



## Becoming Isaacson

May 19, 2019

*"I am royalty/ in the heart of a nation."*

When Emily Isaacson came out as a poet in 2011 it was as if a giraffe hit the high wire. She was at first quite long-winded. Her first book was a treatise in poetry in three volumes titled *The Fleur-de-lis*. It was treated as Canadian literature by her publisher. Over 800 pages, it contained poems in both English and French. Her former university French literature professor, Dr. Kelsey Haskett, was the French editor for the book and took it with her to France on sabbatical when it was finished. She later complimented the work, saying she was impressed even in the face of its voluminous quality. Isaacson went on to publish nine more poetry volumes of Canadian poetry, including *Arsenic: 58 Distressed Sonnets* which came out late last year with Potter's House Press, a short volume of her complete sonnets.

Isaacson is a postmodern poet and uses postmodern device quite liberally to the chagrin of her modern counterparts. Postmodern poetry is largely fictional, not based on her life story or emotions, or even events that have happened to her. Her poems may be about characters, fictional events or fantastical descriptions of nature and human nature. They often include both male and female voices, or characters conversing back and forth. One example is her dialogue in poetry between the naturalist and the philosopher in her books *House of Rain* and *Snowflake Princess*. Another is her depiction of a homeless woman from her book *The Blossom Jar* (2016), written to draw attention to the plight of the homeless. Here she says, "Nature has made me/ her didactic queen/ with fiery blood of royalty. / My crown has stood the test of time/ or I would not be standing here now/ winsome as a branch."

When *Snowflake Princess* was released in 2013 it was a huge success, with the book launch guest speaker being Amanda Todd's mother Carol Todd. Isaacson dedicated 10% of the profits from the book to the Amanda Todd Foundation. Isaacson now has about 4,000 books in print, including her children's book released in 2007 *Little Bird's Song*. She decided to write full-time after a difficult divorce, and changed her name to her pen name for her first book release. Although that allowed her as an author to be somewhat anonymous, people soon caught on to who she was. She built her own website in 2006, and twelve years later, her book websites have gathered over one million visitors. Her books have been given to cloisters, people groups, even translated into Mongolian, Prime Ministers and royalty. Isaacson has received seven Christmas cards in return from the Royal Family, one from the Prime Minister and one from the Premier.

Isaacson's Commemorative Edition was released by Dove Christian Publishers in late 2017, titled *Hallmark: Canada's 150 Year Anniversary*. The book contained 130 new poems, as well as many previously published favourites. Her use of postmodern devices such as pastiche demonstrate her use of eclecticism in art. It allows her to imitate while celebrating the work of other writers, such as Edna St. Vincent Millay. She discards the modern poet and returns to classical form; she speaks of figs growing from briars, and has familiar titles to the genius of Millay in the 1920's. She also writes rhyming sonnets, as Millay did. Her use of ballad in "Last Words From A Weaver's Basket" is a timely returning to Millay's era and Millay's soft-spoken "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver".

Recently Isaacson has renovated her Sonnets blog, posting her two most recent poems in response to the burning of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on April 15, 2019. The poems evoke a sense of her own helplessness and her personal interest in the Catholic faith. Although she is Protestant, she is closely affiliated with the Poor Clare Convent in Mission, B.C. as they have read and endorsed her work. The poems can be read at [www.isaacsonsonnets.blogspot.com](http://www.isaacsonsonnets.blogspot.com)

From the Ashes of Notre Dame, (an Italian Sonnet)

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I crossed myself and stood at the altar,  
eternity wound around my finger:  
the crushed moment of my solemn singer  
was the moment when the burned stone faltered.  
I cannot ask for more from Gibraltar,  
but for one of these little ones, ringer  
of the bells that call them home, rise linger  
on the sweetened isle, fading light loiters

as the peals repeat and resound, silence  
breaking at the notion of sound's fury.  
The burnished cathedral has fallen, died;  
attic to cellar smoke with violence,  
the steeple tied to the dead we bury  
when the beating steel heart of Paris cried.

--Emily Isaacson

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This year will be Isaacson's second year on the board of the Fraser Valley Poets Society. They are hosting the BC Poetry Competition right now which is open to all entrants, and the rules and prizes are posted on her website at [www.emilyisaacson.com](http://www.emilyisaacson.com). They particularly invite students, seniors, and writers from all walks of life and all nationalities to submit their work. The winners will be published in their upcoming anthology.

Isaacson will be the featured reader at the next Blue Moon poetry reading hosted by the Fraser Valley Poets Society and Clearbrook Library in Abbotsford. The reading will be May 27 at 6:30 p.m. and is free to the public. The guest speaker will be followed by refreshments and an open mic, with a book signing to follow.

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