

Lines from Victoria

inspired by “Poems for Moscow” by Marina Tsvetaeva
written for the Victoria Book Prizes, October 17, 2018
by Yvonne Blomer

From a bicycle take this city, wheel and breath,
not made for a bicycle.

Take it bike lane by highway.
Take churches, synagogues,
take the kid on a skateboard flying
to rooftops. Take poets, novelists, truth tellers.

Take the rainbow walks, the Gorge and its trestle,
take swamps now lakes; Bowker, Cecelia and Colquitz creeks,
daylight what once was buried.

Take the new bridge at night,
now lit blue.

Take the stairs to the roof of Yates Street Parkade
and the glass-walled elevator to the top of The Bay –
take it down again. Leave your gut –
a gull soaring over the inner harbour;
leave your voice – a fog horn over city scape and ferry’s dock.

Leave this city the way a bride leaves,
one trinket stowed, a piece at a time.

Take Cook Street to Quadra, leave land already European-taken.
Take Mackenzie, but leave its interchange; take the widening
road and shrinking mountain that is The Malahat.

From your lives, dear writers,
from blue breath of whales
and red breath of history
drop your thin lines,
pierce them with blood; weave with threads of cedar,
gold, starling feather, and scotch broom stalk.

Catch bull frogs in the shade,
cook them or let them go.

Let language reconcile, record, share.
Take the road southwest to Juan de Fuca. Take

the ferry northeast to Saturna. Let the salty air taste you.

Bleed here. Tell a story.

Tell it. Let your hand cast a shadow,
smoothing the page in its wake,
pen balanced and breaching.