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NUMBER 103

WINTER 2016

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SOMETHING LIKE ARMENIAN





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# GEIST

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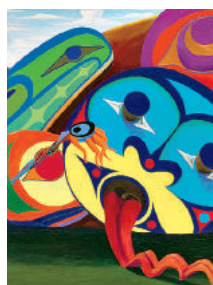
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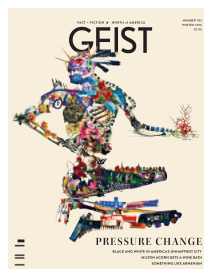
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# GEIST

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# LETTERS

READERS WRITE



"Little by Little", Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country

Goran Basaric, 2014

Happy Holidays!

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## SECRET ADMIRER

Last year I received a gift subscription to your magazine. It came with a lovely card, signed "Secret Admirer." I never found out who the admirer was. As the holidays draw near, I have not received a notice of another *Geist* gift. I'm beginning to suspect that my secret admirer may have found someone else to secretly admire and with whom to share the gift of *Geist*. I won't lie, I'm a little saddened by this thought, but I want you to know that *Geist* has been a wonderful part of my 2016, one of the worst years in recent memory. So if nothing else, my secret admirer introduced me to a new favourite—if I don't hear from them by the new year, I'm getting my own subscription!

—Donna, Montreal, QC

## WITH THE FLOW

What a delight to see a real leannej flowchart in the pages of *Geist* 102. It's been years since I saw one of her flowcharts. I'd completely forgotten about them, and then there it was, smack dab in the middle of a great issue. I recall a bunch of years ago the *Wahrus* published an imitation

flowchart story. As far as I remember they ripped it off from leannej. Very happy to see the original at work.

—D.K., Scarborough ON

## LOST?

No Caught Mapping map (No. 102)? What gives? I almost didn't notice. But when I put the magazine down after reading it all (okay, almost all), I had this funny feeling that I hadn't actually read the whole thing. My boyfriend picked up my copy and immediately noticed the map's absence. All this to say, I may not always like your maps (though I usually do), but the magazine just somehow didn't feel complete without it. Here's hoping for the next issue!

—Allison, Winnipeg MB

To see maps that actually have appeared in the magazine, visit [geist.com](http://geist.com).



## OOPS!

In "In the Flesh" by Michał Kozłowski (No. 102), reference was made to a Polish deli on Bernard Street. Although there are many great delis on Bernard Street, the intended Polish deli was on Rue Saint Viateur.

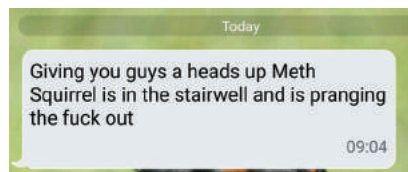


DEPT. OF  
GLASWEGIAN WILDLIFE



I live on the fourth storey (or third floor as we say over here) of a stuccoed building. This squirrel climbed up the stucco to my windowsill yesterday afternoon. He sat for a while with his paws on the window, looking in, then did a sheer drop down to the bushes below, then ran up the building wall again. This morning I'm walking down the close/stairwell and buddy is running up and down the stairs/walls/what-have-you. This thing is unwell. Everybody in my building is freaking out. He's quite aggressive.

—Christine Novosel, Glasgow, Scotland



*Editor's note: Read more about the squirrel-related hijinks of Geist folks in "Squirrely" by Michał Kozłowski on [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

WRITE TO GEIST

✉ Thoughts, opinions, comments and queries are welcome and encouraged, and should be sent to:

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Vancouver BC V6B 1H4

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum. Authors of published letters will receive a *Geist* map suitable for framing.

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**Roni Simunovic** is an artist and writer. They live in Vancouver and at [ronisimunovic.com](http://ronisimunovic.com).

**Fabrice Strippoli** is a photographer whose work has been exhibited at the Art Actuel Paris, Rochester Institute of Technology, Marshall McLuhan School and private collections. He is author of *Dark City*, a book of urban street photography. He lives in Toronto.

**Nicola Winstanley's** comics, poetry and fiction have been published in *Geist*, *text/lit/mag*, *Glass Buffalo*, *The Quilliad*, and other magazines. She has also published two children's books, *Cinnamon Baby* (Kids Can; shortlisted for the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award) and *The Pirate's Bed* (Tundra). Her third kids' book, *A Bedtime Yarn*, is forthcoming in spring 2017. She lives in Hamilton, ON.

