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American Journal of Poetry (July 2020): [The American Journal Of Poetry](#)

Arion (Winter 2021): [Volume 28 | Arion \(bu.edu\)](#)

The Poets' Touchstone (62.1, 62.2): [Publications – Poetry Society of New Hampshire \(psnh.org\)](#)

Comment on poem:

The poem “Botanical Gardens” is from a collection entitled *Province* or (I hope) *Where There Are Words* (bending a certain permission) and offered *in memoriam* to Danielle Passentin. The book refers to many places in Quebec, especially Montreal (as here) where Danielle lived and I often visited. The poem draws on the writings of François Cheng, whom Danielle was reading in the last years and months of her life. Cheng also wrote a book on Shitao, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese artist and Buddhist monk.

Additional Poems

Unpublished (from *Province*)

MONT-ROYAL CEMETERY

Yes, that's right, you are a discussion to me  
As we walk the parchment hills,  
Straggling down the mountain  
From Lac des Castors.  
Serried graves echo the city's grid.  
Further passages in strength unroll,  
Brief north day bevels the sun  
And light skates down the corridor of death.

Frozen jaw, bracing wind, we,  
In the province of our exchange,  
We, walking among the trees and text;  
Our words are birch trunks  
Fading in a blizzard,  
Marble statues in a drift.

More and further passages of strength

Unroll before us.  
Brief north day bevels the sun.  
Light skates down the corridor of death.

1996

Unpublished (from *Province*)

#### OUTREMONT

Some gods must be stacking blocks of ice,  
Facet to facet, for makeshift towers  
To house the oracle  
Who speaks the capillating Borealis  
Into the south.  
For the sky never could say itself out  
On such a day.  
But for some there is only one God,  
And the wailing wall,  
An alabaster tree sprouting  
Knotted prayers for fruit.

No vehicles ventured much this morning,  
Trees rigged out in spongy snow,  
Fresh drifts of sufficient size  
To help us understand the departed storm.  
All day we skated and played puck,  
Until the crust of twilight burned.  
We shouldered our sticks and met  
The Orthodox fathers and children  
Scrolling home their sleds.  
The family still walks, therefore,  
The stages of an ancient moment.  
Though unable to voice a vow of stability,  
Despite Hadrian and the Holocaust,  
Still look, we hold  
Our crumpled fruit upward,  
Our daily upward waiting cries  
Hammered out of  
Isolation, neuroses, displacement,  
That fragrant Jerusalem be this evening,  
In handwritten notes  
Of childhood's snowdrift, a candle,  
For those unspoken songs collect and scatter

And bathe beyond the natural effect  
Of the playful gift we were taking home,  
A light that gives what we never had,  
Stretches over us the *plenius* viaduct  
By which we arrive equal to the day  
For it had been a day and we had skated hard.

2017

unpublished

### SHAPES OF THE WORD

Sun-shaped, dressed in a moo-moo  
Yellow and ungainly bright,  
She appeared at my door to ask a simple question,  
To which I made a gruff reply, being choked  
With papers to be graded.  
Nudged by thought or heart, I looked up,  
When she had gone,

And saw only the air of her departure,  
The bountiful fault line in time  
Remained as I ran where I sat, still hadn't fled  
Some momentary after-image of her,  
Frictionless, generative,  
The air within air on the move, silent sparks  
Along the jam.

Between worlds a pinole of light  
Gave what's there and gone  
In the doorway's frame, a flashing fish,  
The lightning face on the shroud's vanish,  
Asking no more  
Than to break bread in kind words,  
And still she left me this.

2021