning  
entrapment pedestal,  
busted at the seams.  
Empty frame, roofless  
walls, poking out of some  
hole in the pavement.  
Underground gardens flourishing  
speaking of dandelions and  
tidbits of mercy left  
at the wayside to collect  
like a tossed-away overcoat -

I wear that overcoat every day,  
every evening curled inside of it,  
smelling the nuances of the places it has been,  
places of music and unrequited love -  
beige now and stained dark grey.

I long to regain the taste of its first wear,  
when I was the exodus maker,  
keeper of the icicle, explorer of a missionary salute,  
bowing down only to clean it, sure of  
my perfected individuality, saying something  
monumental with its sway.

Those were days rich with equal  
fear and hope, underneath the canopy trees, looking up,  
past cloud ridges and bird flights.

I look at the TV or at nothing, smelling  
the stains washed in mild detergent,  
with the hope that some scent of back then still lingers,  
covering my shoulders, hiding my hands.

**Everything that was me, in me, outside of me  
is already gone and I am not even 50, still able  
to walk, hold a book, a conversation, unable  
to return to a place of confidence  
wrapped in this faded cloth, overcoat completion.**

## Collector

Pale sleep,  
naked under eyelids  
and summer beating out the  
last of its heat, remembering  
the skin of stones I collected,  
hidden in boxes under mounds of  
typed-on paper.

I will take them out,  
read them like a diary and soak  
myself with their flavours. Then  
maybe I will remember my inauguration  
into oxygen, a direction I can run in,  
leaving crutches in the alleyway.

I can gather armour, carry armour, be rooted  
to victory and the purity of murder.

The bitten moon, lingering, muscles forgetting  
how they travel, how love is contemplated  
and grows in sand, in cracked concrete corners  
even when the wolves are nearing. Trust. It is  
gathering. I will gather these colourful stones -  
some tumbled sheen, others, raw  
and ready for flight.

## One longing

Thriving in darkness,  
one longing, reduced in the sun,  
devoid of a plush pulse, dried up,  
surrounded by feasting ants.

One longing, entombed.  
One longing, dormant, awakened  
divulged then defused. One longing  
I should be happy to get rid of, but  
I am not because it was a lifecord  
bonding me to you, to your valiant warmth  
and the promise of what I have never known.  
I never received a soft forehead kiss from your solid  
lips or your two hands kneading my  
aching shoulders. I have let go of wanting it,  
and am left hollow, still, without  
wind over my waters.

I sometimes think of your love,  
how it would have been to receive  
a memento of reciprocated devotion.  
How free I could have been  
in your desirous presence.  
Instead on this couch, in this same spot,  
arms folded, feet cramping  
from underuse. I walk, but  
take the route of a circle. I've  
lost the seventh sense which was  
mine alone.

With no hope of you,  
I am not whole, with the hope,  
I am doomed. So I kill the hope,  
leave it mid-road, so tiny  
cars cannot see it to avoid, so deformed  
children cannot feel for it  
to save it from destruction.

## **Bound**

**Bound to arrive,  
face the mourning,  
cradle its soft hand in mine.  
Memory of a possibility, memory of a failure  
to cherish as an infant's plump cheek –  
smelling perfect as heaven must smell  
or a lover after a dive in the lake, laughing  
with exuberance.**

**Bound to pace the carpeted floors, trapped  
in a time-fold that repeats and never lets up,  
reminders in the ceramic jar, in the dirty fridge,  
in songs I hear and in ones I don't but could  
challenge to be born. Reminders on the upper level -  
beds unmade, books askew on shelves. Reminders  
of dreams that swarmed my mind, ethereal touches,  
riveting fulfillment.**

**Bound to lay out the truth  
like a cooked meal, consume it  
and clean up the dishes. Alone,  
unheard like before, but worse now  
that doors have been opened and entered.  
It doesn't feel right, doesn't feel like peace or  
a place to make a home.**

**Bound to hold the breath of dread  
like small a marble in the pocket below  
my navel, or just above. Rolling,  
rolling, giving way to its movement  
when no one else is around, giving  
honour to its creation.**

## **The Clothes We Wear**

**Fall down and recognize  
the river and its reaching sway.  
Solitarily suited between what you gave  
and what was refused reception.**

