

Unpacking Stereotypes with Poetry
Readings from
Canadian Rubaiya
A Collection of Quatrains of the Heart

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2 solitudes

short story of a new future

*It's hard to consider two Canadian solitudes
When my mind returns to old European feuds
And dates for which we were royally chewed
If our young memories did those events occlude*

*Would you believe the "Scramble for Africa"
Followed the grabs for Asia and America?
Earlier still, the world was bull-ied into two
"Portugal got half. Spain, here's half for you"*

*Other factions didn't share in this earthly pie
And why should they be denied their supply?
Picture these male autochthones from Europe
With flags & crosses making a global cleanup*

*"For the King & Queen we claim these lands"
While the natives cheered in the grandstands
Continents entire taken lock, stock and barrel
Savages now granted entry into the historical*

*It was in Kenya as I listened to my teacher
But far more interested was I in her stature
What did I care about ancient globalization?
Yet I own memories of "getting civilization"*

*Sitting quietly on the Plains of Abraham
Reflecting on yesterday's television program
My history teacher assumes another stature
I wonder whether the news was a caricature*

*"That decisive battle of seventeen fifty-nine
Is another story of the European bloodline
A reminder of mass continental distribution"
Now we're talking mass global destruction*

*But, there's light in the land of two solitudes
Being joined by all the colonized other dudes
Also re-searching to formulate a new future
Without making the past a complete rupture*

*Stories waiting to be re-told and re-written
Explorations of other/coloured imagination
Voyages into futures of the Canadian terrain
Discoveries past the "e" of what's human(e)*

school WAS hell

*When authority & violence & racism are institutionalized
And all 3 instruments in the same concert are operationalized
When the perpetrators are adults and children are victimized*

Time is endless pain and space is brutality 3-Dimensionalized

*When you scoop me out of the place I call home and my family
Force me to stay in your school and then call this educating me
If danger lurks in the class, in the halls and in the dormitory*

Time is agony of pain and residence is a brutal 3-D purgatory

*When my way of smiling "Hello" to you is beaten out of me
My story of creation trashed and your history stamped into me
If I cannot even look you in the eye to see my own subjectivity*

Time is relentless pain and school is 3-Dimensional brutality

*When the paleness of your skin works as antidote for the acts
And your power to name me continues yet to hide the facts
Because your histories are written and my tongues are oral*

Time is memory of pain and space is brutality 3-Dimensional

*I will keep asking you, "Should you not have known better?"
Where was your spirit and what did you follow to the letter?
Did your heart not protest when you saw the pain in my face?*

How on God's earth did you construct this brutal 3-D space?

*Many have died, few survive the ravages of the past century
As the nineteen hundreds are burnt into my deepest memory
This continent shudders, wounded by 100 years of depravity*

Time that could have been hope, space the future of our humanity

*Why did so many react so badly?
Is the question I asked repeatedly
What is it they couldn't hack?
The other's right to talk back?*

*This professor of a different kind
She decided to speak her mind
But the whole pack went ballistic
With language beyond vitriolic*

*From paper one to paper another
The entire press in such a rancour
The privileged sporting hypocrisy
Throughout many a Canadian city*

*Guys expressing their own opinions
Now behaving like media minions
Was it about her, was it about them
Media mouthpieces, corporate spam?*

*Who controls this institution
Protected by the constitution?
Whither went freedom of speech
We treasure from beach to beach?*

*The courage to attack content
Was found to be non-existent
"To the country she's an affront,
How dare she," the only constant*

*When did they read the Charter?
Missed class in their alma mater?
Or do they read between the lines
The "Whites Only" of past times?*

*Those clubs of their colonial past
Where "others" met a cold blast
"Get the hell out you lousy bugger
We won't serve your bloody colour"*

*How did it arrive at this state
The press as an engine of hate?
Is this what we're protecting
Mass communication of hating?*

*How did journalism sink so low?
Was education all ebb, no flow?
What is it these guys won't see
To keep repeating this lousy D?*

Journalism 101-D

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