

A Series of Poems

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Shelter all the Delicate Passages

Being Red River Métis, I resist. I resist conflict.
I resist positioning of text. I resist a sequence,
and I resist chaos. I make sense of things
by threading it all together and sometimes I rip
it apart. I clarify, and I trouble in equal measure.

I am a specialized dictionary with opaque definitions
framed in fragile positions. I am material and can
be held in your hands. Within your hands, I am
emergent. A distortion of punctuation and syntax.
Being Red River Métis, I provoke, anticipate, and I

imagine destructions of presence and punctuation.
Because I have built myself into textual and poetic
abandonments, I ruin and repair. I create intentional
sequences. I am Red River Métis, so I generate structures
predicated upon the realities of empire, colonization,

and a found language I arrange into quintets. I
reinforce my own fractured form. I gather data
and recognize it is indeterminate and obscure that it
lacks any singular position. Because I'm Red River Métis,
I rely upon a hybrid technique of thought and memory,

which work as palimpsest—gestures to the languages
of my mother's lineage, Michif and Cree; references

to a childhood from the late 1970s, and allusions
to cultural transformations and clearances. I have
an identity and a legal classification. I am disparate

registers in compressed spaces, and I persist.
My memory is a scaffold of descriptions that are specific,
geographical, dependent on lived-in recollections,
and a failure to map with clarity. I reside in a country
that I can't call home. Because I'm Red River Métis,

I exist in transit. The components of my language
are subversive and resistant to colonized impact,
or so I like to think. Sometimes I think I am sorrow
or grief or something in between, and I wish
(mostly for you) that I was a little more delicate.

Unmarked Graves: May 2021

The former Mayor suggested the children's
bodies were the byproduct of disease probably
tuberculosis,
as if their bodies couldn't be affective force and residual
material,
as if they weren't weather conditions.
Atmosphere that settled over the region.
The world,
such as it is,
appeared shocked initially by evidence and later at
having to bear witness to a conflict they felt
predated—
in all likelihood and for the most part—
their births.

Do they think the wreckage is configured
and transmitted from the past?

The dominant white society of Canada
struggled to make sense,
to make meaning of the event.

The conditions at hand were an index of
future potentiality unrealized.

Our children fell through the ground and
lived within us—
the Inuit, the First Nations, the Red River Métis—
as the movement of memory.

Our children—

not in unmarked graves but hidden,
discarded,
buried in kill sites—
articulate our resistance,
our uncontrollability of what is most delicate and most
defenceless.

The fragility of our encounter with the crisis
of the Canadian Indian Residential School system
is registered through the generations.

It is an archive of crisis.

It's a location;
it's a place from which we struggle to
depart.

Are we held in suspension between what a
country has broken,
and how all that has been fragmented travels within us
most often spoken as intergenerational trauma.

I think of it as a provisional site.

I try to remind myself that places can be
left—
can't they?—
even as they're constrained and shattered by a wound
in time.

A wound that divides the past by the
present and collapses citizens and municipalities
into fractional remains.

Biography

Heather Simeney MacLeod is a Red River Métis (Michif) writer born in Treaty 6 territory. She has published four books of poetry, and she has a selected collection coming out with Barbarian Press, *Let the Bees Go Then*. Heather has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Victoria, her Master in Social Sciences from the University of Edinburgh, and a doctorate from the University of Alberta. Heather works in the Department of Communication and Visual Arts at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC in the unceded territory of the Secwepemc Nation. She is mother to a rambunctious boy and a cranky cat.