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# Religion or Culture?

In November 2016, a mother in Port Alberni, BC, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, took her children's school district to court. She claimed that the kids had been made to participate in an Aboriginal spiritual ceremony, violating their right to religious freedom. A letter had been sent home to parents, informing them that a member of the Nuuchahnulth Nation would lead a smudging ceremony, a cleansing ritual.

The school responded to the legal action by saying that participation in the ceremony was optional, and apologized for not making that clearer in the letter to parents. Nuuchahnulth leaders stated that smudging is a cultural practice, not a religious one. The district school superintendent said that the school is committed to "teaching and learning about different cultures and traditions," and in fact all BC schools have a mandate to integrate Aboriginal content into curriculum. The case and the responses have sparked an interesting debate about religion and culture.

In smudging, a practice in many cultures, cedar or herbs or other plants are burned for the purpose of cleansing. I am Nuuchahnulth and I do not recall our people ever burning cedar for this purpose. Cedar branches were used to cleanse rooms but they were not burned. There may have been an error in reporting, as a Vancouver newspaper stated that sage was burned for the smudging ceremony, other accounts mentioned burning cedar, and a CBC report stated that students would hold a cedar branch "while smoke from sage was fanned over them." (I am surprised that none of these reports mentioned that smoke inhalation is unhealthy for children.)

The sobriety movement in coastal BC tribes has incorporated

ceremonies from the Plains and the Interior of the province. For example, smudging with sage or sweetgrass and the use of the sweat lodge are not traditional to the BC coast. They are part of a Pan-American movement—an informal alliance of groups throughout North, Central and South America with shared political and social goals, who also adapt other groups' practices. Tribes in BC are so diverse, with so many languages and dialects as well as cultural and religious beliefs, that it is much more convenient and inclusive for coastal treatment centres and Aboriginal organizations to apply a Pan-American style. It invites groups to emphasize their strengths and it clearly illustrates how cultures can evolve.

This process is increasingly important as the current necessary reconciliation work taking place in Canada brings First Nations cultures into classrooms, government offices and other workplaces. The desire of individuals, organizations and governments to advance the process of reconciliation, and to understand our long history of racism, is indeed honourable. But in presenting indigenous history and knowledge to non-indigenous people and institutions, the distinction between religion and culture can be cloudy.

That process is not unique to Aboriginal content. For example, as meditation and "mindfulness" become more popular in classrooms, other aspects and values of the source of these practices come along too. That source is Buddhism, and Buddhism is a religion. A petition to "Remove Mindfulness Programs" from Canadian schools, as a violation of religious freedom, has been launched in Vancouver and has more than five hundred supporters.

All cultures are blends of history, art,

politics, religion and other rituals and traditions. Is it possible to introduce one culture to another without any hint of religious beliefs or practices? Is it desirable to do so? Should Canadian taxpayers be paying for religious practices in Canadian institutions?

If I sound like I am opposed to my own people's religious practices, it is perhaps because the Indian residential school was successful in taking the "Indian" out of me. I like to believe as an "urban Indian" I am able to stand back and take a wide view of situations. Either way, I want my grandchildren to be free of religious practices in their schools.

—Randy Fred

*Randy Fred is a Nuuchahnulth Elder. He is the founder of Theytus Books, the first Aboriginal-owned and operated book publishing house in Canada. He has worked in publishing and communications for forty years. He has won gold at the Canadian National Blind Lawn Bowling Championships five times. He lives in Nanaimo.*

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# Dear Geist...



I have been writing and rewriting a creative non-fiction story for about a year. How do I know when the story is ready to send out?

—Teetering, Gimli MB



Which is correct, 4:00, four o'clock or 1600 h?

—Floria, Windsor ON

Dear Geist,

In my fiction writing workshop, one person said I should write a lot more about the dad character. Another person said that the dad character is superfluous and I should delete him. Both of these writers are very astute. Help!



—Dave, Red Deer AB



## Advice for the Lit Lorn

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We will reply to all answerable questions, whether or not we post them.

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Movie shoot truck flower girl, by Fabrice Strippoli. Shot with a Hasselblad Stellar. Queen West at Brock St. in Parkdale, Toronto, on August 10 at 3:14 p.m.

