

Classic Poetry Series

Erin Mouré
- poems -

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Erin Mouré(17 April 1955)

Erin Mouré is a Canadian poet and translator of poetry from languages which include, French, Galician, Portuguese and Spanish to English.

Biography

Her mother Mary Irene was born 1924 in Galicia, Western Ukraine (then Poland) and emigrated to Canada in 1929.(ref) Erin's father is William Moure born in Ottawa Canada in 1925. Erin is the oldest of 3, having two younger brothers, Ken and Bill. In 1975 Erin moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where she took her second year classes at University of British Columbia in philosophy. After only taking one year of classes Erin left University of British Columbia and got a job at Via Rail Canada where she continued to write poetry and is where she learnt French, Erin still lives in Montreal Canada

Writing and Style

According to an interview conducted in the early 1990s, Erin has four major influences which led her to become a writer, other than the work of other writers or poets: "Landscape of cars, her mother going to work, her mother teaching her to read, and in a small way losing her sense of touch"[5] Of her more recent work, Melissa Jacques has written: "Erin Mouré's poetry is fragmented, meta-critical and explicitly deconstructive. Folding everyday events and ordinary people into complex and often irresolvable philosophical dilemmas, Mouré challenges the standards of accessibility and common sense. Not surprisingly, her work has met with a mixed response. Critics are often troubled by the difficult and therefore alienating nature of the writing; even amongst Mouré's advocates, the issues of accessibility and political efficacy are recurrent themes."(on Moure's EPC page, external link below).

Erin has been nominated and won many writing awards for both her writing and her translation. Some of these awards are the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, Governor General's Award for poetry, Prize for Poetry.

[I can t sleep for grief]

I can t sleep for grief.
I can t sleep for longing.
I can t sleep for wanting happiness!
Mother, how will I live.
Who will sing a canticle?
The word bower?

(I can t sleep, I don t believe now in service
to the king! The king s a traitor.
He s going to kill what I most love!)

[776] #833 [777] #834
Pero da Ponte

Erin Mouré

[I ll never master the art of poetry]

I ll never master the art of poetry. I
have these words: sadness and tears!

I m not going to put them into lines for
you. Or ask for death. Or tell you

I suffer endlessly, courting
you.

Sadness and tears!

[807] #864

Dom Johanne Meendiz de Breteyros

Erin Mouré

[I m going to walk to the mountain]

I m going to walk to the mountain. As if
we could meet there!

First I must dream the mountain
will it be verdant? Hazed with summer?

Or will I walk to you through
snow.

(My heart.)

[871] #927

Roy Fernandez, Clerigo

Erin Mouré

[I m not pleading any thread of love]

I m not pleading any thread of love
until I see you.

I m not plaiting my hair above
until the sea brings you.

Back from where you ve gone.
To serve history and the King?

(I don t know what to do
and don t advise me, oh my friends.)

[861] #918
Pero Gonçaluez de Porto Carreyro

Erin Mouré

[It was at the fountain where I washed my curls]

It was at the fountain where I washed my curls,
Mother, and where I did loosen them
and me
oh lucent

It was at the spring where I rinsed my locks
Mother, and where I did loosen them
and me
Lucent

At the fountain where I did loosen my curls
there I knew — Mother — one to lord over them.
and me
Lucent oh

Before I from that place departed
Loosened was I in the words he d told me
and me
oh oh [lucent

[652] #689
Don Joham Soarez Coelho
« and so I did appease them »

Erin Mouré

[Lisbon is sleeping]

Lisbon is sleeping;
the spaces under the staircase breathe like
a lung.

The loneliness inside horse-drawn vehicles
was transferred to us on their demise.

Rain falls into the Tejo.
Reverence waits in the streets
and on the roof tiles.

The city of Lisbon is asleep.
The Phoenician city is asleep and the Roman city is asleep
It is Sunday and the city of Lisbon
breathes like a lung
breathes like a lung
asleep on its side

a dog asleep on its side in a house in the Lapa
a chandelier on its side in the Bairro Alto.

Real lungs have journeyed to Lisbon
Lungs in a coat, arriving now
in Lisbon.

A carriage is not enough for a lung.
A river is enough for a lung!

A carriage has journeyed into Lisbon,
look, the lung has turned away
and is walking.

The lung wants a river or nothing.
The lung can make its own river and its own
coitas.

How haughty of the lung!

Some hands are slicing potatoes in the kitchen.
I am alone in the streets of Lisbon.
The cobbles are kicked up
fractured, the hands keep cutting potatoes.

The player falls dead on the field;
for a moment, pain's syncope, then nothing!
The hands in the kitchen cut potatoes.
Potatoes come from the earth!
Far earth. Earth below Lisbon.
Pain like that is surprising
but doesn't long.

Sea.

The mouth of the sea?
A lungs' mouth too common in an aching world
So many ancestors wore their molecules differently
coats
meals, sweaters
as the wind comes up. Will you be there?

When you're hungry you move
so fast you bear snow in you.

50 years since it's

snowed in Lisbon.

Erin Mouré

[My eyes, not seeing you]

My eyes, not seeing you, to all else
go blind.

