

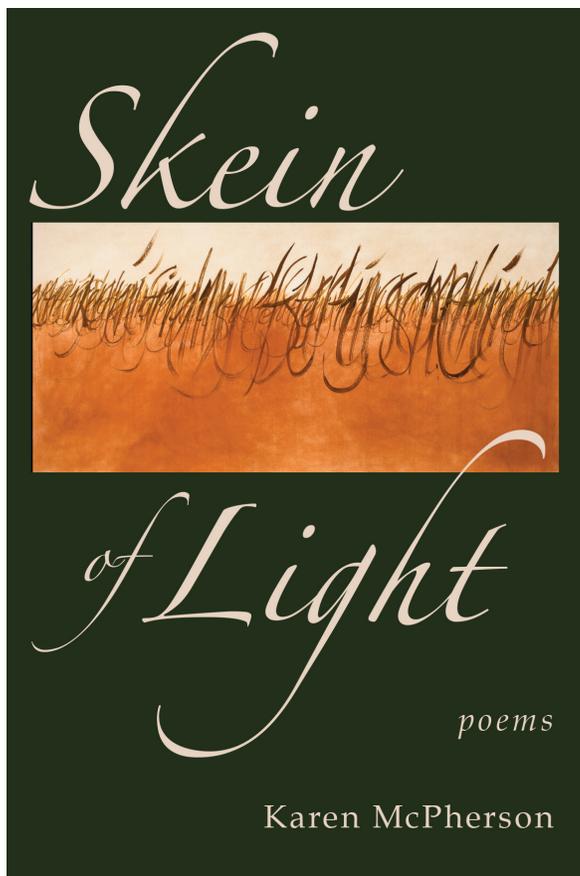


NEW FROM AIRLIE PRESS

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A poetry publishing collective in Monmouth, Oregon, **Airlie Press** announces its newest title this fall: ***Skein of Light*** by **Karen McPherson**. The book has garnered advance praise from poets such as Maxine Scates and John C. Morrison.

Airlie Press is a press run by writers. A nonprofit publishing collective, the press is dedicated to producing beautiful and compelling books of poetry. Its mission is to offer writers working in its particular habitat a local, shared-work publishing alternative. Airlie Press is supported by book sales, subscription orders, and donations. All funds return to the press for the creation of new books of poetry.



Skein of Light

The luminous poems in Karen McPherson's *Skein of Light* pull and gather toward horizons of reflection. In language that repeatedly reveals what it can and cannot do, the poet maps landscapes of memory where sharp-edged questions disturb the stillness. The personal and human are deftly threaded through a natural world made legible in flights of birds, bending grasses, rock striations. And through this open work, the reader steps into a place both familiar and unknown.

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"'In everything / there is an underside, an other hand, / something to which we are not listening,' writes Karen McPherson and whether the poet is writing of dreamscape or landscape, McPherson's **gorgeous meditative poems** dwell in the shifting meanings of that listening. From every angle, present or past, we see how wonderfully tricky yet compelling seeing or understanding or representing anything is, how transient words are when it comes to translating the momentary they try to name. Though, of course, in the joy of that 'perpetual translation,' McPherson would have it no other way, and as her readers, we, too, can be grateful for the **endlessly exquisite possibilities these poems embody.**" — Maxine Scates

"Even in the play or pique of questions, McPherson's fierce eye has a **relentless focus on the resonant image**, her ear on the alluring rhyme. Meanwhile, beneath these poems a clock ticks like a metronome to guide us toward a kind of balance where we might, momentarily, rest and draw strength. **Powerful work.**" — John C. Morrison

Karen McPherson is the author of the poetry chapbook *Sketching Elise* (Finishing Line Press, 2012) and her poems and translations have appeared in numerous literary journals. A professor of French at the University of Oregon, she has also published two scholarly monographs and a book-length translation into English of poetic essays by Quebec poet Louise Warren. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, with her life partner, Elise.



KAREN MCPHERSON BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

In a family crowded with generations of teachers and writers and missionaries, Karen knew she would be a *writer*. When she was five, her father quit his job teaching at Smith College and the family moved to rural Connecticut. Karen's mother made the long commute to Danbury State Teacher's College; her father stayed home writing novels and caring for her younger brother. Karen entered first grade and began writing poems and stories. A few years later, her mother was teaching at the local elementary school and, when Kennedy was elected in 1960, her father, one of the few eligible local Democrats, was appointed postmaster of the tiny Marble Dale post office. In high school, Karen edited the school paper, read Lorca and D. H. Lawrence, studied French, and read her poems at gatherings organized by artist friends who lived in a barn.

In 1967, Karen launched her college career at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, by getting arrested for chaining herself to the door of the local draft board. She began studying Russian and had a particular enthusiasm for the poems of Yevtushenko. It was an exciting time, but not particularly conducive to staying in school. Karen and her boyfriend, Garrick, dropped out and, with a group of friends, started the Rainbow commune near Drain, Oregon, where their daughter, Eden, was born in July 1971. After a few seasons on the land and a few more on the road, Karen and Garrick separated. Karen and Eden moved into Eugene, where Karen joined the *10 point 5* editorial collective, read Doris Lessing and Adrienne Rich, and took a job in the textbook department of the university bookstore. After auditing a couple of French classes, she returned to school to earn her undergraduate degree.

The obvious next step was a year in France. In 1979, Karen and Eden were living in a tiny sixth-floor apartment in the 14th arrondissement in Paris. With a part-time position as an English language *assistante*, Karen had time to sit in cafés reading French poetry and dabbling in literary translation. She toyed with the idea of staying another year in France, but the scripted path won out over the less-certain one: she entered a doctoral program at Yale. Graduate school plunged her into literary theory, deconstruction, and feminism. Yet as she became more and more firmly entrenched at the scholar end of the scholar-poet spectrum, she found it increasingly hard to make any time and space for her writing. Writing poetry went underground for almost fifteen years and only bubbled up again when her twenty-year friendship with Elise evolved into a committed relationship and the couple moved back to the Pacific Northwest, where they had first met.

In Eugene, Karen taught French literature at the University of Oregon and Elise trained to become a homebirth midwife. With Elise's strong encouragement, Karen was able to forge a healthy balance between her scholarly work and her creative writing. She published scholarly articles and a critical monograph on Canadian women writers, her poetry appeared in journals like *Potomac Review* and *Descant*, and her chapbook of poems *Sketching Elise* was released by Finishing Line Press. She also rediscovered the particular pleasures of literary translation. *Delft Blue & Objects of the World*, her translation into English of two volumes of Quebec poet Louise Warren's essays, was published in 2013. In Oregon, Karen found a welcoming community of fellow poets. She made room in her schedule for artists' residencies and writing retreats, including yearly reunions with her Porch Sisters, a group of writers she had met at Vermont Studio Center. A month-long residency at Playa in the Oregon high desert profoundly changed the landscape of her seeing and writing. On the occasion of her father's eighty-fourth birthday, she edited and published *Straightening Out the Record*, a volume of his poetry.

Karen continues to work as a professor of francophone literature at the University of Oregon. She is glad to have learned how to make the teacher and the writer play nicely together. She has no plans to become a missionary.



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