**Born on a balcony, hung over the rails -  
so much work, so much love needed to  
make it work. And then you grew up  
and needed only a dark room to hide in,  
the reproach of some sages and  
the occasional charity.**

**Then your fire-ball bouquet of demands,  
squealing and giggles drew blood and the rain  
got stuck in the sky as the angels misplaced  
your destiny. They cannot get it back –  
some have tried, most have not even bothered  
as it was fed into the ocean, swallowed up  
by primordial beings, ancient, not used  
to sunlight and heaven.**

**They swim through pressurized underwater caverns,  
carry it stuck in their gullets, only to be released  
when their centuries-old bodies give way to compost. Then  
maybe a holy voice will hear it cry out, bubble to the surface  
and claim its place back inside of you. Maybe, in that time  
you will give value to the hallelujah  
that fireworked through you when you first came here –  
from another place, high up, but strange and dark too  
as the ocean's floor.**



## **Steel and Spice**

**Inch across  
the bell-cups of lilies  
in the dead oblivion  
of decades of reality's denial.**

**Inch into the sweetness  
of a lilac's centre,  
nourished on imagination everytime  
over the bite of bitter soup.**

**Gather the crows in your morning sky,  
ask them to envelop you and then ask  
their forgiveness.**

**Hiding your panic  
in the promises of miracles, licking the acid  
off of your skin to make for a good story,  
for the belief in an undamageable surface.  
Mistaking silk for bread, counting on  
God's kindness to come on the brink  
of desperate need.**

**Will you now  
be a slave to the feast of worms or  
strip-mine until what little gold you find  
feels like abundance?**

**Maybe you are safe, living in this  
burning garden, protected with a poet's peace  
and by a faith that bypasses gravity's consequences, but  
has consequences and demands of its own – ones  
you must live by and dedicate yourself to keep**

**turn a blind-eye to practicality,  
and press all fear into a resounding prayer,  
existing on the substance of  
divine gifts, gifts that are final,  
that have no price to pay except that you  
leave yourself leaning, tied and planted only  
to this holy dreamscape liberation.**

# Cracked

Cracked to retrieve  
the soft part inside,  
the nutritious overflow  
that rests open with  
a broken shell and will  
never regain its symmetry  
or means of protection.  
Cracked in the nearing Autumn,  
fresh as the false dream  
has been exposed,

and you realize  
that anything true bends  
its will to the moment,  
relinquishing its authority  
to a higher unknown agenda.  
Sighs, sings and takes notes  
under siege of the shifting  
winds, underwater, happy  
if it is able to rise  
and sometimes float.

## **No Transgressions**

(starve the ego of its rights)

**The light that leaves,  
that feeds the light that  
leaves, speaks of scars  
and childhood's sanctity,  
has grown weary in its search  
for a source to continue brightly,  
has slept out the potent night  
and screams indecently for intimate  
disclosure. The dance that strips  
the tissue from the sinews, signals for the game  
to end but does not end its rhythm or  
burning – explosive flourishing – no facts  
but a faucet drip drip curse to  
hold down a half-a-dozen personalities  
perched on your throne. The light, the light –  
Who will win? The dance, the dance,  
rattle and leak your soul into a theatrical  
achievement – stand high in an age of distraction  
and violence, stand rooted in the light,  
matter most when you are dancing, even if  
a malignant army invades  
and prevails.**

# Unstuck

Of course it happened  
this way – the bed was bought,  
the sheets were new, and the fist  
bore down like a fireball, blazing  
comfort into smoke and then extinction.  
Of course the memory lasted  
decades, even lifetimes, bulging up through  
a normal ecstasy, distorting a regular  
hope of moving onward, until all passages were  
claimed by that disaster and all offspring were lined  
with its inevitable outcome.

Of course I never took the haunting as a gift or  
a train ride through a desert, though I know that a bonfire  
is not the same as that bomb, and my initials  
have changed since  
that day, as have the ramifications of such violent chaos.  
I love beyond the library of other people's stories,

I am not deceived by morsels of paradise promising  
a meal or a fridge full of many meals.  
Of course it will always hurt and memory remains  
a mule on a slow decline, but peace is a whistle  
beckoning me into its spell. The hurricane  
has lifted and I watch children gather,  
forming a community much stronger  
than a one-off home.