Is it you, from far off, blinding me?

So many others just look up from their mundane
desks, and see you.

They re blind too, without a clue
of what blindness is.

(Green plants see me, I can t bear
to see them.)

(Ducks, white leaves. The air
of Lisbon.)

(Ships.

[] #1394

María A. Soldadeira

The excess, 'ships,' is one way of hoping for love.

Erin Mouré

A Real Motorcycle

Unspeakable. The word that fills up the
poem, that the head
tries to excise.

At 6 a.m., the wet lion. Its sewn plush face
on the porch rail in the rain.
Heavy rains later, & maybe a thunderstorm.
12 or 13 degrees.

Inside: an iris, candle, poster of the
many-breasted Artemis in a stone hat
from Anatolia

A little pedal steel guitar

A photograph of her at a table by the sea,
her shoulder blocked by the red geranium.
The sea tho invisible can be smelled by the casual watcher
Incredible salt air
in my throat when I see her.

'Suddenly you discover that you'll spend your entire life
in disorder; it's all that you have; you must learn to live
with it.'

2

Four tanks, & the human white-shirted body
stopped on June 5 in Place Tian an Men.

Or 'a red pullover K-Way.' There is not much time left
to say these things. The urgency of that,

desire that dogged the body all winter
& has scarcely left,
now awaits the lilacs, their small white bunches.

Gaily.

As if their posies will light up
the curious old intentional bruise.

Adjective, adjective, adjective, noun!

3

Or just, lilac moon.

What we must, & cannot, excise from the head.
Her hand holding, oh, The New Path to the Waterfall?
Or the time I walked in too quickly, looked up
at her shirtless, grinning.
Pulling her down into the front of me, silly!
Sitting down sudden to make a lap for her...
Kissing the back of her leg.

4

Actually the leg kiss was a dream, later enacted
we laughed at it,
why didn't you do it
she said
when you thought of it.

The excisable thought, later
desired or
necessary.
Or shuddered at, in memory.

Later, it is repeated for the cameras
with such unease.

& now, stuck in the head.
Like running the motorcycle full-tilt into the hay bales.
What is the motorcycle doing in the poem

A. said.

It's an image, E. said back.
It's a crash in the head, she said.

It's a real motorcycle.

Afterthought 1

O excise this: her back turned,
she concentrates on something
in a kitchen sink,
& I sit behind her,
running my fingers on
the table edge.

O excise this.

Afterthought 2

& after, excise, excise.
If the source of the pain could be located
using geological survey equipment.
Into the sedimentary layers, the slippage,
the surge of the igneous intrusion.
Or the flat bottom of the former sea
I grew up on,
Running the motorcycle into the round
bay bales.
Hay grass poking the skin.
The back wet.

Hey, I shouted,
Her back turned to me, its location
now visible only in the head.

When I can't stand it,
I invent anything, even memories.

She gets up, hair stuck with hay.

I invented this. Yeow.

Erin Mouré

An Endnote And Love Song:

1. And if you were to leave me for my faults
2. I'd not defend my lameness, walking halt
3. and from my trust I would elide your
4. name, I would not do you wrong and speak of you
5. and (love) I'd not look at our friends who say you do
6. not merit me Your name was sweet and is no more
7. I will not speak of you
8. nor will I walk again where we once walked
9. I will not let my tongue evoke your name.
10. Your name will not be named by me, lest I profane
11. I will not name you.
12. I will not speak (too much profane)
13. You gone, I could not love me more than you
14. and if you love me not at all I love me even less
15. But oh your name. It will not touch my mouth.

I will not (trout) name you.

Erin Mouré

An endnote and love song:

SAUNA 89 (sweated by ?. ????????)

1. And if you were to leave me for my faults
2. I'd not defend my lameness, walking halt
3. and from my trust I would elide your
4. name, I would not do you wrong and speak of you
5. and (love) I'd not look at our friends who say you do
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Erin Mouré

Georgette

Dignified is a heartsong here
Harsh traverse of the unknown

"Better to go down dignified"
Ekes out
constant

What gives in us, or won't give
(her smile seen once in the Red Café)

Turns sparkless
Into sparklers

One "s" less
One "r" more, Georgette

- - - - -

The new wall we built that year
where the house side had been torn out

Grammar we called in

like a bet on narrative

- - - - -

Now I am the only one who hasn't yet gone in;
and I have these sentences

(fissures in the hand)

Erin Mouré

The Chord

Courageous lair "might prevail"
Waking up to her your "yellow coal"

Steals a its way

harm's imbrogliatic murmur
to concatenate

has been "said"
a mortal habitation or cut in air

that air leaks through

here too

Tricked again out of
hope's chord

The oscillatory hum in the head, or
amygdala

continual reaction in the wet mouth to
old oranges, or

mistakes in form
"I retain a clear memory of afternoon light."

A vertebra unfolds its wing, its smallest
wing, the pleasure particulate of such a wing

(harp's corde)

a our mycelium

Anonymous submission.

