



PARLIAMENT | PARLEMENT
CANADA

Parliamentary Poet Laureate



POETRY CONNECTION: LINK UP WITH CANADIAN POETRY

Annharte (1942 –), aka Marie Annharte Baker and Marie Annharte, is Anishinabe (Little Saskatchewan First Nation, Manitoba). Her books include *Being on the Moon*, *Coyote Columbus Café*, *Exercises in Lip Pointing*, and *indigena awry*. A book of critical essays, journals, and memoir, *AKA Waandizimo*, is forthcoming from CUE Books. She is also a playwright (*Cannibal Woman Campout*) and storyteller, performing with puppets as “Indigena Bushytales”. She lives in Winnipeg.

Poem for discussion:

“Raving in the Hood”

From: *indigena awry*
New Star Books, 2012

way back when in fact might be true another day
front of nose right there women muddle over story
how so gory women huddle borrow glam glory sorry
horror story what if told fabulous fable hype it princess
meets pimp prince lover type no fairy spell bind
resold retold twice say when old wives tales start once
upon time design how score rerun remake replay

old lady stories for sure not all grandma talk will bore us
does not won't don't gossip go sip up truth loose lip whine
so girlfriends must know the endings not even how solved
enough crime about women gone way down memory lane
done prime chance to become even newsworthy story rehash
hey hang around listen to made up tale about she without she
never told her good points as she did not get too old to develop
on site insight remember no one told story about life friend
rough rave in the hood death just raven it after all up to no good
up to no good should we should no body guessed her body
does free pick up from crowd unique freak speak outcheek
find her around beer table hip hop she hung kinda out way out
not her fault mr one stripe fur covered guy find puts her on hold
twine over under blur of odorizer blast confuse
not her excuse me don't squeeze me again sir skunk embrace last
mistake she wasn't one to point out probable just blame perps
abc then v for vagina no actual intended victim game in tv view
was it only one time not so long ago did she play at risk knew
shame men grabbed in sweat lodge dodge grope
now after burn incense is compassionate common sense
they do make us mind a quickie to do sooner pay back
raven in the hood raven bitch best put out posse
what fur sake fur split sake f-u-r sake us forever ever figure
give out hint to girl half baked self time to wake up clever lady
f-u-r in sync forensic all four once f-u-r look out fur sense able
ndn time set on white cop watch schedule hours clock out wasted
overtime looking for sicko rude dude tattoo unglued crude prude

fluid drink renewal time zest get rid buddy pest memory
go down kidnapped in parent zombie zap flasher meant her
flap & snap why take all crap rap flak run away no forward
address forget falling in sack start it all over again re-enact a kill
bungee been in bad hair day have we put one more still crumpet
in treaty toasted rights go get it over top flog it fine as yet
fight nights succeed exceed next national day protest plan staged
complain refrain fries ketchup mustard come slow wait
priest proofed any chance you want a chief similar odour
order up or do sweet tooth guys like aboriginal disorder better
don't bet on it they never transport her safe deposit place
easily convince her not to pick man on drive thru menu
available after he poses silent stand on her cold body in out field
listen up warrior outcry high volume pull the stake out vigil
ravage our hood would they do all over again in time to forget

For discussion:

1. What is it that makes this poem "difficult"? Be as specific as you can in your answer.
2. Read the poem out loud. How do you determine where pauses should be? Where phrases end and begin? Read it again. Did you pause in the same places? Did you read the same phrases?
3. In northwest coast indigenous stories Raven is a transformer. Raven changes the forms of things. Where do you see Raven activity in the poem?
4. The poem challenges readers to rethink the stories we tell about women who are victims of violence. What are some of the common stories we hear about such women? What is missing from those stories?

Writing prompts:

1. Words resemble or remind us of other words in their sound, shape, or meaning. In Annharte's poem, for example, "gossip" is transformed into "go sip". Experiment with letting words transform into other words. Let your poem be guided by these.
2. "Not all grandma talk will bore us." What are some of the stories your grandma told you?
3. Many traditional indigenous stories featuring animal figures take place in wilderness environments. Annharte's animals (raven, "mr one stripe", "sir skunk", who is reminiscent of the cartoon character Pepe Le Pew) are active in the city, "the hood". What are the animal figures that you would place in poems with an urban setting?
4. "Raving" means, in part, that thoughts and words follow one another with little or no concern for the logic of grammar. Write a poem that refuses grammatical correctness.