the
life
of
words

ANTHOLOGY 2019

The Life of Words Poetry Anthology

VOLUME IV
2019

Contents

❧

Preface

❧

*Th**e Life of Words*** is an ongoing research programme that investigates the mutual influences of poetry and dictionaries. Each year we hold a poetry competition, open to all Ontario high school students, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation and the English Department of St Jerome's University. The broad theme this year was "Write a Poem About the History of a Word." We received more than two hundred entries from across the province, and read them all with interest and admiration. Here we present the eleven poems we thought best answered the challenge of the competition. Each thinks etymologically, reviving old meanings, bringing the lexical past into the metaphorical present. My thanks go to all the students who wrote in, and to the teachers who advised and guided them. Special thanks too to the members of *The Life of Words* research team who helped in spreading the word, adjudicating the competition, and assembling this anthology: Cosmin Dzsurdzsa, Chris Giannakopoulos, and Danielle Griffin.

David-Antoine Williams
May, 2019

Nika Ribnitski's poem, "Désastre", was selected as the winner of this year's competition. She receives $100 to spend at a national book chain, and both she and her school's library recieve copies of *La poésie québecoise: Des origines à nos jours,* an anthology of essential poems in French, edited by Laurent Mailhot and Pierre Nepveu, as well as a one-year subscription to *The New Quarterly*.

Désastre

Comme un arbre renversé
Par un terrible vent inattendu,
« Désastre » trouve ses racines
Dans les étoiles. Dispersée

À travers la nuit méditerranéenne,
Cette majestueuse tapisserie suspendue
Dévoile la valse des mythes
En constellations et en éclipses.

Mais quand une comète déphase la danse,
Lumineuse, étrange et inconnue,
« Dis » rejoint « astro »
Sur les lèvres tremblantes ancestrales.

Cette « mauvaise étoile » est un présage céleste,
Annonçant le déplaisir divin
Et les horreurs épouvantables
Qui suivent une telle démonstration.

Répété sans cesse par les voix maudits,
« Disastro » se transforme en « Désastre »
Et au moment où les étoiles s'aligneront,
Les voix retourneront au ciel.

Nika Ribnitski
Grade 12
Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute
Toronto

Inspirare

Breathe in,
Breathe out.
The blowing wind
carries along a dream,
a dream of life
to live.

The breeze is strong:
it sweeps,
it picks up,
it pushes,
it chokes,
then leaves.

But you,
you crave it,
the breath that created,
the breath that saved.

Who took that breath?

The blast that gave you a push
and opened your eyes to the world breathing
into your heart,
to keep you alive,
keep you living,
to impart a truth
the truth of who you are.
You are an effect,
an influence,
an inspiration, so
inspire.

Victoria Bilinski
Grade 12
St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School
Mississauga

Separation

The French said *escheat*.
In those days it was common.
Not the action, but the word.

The English say "to cheat."
I find it is common,
Both
The action and the word.

To escheat is to deceive,
To make one trust and to abuse trust.
To escheat is to con,
To manipulate in your favour.
To escheat is to copy,
To simplify your task.

To escheat is to perform adultery;
To break a bond,
For pleasure.

The word cheated itself,
Tricked itself,
Dividing itself in half.
Now deprived of its true beginnings,
And its identity,
Forced into sorrowful, pitiful separation:
Es   cheat.

The loss of each other,
Caused by the actions of one.

Gwyneth Preiss
Grade 12
École secondaire catholique Monseigneur-Bruyère
London

Bamboozle

Over a thousand years old,
Meaning to mystify or confuse,
My siblings are dupe, defraud, and delude.
My name is slang for drunk in college speak.
It is considered low language,
But with a name like mine
I was born to confuse,
To fool, hoax, or hoodwink,
Never to clarify,
Never to enlighten.
Because I was born of *embabounier* and *bombaze*
I am the one to throw you into a pit of bewilderment
I am the one to deliberately mislead you.

Breanna Laurel Ann Pollock
Grade 11
Eastview Secondary School
Barrie

Reconciliation

Sacred land and cerulean skies.
Within the bowl, a treasure lies.
Kele- a "calling together",
of flourishing land and fresh water,
cradles *concilium*, "people gathered",
tending a flame that grows hotter and hotter.
A history of angry tears and silent cries.
The trauma dwells in their current lives.
To this day, we remain unsteady,
But with this word we could save many.
As *conciliare*, means "make friendly"
and *re-* means "again".

