

On the Move-a collection of poems

Barbara Waldern

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Part One:

Poems from the novel, *Camelia in Winter*

1. Winter Comes
2. Morning Glory
3. Ocean and Light
4. Camelias

Winter Comes

Fruit hangs like hearts from bending tired mothers;
It is autumn now and they retreat,
Exhausted from the feeding,
But generously surrender their offspring.
Hush, now. Winter comes but will bring forth new life.
Remember that camelias, ever green, bloom in winter.

Morning Glory

A simple vine binds the ground,
Pulls the weight of fear down,
Creeps up fences barbed and high,
Past point of gun to spy.
Though at night it be closed, down cast,
The morning brings the flower at last;
Silent white trumpets herald in glory,
Rise up and reclaim the nation's story.

Ocean and Light

Some say life is an ocean:

Succumbing to the tides of change,

Floods of excess, and

Droughts by deprivation

It is always in motion ,

A vast body always changing shape

And shifting the sands, itself

Pushed and pulled by cosmic forces;

It is both nurturing and destructive,

It is cause and effect together;

It can carry us away

Opening passage to freedom

Or, swallowing us up.

It is the arms of refuge and the fist of storm,

Life sustaining and life extinguishing,

Inspiring both fear and solace.

Life is light, too.

Twilight brings peace in the neutral space

Between the dramatic glare of the sun

And the secret smoldering of the night.

Tonight, the water is calm and mysterious;

Together we fall into respite.

Headlights catch a glimpse
Of humility bared and nerve exposed—
Questions rise and float about the shore
So our words say very little
While the evening air speaks volumes.
Concealed by the cloak of darkness
And awaiting the morrow,
Here we stand safe upon the shore,
Feet on the ground but eager to swim,
Sharing the stillness in a moment's
Panoramic view of a detail,
Conscious of the essential.

By Barbara Waldern

Masan, 2008

Camelias

Although they resemble lumps of snow,
Look closely to see how they grow
On branches bearing dark green leaves, firm and crisp,
In defiance of winter chill that turns breath to wisp,
To recall that brown and grey stem amid dead leaves
Cold has made slumber but must surge life in heaves
As soon as the season is right
When the forest's forces recover their might
And warmth rallies its strength
Because the evergreens at length
Have persisted to bloom,
Never succumbing to gloom.
White of purity, white of peace,
Camelia's petals open in release
Of spirit, joy, beauty, and love
At any hint of hope, any sign of the dove;
Against all odds that would life discourage
Camelia never gives up, never loses courage.
And so she poses and beckons in luminescent glow
Of rounded deep and wide richness upon all to bestow.

By Barbara Waldern

Masan, 2008

Part Two:

Other Works written from 2007 to 2010

1. Self in Motion
2. Canada Day Message from an Economic Exile
3. On Education and Liberation
4. Straight Pine
5. My Desire
6. Bus
7. Toast to a jack-ass

Self in Motion

Cross the water

Stretch the bounds

Step over miles

Escape the hounds—

My life is not where

They say it's supposed to be;

Despite not to spite it,

I live according to me.

That may sound selfish

And hard to relate

But there's no telling

The quirks of fate.

I am not a pilot

Though active and participant

The universe changes

Directs and rearranges

No, I'm not just

Along for the ride—

Whatever happens

I take it all in my stride.

I may push, pull

But get swept aside

Or unwarned collide

Or suddenly slide.
However grand,
We are never
Masters of any land;
Just pawns in some strange plan
Or unintended consequence
Of powerful coincidence—
Who knows?—
Not you, not me.
Yes, we can affect
At least the schemes of man.
It pays to work for betterment;
We should do what we can
But be careful what you expect
And who and how you criticize;
Shame is a boomerang
And scorn ricochet,
Opinion a double-edged sword,
Anger a trigger
Or a detonation,
It *is* all a matter
Of interpretation.

Language is a record,
Though, too, a matter for interpretation;
It is also a testimony
And a moment of contemplation.
Language is a sign,
And signal,
As much as it is a voice.
Language is a habit
That one wears and performs;
Language is a revelation
That can take many forms.
Once, it is verse,
Then, it is a line—
Poignant, mundane, sublime—
Of a script to rehearse.
Sometimes it is food,
Others just some wind,
Urge you may wish to rescind;
Or meant to allude,
Whether jingle or song,
Speech, however long,
Mere emotions to exude;
There's always event
By accident
As well as blurt imprudent.

