Aujourd'hui

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Bill Elgersma

In the land of fleur de lis
and loonies and toonies
I am home.
Crown land, King’s Highway, the QEW
spill from my lips unconsciously—
I have crossed a border in both body and mind.

A closed door creaks
to shape words off my tongue
like house and mouth and about.
Lilt and inflection
cause my daughter to smile,
“You’re talking funny.”

I am home
but gone so long it all appears new.

OPP and QPP,
MP’s and PM’s and RCMP’s
All initials so familiar. . . so forgotten.
Hard living immigrants
foreigners to make up a country of no nationality,
just survival.

In clipped accents
oblivious to feelings
intent on principle
they speak their mind
they manage,
proudly.
Beer at 28 bucks a box
smokes 6 bucks a pack,
they work to enjoy living,
live hard
but not too long.

Returning back, green card in hand
the border guard hassles me
and I realize
I only have the vocabulary
a small wrinkle in a dusty portion of my brain.

To the door I have closed
that shrinking wrinkle says,
_Au revoir_ and _bon chance_
And to myself
in the realization of what is left behind,
_c’est dommage_ but _c’est la vie._