# Custodian

Shelter or summit -  
a wood they call it, in  
a stream, lined up with crossroads and fields of  
four directions. Adolescent  
they call it,  
a dormitory of unforgivable energy,  
magnificence embedded into organ-memory,  
wondering what could be equal to this  
collapse, would something be equal and claim  
a path to recovery.

Foul play  
they call it, marginalized, a display  
of tragedy, like a crippled horse, on the grass,  
in the afternoon.

Unjust, you call it, a senseless chemistry  
that begins brightly and ends in ash.

Belong with me. Belong here in this intimacy  
in this fraction of time, square footage of a place that is ours,  
that we imagined and manifested and will not be corrupted.  
Forget what they call it, their exhibitions of  
ego-soothing massage.

This is our strategy - to touch the canvas  
with our intentions pure and concentrated  
as they first were - disappointment, devastations  
degraded to one sleepless night, then returned  
for a greater glory.

## **If blessed**

**Blank, solid, dependable  
on the surface, without a flaw.  
But after the end result, when the day  
has paid its dues, chaos fractures  
the spine, enters brightly and  
consumes. Blessed once to receive.  
Blessed twice to give, and in this way,  
made whole.**

**If blessed then honour the doing,  
daily training the dread to feed in its cage,  
remain content in its bonds, content and never  
over-thriving. Take the hand  
of infant peace and gently caress its fingers,  
know it is fragile and demands  
great care and attention,  
know you are blessed, and be diligent  
in your offerings and your praise.**

# Calling

**It happens once.**

**Maybe there are near misses,  
little rooms of perfection that were  
dressed-up beautifully for a while,  
held passion and intent, though behind  
the dream-like wonder – a deadness  
that surpassed each sermon you gave yourself  
of goodwill and future promise.**

**It only happens full strength -  
blue flame clean, exact - once. And when  
it happens it is warm as a new lifeforce emerging,  
tears down confusion, shreds the darkness, and  
is difficult like falling in love - a love that overshadows  
all other loves before, ruins you for anything less  
than its wounding intensity, its golden seriousness.**

**It will not happen again - even if it fails in its performance,  
projecting a weak beam across the table. Even if it  
straps you to the chair of an unyielding sorrow -  
it will not lose its possessive claim.**

**It has latched to your everlasting like a hosanna  
riveting through each pore, breaking the bottom  
again and again, breaking through the traffic  
to measure you naked and  
just as you are.**



## Uncut

Upstream, across the stream  
to the bottom, it could have been  
done, if the stars were aligned and  
the temperature poignant enough  
to boil over and reveal  
the full of its power. It could have toppled  
security measures, unified its truth  
with popular culture if the apex had been  
achieved and the ceiling cracked to cave in and  
collide the sky in conjunction with the ground.

It could still gallop, unbridled  
through the neighboring streets and then out, across  
boarders. Unlike the delusions  
that dripped over the tub, keeping  
us awake all night, flooding toenails and ankles, crossing  
over miles to vaporize in the first warm breeze, it is stronger.  
Stronger than any ego-charm, continuing its supremacy,  
aching, as it clears the deck  
of the frivolous and the unnecessary.  
It could still be seen as enormous  
as it is – breath-gasping, far-reaching,  
a hot glowing hut  
of mystical enterprise.

Take it down, every inch, scatter it  
among the needy. Feed it as crackers  
without spread, for its  
nature is substance and its time  
is a slow forming tornado,  
gaining friction, gaining on destiny.

## In Waiting For

A dozen times I waited for  
the whispered word to lay  
a foundation and rise up into the sunlight –  
glowing.

A thousand hours I have been  
sitting, fixing the wheel, using the tools  
at my disposal, subjugated to  
this neophyte democracy, scheme  
of constraint, holding vigil  
to the past, in waiting.

In prayer, in the shower, behind broken  
blinds, peering out, listening for the next move,  
hearing a far-away crow, playground screams, idiot  
conversations. A dozen times a dozen days playing  
the sieve-taker, the monastic overseer, doing only  
what the day allows, wondering where  
the campfires burn and if they will ever burn  
close, past midnight, for me.

## Harmony

If I make it into the warmth,  
vibrant as a crushed flower, catch  
when the sidewalk children  
throw a ball, rake leaves  
with my hands and scrapbook  
the best of them,  
then this shell could own its sensitivity,  
and not just the underbelly, then the  
painted road arrows will point  
like divinations for the white butterfly and I  
to follow – expectations, destinations shed  
for a fullness of joy,  
coral-coloured angles pursued -  
outside our bodies, in sync  
inside our bodies, aligned.

