



POETRY MONTH SPECIAL: TALKING ABOUT POETRY WITH ANANSI POETS A. F. MORITZ, ERIN MOURÉ AND KAREN SOLIE

Submitted by Grace on April 15, 2015 - 2:31pm

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A. F. Moritz, Erin Mouré and Karen Solie are three of Canada's most decorated and venerated poets writing today. Poetry fans are getting a particular treat this year, as all three authors have new (and hotly anticipated) books out this spring: Moritz's *Sequence*, Mouré's *Kapusta* and Solie's *The Road In Is Not the Same Road Out*, all published by House of Anansi Press.

Continuing our National Poetry Month celebration, we speak to Anansi's poetry dream team today about their new books, what makes a great poem great and what the writing spaces of award winning poets look like.

Best of all, you can be part of the poetic action in person: House of Anansi is throwing their annual **Poetry Bash launch party TONIGHT in Toronto!** The action starts at 7:00p.m. at the Tranzac Club (292 Brunswick Avenue). This is a free event, with books for sale, and will include readings by Moritz, Mouré and Solie as well as Shane Book, and a reading from the late Elise Partridge's new collection.



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KAPUSTA

Erin Mouré (House of Anansi)

From House of Anansi Press: In *Kapusta*, Mouré performs silence on the page and aloud, writing "gesture" and "voice" to explore the relation between responsibility and place, body, and memory, sorrow and sonority. Here, poetry flourishes as a book "beyond the book," in a space of performance that starts and stops time.

PURCHASE



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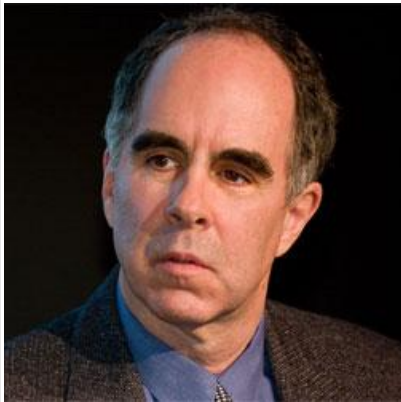


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Open Book:

Tell us about your new book and how the project started for you.



A. F. Moritz:

The title of the book is *Sequence* and sequence is both its form and subject. The sequence of our lives is both its emotional and its intellectual theme. It's made up of ten sections each with ten to fifteen short poems. The poems are linked sequentially, but also refer to each other across the distances of the book, by means of repeated or echoed words and phrases, images, subjects, and the like. There's both linear, and radial or constellating, organization.

The idea of sequence for me is an affirmation of the fact that our life and experience is both continuous flow and discrete moments and individuals. The overwhelming tendency of modern culture is to give all weight and honour to the flow, or to whatever is taken to lie beneath or within and be common to all: the structure in scientific terms, the abstraction in philosophical terms. This is wrong. Existence is equally the individual thing and that which makes it up and is common to all. If there has to be a first among these equals, it's the individual, not the general. The general exists only in and as and for the individual. Poetry is the guardian of this awareness. As Paz comments, poetry cares for "humiliated reality".

The traditional book expresses this in a material form, especially when bonded with the poem rather than prose. Each work is complete on a page, or two or three. We might compare these pages and small groups of pages, for instance, to our days, and those riffs of several days that seem almost to override the intervening borders and make up a small unity we can sense. But equally each of these days is part of a life, of the Earth and the universe, of existence, being, the radiant darkness, the void plenitude. So: the individual and the whole, the pages and the book. *Sequence*.

The book started out of my writing of many small poems in the search for a new style, with the help of my reading of such poets as Juan Ramón Jiménez, Par Lagerkvist, elements of George Seferis Giuseppe Ungaretti, Paz, Homero Aridjis, elements of Czeslaw Milosz, various others.

But this search for a new style was fundamentally under the pressure of needing a way to express newly felt realizations, from new experiences that stirred up the depths differently. It proceeded through the period of having to have a heart operation, and then the period of recuperation, and then a period of a sort of blessedness of "just-going-around" in the beautiful fall of 2014. So it constantly acquired new meanings as it went along. By 2015 the book had been going on for about ten years, had gathered to my primary focus for the last three, and then was being modified right down to the wire. It was a very living thing for me, and a way to live, all along this trajectory.