## Waiting for Trudeau

MICHAŁ KOZŁOWSKI

*Pansy shoes and power suits on Parliament Hill*

A couple of months ago I was in Ottawa and went to Parliament Hill hoping to observe Question Period. It was late fall and the air was frigid; the news that morning had forecast the first snowfall of the season. At Centre Block, a few dozen people were waiting in line. Within minutes of my arrival, a Parliament Hill employee, a young woman whose coat bore a silhouette of the building in front of us, announced that Question Period was full, but we were all welcome to stay in line to see if anything opened up. A stout guy in a leather jacket turned

to his friend and said that it was because the PM himself is supposed to attend today and then the two of them slipped out of the line. A middle-aged guy in an overcoat said to no one in particular that this never used to happen when Harper was the Prime Minister and then he too slipped out of line and began the long march along the giant lawn in front of Centre Block and up past the Centennial Flame, around which a group of kids huddled for warmth.

I was determined to wait it out, so I pulled out my book and settled in. I had

come to Ottawa to attend a meeting of publishers, cultural bureaucrats and MPs. In preparation for the meeting I had been discussing with a friend Hannah Arendt's writing on culture and entertainment in which Arendt proposes that entertainment increasingly threatens to erode culture through the remaking on a mass scale of art objects into easily digestible forms suited for mass consumption. My friend suggested that the same process is at work in the political sphere, and that politics has come to occupy the space of entertainment, as most recently evidenced by our own Prime Minister, the one who was attending Question Period that very day, appearing on the covers of fashion magazines and a reality TV star being named the Republican candidate for the US presidency. Then I heard a matronly voice say, where did



you get those pansy shoes? I looked down at my own shoes and then up to see the speaker, who was a middle-aged woman in one of those brightly coloured puffy jackets; she was wearing a pair of brown leather boots in the style of riding boots favoured by equestrians, a sport that seems particularly suited to Ottawa. The woman in the riding boots was evidently addressing her son, who had on a pair of blue canvas sneakers. You're a big guy, she said, you need big rugged shoes, not little pansy shoes.

At this point the crowd shuffled forward, and along with the woman in the riding boots and the young man in the canvas sneakers and a couple of middle-aged guys in varsity jackets, I finally entered the foyer of the Centre Block, which was filled with security guards directing traffic, RCMP officers rushing in and out of the building, men with white hair and dark suits and women with big hair and skirts and blazers striding confidently through security; young men and women in tighter suits with lanyards around their necks standing around; a flutter of activity that was amplified whenever the door was opened and huge gusts of wind ripped through the foyer.

The security guard, a pudgy guy in his forties, asked, are you together? What about you? You? He was pointing at the people in line. Okay, he said, you're going to wait here for a moment and then I'm going to wave you through and you're going to walk along the wall here just like that and then you're going to see those fine gentlemen over there, belts and jackets off, pockets empty.

The woman in the puffy jacket said to her son, you should become a security guard, you're a big guy.

The son said, you can't trust people if you're a security guard; I trust people too much.

Then the security guard started chatting with the two guys in the varsity jackets, and at one point I heard him say, for Halloween one year I went as Hunter S. Thompson. Way I see it, it gives you licence to get belligerent. Another year, he went on, I went as a hobo. I rubbed some bike grease on my face, so I could say that I wasn't wearing makeup.

After we had passed through security, we were pointed upstairs, where more white-haired men in dark suits and big-haired women in skirts and blazers were strolling around with folders in their hands. Another security guard pointed me to a desk, where two more security guards sat, and when I asked them about attending

Question Period, they pointed me to yet another security guard, who pointed in turn to a line of people huddled behind a velvet rope. Question Period is full, she said, but you can wait there to see if anything opens up.

I got into the back of that line and settled in. The place looked eerily familiar, though I knew I had never been inside any buildings on Parliament Hill before. Two women in their forties, wearing power suits, got into the line behind me.

—When I don't have to worry about my mom I can cook a good dinner. You know, experiment.

—Ya?

—Ya, when I was house sitting I could look at the recipe books and then go to Walmart but when I got into that damn store I'd get confused and leave with only two or three of the ingredients on the list.

—You gotta write it down.

—I know that. You're right.

—You ever read the ingredients on cream cheese? You can't even pronounce half the words.

—Ya, like my mom used to get

Cheez Whiz.

—Oh I like Cheez Whiz.

—Or those Kraft Single slices.

—Or that Velveeta stuff.

—The Velveeta I liked better than those slices. But not for your hamburgers or for your grilled cheese sandwiches.

