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“Open the door to the roaring darkness”: the Enigma of Terry Sawchuk in Randall Maggs’s *Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems*

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The second poetry collection ever to be launched at the Hockey Hall of Fame, fourteen years after Richard Harrison’s *Hero of the Play* (1994), was Randall Maggs’s *Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems* (2008). *Night Work* delves into the life and career of Terry Sawchuk, perhaps the greatest hockey goaltender of all time. The collection explores the psychology of a single player and offers a very different example from that of Harrison of how sport, and particularly hockey, can be viewed through the lens of poetry. The poems are longer, grittier, and, on some levels, more difficult to access than those in *Hero of the Play*. While Harrison’s concise and focused single-page poems stand alone, each one a new game on a fresh sheet of ice inspired by a specific player, idea, or event, Maggs’s lengthier poems work off of one another to create a richly intertextual, three-dimensional, and occasionally contradictory portrait of a player whose impact on the game was matched by his enigmatic nature.

Since its publication in 2008, *Night Work* has earned considerable critical and popular success. The collection was awarded the 2008 Winterset Award, an annual recognition of the best book published by a writer from Newfoundland and Labrador; the E. J. Pratt Prize for Poetry (2007/2008) at the Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards; and the Kobzar Literary Award, presented biennially for the best Canadian literary work in any genre that addresses a Ukrainian Canadian theme. The book was also named one of the top one hundred books of the year by the *Globe and Mail*. As with Harrison’s *Hero of the Play*, the obvious excellence of Maggs’s literary treatment of such a popular topic brought about a degree of attention rarely afforded to a new collection from a Canadian poet. Maggs was interviewed about Sawchuk and *Night Work* on the CBC national radio shows *Q* and *The Next Chapter*, but his work also saw media coverage in more unusual venues. It was featured in an extensive interview of Maggs by sports journalist Bruce McCurdy on the hockey blog *Copper and Blue*. Then, as Martin Brodeur broke Sawchuk’s seemingly untouchable record for career shutouts, *Night Work* was discussed in

the *New York Times* by US hockey writer Stu Hackel, who referred to it "a remarkable set of poems . . . that deserves a place on every serious fan's bookshelf." The praise by Canadian writers was even more effusive. The back cover of *Night Work includes* Dave Bidini describing the collection as being "poised to become a Canadian classic" (<YEAR>), while Stephen Brunt, one of Canada's pre-eminent sports journalists and the author of several important books about hockey including *Searching for Bobby Orr* (2006), writes that *Night Work* "may be the truest hockey book ever written" (<YEAR>). The impact of *Night Work* would also reach beyond the literary world, inspiring both a short film based on the poem "Night Moves" (Simms 2009) and a powerful song, "Sawchuk," by the late, great Newfoundland singer-songwriter Ron Hynes. The song's lyrics, co-written by Maggs, draw from the general depiction of Sawchuk's life in *Night Work* as well as from the words and themes of the poems themselves.

Picking up *Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems* for the first time, one is immediately struck by the book's length. At 189 pages and with 74 poems, 12 photographs, extensive acknowledgements, and a bibliography, the volume gives the impression that it is as much a biography as a collection of poems. The poems themselves are bookended by two unforgettable documents that capture the pain and injuries Terry Sawchuk suffered for the game over the course of his remarkable career. The book's epigraph is an excerpt from the autopsy report that describes in excruciating detail the many scars found across Sawchuk's face at the time of his death. These thirty-one lines of text that inventory the "multiple fine scars present over the forehead and face" (Maggs 2008, 9) give the reader a glimpse into the beating Sawchuk took in the net over a career that began when no goalies wore masks and when no goalie ever wanted to leave the ice for fear of losing his highly coveted spot on the roster of one of only six NHL teams. Over his twenty-one seasons in the NHL (1949–70), in an era when few goalies had a career lasting more than a decade, Sawchuk recorded 447 wins and 103 shutouts, NHL records that stood for decades. The price his body had paid by the time of his early death at the age of forty included broken bones (including a poorly healed broken arm that wound up two inches shorter than the other), six hundred stitches, torn tendons, a devastating eye injury, ruptured discs in his spine, a swayed back from his famous crouch stance, and a nervous breakdown.