Erin Mouré:

Kapusta is a poetic work that takes the form of a play-poem-text-cabaret, with a little book of poems from the future at the back. I started *Kapusta* — which means cabbage in Ukrainian — with little hummed and sung songs. I tried to create a form in which I could assemble the voices and urgencies in my head and in my being that simmered in me after writing *The Unmemntioable*. The book wanted to be people talking, wanted to be voices. And there was a grandmother and a wood stove and a lion and a marionette mother and a sock monkey and a field of cabbages. And memory and non-memory of genocides and war.

Karen Solie:

THE ROAD IN IS NOT THE SAME ROAD OUT

Karen Solie (House of Anansi)

It's titled *The Road In Is Not the Same Road Out*, and like my previous three collections wasn't written to a unifying idea, but started simply with the first new pieces. It takes quite a while, and quite a few poems, before I start thinking in terms of a book. I suppose it includes certain recurring questions, but sometimes I think it's easier for a reader to discern what they are, since like all writers I view my work through the lens of what I did and did not intend. That is, I tend to believe what I've set out to do is there, and what I haven't meant to do is not. I'm not completely oblivious, but it can be a bit of a surprise, the motifs readers pick up on. Not only in terms of subjects, or references, but also modes of address, syntactical patterns, rhetorical strategies. Which makes sense, as a collection reflects not only what the writer has been thinking about over a period of time, but how. In any case, there seem to be quite a few guns in this new book, for whatever reason. Also vehicles, burrowing animals, and paintings.

Open Book:

What defines a great poem in your opinion, both as a writer and as a reader?

AFM:

It's a combination of breadth and depth of experiencing with proper form and phrasing: form and phrasing that combine the intuitive and passionate elements with the rational, perfectionist ones, on the basis of the former. It's a perfect balance of these factors. I emphasize balance, because balance is the greatest tension and dynamism. What we usually praise for its energy, namely a "radicalism" in one direction or another, is weak compared to a real balance of vital forces. Such balance contains the most of life and power. That's why a poem recognized for its calmness will always be found, on a closer look, to contain the most tension. That's why a poem that is greatly sad is happy, and one that is greatly happy is sad.

EM:

One you return to, to read again, one that creates a new furrow in the language, in what is possible to utter, and to respond to. One that crosses borders you only recognize as borders once you have passed through to the other side.

KS:

It's been said many times that a great poem is something we feel happens to us, and I think this is true. It's a first-hand experience, rather than a description of someone else's experience. A great poem changes your life a little, as every experience does. It can take any form, speak in any style, can be a sonnet, a lyric, a conceptual piece, etc., but like all experience it has a mystery at the centre of it. Implications. An uncertainty, often unstated but present nonetheless, with very high stakes. As a reader, I know the feeling of such an encounter, and also that it doesn't happen very often.



OB:

What does your workspace look like? Do you have any rituals or habits while writing that have become part of your process?

AFM:

It looks like a chaos and then it looks very orderly, like day following night. My ritual is to turn everything upside down as I work and then straighten it all out as I get ready to work again.

EM:

I have many workspaces. My favourite is just a pencil and notebook, on a park bench. My office at home... well I haven't been there for awhile! I just need quiet to write, and a lack of clutter.

KS:

I don't have a place to live right now, have been going where work and housesitting opportunities take me, so my workspace is wherever I am. I have a notebook I write in and work from, and I love the reading and walking and note-taking part of the process. I love it so much I could extend it indefinitely. So my rituals and habits mostly involve putting off the first draft. Composing a first draft is my least favourite part of writing. My best writing occurs in notes, and then in revisions. Though revising can be frustrating and difficult when nothing I try works, often I take great pleasure in it. It tends to be when the discoveries happen, for me.

OB:

What are you working on now?

AFM:

I don't know. That's always the case, that I don't know. I'm writing, I'm trying to grasp things, and I'm just about to begin collecting certain drafts and fragments and mini-essays in a folder and seeing what I've got. That's how it goes. In one way, I'm looking to extend all that I said regarding *Sequence* because such experiences and thoughts can't be finished. *Sequence* is the most recent thing, its momentum continues, you could say it's simply a new appearance of what I've always been. So I can't avoid its continuing in the next thing. But in another way, it's just the opposite. I'm noticing in the song and art around me, the astonishing originality of others, a thousand potentials of my own to be different.

EM:

Finishing a translation from Galician of Chus Pato's amazing *Flesh of Leviathan* (for Omnidawn in California in 2016), awaiting François Turcot's comments on my first draft of my translation of his *My Dinosaur* (for BookThug in 2016), and starting a translation from the 19th century Galician of Rosalía de Castro's *New Leaves* (for Small Stations for 2016 or 2017). Working, all too slowly, on a draft of a book of poems and texts about my Dad called *The Elements* and getting ready to start a year of working on a poem also in the form of a play in shouts and paraphernalia, called *Martin!!*, after the saint, of course.

