

Title: *Fragments: A Poetry Mosaic*
Author: Joyce Goodwin
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Fractals and Fragments

It's rare to find the talent of a poet and painter in one, yet Joyce Goodwin is exquisite at both. Goodwin's poetry encompasses the wisdom of a life well lived. Through the pages of *Fragments: A Poetry Mosaic*, Goodwin seamlessly weaves her gifts, offering a taste of lyricism through her poetry of place as she encapsulates life from the Ireland of her ancestors and early years to the North Shore of Vancouver and beyond. Her mosaic of verse explores the insights she quotes from Irish greats Seamus Heaney and William Butler Yeats, her voice calling through time and place, from ancestors to grandchildren. Like geometric fractals, patterns of repeated wholeness unite mystical fragments, the overall design and layout of the book as intricate as the individual poems.

The soft colours in Goodwin's cover painting lead the reader into the compassionate heart of her material, rose light permeating her work in an undercurrent of gentleness, as her subjects stretch toward peace through the solidarity of her verse. With the sorrow and wonder that imbue Irish literature, Goodwin addresses the paradox of "A Terrible Beauty" in her homeland poems, taking on famine and the mindsets that allow starvation in the name of obtusely rigid capitalism. "Turn over any stone in Ireland/ and it will bleed sorrow," she confesses of "her island home where/ my people lie buried/and spirits walk with me/ in the half light." Dublin comes immediately alive in her words as "gulls wheel noisily/ over city streets." She leaves us immersed in "an island of music and mist...bog and limestone" while we journey with her to Canada.

The next section explores the duplicity of Vancouver, the "City of Glass," below Goodwin's North Shore home, with its dichotomies of extremes in her "End of the Line" poems that address the human condition with fragments of hope. The texture of her painting that introduces the section evokes humanity for those at the end of the line, where the poverty and addiction of the Downtown East Side becomes their last stop, contrasted with the excess of Robson Street shops in the background. Goodwin's humble painting carefully coloured with purple and jasmine shows the narrator's care for all citizens and aspects of the city, even in the shame of hard-hitting deprivation juxtaposed with empty excess, addiction in its extremes, both to avarice and the nadir of bottom of the line cycles of substance abuse, from "the sharp glitter of urban dreams" to "delusional figures doing/ tricks in an alley behind Gore." The poem "Street Orchid" portrays the crushing defeat of the streets through flower imagery, leaving the reader with a sense of Ophelia taken too young, deserving to be remembered in dignity. Goodwin depicts the fallen woman as "an orchid among wildflowers...in urban wastelands, fragile...crushed by the twisted embrace of a hostile world...To those who knew her before...she was a child/ of the north shore, where wilderness reigns and/ wild creatures roam free."

Goodwin then takes us "Across the Divide" to the wild, natural North Shore to "trees with prehistoric memory" where "our wild heart sings celestial songs." In "A Listener" she takes us to:

silk spiders spinning
gossamer, wings of
butterflies painting clouds
a translucent rendering,
diaphanous sweep of sky

then on to “The Spirit of Trees” for the “soul of forests...bearing poetry and songs of earth.” Poems cover the majesty of wildlife on the British Columbian coast from whales and eagles to cougars and bears, all part of daily existence.

In the following section, “Agony and Ecstasy,” her poetry of place expands to the world, inviting imagination and philosophy, heartbreak and sorrow, between its pages. We travel with the author through continents and flowers, the loss of innocence, the disappearance of people in the absence of political asylum, of “monks chanting saffron prayers,” through East and West of the Cold War, Europe and Asia, history and suffering. We then visit Ground Zero with her, pay respect to “the lost three thousand/ who haunt the underworld/ of concrete and steel...in the hole at the heart/ of New York City.” Our journey through time and place and human made grief continues until she leaves us with her final poem of the section, “Hope.”

From there we join her for the closing poems in “Time Passes,” the wisdom of allowing, as she hitchhikes across Pierre Trudeau’s Canada of the 1970s and remembers first love:

...on the forest floor laughing
it was you who surprised me
with your knowledge of
ancient rhythms, that first time
you told me I was beautiful.

Children emerge, “born of nacre and/ dreams iridescent...as roses unfold into spaces/, shaped by birdsong.” In “Songlines,” we dream with her boy child’s calling to Australia, following her lead “to let go slowly/ where trees lose their cover in deciduous surrender,” as her adult children weave their own webs in new adventures. We welcome her four grandchildren, each with their own full poem, as the “light half of the year returns...spectrums of colour across the glimmering sky...along the silver path of a supermoon...his journey from the stars...where Pacific rain sings...where dreamers learn to steer/ by the stars and lunar light...a silver path to the future...violet and pink tulle shimmering in waves.” The crescendo of love for her grandchildren closes Goodwin’s debut collection where the rose light of her heart permeates all that she encounters.

Roots stretching backwards and forwards, *Fragments: A Poetry Mosaic* is music that lifts off the page in empathy, fond memory and appreciation for existence in all its eloquent mystery. From her life as an immigrant aching for home soil to the wildness of the North Shore and all her visions between, Goodwin connects with relatives near and far, those out of her womb and those whose dust remains on the mother isle, an endurance of fragments bound with love, respect and integrity.

About the Author

In 1989 Joyce immigrated with family to North Vancouver and continued her social work career. A North Shore Writers' Association member since 2000, she was on the executive for many years, becoming vice president and co-founder of the literary cafe Dare To Be Heard. A Canadian Authors Association member with the metro Vancouver branch since 2008, she has been membership chair and writing groups co-ordinator and served on the anthology committees and program and publicity committee. Joyce is also an active member of the Ontario Poetry Society. She has been a trustee, judge and reviewer for a number of national contests and awards. Her award winning work is published in magazines and numerous anthologies. As a visual artist, Joyce paints and exhibits with the North Shore Artists' Guild and other painting groups.

About the Reviewer

Cynthia Sharp holds an MFA in creative writing and an Honours BA in English literature. She is a full member of the League of Canadian Poets, as well as The Writers 'Union of Canada and was the City of Richmond, British Columbia's, 2019 Writer in Residence. Her poetry, reviews and creative nonfiction have been published and broadcast internationally in journals such as *CV2*, *Prism online*, *Haiku Journal*, *The Pitkin Review* and *untethered* and are used in classrooms in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. Cynthia is the author of *Rainforest in Russet* and *The Light Bearers in the Sand Dollar Graviton*, as well as the editor of *Poetic Portions*, a collection of Canadian poems and recipes honouring Earth Day. Her books are available from Silver Bow Publishing, Amazon and local libraries.