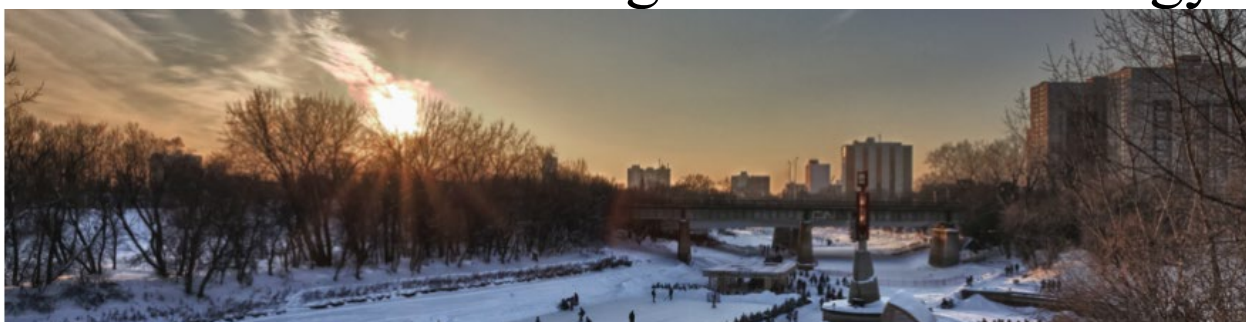




## 2014 Summer Writing Institute Anthology



## **Words, words, words**

Cathy Orsenik

Polonius: What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words

( *Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 2)

Letters and sounds  
Representing thoughts  
Rhythmic, resonant, resounding.  
Words let us  
Dream about our lives,  
Make meaning of our lives,  
Add meaning to our lives.  
Like water over stones on the bed  
Of a slow trickling stream, words can  
Sing,  
And like the bells from the loftiest cathedral,  
Ring out,  
Allowing us to say what we can be  
And be what we can say.  
We can orbit the sun and the moon, carried  
Away on our grand thoughts,  
Using them to forge paths, and build bridges  
Connecting us  
To each other.

But words are also  
Disturbing, damaging, dark,  
So much so that there are some  
That we cannot bring ourselves  
To write them  
Lest we give them power,  
Causing so much pain that freedom of speech  
Is governed by hate laws--  
You do not have the right  
To use words that infringe  
On my rights.

Yet everyday we hear them-  
On the playground,  
In the grocery store  
And coming from the open windows  
Of our neighbours' houses in the dark of night.  
So close.  
The voices of those who know better,  
Those who pledged to love, honour and cherish:  
Abusing, belittling, crushing,.

And what do we do?  
We turn away,  
Thinking it better  
Left unsaid  
That we are  
Afraid to get involved,  
Afraid of the  
Consequences  
Afraid to admit our  
Embarrassment  
That this is happening  
In our community,  
Brought up to respect  
Other people's privacy.

And so we carry on,  
Nodding silently  
As we pass on the street  
Not admitting  
What we both know,  
Because  
For our shame  
And complacency  
There are no words.



A Rose by Every Other  
Name Jennifer Konczak  
(2014)

I was, I am told, an early speaker. First words quickly gave rise to first phrases and then complete sentences. Once that happened, there was no shutting me up. My father called me motor-mouth, a nickname not intended to torment me, but to tease me into giggles. His gentle jokes only encouraged me to speak more. And he asked questions, encouraged stories, and contributed many of his own. Our relationship was one of words. Words bound us together.

At 26, I was fortunate enough to speak with him the night of his death, a brief telephone conversation about a family reunion coming up: How he didn't want to go and would do almost anything to get out of going. (Irony is a sick bastard). Had I known that was to be our last conversation, I would have chosen my words more carefully. I would have listened more closely. I would never have hung up the phone. My motor-mouth would have kept chugging along.

In elementary school, I began to speak faster and faster. I spoke so quickly that teachers could not understand me, kids teased me. When asked to answer questions in class, I machine-gunned my responses, hoping to get it over with as quickly as possible. Hoping I could go back to being invisible. But they found me. There was no quick-talking my way out of that distinct misery that only children know how to create with their dagger words.

By junior high, I had developed a thick skin. Okay, that's a lie. (I should be more careful with my words). My skin was paper thin, a shadow offering no real protection. I felt vulnerable, as though I could be torn apart at any moment. It was my wit that had thickened. I began to protect myself from words by using my own words. I was no longer a motor-mouth; I had an acid tongue. I now understood the power of words.

With the beginning of high school, in a new place with new people, I withdrew into myself and took my words with me. I tried once again to be invisible. But words found me nonetheless.

Bitch.

Whore.

Loser.

I sought comfort in words of my choosing, those printed in books. And as I read, my experience with words evolved. I realized that words are a playground for thinking. If I change one word, I change an entire thought. Or the intention behind the thought. Or the subtext. Words can reveal or conceal. Words can be precise or vague. We can be careful or careless with our words. Some words sound just like they look. Others trick the eye and ear. I realized that words could be everything, or they could be nothing. I understood that a rose by any other name is not as sweet.