—Now you can get Velveeta in those slices.

A few people slipped out of line, so I shuffled along closer to the front.

—Oh, and I've been making a bit of progress in my knitting. But I'm still having a hard time with accounting for rows.

—Oh, you just really have to count right. But it might be too difficult for you.

—I already made one of those copy cats and Sarah has me making more for Christmas.

—Have you met Fiona yet?

—I have suspicions about Fiona. I don't think that I trust her. I saw what appeared to be an alcoholic beverage at her work station.

—I guess she thinks her job is more important than God.

—That's like my mom. I said to her, get off those pills and start believing in God.

Then it dawned on me why this place looked so familiar; I had seen it on YouTube, it was exactly where the cameraman had shot from when he filmed the RCMP closing in on the man who had attacked Parliament Hill a few years earlier, while the sound of gunfire rang out.

At quarter past three, two hours after I had joined the first lineup, there were only four of us left in line. Another security guard came over. English, French? he said. Okay, I just want to inform you that Question Period is over. You can stand in line to see the galleries, but QP is over.

---

*Michał Kozłowski is the publisher and editor-in-chief of Geist. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*



# Something Like Armenian

ANGELA WHEELLOCK

*Great poets, terrible leaders*

Several summers ago I spilled a cup of coffee on my laptop and after I let it dry out the keyboard wouldn't work so I had to take it to the Mac repair store at 4th Avenue and Macdonald Street. It was hot and humid in Vancouver that August and the humidity had caused the arthritis in my right knee to flare up. The day I took my laptop to be repaired, I caught the #22 north to 4th Avenue. My knee was sore enough that walking hurt and I was hoping to sit down at the bus stop. It was early afternoon and the sun was straight overhead and I was sweating.

There were two people sitting on the bench at the bus stop. One was a man of medium height wearing a baseball cap. He had a small bag, which took up the only space left on the bench. Can I sit down? I asked. Sure, sure, the man said and moved his bag. His English was hesitant and when I told him that I needed to sit because of my knee, he didn't seem to understand. No English? I asked. Persian, he said. Oh, I said and told him that I loved Persian poetry. I began to list names of Persian poets: Rumi, of course, and Hafiz and—I paused... Saadi, the man said, pronouncing the poet's name like it was a swear word. Then he began talking and his English was fluent and passionate. Yes, yes, he said, as if he were brushing something aside. Great poets, terrible leaders! His voice began to rise. Killers, he said as he rolled up the sleeves of his shirt. They tortured

me. Look, here are scars, here and here. I looked at the man's arms and I could, indeed, see the tracks of scars running up and down his arms like old riverbeds.

The other person at the bus stop, a woman at the end of the bench, turned her head away. They tortured me, the man said again and told me that he was only nineteen years old when it happened, not long after the Iranian Revolution began. They killed my brother, he said. I asked him why and he said it was because his family wasn't Muslim. I asked what he was, if not Muslim. He considered for a minute or two and then said, "something like Armenian."

I knew that meant Christian because my sister's first husband was an Armenian who had grown up in Dearborn, one of the suburbs of Detroit. I was thinking about this and before I could ask what he was if not Armenian the bus pulled up and we got on. As I boarded, I felt a small puff of air on my bare arm and it was only when I sat down that I realized that it was a wasp. The tiny wind was the sensation its wings made as it hovered over my arm. The man sat down beside me and now he talked about the wasp and the weather instead of Iran and my stop came and I got off and the man rode on.

I didn't think about the man again for a long time. Then, in early 2015, when terrorists attacked the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris, I wondered what the man thought about

the attacks and whether the news from Paris triggered painful memories. The attack motivated me to find out more about the man and I did a Google search for "Christians in Iran." Wikipedia told me that there are about 400,000 Armenian Christians in Iran and there is another, smaller, group of Assyrian-Chaldean Christians. I paused at the term: Chaldean.

I grew up in Michigan and the word *Chaldean* hovered at the edge of my memory. When I read further, I found out that Detroit has the largest community of Assyrian-Chaldean Christians outside of the Middle East. Saddam Hussein's right-hand man, Tariq Aziz, was an Assyrian-Chaldean Christian. In 1980, Saddam donated \$250,000 to Assyrian-Chaldean Christian churches in Detroit and then Mayor Coleman Young sent Saddam a key to the city. I had learned about ancient Assyria and King Nebuchadnezzar in Sunday school. I can still remember the first time I spoke that glorious tongue twister of a name out loud. Now, here in Vancouver, I had met an Assyrian.