While many of these injuries are discussed or alluded to in the poems in *Night Work*, Maggs's choice to open the book in this way reminds us that the poems to follow constitute just one attempt to articulate the complexity of Sawchuk as an individual and as a player. The excerpt

from Dr. Gross's autopsy report, a clinical and objective assessment written in the hours just after Sawchuk's death, tells us a great deal and, at the same time, almost nothing about Sawchuk's life. While a doctor can catalogue all the marks on a player's face, the stories and suffering behind the scars—the prominent "oblique scar, 1 1/2″ in length" or the "suture cross scars" that lie across it—remain buried under this purely objective writing (9). *Night Work* ends with the famous *Life* magazine photograph of Sawchuk for which a makeup artist enhanced many of the goalie's scars, making them all look recent. While the photograph aimed to depict all the facial injuries Sawchuk suffered over his career, its inclusion at the very end of *Night Work* reminds the reader that, like the autopsy report and each of the poems in the collection, any efforts to capture Sawchuk's inner nature and experience are just that: attempts, through art and words, that are doomed to fall short. *Night Work*, then, aims to paint a portrait of Sawchuk that is true to both the spirit of the subject and the vision of the artist, rather than to document every aspect of the goaltender's life and provide an objective biography. Maggs's collection is not an autopsy report, nor does it focus on telling the story of Sawchuk's death; it is, rather, a set of stories that no photograph or medical narrative can tell. *Night Work* is Maggs's foray at breathing life into the enigma of Terry Sawchuk and his experiences on and off the ice.

Dividing the book into eight sections, Maggs generally groups together poems that deal with specific periods in Sawchuk's life and career, although later sections include poems that do not directly address either of these topics. The biographical poems stretch from Sawchuk's childhood in Winnipeg to his dying hours in the hospital, which are captured in the final section, "Last Minute of Play." Photographs of Sawchuk from throughout his life are interspersed in the text, and epigraphs from other poets precede each section, ranging from Homer's *Odyssey* to twentieth-century poets such as Elizabeth Bishop and Denise Levertov. Only one epigraph deals with sports directly: the fourth section, "Goaltender Suite," opens with a quotation from Thomas Boswell's baseball book "Why Time Begins on Opening Day." The wide and distinctly literary scope of these epigraphs reminds the reader that *Night Work* is as much a book about poetry and its possibilities as it is about hockey. The tension between these two seemingly incompatible worlds is one of the most striking characteristics of Maggs's book.

The first section of the book, titled "The Question That He Frames," introduces us to Sawchuk through the words and imagined perspective of Red Storey, one of the subjects whom Maggs interviewed during his research for the book. Storey—himself an athlete who played

hockey, lacrosse, and professional CFL football, winning a Grey Cup with the Toronto Argonauts—is a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame for his career as a highly respected NHL referee. Though Storey was a referee for only a decade (1950–59)—he resigned abruptly after NHL President Clarence Campbell was quoted as questioning Storey's performance in a controversial and riotous game six of the Stanley Cup semifinal that saw Montréal advance to the finals—he was on the ice throughout Sawchuk's prime, including his three Stanley Cup wins with Detroit (1952, 1954, 1955). The poems "Neither Rhyme nor Reason" (19–20) and "The First Wife" (21) compose the entirety of the book's first section. "Neither Rhyme nor Reason" recounts the poet's visit with the elderly Storey "that long afternoon in his home / with his souvenirs and his second wife" (19). In this poem, which sets up a key incident described in the later poems "Big Dogs (1)" and "Big Dogs (2)," Storey mentions "that crazy question" that Sawchuk asked him at the start of a game:

> *Where to begin with the guy?* Even after 50 years,
> it nags him like a wrinkle on his ankle. *What he came to me*
> *wanting to know, Jesus, I thought he was joking*. (19)

This incident—which is mentioned again in "The First Wife"—begins to give a sense of the complex and enigmatic character of Terry Sawchuk, a character that fascinates, according to Storey, because it seems connected somehow to Sawchuk's legendary abilities as a goaltender:

> And why would you fret about Sawchuk
> anyway? Jumping Jesus, what the guy could do.
> He'd felt the agony in the Forum tonight [. . .]
> as Terry turned them back wave after wave in the terrible storm
> of the crowd—48 shots against 12, the Rocket in twice,
> but the Wings take the game 3 to 1. (21)

The longer, linked poems "Big Dogs (1)" (58–63) and "Big Dogs (2)" (109–12) go on to recount in full the incident that troubled Storey for so long. "Big Dogs (1)" returns to the setting of the poet's interview with the aged referee. The eighty-three-year-old Storey spends a great

deal of time in silence during the conversation as he works to remember the events of fifty years earlier—another way of stressing how hard it is to understand the past. Finally, in "Big Dogs (2)," Storey reveals the conversation first mentioned in "Neither Rhyme nor Reason." He tells the poet how, one night in Detroit, after clearing the crease of the players who had piled on top of the home team goaltender, Storey asked Sawchuk if he was all right. Sawchuk's angry response, "go fuck yourself / you drunken son of a bitch" (111), earned him a misconduct penalty. A couple of days later as the game is about to get underway in Montréal, "Terry skates out from his net to ask me a question I'll / never forget" (110). Sawchuk asks why he received a penalty in the earlier game:

> 'What was it for, you big Palooka?' I say, 'You told me to eff off. You
> can't say that to a referee.' What I was really wanted to say was you can't
> treat friends that way. He just stares at me a moment and you know
> how dark and scary his eyes could be, I don't even know what he was
> feeling, sad or sorry or angry. 'I don't remember that,' he says.
> 'I don't remember any of that.' (111–12)

Half a century later, Storey remains haunted by the incident. Sawchuk's question might point to how, in the heat of a game, his focus on the puck was so intense that he failed to register all that was going on around him. Storey, however, seems to feel that he caught an unsettling glimpse of something darker and mercurial. As he explains to the poet in "Big Dogs (1)," "'But there was something about him, something / more than just how good he was. [. . .] That's what you want to know about, I suppose'" (58).

Storey's frustration at never being able to fully know or explain Terry Sawchuk—"'Did I ever get him figured out? Ask me something easier'" (63)—is a metaphor for the challenge faced by the poet as he works to understand his subject from a variety of angles. Maggs skilfully dekes the temptation to look past the contradictions and depict Sawchuk as a knowable, unified subject. Instead, he takes a more postmodernist approach, showing us Sawchuk from many different

angles, including through a number of poems that try to imagine the goaltender's own personal experience.

The second and perhaps most important section of *Night Work*, "Kings and Little Ones," takes the reader from Sawchuk's childhood in Winnipeg to the early years of the goalie's playing career in Detroit. It is the lengthiest section of the collection, spanning forty-two pages and nineteen poems, and it includes some of Maggs's finest work. The first poems in this section work through some of the well-known facts about Sawchuk's childhood growing up as a Ukranian Canadian in Winnipeg. We see him in school at twelve years old in "Initia Gentis" (Latin for "the beginning of"), and in "Sheet Metal," we learn more about his immigrant father, a "strong / but gentle man, shaped by the sound of violins / and un-flat land" (27), whose devastating workplace injury sent the sixteen-year-old Terry to work to support his family. Understanding what is at stake for Terry and his family allows the reader to empathize more deeply with the young man, particularly in "Writing on the Walls," as he sets off on the train in 1946 to join the junior Red Wings. In the poem, he loses to a card shark "the ten dollar bill in a pocket, still folded." His mother had given him the money, and he thinks:

> I would have sent home what she gave me, doubled,
> just so she'd know, but I didn't know how
> to get out ahead of the game.
> I might have learned that then about myself. (33)

Like "Writing on the Walls," the poems that detail Sawchuk's formative years in Winnipeg all contain elements of a near mythic origin story that presages both the goaltender's future greatness and the darkness that will sometimes surround him. The second and third stanzas of "Initia Gentis" address how Sawchuk and his friends, in their working-class neighbourhood, were unable to play hockey at night since their rinks had no lights. The "trouble with time" that "[b]egins in school" and the "black hand's gloom" of the long winter nights are set in the context of the opening stanza lines of the poem (25). The first stanza, the only section of the poem in the first person, is, through its italicization, visually distinct from the rest of the poem:

All my life I'll know this restless tilt of eyes,
the upward glance before you get set, how much
time you have to save your skin. (25)

The image of Sawchuk in net looking up at the clock and the way players—goaltenders especially—perceive time in a particular way comes up in later poems as well, most notably in "Different Ways of Telling Time" (49-53). In "Sheet Metal," Terry's one workplace injury "slicing open his catching hand" (28) is echoed years later, when "Pulford would skate across / that same hand," severing Sawchuk's tendons and jeopardizing his career. The brutal toll on Sawchuk's body and mind are detailed in later poems, such as "An Ancient Fire" and "The Thousand Things," but this early poem helps connect Sawchuk's many hockey injuries with the workplace injuries and mishaps experienced by his blue-collar father.

Another significant event in Sawchuk's childhood that shaped the future Hall of Fame goaltender was the loss of his older brother Mike when Terry was ten years old. Mike played goal and the younger Terry was deeply influenced by the brother he idolized. It was only after Mike's death, when Terry inherited his old equipment, that the younger brother got the chance to be in net. Terry never played another position after that. In "The Back Door Open Where She's Gone to the Garden," the poet imagines, through Terry's perspective, the family's struggle to cope with Mike's death:

How do the rest of us deal with him being gone?
[. . .] And I wear the pads in the family
now. I bring the bruises home, the aches and taunts
that wake me in our moon-bleak room. (30)

"The Famous Crouch" provides greater detail of Mike's influence on Terry, including on his technique as a goaltender:

All those nights I'd hear him
in his sleep. *Stay low, stay forward, balance*
on a ball. Forget the names they sing you through the screen.

See the shot before it leaves the stick. (31)

At the end of the poem, Terry notes that Mike's influence on him remains strong through his career:

> But now it's me who's bending low and looking for
> the bullet shot. All my life, I'd heard the warning
> in his voice and in the moment's heat
> I hear it yet. (31)

Poems such as "The Famous Crouch" help to build a narrative of how Sawchuk's early life in Winnipeg formed the roots of both his Hall of Fame career and what at times would be his battle with his dark, troubled psyche.

While the section "Kings and Little Ones" contains several other notable poems that follow Sawchuk through to the first part of his career, including "A Clever Dog" (39–41), "Let's Go Dancing" (55), and "Desperate Moves" (64–65), no discussion of this section would be complete without examining "Different Ways of Telling Time" (49–53), one of *Night Work*'s finest poems and one that anchors the theme of time that infuses the collection. The passing of time on the clock is the one unerring constant in any game and the preoccupation of every player:

> They know time's rough
> and tumble. Space and time, that's where they live,
> arcs and angles, a quick move into open ice.

The players most conscious of the time on the clock, the poet reminds us, are the ones who never leave the ice:

> Left out on the ice—they might as well be
> on the moon—both goalies eye the clock,
> one's for zero, the other likes infinity,

> but things can change.
>
> *Get going clock.*
> *Slow down slow down*. (49)

Although “no one in the building likes time’s pace,” the referee can add more seconds to the clock: “imagine the power, / to kick time’s arse like that” (49). Divided into six sections, with titles like “(iii) *sudden death*” and “(v) *carpe diem*,” the later sections of the poem take us away from the ice into the hours in the dressing room and the personal rituals before the team hits the ice. The final section, “(vi) *big river*,” sees Sawchuk awake in bed beside his sleeping lover, wishing that time would slow down and that he could leave behind the thoughts of his past and of the threat of the up-and-coming goalie Glenn Hall taking his place in net.

While the early parts of *Night Work* follow a chronological structure, the poem “A Clever Dog” marks an important shift. It describes Jack Adams, Detroit’s general manager, preparing for a meeting with Terry Sawchuk and deciding to slash his salary offer to the goaltender from three thousand dollars to two thousand. Adams’s decision to trade Sawchuk to Boston at the peak of his career in 1955 and replace him with Glenn Hall damaged Sawchuk’s confidence and, by all accounts, troubled him for years afterward. Midway through his second season with Boston, Sawchuk became overwhelmed by stress and, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, announced an early retirement. After trying several other careers, he returned to play for the Red Wings the next season. His confidence was shaken, though, and his career and life would spiral downward from that point on. As Maggs explained in an interview with Bruce McCurdy, *Night Work* is deliberately structured to reflect the impact on Sawchuk of his first trade from the Red Wings: “I break off that [chronological] pattern intentionally. What appears from there on is perhaps less orderly in appearance, which reflects what happened in Terry’s own life as a result of Jack Adams’s handling of him. From then on there are sections more or less grouped together having little regard for any orderly historical unfolding of time” (McCurdy 2010).