So my armour became one of words. Not an armour made of wit where I deflected the hurt or redirected it to others, but one where I could use words to detach from people to me or to create a void. Words could empower me by distancing me from others.

Now, at 39, I see the great void that I have created. I disappear behind diction, conceal with connotation, and turn myself invisible with idiom. If a man is his word, then who am I? Whose words have I been using?

**Beyond Words of the  
Constitution  
By Amanda Crampton**

Inhuman  
Degrading  
Cruel Torture

The treatment of humans should be none of  
these.

Inhuman  
Degrading  
Cruel Torture

A spectrum of treatments seen, heard, and  
felt. A spectrum? Perhaps—but all deny  
rights.

Inhuman  
Degrading  
Cruel Torture

Seen throughout history,  
Still heard today;  
Worldwide victims feel the effects.

Inhuman  
Degrading  
Cruel Torture

## **Eight Sacred Seconds**

**By Jacquie Neufeld**

One

In she walks, phone in  
hand Clutched to her  
chest

Two

He ambles behind, hands in pockets happy to follow  
her lead Three

A sideways

glance at the red  
coat

*Do you see the stamp on the brass buttons?*

Indian.

Four

Just a few quick snapshots  
Click, click, click

Five

Hey! She whispers, is that a  
pipe? Six

Stealthy, quiet as if not to  
disturb These precious  
artifacts

Seven

They slip out, seemingly

unnoticed Untouched,

unchanged

Eight

Seconds....



### Fatigue is a Common Side Effect

I'm tired.  
What is it this time?  
Radiation working inside me  
zapping tiny cells  
good and bad  
as my body works to heal  
only to be reinjured by each new beam of energy  
day  
after day  
after day.

Or is it remains of the poisons I presented myself for,  
over and over,  
to kill the cells that might  
- or might not -  
have taken root elsewhere;  
even though the surgeon cut so much out,  
threw it away.

I'm tired.  
My mind clouds  
words slip away, eely and impossible to hold  
and I struggle to make my ideas coherent.  
To sound like my bald head still contains some actual intelligence.

I try to hold on to my place in the world – hard fought – finally someone I was proud to be  
teacher (wise)  
parent (loved)  
homeowner (secure)  
student (sophisticated)  
volunteer (appreciated)  
person (respected).

I lovehate being the patient.  
I'm grateful for the system which whisked me into its grasp and tossed me  
from mammogram  
to biopsy  
to OR  
to chemo ward  
to radiation table,  
with pit stops at social work, support groups, and lymphedema care.  
I think of those whose suffering came before me,  
who made known the void or the need.

I'm tired of being fed by family, by friends.  
Though I taste the love and support and care in every bite.  
My freezer overflows with love.

I'm tired.  
of appointments  
of risks and benefits  
of side effects  
of being tired.

## Metal and Stone

Juventas et Patrius Vigorous.  
Youth and Patriotic Vigour.  
Agwii' idiwin, Tratii,  
Treaty.

Athena enshrined.  
Trident, shield, centurion's helmet.  
The lion, the lord, the guardian.  
The conquerer and the conquered.

Bend your knees. Bow your head.  
Sit at the right hand of your Queen.  
Suckle at the breast of your mother,  
She who lives across the big sea.  
Britannia personified.

Tarnished silver, the shine has worn off.

Fly away, Thunderbird.  
Lest you anger Zeus.  
Fly away, Thunderbird.  
Lest the snake bite you.  
It's venom poisons, then  
Kills.

Turtle Island has flooded.  
White waves of destruction  
Wash away the past.  
Sinking, choking, drowning,  
Silencing.

Who will bring up the earth this time?  
Who will build the fire?  
Who will call forth the spirits to join us  
once again?

The immortal stone sits quietly in its glass enclosure.  
It speaks in soft whispers and vibrations.  
It is waiting.

By: Rebecca Reynolds



## **Freedoms and Rights**

A child's innocence, fresh-faced and bright,  
afforded – no born – with freedoms and rights.  
Regardless of colour, sex and race;  
regardless of language, religion, birthplace.  
But we don't all receive these freedoms and rights,  
Many live in squalor, fear and strife.

It's not supposed to matter where we live  
or which beliefs we hold...  
But it does, yes it does, despite what we're told.

Some people don't eat; we say 'that's life'.  
Others get beat; we say 'not our fight'.  
Some are held prisoners for their political stance,  
We look the other way, hardly offering a glance.  
Some people are homeless; we call them names,  
We laugh or dismiss, taunt them to shame.

A voice amongst many, a face in the crowd,  
Listen to these words, spoken out loud:

I'm born Filipino, Hindi, German, Cree.  
I'm born Irish, French, Jamaican, Greek.

I speak Arabic, Punjabi, Michif, Hebrew,  
I believe in God, Allah, I'm an atheist, A Jew.

I'm a girl, a woman, a boy, a man.  
I'm black, I'm red, I'm white, yellow, tan.

I am who I am, no more or less than that.  
I deserve freedoms and rights, and that is a fact.

Amanda Borton

