

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Erin Mouré**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

# 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.

## <b>Biography</b>

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

## <b>Writing and Style</b>

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
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

# Georgette

Dignified is a heartsong here  
Harsh traverse of the unknown

&quot;Better to go down dignified&quot;  
Ekes out  
constant

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

Turns sparkless  
Into sparklers

One &quot;s&quot; less  
One &quot;r&quot; 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.



# 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