Erin Mouré

The Cold

There was a cold
In which

A line of water across the chest risen
(dream)

Impetuate, or
Impetuates

Orthograph you cherish, a hand her
Of doubt importance

Her imbroglio the winnowing of ever
Does establish

An imbroglio, ever
she does repeatedly declare

to no cold end
Admonish wit, at wit's end, where "wit" is

The cold of which
her azul gaze impart a stuttered pool

Memoria address me here (green)

Echolalic fear
Her arm or name in French says "smooth"

A wine-dark seam inside the head, this name
The "my" head I admit, or consonantal glimmer

Insoluble
Or wet fields the vines or eucalyptus wood

Lift from, here

Whose cartilage did grief still bear?
Whose silent wound?
Who submitted?
Who fortuitously was grave?
A trepidation honest
Whose declaration met silence?
Whose demurred?
Whose wall shored up became
houses?
Whose "will"?

Whose sympathetic concatenation? Whose picture
withstood "ordeal"?
Who caressed "that tiger"?
Whose laugh at an airport called forth? Whose ground
shifted?

Anonymous submission.

Erin Mouré

The Grammar Of The Dog

I have a little dog of water
It is just a little peg
my dog of water

Do you see it
so worn down across the field
nosing low in the bended grasses?

It is my dog of water.
Each leaf of grass dips a scarf into its passing.

Even the grass today is running.
Even the grass today touches the dog of water.

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Calzada (Reboredo)

Nowhere yet has a footfall proven
adequate to its situation
Waiting for the boots to call out
from their stall by the door

Boots wet with river and a field's muck
Boots that touched a swollen sheep
lain there and a swollen yellow cat
lain there rain in its hair
little rivulets running down its body
its hair in wet swirls

Boots that found it there beside the road's calzada
A little grass grown round it far too soon
and no one to bring it to the earth again
though it touches the earth

and the boots touch the earth
that's all they do
touch the earth
that's all they do

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Confluence (A Carixa)

A little river and a big river
the story of the bronchials
Some of earth's heartbeat but not all

The water rose in the little river
and washed the big river away
Some of the lungs' telluric memory

The story of a river mouth
and a confluence
From such a place you can hear the river
or you can breathe
but you have to choose or it chooses you

If it chooses you you are an asthmatic
Now you can live here forever
You can sit under the oak leaves and feel wet spray

The big river and the little river
The story of breath in a meander

The big river and the little river
A little story of leaves the river swept away

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Green Leira (Mandúa)

Is bad weather coming
how would we know
Is bad weather coming
call everyone

I am all alone cutting the grass or grain
cutting the wood I am alone
splitting it open carrying it to the crib
Call everyone, put the white table out in the yard
sharpen the knives the scythes
bring out the books now
sharpen the clock's knives too

where did we read any of this
my heart mad with beating
I might lie down here in this field before you come

call everyone
the flies are singing their hymnal hum hum ai ai
how would we know

the needles of the clock are cutting down the names of the hours

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Hope of a Cebola (Santiso)

On the hill there is no hay
but rain

no hay for a hayrick but
small rivulets singing the grass down

An onion has toppled off a high cart
the chest of the high cart has gone on past the hill

if pressed with a shoe an onion toppled
may take root

Will a shoe ever find it
how can we know

will the onion find a mouth to eat it
how can we ever know

In the channels of water :
small blue rivulets of blue

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Millo Seco (Botos)

I am in the little field of my mother
Her field touches
oaks of the valley
and I touch the faces of my corn

Opening corn's faces
so that my hands touch its braille letters
The face of corn is all in braille
the corn wrote it

Fires will burn this evening
burn the dry husks of the corn
and I will learn to read
Sheep will wait by the trough
for they know corn's feature, corn's humility

corn's dichten

grain's

granite too

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Peito (Santiso)

In a woman's arms lies a man
his skin is blue and his lips are blue
and his chest is a hayrick
flat with forks of blue
Perhaps he is dead, perhaps he is dreaming
perhaps he remembers the law has smote him down

he has shut his eyes
his eyes are open
his chest is a hayrick
His head is very tiny, bearded with thread

his head has the breadth of an onion
in a mother's arms
where is she carrying this onion :
its chest is so huge!
on the road above the house roofs :

why is this onion passing by?

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Stone Chapel (Abades)

In one of its cornices are the two boots of a man
In one of the stone canzorros
If you listen you can hear him walk
His walk is stone and
his gasoline is stone
and his quill is stone

that's why he hasn't written
because his quill is stone

that's why he hasn't come yet
his gasoline is stone

that's why at night you hear him walking
his boots are stone

even his field of corn is stone
and his mother is water

Erin Mouré

Theatre of the Stones that Ran (Fontao, 1943)

At night in the valley of penedos erguidos
a glint of wolfram

the uncles' job at night
to touch the glint of wolfram

wolfram brought riches for all in Fontao
they all had jobs then in Fontao
even the prisoners worked in Fontao
the garrison eyed everyone

there was only the night left

The uncles mined the glint in the river course
and stood up in the water
at night they worked each with small hands of xeo
and stood up in the water
climbed out of the river with the wolfram

penedos erguidos
human uncles, tiny

and they ran

for M.I

Erin Mouré