Language is a code;
You're free to decipher—
What it may mean
We're never quite decided.
Language is a barrier
Sometimes consciously constructed
It is a device, tool and object,
Obstructing and obstructed.
It is education
Fastidiously instructed,
Though , at times, a reward
That may be self-inducted.
Language is commodity
And a cornered market—
Bought, sold and traded,
Its value up then deflated.
Language is indication of class.
Language is air—
Its substance might not last.
Language is sound,
Often unheard,
Writing square or round,
Read or unread word.
Language can be rationality;
It is also nationality,

Which may not be rational at all.

Language may be big

Or understood as small.

Be it building block

Or hackneyed stock,

Set of stairs,

Splitting hairs

River flowing,

Of laughs and glares,

Flower growing,

Source of light,

Or no delight,

All depending on the learner.

Language is argument

As much as it is explanation.

Language is shopping lists

As much as it is narration.

Language is history

As much as it is oration.

III

Some argue that

Oceans are just there,

Not meant to be crossed,

As they do nations.

Still, we cross and are crossed,
With or without care,
Under emblems and slogans,
By cheap or valiant machinations.
Of moguls and shoguns.
People move or are moved.
That is a fact.
They always have and always will.
That is that.
They may wish to escape,
Or hope to change shape.
They may wish upward mobility,
To reach the status of nobility,
Or they like to eat
And stay dry,
If to meet grim feat,
While aiming to try.

IV

Here upon the crest of my voyage,
I survey.
I can see farther now.
I am larger
While the world is smaller.
I am less significant

Though I am taller.
The world means more to me now.
More things matter less, anyhow,
Though the value of life
Has ascended and descended
According to certain kinds of rulers
Who also suffer their ups and downs.
To travel
Is to unravel
Then fold up again.
Pack and unpack
Case and gunny sack.
Here, I rest.
I must.
Until nature's jest
Blasts yet another gust
And moves me
Like a spider
To resurrect webs.
Life's like that.
It's where it's at.
Here, then there,
Evolution not well accounted,
Mountain as yet unmounted,
Among forests uncharted,

Oceans too deep
And generations unstarted,
Or so it seems to us,
Though we see patterns,
From Suns to Satums,
In which we are trapped.
We can only yelp and cry,
The universe passes us by:
Thunder clapped,
Mountains percolated,
Gases infiltrated;
The galaxy evolves,
Sphere spins and revolves,
Matter is created,
Matter dissolves.
History is a human invention
And the clock a simple convention —
Little lines we scratch,
To make rules, labels and rhyme,
Of things we cannot catch;
There is no time.
We can never be master
For the more we bleed
The universe burns faster.
By Barbara Waldern (Masan, 2008)

Canada Day Message from an Economic Exile

Many times the world has beckoned before—

Other lives to live, other lands beyond my door—

Yet I've resisted

While it's persisted;

What really suits

Is faith in roots.

Attending to international affairs

Need not take abandoning domestic cares,

Appreciation of the Other

Does not demand neglect of Mother

The justifications for travel, however,

Augmenting, urge departing forever.

Still I plug along, persevere,

Never really wanting to leave here

But now I suffer the rising voice,

“Do current conditions give any choice?”

O Canada, hell bent to globalize

Encourages all to de-regionalize,

Downsize, relocate,

Deconstruct, depatriate.

Our Uncle Sam sheds light

From fierce eyes burning bright

Illuminating horrific path to follow
In decay, gluttony, death, greed, rape to wallow
Leaving behind countless souls charred,
Hopes, dreams, mores and integrity marred.
Spirits give into disconsolation
Relent, consider betrayal of nation;
The drum beats out of the belly haunt,
Drive the war march for have against want
Over hill and sea, mother, daughter, sister goes
Depending which way the money flows.

O Canada, you can count me out
“Peace making’s” not what I’m about:
“Keep Afghanistan in line
And we’ll all be just fine” —
I join the protesters in their denouncing
All the “development” that you’re announcing.
I want no part in your Olympic sized debacle
That robs the poor, binds some in shackle,
That dumps the vulnerable in the street, uncared for,
Underemploys skilled workers, just one foot in the door,
Causes untold sickness and accidents at work,
Denies benefits, says the downtrodden shirk.
Cost of living simply exploding,
State responsibility unloading,

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