The remaining sections of *Night Work*, then, zero in on particular moments of Sawchuk’s career. For instance, the third section, “Two Goalies Fishing in the Dark,” deals exclusively with the Bruins’ ten-day, seven-game tour of Newfoundland in April 1956. While most of the poems either feature Sawchuk as the speaker or tell something about his performance there, they are

equally poems about Newfoundland and this important moment in the history of the five communities in which the Bruins played exhibition games against local teams. As the Bruins kick off the tour with a rough ferry ride from North Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, the speaker in "Night Crossing in Ice," presumably Terry Sawchuk, asks himself "Who could call this heaving darkness home? / Who'd go out of his house in this for a game of hockey?" (Maggs 2008, 69). The remaining poems in this section serve to answer that very question; the reader sees Newfoundland and the exhibition games through the eyes of Sawchuk and, in poems such as "String and Bones," witnesses Sawchuk through the eyes of Newfoundlanders. "String and Bones," which became the basis for the short film *Night Work: A Sawchuk Poem* (Simms 2009), tells the story of the local hockey player who scores on Sawchuk in a penalty shot with an ill-advised "bullet / right at Sawchuk's head" (Maggs 2008, 78). The first half of the poem includes quotations from a variety of unnamed sources, each seeming to offer their own take on this story and on why "Terry took such exception" (78). In the second half of the poem, the poet tracks down Gerald, "the man who scored on Terry Sawchuk" (79):

> "Maybe he did come after me,
> but he was only kidding. Yes, he did say
> something. Just like it was yesterday."
> <ls>
> Long silence, looking out over the water,
> then he turns to me. "He said, 'How come a guy with the shot
> you got isn't up with us in the NHL?'" (79)

The conversation between these two men is a humorous reminder of how, as the decades pass in a storytelling culture like that of Newfoundland, a tale can grow in ways that make how it is told more important than the long-lost truth that may or may not be at its core. This is a theme, of course, that has particular relevance to the poet's quest to come to an understanding of Sawchuk through poetry and story rather than through player statistics or historical records.

Aside from the inclusion of "Big Dogs (2)" and "Transition Game," two poems in which the unnamed narrator appears to be Sawchuk, the fourth section of *Night Work*, "Goaltender Suite," comprises poems that pay tribute to a variety of legendary and lesser known goaltenders

from the early to mid-twentieth century, ranging from Gump Worsley and Jacques Plante to Percy LeSueur and Frank “Ulcers” McCool. The section also contains two remarkable poems about the position of goaltender—“Rough Calculations” and “One of You.” “Rough Calculations” talks about the physics of hockey, beginning with a comparison between the “subtle baseball with its endlessness, / its pendulous invitation” and the inherent “winterness” of the puck: “Flat and squat, a puck’s / inert, needs a lever, needs ice” (95). The poet imagines physics equations that, by taking into account a puck’s mass, velocity, and “*the time the puck is in contact with the player’s head*,” one might be able to calculate “*the amount the head is deformed*,” something “goaltenders / know in their bones” (95–96). The final section of the poem reminds the reader of how the invention of the slapshot, “the ’50s leap in firepower [. . .] blending the games / of boys and murder” (96), “for goalies meant a whole retooling / of reflex, a new code for heart” (97). Above all, the poem helps to contextualize how and why so few goaltenders in Sawchuk’s day were able to withstand the pressure and danger of putting their poorly protected bodies between the puck and the net; Sawchuk’s unparalleled longevity at the time speaks to both his incredible resilience and the deep price he paid with his body and mind to do what he did. As the poem “One of You” reminds us, hockey is a different game for the goaltender than it is for any other player:

> Denied the leap and dash up the ice,
> what goalies know is side to side, an inwardness of monk
> and cell. They scrape. They sweep. Their eyes are elsewhere
> as they contemplate their narrow place. (98)

The poems of “Goaltender Suite” explore how goaltenders have more in common with each other, perhaps, than with the others on their own teams. Collectively, these poems offer another way of understanding why Sawchuk may have been seen by his teammates as distant and disconnected and why the pressure of his role gradually ate away at him.