How many other people had the man told his story to? I imagine that he had gotten tired of explaining his origins and just said "something like Armenian" if anyone asked because it was easier. The day I met him, it was as if he'd been waiting to tell his story and when he saw that I was listening his words poured out like heavy rain. Now I think about how the man's scars were old scars with the silvery sheen of old scars and I knew it had been a long time since he had been nineteen.



---

*Angela Wheelock has written for Geist, the Bellevue Literary Review, Notre Dame magazine, Shenandoah and other publications. She lives in Vancouver.*



# Carbon

ERIN SOROS

*A folder full of awards proves to the psychiatrist I wasn't always this way*

Age forty-six and I've moved in with my parents. I'm not proud of this turn of events, but I make an effort, shower and dress, sit in front of the computer for a few hours each day. At breakfast my father tells me his dreams. Last night I had one, he says, about some random country, like India. He scarfs down his porridge. He nods at me to finish mine. It's hard to concentrate when I'm on these meds, and harder still to shrug off the feeling I've failed. Just tell people you are taking some time off, is what my father says in his booming, gruff voice. You are recharging the old batteries! Imagine you have *cancer*, my mother suggests, her voice enthusiastic, no one will judge you! The comparison to cancer makes me uneasy, how she uses one illness to legitimize another, without ever referring to what I actually have. It makes me suspect my family would be happier if I did have another kind of disease, one that would be easier to describe to the neighbours. When I was in the hospital, my parents brought me healthy foods—walnuts and grapes—and kept asking if I was eating all right, as if my body were in trouble and not my mind. They stuffed a folder with photocopies of my certificates and awards and presented it to the psychiatrist to prove that I wasn't always this way. They gave food to the other patients and called them each by name. My father went to shake everyone's hand. One guy had obsessive-compulsive disorder and wouldn't let my father touch him. Instead he showed my father how you can shake someone's hand just by holding your palm up in the air and pumping your arm, fingers outstretched and touching nothing. My mother brought me a basket of clean clothes. She told me she had

handwashed everything in the sink. I was careful, she said. I asked her why she didn't use the washing machine. I'm scared of your clothing, she said. All the details, the sparkly things—they could fall off. But I don't think it's my clothing that frightens her. My symptoms came on suddenly, that's the thing, and then left just as suddenly, and now my parents have their daughter back but they've learned that my days can collapse. So they move around me eagerly, ask me my plans for the day, their voices chipper. My mother leaves stickers on my dresser—rainbows and butterflies. My father backs up my computer. If I had experienced depression, that might have been easier for them to understand, although they still wouldn't call it what it is. Mike Wallace, my father says, I saw it on TV. We don't mention what I screamed in the hospital. We don't discuss what I dreamed when I was awake. I don't have the slightest idea how to talk about psychosis, although now I've gone and mentioned the word. My mother is reorganizing the spice cabinet. Some of these things, she says, we haven't used in years. Look at this, I can't even tell what it is. Can you smell it? Can you identify it at all? Look now, she says, I'm just going to throw it out. They worry that what happened to me could all be their fault. That they raised me wrong or passed along some gene that only finds expression in me. When does psychosis begin? That's the problem. I could describe the full moon emerging from a rippling ocean; or a man sitting next to a sign that asks for spare change; or the soundtrack to *The Sweet*

*Hereafter*, Sarah Polley's plaintive voice singing "courage, my word"; or the feel of a bone snapping when I slipped on ice. Instead I drive with my mother to buy a plate shaped like a fish. The plate is only available in one of the big box stores in Coquitlam, a neighbouring suburb of Vancouver, the kind of suburb that calls itself a city and even has signs that say "City Centre," but you find there's no centre at all, just long lines of highway and high-rises that hug the highway and ugly new buildings emerging in the kind of emptiness that invites signs that say things like "If you lived here, you'd be home by now." Who would want to