KS:



Karen Solie
*The Road In Is Not
The Same Road Out*



I'm in the early stages of what I'm thinking of now as a book-length poem, the hinge of which is a 7th-century Scottish monk and his time spent living in a cave in Fife. It's all new to me – the form, the subject, writing from a core idea – so it's exciting and also terrifying. I want to see if I can do it, though.

A. F. Moritz has written fifteen books of poetry, and has received the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Award in Literature of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Ingram Merrill Fellowship. His collection *The Sentinel* won the 2009 Griffin Poetry Prize, was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award, and was a *Globe and Mail* Top 100 of the Year. He lives in Toronto.

Erin Mouré is one of Canada's most eminent and respected poets, and a translator from French, Spanish, Galician, and Portuguese. She is the author of seventeen books of poetry and a book of essays, and has received the Governor General's Literary Award, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, the A. M. Klein Prize, and has been a three-time finalist for the Griffin

Poetry Prize. Her recent works include the book-length poem *The Unmemntioable* and *Insecession*, a memoir and poetics that is a companion text to her translation of Chus Pato's biopoetics, *Secession*. Her twelve books of poetry in translation include *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* by Alberto Caeiro/Fernando Pessoa, Nicole Brossard's *White Piano* (co-translated with Robert Majzels), Rosalia de Castro's *Galician Songs*, and Galician poet Chus Pato's acclaimed *m-Talá, Charenton, and Hordes of Writing*.

Karen Solie was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. She is the author of three collections of poems including *Pigeon*, which won the Griffin Poetry Prize, the Pat Lowther Award, and the Trillium Book Award for Poetry. She was International Writer-in-Residence at the University of St. Andrews in 2011, and is an Associate Director for the Banff Centre's Writing Studio program. Her poems have been published in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe, and have been translated into French, German, Korean, and Dutch. Her first U.K. edition, *The Living Option: Selected Poems*, was published in 2013. She lives in Toronto.

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springwinter on April 17, 2015 - 1:54am said:

Hello. Great post !! You did explained well the topic. I learned a lot from here. Hoping for more post and well discussion coming from you.

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DATE

Tue September 4, 2012

The 2012 Scotiabank Giller Prize Longlist Announced!

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The [Scotiabank Giller Prize](#) announced their 2012 longlist today, prompting discussion amongst book lovers, industry professionals and writers across the country. The longlist consists of 13 titles from authors at all stages of their careers.

The 2012 jury consists of Irish author and screenwriter **Roddy Doyle**, Canadian publisher, writer and essayist **Anna Porter** and American author and satirist **Gary Shteyngart**, who will whittle the longlist down to five or six shortlisted titles, with the final winner announced at a televised gala on October 30. The winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize receives \$50,000.

The 2012 Longlist:

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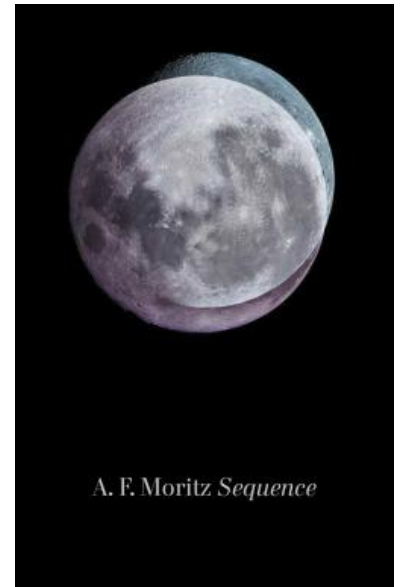


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SEQUENCE

A. F. Moritz (House of Anansi)

From House of Anansi Press: The latest collection from Griffin Poetry Prize-winning poet A. F. Moritz. In *Sequence*, the reader accompanies the poet step after step and breath after breath through a haunting and mercurial world that shimmers like sun on sand. Alternating moments of spare clarity with deep narrative flashes, the poem wanders the borders of the self, pursuing the eternal moment through imagined landscapes and the lush world waiting outside the writer's window. This is poetry of intense observation, finely tuned to a

pattern that is sustained with breaks and returns, alive with eros and a hunger for Breton's "convulsive beauty." Sequence dazzles as it seeks the great mystery, while remaining fully invested in our life of contingency and time.

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