The fifth section of the book, “Canadian Dreams,” collects a variety of other hockey poems, including two about the great Montreal Canadiens defenceman Doug Harvey, who struggled with alcoholism and bipolar disorder later in life. Other poems, such as “Guys Like Pete Goegan” (125–26), recount stories and experiences that Maggs learned about from his

brother Darryl Maggs, who played in the NHL and the WHA for teams including the California Golden Seals. The Golden Seals come up in "No Time to Go," the only poem in this section to include Sawchuk. Sawchuk, the speaker in the poem, is second-guessing his decision to play for the LA Kings in 1967–68: "Shitty ice. Shitty crowd again this afternoon, biding / their time from brawl to brawl" (121). A story about how a young player's wisecrack to the Chicago coach gets him traded to the Seals, a team that wears white skates, leads Sawchuk to reflect on the fate of hockey and hockey players in California: "Prairie boys wearing white skates. / There's guys getting hold of this game / been out in the sun too long" (122). Although now, half a century later, hockey is well established in California, "No Time to Go" reminds today's reader that, especially to veterans like Sawchuk, NHL expansion must have been seen as a dramatic lessening of the game.

The contrast between the game of hockey today and that of the era of the original six and of the post-expansion years becomes more apparent in the final three sections of *Night Work*. The brutality of the game in the 1950s and 60s and its impact on Sawchuk's body and mind described in the later poems in the collection is unfathomable today; with today's goaltenders now protected by pounds of equipment and padding the experience of the goalie has changed dramatically from the mask-free era during which Sawchuk began his career. The sixth section of the book, "Saints at Home, Soldiers Between Wars," depicts the border between the pressures of the game and Sawchuk's personal life starting to become more unstable. Sawchuk's difficulties sleeping because of the lingering effects of his injuries comes up in both "Game Days" (130) and "How Things Look in a Losing Streak" (131–32):

> [slept] on my bad side again, the elbow
> slowly disintegrating. More bone for the jar when the season's
> done." (130)

In the poem "Things in Our Day" (135–39), Sawchuk's former Detroit teammate Gary Bergman speaks to the poet about Sawchuk: "that's when he was most alive. Out on the ice with the / game on the line. Even with all it cost him in the end" (139).

The price Sawchuk paid to play the game as he did is detailed extensively in the seventh section, "Hurt Hawks." The poem "An Ancient Fire" (145–46) begins with a 1967 photo of

Sawchuk, then a Toronto Maple Leaf, after he had been injured by a slapshot from Blackhawk Bobby Hull. The poet observes that in the photo, which occupies the page directly opposite the poem,

> in the deep slump of his body you see his agony
> and sagging spirit. [. . .]
> The signs of defeat are clearly there. The taped-up
> hand that holds the damaged arm. The body that only
> wants to curl into itself. (145)

In "The Thousand Things," a poem that addresses the same incident from that 1967 semifinal series, Maggs imagines Sawchuk's perspective as he sees the shot coming:

> His choices were few: come out and cut down the angle
> or go take that job with his father-in-law. A hundred and twenty
> miles an hour, he takes one full force on the shoulder.
> The crack of bone like a roof beam giving way. (147)

Somehow, Sawchuk manages to play on. "No Country for Old Men" details how, following game five, Sawchuk's teammates come to realize the extent of his sacrifice and heroic resilience:

> one by one they sense a deepening silence in the room
> and turn to look where Terry's resting, panting, having
> wrestled off his sodden shirt. Their eyes tell them
> armload of plums, say peacock's plumage.
> Their fingers pause in their intricate task. *Jesus, Ukey,*
> someone breaks the silence. The whole room
> gapes at the hammered chest and belly. Easy to count
> the darker nine or ten from Hull. They can't even look
> at the shoulder. (153–54)

