

Moving pictures, moving words

By Tanya Davis

Cine-poetry. Videopoem. Poem as documentary, as melody, as soundtrack carefully composed.

In striving to tell stories and communicate ideas, filmmakers have countless tools at their hand. They choose cameras, actors, and place. They pick filters, lights, and angles, shots and script. Endless decisions, tiny and grand, from conception to closing credit. Poetry in film has long been present, though in recent years its company more purposefully sought, more clearly seen and heard. These docu-poems join a vast and expanding canon, a genre of filmmaking wherein poetry complements form. Beholden to no piece of paper, poems burst from structure to affect listeners they may have otherwise never reached. The presence of a poet's voice adds dynamism to words, gives a texture, a subjective timbre. As an increasingly accessible—and valued—art form, cine-poetry will no doubt continue to light up movie houses, online venues, and film festivals just like this one.

These 5 docu-poems tell disparate stories while exploring similar and pertinent themes—the path of history; the colonization of people and land; racism past and present, personal and systemic; and the many changes we need face. Based in and around the town of Lunenburg and the sea alongside, each piece marries the voice of a poet with a filmmaker's eye.

In Yalitsa Riden's film, **Ice**, text takes centre stage as Moira Frier recites a poem by Matt Robinson. With interesting word play and a complex—and tricky!—rhyme scheme, this piece winds its way over ears while ears work to absorb every labyrinthine phrase. Its *skate-steeled rhetoric* is clever and intricate, bringing images of ice rinks, the poetics of hockey, and *the wide open cage with which we are left*.

Filmmaker Cory Bowles and Poet Andre Fenton team up in **Sea of Change**, an invitation to look at racism past and present, in Lunenburg and beyond. Fenton writes honestly and unflinchingly about *the blood that has been spilled on this land* while beckoning change, questions, and conversation. He dabbles in metaphors as he challenges us to unravel them, to speak truth in plain language and dig deep.

Lunenburg In The Dark captivates from the opening title sequence and holds us through the poignant, closing phrase. The film is cohesive and creative as it questions our ideas of darkness and light, black skin and white, the absurdity of how *we are afraid of the dark but we relish in our colours*. Filmmaker Tamar Dina elevates Abena Beloved Green's skillful and lyrical writing with shots of subtle colour and vibrant shadow, changing sky of many hues. This work asks us to sit with the darkness, *without shining a light to erase it*.

Dominique Gusset's film, **Lunenburg Variations**, gives a brief yet varied history of āseedik, of Mirliguèche, of Lunenburg. Poet Janet Barkhouse tells a tale that starts with *trails 13,000 summers long* and ends with a reminder that *the sky is the same*. She wraps history in verse as we learn about this place of many people and many names. Corresponding images punctuate piercing truths: a woven web of unceded territory; the quills of 'ownership'; the clear cuts of war. We are asked to question who owns this. This, the sea. This, the land.

In **Mazewalker**, by Bretten Hannam, poet Shalan Joudry takes us through the poetry of disbelief. *What can we say to celebrate? To mourn?* Expressing an inability to comprehend so much human change, she leans on language in attempts to reclaim, to grieve the *Mi'kmaq, disentangled from landscape to make way*. Poet and filmmaker find common ground, merging earthy words and imagery, beats as steady as the ocean.