

Excerpts from a manuscript in progress, *The Green Archetypal Field of Poetry*,
by Stephen Morrissey

THE OLD DAYS

That generation of poets, Layton, Dudek, Smith, and Scott, they welcomed young poets; after all, not many young people wanted to be poets in the old days, common-sense prevailed. Bill Goodwin was Irving Layton's nephew but Bill and Irving were more like brothers. My mother lived on Montclair Avenue and, on occasion when visiting her, I used to see Bill walking along Monkland Avenue on his way to Irving Layton's home; that was in the 1990s when Irving wasn't well and Bill and several others looked after him, it was before Irving entered Maimonides long term care residence. Bill was also a poet and I still have one of his books that he published before he retired. Bill told me that he retired from teaching so I could hold on to my teaching job, I replaced Bill in both the English and Humanities Departments. Whatever Bill taught it included poems by Irving Layton and every year he would have Irving visit the college to give a reading. After the reading I would get a lift downtown with them. Poets, like Irving Layton and Louis Dudek, focused on the young, so while Irving was sitting in the front seat of the car he'd turn around and include me in the conversation. He was always polite and considerate. He'd ask what I was writing or what I thought of some political issue; despite his famous enormous ego he was also concerned with mentoring young poets. Layton was a natural teacher but so was Louis Dudek and Frank Scott, they were kind people and we, young poets, benefitted by knowing them. In the old days the established poets mentored younger poets; it was a small community and younger poets were treated with some consideration and respect. Even eccentric poets were accepted by the older poets, they added a lot to life at a time when society was more conservative. I mention all of this as it is an insight into those days when poets were few but they were dedicated to the Muse and to the life of being a poet. That's what it was like in the old days.