## **I will make my way across the water**

**I will push my way  
through the threshold,  
bend over the edge then  
let myself go – gravity,  
mudslides and rock edges  
will dictate my descent, but  
I will look up and witness  
the starlings amongst the sparrows,  
the dislodged grass sprouts that take  
the fall with me, above me  
in gentle wave-like motions  
with the wind.**

**These limbs will crash,  
be cut from their flesh, and I will break  
only to be reborn, a sapling, myself  
graced with lifetimes of memories, stretching  
my stem gradually into the light.**

**In time, animals will flourish under  
my shaded canopy, and lovers  
will carve their initials into my skin,  
promising one another their exclusive eternity.**

**I will make my way across the water,  
over the threshold and fall  
to embrace the ground I came from.**

**Spread low, spread high – a century  
or more guardian, a tree-fort reaper in a forest  
far across the hill and still  
beyond.**

## **I barely know how**

**deep this illness has stepped,  
what new season of burning dreams  
I will inherit, or from outside, is  
there a weed I can pull I have not  
seen, is there something to swallow  
I have refused to swallow, sealed  
up in my solitude, knocked about  
against some ridged rocks and the sober earth  
of doomed starvation. Open light,  
open and let me see the harvest I have worked so  
hard to ripen, let there be goodness in  
my children, let them know they are loved.**

**I kept waiting for the clue, then I thought  
I solved it all with surrender, but decay lingers  
in me like a tapeworm – I have known  
nothing but withering and animals I loved who  
are dead, corpses rotting underground in  
places I see daily where summer plants  
grow wild, up and over, but cannot cover the desert spot.**

**An angel lived with me. An angel is gone.  
My lungs ache and I cannot stop  
coughing and wondering if this is how I will  
die – asleep on the old sofa, wrapped up  
in the smell of my home like a shroud.**

# The Closing

## Part 1

Eight years ago  
it entered, building force  
gradually, started  
embryonic, developed  
organs, blood vessels, a brain,  
then talons like tentacles  
gripped from the inside  
strangling the light, passing  
its poison into the bloodstream, feeding off  
of adolescence fears and anxiety.

It started small, moments of rebellion,  
grew irrational, unkind,  
ended in violence – a smashed glass extending  
its tear into every room, crevices, vents.  
Sacred hope sacrificed to indulge  
in dark extremes. Love denied, turned  
on its side unable to struggle enough  
to set itself upright.  
Now it is here, overtaken,  
apparent in heavy footsteps,  
sleep deprived eyes, unshowered  
hair, a room as breeding ground  
for clutter and chaos.

I take you with two hands, grip your sloughing shoulders,  
your tarry taste and destructive tongue.  
I take out what has entered, send it back to the void  
and that line of heritage it travelled upon.

I fill the empty pocket with light, first mending it with  
the tender-thread of God and the sharp-point of truth.  
I iron-gate the place where it left and pour a concrete wall.

**I bless this house. I clear the corners, the ceiling, floorboards.  
I call the Buddha that was born with you to reawaken,  
for my army of angels to lift up their swords. We are  
still here. We are love, and love  
is the centre, the carriage and the tide,  
never defeated, stronger than the frantic pulse,  
stronger than the wielding axe and the ash of its remains,  
stronger than this cursed person you wear and claim,  
strongest now in this hopeless hardened place,  
in this choice, beginning.**

## Part 2

Step, bless your  
new shoes, step and  
hold the sun on your tongue like a berry,  
leaving an indelible juicy mark,  
be guided by other people's wisdom  
as long as it doesn't undermine your own  
and watch yourself enter Eden-Earth in its many glorious  
forms – dive into small mounds of sand, pieces of glass,  
spiraling trees, trunks, bulging and retracting  
in individual rhythm,  
a solid movement, stunning as music.  
Take this choice from disaster,  
offer it the path of the impossible, a pathway into  
a miracle because God counts for everything,  
counts on flat and hot surfaces,  
counts on the deathbed and  
in the red coat  
beautiful gleam



### Part 3

**The way forward is  
the way back, clearing  
stumbling blocks that promise  
to repeat ahead if not killed  
at their source.**