live here is what I ask my mother. We are lost, in any case, having missed some turnoff to the big box store that advertised a fish plate for twelve dollars. I was going to hang it on my wall and not use it ever or it would chip. We are stopped in traffic, the cars inching forward into the intersection and then just stopping so I have to wait while the light goes red then green then red again and nothing moves. We are going nowhere. People in fluorescent vests by the highway are waving signs telling us to stop and what else could we do? They are standing next to a giant hole. Think of all the carbon monoxide they are breathing, I say. I can feel my own brain cells begin to die. There are two seasons in Canada, I say: winter and construction. My mother laughs like the joke is my original invention. She says when my brother did construction work on the highway, people yelled at him and threw coffee at him from their cars. People can be like that, she says. She says this was the direction she used to drive to visit my aunt Nunny in the old-age home. My relatives have odd names, nicknames—Aunt Nunny, Aunt Middy, Cousin Nippers, Uncle Tickie. My great-uncle Densil didn't have a nickname. My mother starts to tell me something he said before he



died but she can't tell the story because she is laughing too hard. Of all my aunts and uncles, he was the funniest. Every morning he used to eat an egg fried with twelve cloves of garlic and when my mother took him out in the car she had to roll down the windows. It came through the pores of his skin, she said. I imagine the rank odour of garlic mingling with his old-man smell. He said the F word so frequently that the hospital had to put a sign on the door warning the nurses. They used the word "profanity." She told me they didn't use the F word in the sign. My mother still hasn't managed to get out the joke. The traffic has started moving past the hole in the road. There is always a hole in the road in stories when a narrator is avoiding something. My mother says what she regrets most is that she wasn't at Densil's side when he died. She'd gone home to make a phone call about the arrangements for the funeral, to make sure his sister Middy would be there. He knew you loved him, I tell her.

That's what's important. He didn't want to die, she says. Was he afraid? No, she says, he just liked life. I love how simply she says it, like life is there waiting for you to like it or not. My mother likes a nice mall. Oh, she says, this is a nice mall. Her face lights up and she walks with more energy as we pass the stores. They look the same to me as all other stores. We stop in the A&W for a root beer. She talks to me and leaves pauses for me to say something but I don't say anything and she just keeps talking as if I have. I feel I've earned this fish plate, having ventured into this no man's land of a suburb and into this directionless mall. I notice there are no clocks, no windows. The plate is waiting for me at guest services. We call our customers "guests," the woman had said helpfully on the phone. I had put the plate on hold, worried someone else would nab what was mine. I know



there are other plates, carbon copies of this particular plate, sitting on a shelf in other versions of this store, but I like to imagine that I've caught the only one. It's pale blue. It's twelve dollars. It's a symbol of Christ, I've read on the internet, but also a symbol of determination and intuition, and I thought it would make a good decoration for my writing room because when you are floundering in a sentence it feels like you are swimming against the current and when you are in the depth of a story it feels like you are underwater. I never feel like Christ, even when I'm psychotic. On the way home from the nice mall I ask my mother if she believes in an afterlife. I don't know, she says. I'd like to see Nana again. But I don't believe in heaven with the angels and everything all white. Or hell, a great big fire! Who could believe that? I think people just made up hell to make other people feel

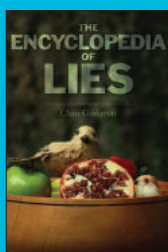
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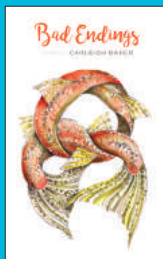


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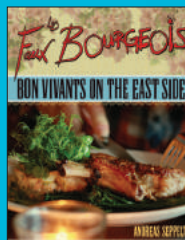


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bad. She's not a very reliable Catholic. Years ago on a ferry between Vancouver and Nanaimo I asked her if she thought Christ was the son of God and she said, rubbing her fries thoughtfully in the vinegar, well, I believe he was a nice man. Now in the car on the highway we are moving faster toward home because there is no construction on this side of the road. We are whizzing along. This is how life feels in its second half. I ask her if she feels hopeful about my life. I do, she says. I mean I feel sad about your episodes. (That's the word we use, "episodes," like they are a series on TV.) But I do feel hopeful. I think something good is going to happen. When she says this, I remember that feeling I had when I was a child, the sense of expectation, a giddy rush, a fish flipping in your stomach when you run barefoot down a grass hill. The fish plate is wrapped in paper and is sitting on the floor in the back seat of the car and when we get home I unwrap it carefully and put it up on my shelf above my computer in the bedroom where I used to live as a teenager when I hated my parents and didn't want to look or sound anything like them. Look at that. My mother and I stand and appreciate it. I'll call it "Coquitlam." I'll always think of you when I see that fish. I'll always think of our road trip to the nice mall. We have salmon for dinner and I ask my father what he thinks of my fish and he says it's all right but I'd like a sauce on it to make it a bit less dry. I ask him if he believes in the afterlife and he says it's all superstition and malarkey and we are made of carbon. We're all stardust, he says. We're all going to return to being a star. But what is going to come out of that star, my mother says, *people*? Are *people* going to come out?

