

# The Causeway In The Rear-View Mirror

was older than us all, the green of artichokes, an architecture of our own

a structured interruption of the view

dash between the words downtown and east, a steel fluidity  
that served the traffic of the road and river both

the river side like tin foil, and the lake was choppiest

that pause for passing boats, the slowdown of the world, it seemed to be  
the rhythm of the city

huge metal body raising its massive dinosaur head

that oxidized copper, that hospital green, that pea soup green

was the view from Knapp's boathouse, small rental boats circling

we made time-lapse movies of its movement  
our group gathered with our easels at the shore to paint the bridge

crossed it at least twice a day, and every day, between downtown and Barriefield

loved hearing that translation of the tires to a hum

was exciting to bike over, trusting the grates, taking up space on the road

walking to work, waiting for the bridge to come the hell back down

crossing it to see the Frontenacs, to Grass Creek Park, to sleepovers  
with friends in the east end, for sledding at Fort Henry, for the fireworks

we would roll the car window down and dream

we were seven, wanting to strum the metal trusses, reached our hand out  
and it hurt so much

we were twelve or thirteen, biking with our dads, we could see the water  
through the holes

kayaking in lucid green and blue under the roaring shadows of the cars

saw a hundred officers in scarlet, marching across to a drum

we watched a boat rip its roof off on the bottom of the bridge, not even leaving a mark

going to soccer away games, it was the signal to prepare our minds

we walked it in the early morning and a heron flew below

we blockaded it in solidarity with Wet'su'weten land defenders

letting the car go brakeless down the hill seeing when on the bridge we'd have to press  
the gas

was the soundtrack of our childhood

like all the cars were race cars when they passed

sleeping in the back seat, waking to that deafening sound  
our mother saying oh my goodness it's the bees again

we were frightened, we covered our ears

the baby's arms flew out, startled by the vibration and buzz  
our grandma remembered the hum as a child

everyone would sing the moment that we left the pavement for the metal

our father would ask what note is that, a C or D or A, and later play the chord on his  
guitar

you had to lift your feet up from the car floor til the noise was done

our spaniel would lose his mind, knowing the sound meant a walk at the  
Fort

begging our parents to back up the car when it opened  
a green giant coming to eat us

our mothers taking pictures of us with the bridge  
our grandparents looking so young and in love, against the railing in black and white

us and our friends jumping off on hot nights into the coolness of the lake

as teenagers we wedged against one of the girders and took a ride up  
then when it lowered we ran

first night in our RMC dorm, could not figure out what that noise was

in winter the metal creaking, percussion of the wind, the loud gears shifting when it opened

deep, melancholic groan of a beast  
sampled it for this electronica record

we drove across at different speeds until we had the notes we needed for O Canada

was there even someone there, or was it cameras, remote control

we used to think the operator lived inside, like a lighthouse keeper

we thought the counterweight was filled with water and then emptied out

to operate: bells, gates, span lock, brakes, lift, raises the bridge

we tried not to bounce the end when it landed  
lowering as quickly as we could for ambulances

it could not be lifted if the wind speed was too high

from our house we knew the wind's direction from the sound  
could tell which way a car was driving

that buzzing in the background, while we wandered with our ice cream cones

heard it whenever we stepped out for a smoke

called it the wara wara bridge, the bee bridge, the whale bridge  
farting bridge, noisy bridge, singing screaming wailing bridge

the musical bridge  
falling asleep to its hypnotic tones

that sound was where the moon rose

the short, loud rumble, calming and familiar, reverberating off the water itself

a constant all our lives, steadfast, familiar comfort

time moves in one direction, memory in another, as they say

it meant that we had reached our destination, meant that we were home

This poem is a compilation of community memories of the LaSalle Causeway, the bascule bridge that spanned the mouth of the Cataraqui River from 1917 to 2024, as assembled by the City of Kingston's Poet Laureate Sadiqa de Meijer following a public call for submissions.