**To hold the truth even if it tells you  
that love is limited in people, certain people  
who play both sides – one foot in the basin of heaven  
and the other glorifying the haphazard world.**

**Even if it tells you you cannot save  
or be saved by a half-hearted account of kindness,  
tells you, it is nothing  
to be bitter over, nothing personal and also  
not yours to bear the repercussions,  
tells you to continue all the way, hold firm  
to the thin road and the willingness to lose everything –  
home, sacred room, the safety of your own -  
for the divine request to follow. Follow then  
the tulips  
still managing to bud in backyards untended,  
follow then with God at the helm.**

**You are not abandoned, not like the tin-foil wrapper,  
or the chewing gum chewed,  
or worn-through undergarments. You are protected  
and that protection is warm and powerful and golden  
as an owl's steady eyes. You are afraid I know.  
The doors you used to knock on are  
boarded up. Steel eyes lock on you, mock you in your anguish.  
It feels ruthless, brutally barren,  
feels that way only until you fully let go.  
I let go. I drop my past, my precious cargo, drop you  
and follow, hearing faint the voice that tells me –  
The only thing I have to do to receive God's love  
is to believe in God's love.**

# Ground Bird Flown

Layers of clear  
Rainbow shine guide  
you through the pyramid portal into  
open air revelation.  
Joy on a stick, in your soft eyes,  
closed in death, with permanent grace.

For all the gifts your gave,  
daily miracles, flutterings,  
vocalizations, accumulating in song.  
For your fragile vessel, energy octave  
higher than us wingless dwellers.

Your fearless power streaked  
into the lining of your feathered coat,  
patterned gold thick veins  
washed in sparkling sand.

Beautiful Sage of the flowerbed gardens,  
the blueberry, the hempseed swallow,  
fearless messenger, angelic power  
bound in a small body, you were  
loved completely for everything  
that you were, gave,  
held lifeforce for. You were  
soft, demanding and rich  
with good humour

stretching, expanding  
higher, wider, wings aflare, lifting  
in pure vibrant dance, puffed and proud,  
your freedom actualized, raised  
only inches off the ground.

## **Not your taxidermist.**

**Foreboding,  
witnesses cracked,  
ice-slit, more than  
a broken arm or a lingering smile  
that bears no goodwill. Don't bother  
with the streamline, take the curve, the twisted route  
into the starscape's eye  
because it is on that route where the  
bells chime a code, where the  
simplest solution unfolds  
and the wind rises, master of unpredictability  
to thrust you into overload,  
where once you were starving for input,  
but now are saturated, almost bloated,  
still able to breathe a healthy balanced sigh  
of mixed astonishment, courage and belief,  
still yourself on the threshold collecting  
clouds and making a fluctuating ethereal pattern.**

**From a turret window watch the road - it has arrived,  
and glory-be the choices that follow  
that will lead to unbreakable intimacy, beyond  
engravings etched on sidewalk stone.**

## **Beauty is**

**True beauty is an experience of awe, it is a momentary recognition where the interconnectedness of everything becomes clear as it sits on the edge of chaos, of knowing the chaos and the precarious tilt towards it, inside of it, but also knowing that chaos for what it is – an illusion.**

**It is a transient intimacy with truth, when the layers of life are exposed, revealed in a completed majesty. It is a fleeting experience, a halt in existence that our temporal selves cannot maintain. It arrives unexpectedly, when looking at the face of a child, an old person's hands, an animal's tenderness to another outside of its kind. Or when knowing the starlight patterns, forest root fungal patterns, brain electrical patterns are one in the same patterns, that mountain ridges and heartbeat ridges join in identical rhythms, that what is in the forest is in the branch is in the leaf, and that singing is simply opening up, letting in, then letting out.**

**Beauty is being in love. It catches our breath, brings peace, uncovering perfect symmetry before dissipating with a thinning intensity. It shields the heart in hope, it is a glimpse of God, is bigger than dying, than death, though denies nothing. It shocks us with a sense of synchronicity, and for a moment, seeing it, we return to the source, restored.**

# 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 1125 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 sixteen other books of poetry and five 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). She 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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[www.allisongrayhurst.com](http://www.allisongrayhurst.com)**



**“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, author.**

**“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Allison Grayhurst's 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.

**"Her (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.

**“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 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. 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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