

BEAUTIFUL REBELLION FEATURE

RITA BOUVIER¹

ABSTRACT. Rita Bouvier is a Métis writer and educator from Saskatchewan. Her third book of poetry, *nakamowin'sa for the seasons* (Thistledown Press, 2015) was the 2016 Saskatchewan Book Awards winner of the Rasmussen, Rasmussen & Charowsky Aboriginal Peoples' Writing Award. Rita's poetry has appeared in literary anthologies, print and online journals, musicals, and television productions, and has been translated into Spanish, German and the Cree-Michif of her home community of sakitawak, Île-à-la-Crosse, situated on the historic trading and meeting grounds of Cree and Dene people.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rita Bouvier is a Métis writer, editor, and retired educator with 37 years in public education at the k-12 and post-secondary levels. Rita's contributions to Indigenous education include essays, books, reports, and active support for community decolonization efforts. Her fourth poetry book, *a beautiful rebellion*, was released in April 2023. Her work appears in various anthologies and productions and has been translated into Spanish, German, and Cree-Michif of her home community of Île-à-la-Crosse, Sk. Rita is a volunteer with the Saskatchewan Anskohk Writers Circle Inc., the Indigenous Editors Association, and the League of Canadian Poets.

2. FEATURED POETRY

L'dzimâsh

(for my childhood cousin-friend)

L'dzimâsh is a day you usually send out feelers into the cosmos. Maybe it comes from living alone or maybe it's a form of prayer – a reaching outward to make a connection to the human and non-human world on the day set aside for rest. Sure enough, your email arrives, and you are wondering “what a philosopher would say? Natural or divine order? Or no order at all?”

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No context to draw on, I write back. I just awoke from a deep sleep! Who pray tell is asking such questions of enormous proportions? By natural order, do you mean nature's laws? By divine, do you mean God?

You respond. I am asking the question. I asked six people the same question this morning. Some views about "order" are huge, like expecting the sun to come up every morning, trees to be still standing when we wake up, even expecting the Co-op to be full of food. I was wondering about divine versus natural order after reading about how people are affected by trauma, and how trauma shakes their belief in whatever type of order they may have believed in. For instance, people who survive climate disasters or human disasters like the holocaust, wars or extreme domestic violence. It left me wondering about the kind of order I believe in, have faith in. Maybe, I need "philosopher" software to figure it out and a glass of red Beaujolais. Meanwhile, here in the boreal forest this weird climate change thing is happening. Rain in January is definitely not natural order. There is less snow than usual up here. The forests may be drier when you come this summer. Hope the blueberries aren't affected.

I offer a quick response. First off, human behaviour, judging from recent world events, would suggest we must be the most stupid life form on the planet and in the universe. Ants are smarter. And people who are traumatized by natural events or man-made disasters, of which there are so many these days, shaken in their belief about a so-called higher entity that doesn't play favourites, are sillier than silly. Let me think. I will write again.

Later that day I write. I lean toward science (from the Latin word scientia for knowledge)— natural laws that kihtêyak speak of, which includes growth and eventual breakdown of all life forms, sometimes helped along by other natural forces coalescing/conspiring to speed up the process. I read something interesting recently about "consciousness" that goes beyond the understanding of an awareness that resides within us as human beings, as a state extending to all life in the universe. Now that's something to wrap your head around. Never mind philosopher software, we need a Cree etymologist. It sounds vaguely familiar to the story that everything has spirit/energy. Natural or divine order? I am not entirely certain. For now, I am content talking to plants - urging them along to maturity and beauty, singing with the birds, who seem to do so dutifully each morning. Maybe they know something we don't. I believe in purposefulness and vibration of positive energy. I believe in goodness. Most mornings, I awake happy to know there is some order and rhythm to dance to within our galaxy, regardless of where it may come from.

For the most part, the pagan in me worships the old ones - sun, moon and stars, and yes, I too hope the blueberries are large, plump and juicy. There is nothing like the kiss on my lips of northern boreal sweetness, of blueberries in my mouth! That was a mouthful.

words and beads, lines and silk threads

you know you are Métis when

you salivate

hearing certain sounds

lapocin l'frrakasî

li rrababô mîn'sâpoy

la kalet l' boyöñ

you know you are Métis when

you confuse “vingt” with “l'văn”

your grandfather is counting weights

on the net he has been mending all morning

you run to tell your grandmother

certain moshôm has drinking on his mind

you know you are Métis when

you weep instead of dance

at the sound of the fiddle

remembering your uncle Louis

late evenings on the porch

playing melancholic music to the universe

you know you are Métis when

your auntie Pauline claims

at a family wake

that *Breeze* has nothing over the heavenly scent

of wet stiff frozen underwear

hung on the clothesline in winter

then wrestled into the house to dry

you know you are Métis when

your eyes hurt so bad

at the sight of a handsome man

who swaggers into a room

poignantly stops combs his dark hair back

with his fingers in a stroke of a strong hand

you know you are Métis when

you realize you are related to everyone

based on the family tree

passed down to you as a young woman

and there is no one I mean no one

for miles around available to marry

you know you are Métis when

you believe squirrels are relatives

you believe when it rains

she is crying replenishing the earth

revelation an on-going process

we really do not know much

you know you are Métis when

you greet everyone you meet with

oh Milky Way galax-yion! oh earthling!

how spectacular our home!

did you know from the vantage point of lalôn

we disappear

you know you are Métis when

you talk about wild life

you don't mean

trees and plants or animals in the boreal forest

fowl or birds or rodents you mean

the life you actually lead or wish you did

you know you are Métis when

you are wearing designer jeweller *Pelletier*

gems of real stones

intricately tangled in seed beads

and you want the world

to know you are

Acknowledgement. Thank you, Thistledown Press, for allowing us to feature Rita Bouvier's work in this inaugural edition. To purchase the collection, visit <https://thistledownpress.com/product/a-beautiful-rebellion/>