That year, the Maple Leafs defeated Chicago in six games and, thanks in part to some of the greatest goaltending ever seen, went on to defeat Montréal and win the Stanley Cup. Maggs describes the Stanley Cup run over several poems in this section, ending it with the poem "Tidal Fears" (163–64). "Tidal Fears" asks how Terry could keep wanting to play after nearly two decades in the NHL during an era when no other goalie had lasted more than eleven seasons. Even "getting drilled by pucks, his nose half ripped away, / his eyeball sliced, / the backs of both hands / opened up by skates" is not enough to make him quit for good. The poet asks, "What always brought him back / for one more year?" (163–64). He imagines Sawchuk's answer at the end of the poem: "'Hell, you saw me out there—I can play this game forever'" (164).

Terry Sawchuk, of course, could not play the game forever. Thus, the closing words of "Tidal Fears" provide a fitting transition into the final section of *Night Work*, titled "Last Minute of Play." The poems in this section address Terry's return to Detroit as a backup goaltender for the 1968–69 season and the final season of his career as a New York Ranger for 1969–70. The collection's final poem, "New York I.C.U." (176), focuses on the last few hours of Sawchuk's life. Recuperating in hospital after a series of surgeries to address injuries suffered in a fall after a scuffle with his roommate and teammate Ron Stewart, Terry tells his coach, Emile Francis, who has been at his bedside for days, to go home to his family. Later that day, Sawchuk dies from a pulmonary embolism. Given the topic, Maggs's thoughtfully restrained treatment of his subject's final hours showcases his craftsmanship as a poet. Tragically, Terry wanted to keep his accident a secret, so Francis was the only one there. Maggs, though, sees the kinship of goalies as part of Francis's devotion to his friend and player:

> Emile, the Cat, the only
> coach he'd had who'd known the life of playing goal.
> That was why he kept the four-day vigil all alone. (176)

In Sawchuk's insistence to police investigators that he alone was responsible for his injuries, Maggs observes

> [h]ow dextrously
> a goalie hangs the chains of culpability around his neck.

Open the door to the roaring darkness, let him go first. (176)

As Sawchuk faces his death, Maggs closes the poem by tying everything back to all that Sawchuk faced as a goaltender:

Fear what was on the way?
What could there be about fear he didn't know?
Open the door.
Infinity is just another fucking number. (176)

While Terry Sawchuk realized the dream of many a Canadian child by becoming one of the greatest hockey players of all time, the pain and torment that came along with that achievement also led to his tragically premature death. As Jamie Dopp suggests, Maggs finds in Sawchuk the same fascination we find in great literary characters like Dr. Faustus or Jay Gatsby. "Figures such as these," Dopp writes, "speak to recurring human anxieties about success. Does success always involve moral and personal compromise? Is there behind every successful person some kind of Faustian bargain?" (2009, 112). In the end, Sawchuk is no longer here to reflect on his life or to answer any of Maggs's or the reader's questions.

lthough *Night Work* is Maggs's attempt to delve into the enigma that was and is Terry Sawchuk, he signals throughout that we will gain no singular, incontrovertible understanding of the man. This indeterminacy, however, should not be seen as leaving us without any sense of the truth about Terry Sawchuk. As Maggs points out in his afterword, although the historical facts about Sawchuck are elusive, poems like those in *Night Work* aim for a "greater truth" (2008, 180). Maggs's contention about poetry is reminiscent of Demeter's question about the relationship between art and the subject of art in Robert Kroetsch's 1969 novel, *The Studhorse Man*. Writing about the "superlative grace and beauty of Chinese art," Demeter, the novel's narrator, asks: "Ah, where to begin? Why is the truth never where it should be? Is the truth of the man in the man or in the biography? Is the truth of the beast in the flesh and confusion or in the few skillfully arranged lines?" (155). The power and immediacy of Randall Maggs's *Night Work* poems suggest that art may lead us closer to "the truth of the man" than facts and statistics ever will. The portrait of Terry Sawchuk that emerges is so rich and three-dimensional that it is hard

for any attentive reader of *Night Work* to close the book without thinking that, as *Globe and Mail* sports writer Stephen Brunt puts it plainly, "his Sawchuk is real" (2008).

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