SARAH TRAN
Grade 11
Walkerville Collegiate Institute
Windsor

Believing in Roots

Do you believe in Love?

Love
noun
"an intense feeling of deep affection"
or
"a great interest or pleasure in something"

love
from Old English *lufu*

Lufu
noun
"romantic attraction"
       the boy with blond hair two seats in front of me
       my parents, like two teenagers, laughing gleefully
       her and her with starry eyes, completely free
"affection"
       my best friend's hug after years apart
       smiling and waving as I depart
       healing hands mending broken hearts
"friendliness"
       making a new friend in class
       seeing someone's smile last
       asking a stranger to a midnight dance
"love as an abstraction or personification"
       knowing pain is not necessarily misery
       keeping hope held tightly inside of me
       believing in the old songs of glory

lufu
from Proto-Germanic *lubo*

Lubo
noun
"love, affection"
> no hint of destruction
> the belief that the spots in my complexion,
> are simply stars beyond correction

lubo
from Proto-Indo-European *leubh*

Leubh
root
"to desire, care for, love"
> to
> love

Love
verb
to surrender freely,
and keep believing,
no matter how fragile it seems

From *lufu*, from *lubo*, from *leubh*

Leubh
root
forms all or part of "believe"

So,
do you believe in love?

GRAY BROGDEN
Grade 11
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School
Sudbury

Origin

Poetic irony:
Originating in Latin *oriri,*
A word that meant "to rise"—
It was revised
To *origo* then to *origine,*
Enduring redesign
Until the early 16th century when
The word became its origin.

Chanel Julia Salame
Grade 12
St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School
Mississauga

Abstract

The abstracted man is lost, for his mind wanders.
It goes to far places to comprehend,
His complex, confusing, and incomprehensible emotions
Ever changing and moldable as children's putty.
To describe one's own mind is to float on a cloud,
To understand another's is to look through a foggy window.
The haze, the murk, the veil of smoke, in the name of enlightenment.
The art of obscurity at its finest.
Painted with passion, not to be technical,
Painted with freedom, truly nonsensical,
Painted in the subconscious, not to be esthetical.
Ready for you to amble over and observe.
Do you understand?
Disagree and disregard.
Some cannot fathom
Curious shapes that cannot be described.
From a different dimension, another plane than the physical.
No concrete picture appears in your mind.
Extract, contract, subtract from the concept
You are left with the abstract.

Regan Ly
Grade 12
Eastview Secondary School
Barrie

Digging

Every life is a collection of words,
Each word earned through hard work
And exploration, finding ancient gems and fossils of language.
At birth, there is unscathed ground,
As the surface is breached, the collections begin to grow.
Rapidly increasing through youth,
As learning begins in a collaborative effort,
Simple words for everyday life are learned,
Like "because"
       (from the French phrase *par cause*)
And "goodbye"
       (a contraction of the phrase "God be with you").

By the end of high school,
A sufficient amount will have been learned.
More complex words,
That can be added to in higher education,
As more pieces of the fossil is found,
Or that can be discarded when moving forward in life.
Words like "onomatopoeia"
       (from the Greek word *onomatopoiia*, "word-making")
And "density"
       (from French *densité* or from Latin *densus*).

The rate of growth tends to diverge at this time.
Some continue to add to their collection,
Moving on to higher studies,
Dusting off what has already been learned,
Unearthing more complex artifacts,
Like "abstraction"
       (from the Latin verb *abstrahere*, "draw away")
And truly beginning to interact with life-applicable words,

Like "loan"
      (from *lán* in Old Norse, or *leen* in Dutch and *lehn* in German)

Others, though, put the pick down early,
Only adding to their collections sparsely,
Staying content with what fossils they have,
Never needing more than what was learned in past schooling.
Using more applicable words,
Like "tax"
      (from the Greek *tassien*, to the Latin "*taxare*, "to charge")
The lack of relics
Speaks nothing of intelligence,
As many were instead learning practical skills.

Some artifacts scarcely appear in the ground,
Their use in modern language declining,
Like "parlay"
      (from French *parler*, meaning "to talk")
Only collected and valued to some,
As each person has a different style of speech,
Leading some words to be important to one person
And not at all to another.

In life, artifacts of ancient language are collected.
Replicas of these relics are adapted for modern use.
The perfect words found among the synonyms,
The display of fossils laid out to suit each person,
So that the language mimics those who speak it.
And follows as language is explored.

