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## night cemetery, a poem by Robin Metcalfe

By [RobertDevet \(https://nsadvocate.org/author/robertdevet/\)](https://nsadvocate.org/author/robertdevet/) - May 14, 2017

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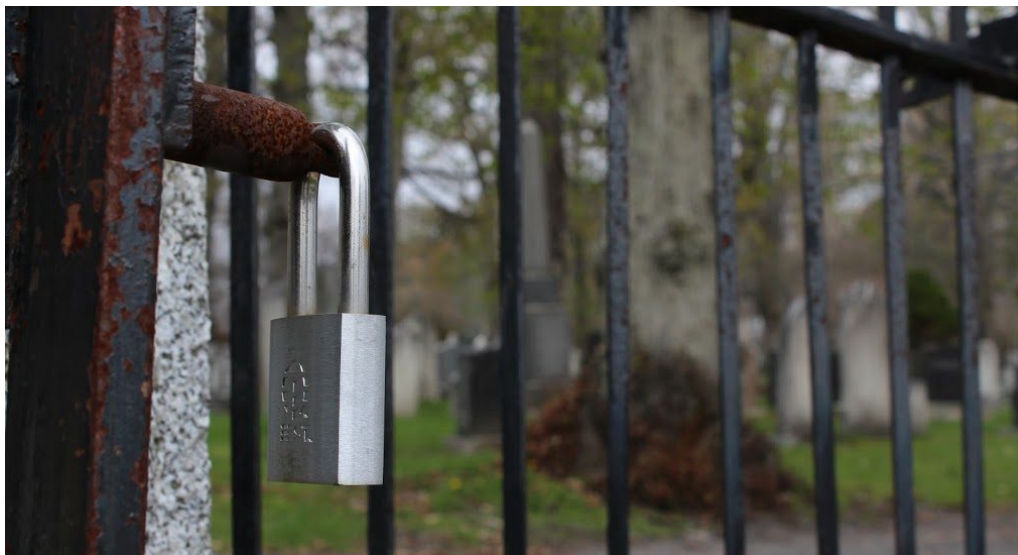
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## night cemetery

for John Thadin

the cops weren't there  
when someone bludgeoned you to death  
beside the grave of Alexander Keith

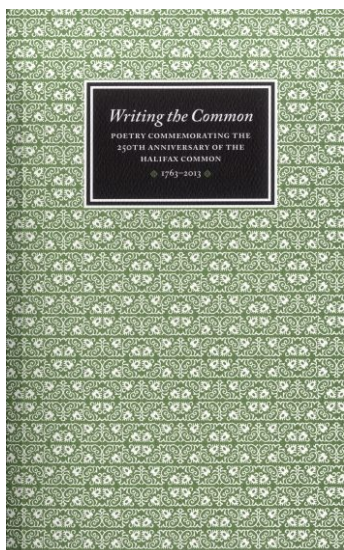
since then I've seen police cars cruising  
where you once did  
what are they protecting  
and from whom?

the new sign says  
Cemetery Closed  
Dusk to Dawn  
No Entry  
By Order  
City of Halifax

a simple solution  
to legislate our absence  
and kill two birds with one sign

as if its words could still  
the forces that compel  
one man to reach towards a stranger  
and another man to kill

I passed the cemetery late tonight  
a taxi driving by on Summer Street  
was mirrored in the polished headstones  
and I thought I saw  
inside the fence  
the ghost of a patrol car



The poem *night cemetery* by Robin Metcalfe was inspired by the ghastly murder of John William Thadin in 1988 in the Halifax Camp Hill Cemetery, a well known gay cruising area at the time. At the trial of the two men convicted of murder we heard that Thadin was robbed and murdered because “fags are an easier market,” and “more fragile.”

Thadin's murder was not so much an aberration as the consequence of a culture that considers gay bashing acceptable. Anti-gay violence was part of the 1980s for the Halifax LGBTQ community, as it remains for many today. You could lose your job if it was found out that you were queer. You could lose your apartment. You could be denied service in a restaurant. Or you could get beaten up.

Robin Metcalfe is a queer rights activist, historian, writer, and director/curator at the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. Like last week's *Grass of the Commons* (<https://nsadvocate.org/2017/05/06/grass-of-the-commons-a-poem-by-david-huebert/>), by David Huebert, Metcalfe's poem was published in *Writing the Common* (<http://www.gaspereau.com/bookInfo.php?AID=0&AISBN=9781554471324>), a wonderful collection of poems about the Halifax Commons by a great bunch of local poets, published in 2013, by Gaspereau Press. In Halifax you can pick up your copy at Bookmark on Spring Garden Road.

night cemetery is reproduced courtesy of Robin Metcalfe.