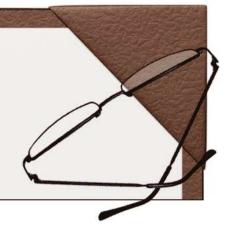


Parliamentary Poet Laureate



POETRY CONNECTION: LINK UP WITH CANADIAN POETRY

Steven Ross Smith (1945 –) is currently the Director of Literary Arts at The Banff Centre, where he is also the Editor of BoulderPavement, the on-line multimedia arts and ideas journal. Since the 1970's, his poetry practice has sought modes of intervention and innovation, in sound and performance, libretto, and text. He has published over a dozen books, his most recent project is a multi-book long form he titles "Fluttertongue." *Fluttertongue 3: disarray* won the 2005 Saskatchewan Book of the Year Award.

Poem for discussion:

Laden

In 'Emanations: Fluttertongue 6'

BookThug, Toronto, 2015

i.

WHU what was that?

Waffle, whisper, a nothingness across

a jet of air jetstream

(Patience, it will come

and come\again return of what's not . . .

said

from a suffering oesophageal all knowing, all known wound

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Blade-fall
              precise, articulate
with blossoms, with blessings tempered feathered edge honed at the whetstone
if let, could cut (wing) open the wall
  And intemperate temperatures
sooner, too soon
                             can be a season
                                                  a stutter
                                                                 а
                 wor(I)d sev-
                             erer
We want
       want a better climate (clemency) and
words spurred from a high
                                          pressure
drop
       a proclamation
to lead us
                       every (one)
                                    where
```

ii. Emanation 2: Michel Deguy

Firm and before us and liquid at the same time

we are builders broken

stones can grow from water

minerals leeched out
pocked, weathered, greening
rock stops all approach
by definition
(what's hidden in run-off? – cavern? rift? a
new solid? – stalactical)

They crawl there with legs or undulations,

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Or with winged ululations flutter (through? over? Never seen again)
 their tiny lives
hard-rock, hiding place writes the hill
's arc from beneath the hill's arc
takes the eye there and to the horizon, final
 edge
all there is in this place for \ hide or \ hesitate or \
heave
       'n hard-nosed, you
and me, bent
down against the mineral
taking mineral breath
our fingers, knuckle-skin pale,
nails to cuticles, pink
 grip
shaded, laden as we must
It slips
                              what was it?
WHU
```

For discussion:

- 1. The poem opens and closes with a breathy sound. Where in part ii does the repeated use of the letter h evoke this breathiness again? Why do you think the poet does this at this point in the poem?
- 2. What words and ideas in the poem develop a contrast between something flowing vs something being cut?
- 3. What speech sounds in the poem involve cutting or stopping the breath? What sounds involve smooth flow? Can you relate these sounds to the ideas expressed by the words where the sounds occur?
- 4. How does the background behind the poet reading relate to the images in part ii of the poem?
- 5. In part ii, what are several things that the poet contrasts with stone?
- 6. The word "laden" means loaded or burdened. Who or what is carrying something in this poem? What are they carrying?

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Writing prompts:

1. Choose five of your favorite spoken sounds. For each sound, list as many words as you can that contain the sound (at the beginning, middle or end of words). For each of your sounds, write a poem, developing contrasts and themes out of your lists of words.

- 2. Notice how Smith echoes "blossoms" with "blessings." The second word in the pair contains some of the sound in the first word but shifts slightly in a half-rhyme. Jot down a list of words based on what you see around you. For each word, experiment to find a matching word that makes a half-rhyme. Now put some of these into a poem.
- 3. List 20 pairs of opposites (example: flow vs stop). Weave connections between some of your pairs into a poem.
- 4. Choose one of the following words from Smith's poem: "oesophageal"; "undulations"; "stallactical"; "proclamation." Try breaking the word up into smaller words or suggestive half-words. Try inserting parentheses, hyphens, slashes and space between parts of the word. Then build a poem out of your experiment.
- 5. Choose any line from Smith's poem. What memories, events, ideas or thoughts does the line bring to you? List as many as you can, then write a poem based on your list.