Onai White
Grade 12
Jean Vanier Catholic High School
Collingwood

Guise

The origin of our words
Made linear,
Spoken with our severed tongues
And mosaics of grief,
Inherited through time,
They started to fall apart.

The creation of our silence
A falling plague upon our love,
Irreversible inflictions,
Detrimental pangs.
With these afflicting wounds
I existed in a torrid blaze,

No cathartic glow,
None to lead me astray.
In your rapacious attempts
I was tortured for shallowness,
This monotony of an indifferent cycle,
It drowned us in melancholy.

Our notion grew weak.
Cotton strings carrying impunity
To juxtapose what we became.
It turned us to devils,
My divinity had been mutilated;
I never could have foreseen it.

My eyes were glazed over
From sin and scrutiny,
The king I worshipped,
The jester I became.
I was fooled
From that lustrous glimmer.

Yet it was the guillotine rising,
The executioner of purity,
A disguised deity
In which heavenly virtues diminished,
Cardinal temptations,
With which you beckoned.

And as I suffered,
The influence abated.
Your devotion had been disloyal,
Yet you had never forsaken me.
I yearned for you as my soul split,
Infatuated with your willingness.

Deeply entranced,
We became the same.
The hypnotizing avariciousness
That had driven me mad,
It became a disease,
I had to remove you.

I performed glossectomy,
Yet my shell still carries you
In the wrath of my own foolishness.
I maimed my own faith,
Too blind to find the truth,
But I discovered

That although the origin of words
Was created linear,
The prefixes and roots interchangeable,
Our meanings never will be.
And these exchanges are a guise
For our true resentment.

Faith Olhiser
Grade 11
Fenelon Falls Secondary School
Fenelon Falls

Mother

Mother.
The one that cares. The one
that bears
the weight of your worries.

Moeder.
The one that worries. The one
that hurries
To help you fulfill your wishes, hopes, and dreams.

Mutter.
The one that praises. The one
that raises
you to be true to yourself.

Ma.
Mater.
Madre.
Mom.
No matter where she is from,
No matter her name,
Be it different, or the same,
She has loved and will love.
A verb, she means to care.
A noun, she personifies love.
She is your
Mother.

Jenna Sumar
Grade 11
Westmount Secondary School
Hamilton

APRIL IS POETRY MONTH!

POETRY COMPETITION

2019 COMPETITION THEME
write a poem about some aspect or aspects of the

history of a word

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T  H  E  *
L  I  F  E
O  F  *  W
O  R  D  S
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TIPS TO GET YOU GOING
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- The study of the history and development of words is called ETYMOLOGY. It comes from Ancient Greek *etymos* ("true") + *logos* ("discourse"), signifying "a discourse on true meanings."

- Think beyond what a word means to you right now. Research how it came into English or French and the changes in its meaning over time, or from the donor language to ours.

- If you know another language, try to convey the "true meaning" of a favorite word in that language by following its history.

- COGNATES are words that share a common origin, like *edge*, *acid*, *acumen*, and *oxygen*, all deriving from a root meaning "sharp." Write a poem that puts cognates back into contact again.

- Some etymologies are mysteries even now! Invent an origin story for a favorite word.

- "Poet" comes from the Greek *poietes*, "maker." Write a poem based on the name for a person, place, or thing. Or about your own name!

RESOURCES
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- Etymological dictionaries, like www.etymonline.com.
- The *Oxford English Dictionary*, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, and foreign-language dictionaries.

PRIZES
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- Winner: $100 gift-card to spend at Indigo.ca, plus:

- Runner(s) up: Inscribed prize copy of a poetry anthology, and a 1-year subscription to *The New Quarterly* for you and your school library, plus:

- Honorable mentions: Publication of your poem in *The Life of Words Anthology 2019*.

HOW TO ENTER
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- Email your poem,* in English or French, by 30 April 2019, to: thelifeofwords@sju.ca
- To be eligible, include in your email: your full name, school, and grade.
- All participants must be students at an Ontario high school to be eligible.
- For information and news, and to download a .pdf of this flyer, visit thelifeofwords.uwaterloo.ca/competition-2019/
- Follow us on twitter @thelifeofwords

*Note: by submitting a poem you agree to its publication, online or in print, under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). Submission does not guarantee publication. No correspondence will be entered into. Questions regarding this contest may be directed to Professor David-Antoine Williams (St. Jerome's University).

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