

Bruce Taylor Pulls the Strings

by Mariève MacGREGOR

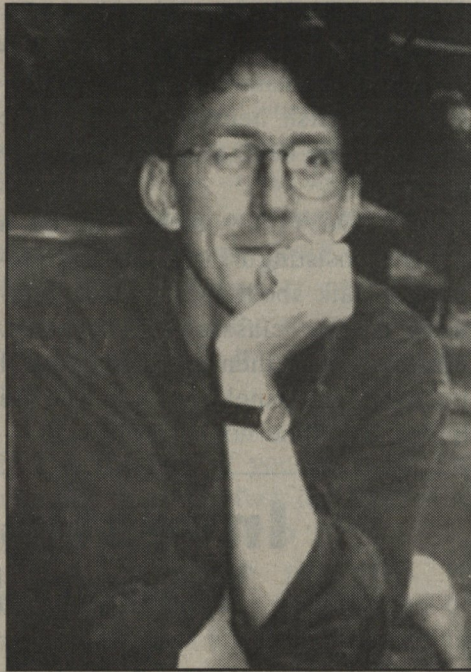
*** Damn, it's started already.. *** I arrived late and the only seats available were most of the entire front row. I was to listen to, then interview, a man by the name of Bruce Taylor. Taylor was giving a poetry reading at the Confederation Centre Library this (Thursday) evening, and was on a tour of the Maritimes doing similar lectures.

Taylor was completely dressed in grey. "Poets don't have fashion sense," he tells me later on, "and besides, I'm living out of a suitcase and this is all that was clean." A little inside info: poets tend to wear dark clothing for readings, because a listener must listen with all their senses, and bright clothing distracts the eye.

Dr Richard Lemm gave the introduction, enlightening us with the facts of Bruce Taylor's life. He lives in Wakefield, Quebec, once toured for two years with a puppeteering group, builds guitars, furniture, boats that actually float, and anything else that can be made of wood. He was also a poet on CBC radio for awhile. (One of the only paying poet jobs in Canada.) As compelling as this was, I was ready for some inspired poetry.

And it came with a blow! *** Woah. This guy knows how to read poetry!*** His enunciation, the rhythm and flow of his words, his voice. Obvious to the experienced poetry buff, Taylor's poetry is very well revised, edited, and thought out. Sweat, blood, and the like have gone into these works of perfection.

In between reading poems, Taylor would recount for us experiences he'd had with critics, bosses, CBC, and other miscellanies. One such critic critiqued that he couldn't understand the reason for Taylor's poetry. What purpose did it have? "This really got me thinking," said Taylor. "And I came to the conclusion that there is no reason to write any poetry. Poetry is unassigned writing." I found lots of reason in his poetry though. Theories, ideas, mini-anecdotes, intriguing imagery. If it wasn't thought provoking, it was entertaining



Bruce Taylor.

and witty.

Then comes the big moment, the interview. But of course, I freeze up and can't convince myself to go talk to him.

*** How pathetic is this? I, a poet, too afraid to approach another poet and ask a few questions. The real problem is that I don't have an angle; I haven't a clue as to what to ask. I'll say something like, "Hey, you were great. I'm a poet too," and he'll get to know my whole life story and I'll still know jack squat about him, besides what Dr. Lemm had detailed earlier in the intro... and whatever else that comes off the top of my head. ***

MacGregor: How do you like Prince Edward Island?

Taylor: It's flat and red, and can I ask about Mount Alberton? Is that it's real name, or were my travelling companions joshing me?

M: Yes, it's really called that.

T: You're kidding.

M: Nu-uh. What makes you tick?

T: Coffee. It is the base of my life form.

M: Tell me about your poetry. How did you start? What inspires you to write?

T: Well, I read a lot of poetry, and eventually just started writing it. That's how all poetry gets started. I mean, poetry begets poetry right? As for my style, I just write for the sake of writing. I don't write to express myself, I don't think of it as therapeutic or as a release. I keep it separate from my life, from myself.

M: That's a very different outlook on poetry. I've never heard it put that way before. Usually it's just that: a release for emotions, therapy.

T: I also think poetry should be written in a way that can be easily spoken aloud. I revise and edit my poetry to the ends of the earth so that it can be read aloud and the words don't trip over each other. Poetry is an oral art form.

M: Do you have a favourite poet?

T: Don McKay. I've also had the pleasure of studying under Louis Dubek while I was at McGill, and I've also had the pleasure of working with Ron Rykers. They may not be very well known, like me, but they were great poets.

M: How many books have you written?

T: I have one chap book (a small collection of poetry) and two full poetry books published. On the topic of writing, I've also done some book and movie reviews for the Montreal Gazette. I read a lot.

M: I think they're closing down the library, so I guess you're free to go. Thank you for letting me harass you about your life and for letting me try to pry into your deep dark secrets.

T: You were doing what now?

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