

## BÄNOO ZAN

### Cottage Canada

I.

This is not mine—

waves  
lighthouse  
reunion

wounds—familiar and obscene  
as bugs—

oblivion—

I do not want  
to return to me—  
the defeated exile  
on a solitary soil—

How much unkindness has gone into  
this?

forcing froth  
out of glaciers

What is the price for hope?

Though I may not have a seat  
at the peace banquet  
the wars are mine to wage—

I.

Barbed ink  
pours out of waves  
Water is border—

Don't fall on my rock—  
Under the staff  
no bush is on fire—  
no Moses—

Don't lose your way  
Trees walk into the sea—  
still standing

This is all outside of me—  
I have opened the windows  
to see how much will rush in

Still this hijab persists—

III.

Boats are faster than rivers  
Words are faster than anger

Here is what I worry about—  
the tool shed burnt  
and Virginia Woolf's  
pocketful of stones

I am not a wilderness  
I have built this up—

civilization—  
identity—

The sun disapproves of  
formality among friends—  
souls guarded  
bodies exposed

Discard your skin  
The mirror is too slow—

I haven't been listening  
I don't remember who I was  
when I was me

This is the third day—  
I am going blind with creation

Let's face it, Nature!  
You recognize yourself in me

IV.

The decayed deck is off-balance  
missing a floating part—  
stairs and veranda  
partly new wood—

The sauna dark—  
since it was born

The cottage practises itself  
differently than I practise me

We are crossing paths  
at the place where islands  
observe one another from distance

We practise us  
We practise Canada

V.

This is where the world draws back  
tired of us reducing her  
to a kaleidoscope

Trees are political—  
debate ideologies—  
to each its own eco-system—

Humans around the table  
drink to the point of politeness

I am a poet  
disrespectful of words—  
I get at truth and strangle it

This is the perfect place for death—  
the body and soul humble  
before the rock shield—

Everyone is here—  
bears, snapping turtles  
rattlesnakes, raccoons, foxes  
insects and us

Life is primitive  
on this planet of conversations—

Despite old conflicts  
the geese are still here—

I don't intend to have a mind—  
I am harmless  
before I put myself into words

Once I recite  
I announce the outbreak of conflict—

I linger like waves  
at the wake of the vessel  
reminding the shed  
of what could have saved  
the world

VI.

I am in the cradle of the breeze  
that filled stories with life

This poem is my first cry—

I don't need oars in this canoe  
I write on water—

The flag in the wind  
speaks to the news—  
in a borderless enclosure

Which of you will stand for me—  
water, forest, rock?

VII.

I am the shore  
fugitives swim to—  
home to everyone and no one—

Speak me  
as mother tongue—  
lullaby of loneliness and adventure—

My sea plants hidden  
under the ululating light—

I flee the sun—  
head towards water—

dive deeper—  
to drown

*Bānoo Zan has numerous poems and three books, including Songs of Exile and Letters to My Father. She founded Shab-e She'r, Toronto's most diverse and brave poetry series in 2012.*

## KATHY ASHBY

### Beautiful Black

Once upon a time we could see night as it  
was meant to be  
black,  
tired, we slid our skin under skins  
eyes open  
as light dimmed it held down our limbs  
relaxed, nothing needed to be brave about  
anonymous black  
commenced descent

in lap of obscurity, indistinct lover  
fetching sweetness  
twinkled and sprinkled  
sifted and drifted  
hovered and covered  
wrapped and packeted

dawn far to come  
our impatience numb  
we savoured the nothingness  
yet fancied the fullness  
the void and the thatness  
of beautiful blackness

*Kathy's poetry and stories have appeared in publications such as Descant Magazine, Canadian Woman Studies Magazine, Chicken Soup for the Soul and broadcast on the CBC Radio program Outfront. Author of the book Carol 'A Woman's Way' (DreamCatcher). Kathy is also an Associate Member of the Canadian League of Poets.*

## MEGHAN EAKER

### best interests for whom

the white decision makers  
sit around the table bloated  
with good intentions

eurocentric ethical principles  
weaponized to willingly

(un)knowingly administer  
the colonial project  
with a self-satisfied smile

to justify stealing yet another  
indigenous child

to purposefully withhold vital services  
to use as a reward  
when we are finally  
forced to give up  
our children

to normalize the theft  
of our bodies  
from our homes  
our lands

in their eyes to be an indian  
is to be in need of rescuing

they flock to us  
to provide it  
mercifully

demanding our gratitude  
for their selfless labour

are we destined  
to be continuous casualties  
of a system of recycled  
white saviours?

*Meghan Eaker (she/they) is an amiskwaciwaskahikan (Treaty 6) based poet, registered nurse, and artist of european and nehiyaw (Cree) ancestry. She is a member of the Woodland Cree First Nation in Treaty 8 and is pursuing a PhD in Indigenous Studies at the University of Alberta, studying storysharing as a creative practice towards miyo pimatisiwin (a good life) for two-spirit, trans, and queer Indigenous youth.*