---

*Erin Soros's fiction and non-fiction has been published in international journals. Her stories have been produced for the CBC and BBC as winners of the CBC Literary Award and the Commonwealth Award for the Short Story. She lives in Toronto.*

## Bones

HOWARD WHITE

*Howard White is a historian, writer, editor and publisher. He has won the Order of British Columbia, the Order of Canada, and the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour, and he holds an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Victoria. He lives in Pender Harbour with his wife Mary.*

When I was in high school my dad had an excavating business  
Which was tough in Pender Harbour because it's all rock  
Except for the little swales at the heads of bays or beside creeks  
Where the shíshálh used to have villages.  
There you could sink the digger bucket in old midden soil  
Black, fine stuff flecked with clamshell—and bones.  
Not animal bones, either. Human skeletons complete with skulls.  
The shíshálh didn't normally bury their dead  
So we knew these were probably plague victims.  
One time at Irvine's Landing we had to dig a basement for the new pub  
And spread the waste soil in the fisheries inspector's yard next door.

That must have been a popular spot in the old days.  
The midden there was ten feet deep and full of bones.  
Mostly we ignored them, although I noticed my dad  
Discreetly reburying any recognizable pieces of skull.  
But here the human remains were so thick you couldn't hide them  
And with my teenage sense of mischief I actually made  
Little piles of bones, crossing femurs and reassembling skulls  
On top of each truckload as if daring whatever spirits,  
Senses of propriety or government regulations to do their worst.  
It did cause quite the sensation with the fisheries inspector's wife  
When she came with her rake to level her new lawn.  
But nobody could really fault me because it was their own idea  
To recycle this nice black soil, so rare in Pender Harbour.  
That was par for the course in those days. I remember  
A photo of the shíshálh chief holding up a skull he'd  
Found in his garden and laughing and the band manager  
Urging us to dig up the big midden at Canoe Pass for \$5 a load.  
Today you have to get an archaeological survey for every ditch  
And a big shopping centre is being held up because they found a bone  
Which will be analyzed then reburied with full honours.  
My father has since added his own bones to the local humus  
Along with those of his old friend the band manager.  
Which is perhaps just as well  
because I am not sure I could explain these new ways  
to either one of them.

# A Different Sort of Synagogue

DAVID KOULACK

*Yom Kippur at the Gymnase Japy in Paris*

This past September was only the second time in my life that I had been to shul on Yom Kippur. The first was when my father took me to synagogue in the Bronx in New York City when I was about seven years old. Although we were not religious my father thought it was important that I have at least some acquaintance with the ritual associated with what is perhaps the most important of all Jewish holidays—the Day of Atonement, the day when you close the book on your deeds of the past year and prepare yourself to start afresh.

I remember little of my first visit, which took place almost seventy years ago, but while I was in Paris this year, my friend Pepo invited me to join him in shul for the end of the Yom Kippur services. As it turned out it was a Yom Kippur like nothing I could have imagined and one that I will never forget.

For starters, the shul was not a synagogue but a gymnasium, on the rue Japy near the Place Voltaire. The Gymnase Japy was being used because there is not enough space in the few neighbourhood synagogues to accommodate all of the Jews who live in the eleventh arrondissement and want to attend Yom Kippur services.

As we approached the gymnasium, a soldier carrying an assault rifle moved aside to let us through. Inside was a beehive of activity and a cacophony of sound: a couple of hundred people praying and talking with one another. A number of davening men, wearing yarmulkes and the fringed shawls called tallitot, stood on a raised platform at the centre of the basketball court. Other men and young boys who were seated on folding chairs placed around the platform

also prayed and talked. Still others strolled about, occasionally stopping to chat with one another. In the balcony surrounding the court sat several dozen women and children. Some observed the activity taking place below. Others conversed as they kept an eye on the children who were playing in the stands.


At the end of the day, the women and children made their way downstairs. Families assembled and the men spread their arms holding the tallitot aloft so that their families could gather underneath. And then there was the long blast of the shofar, a ram's horn trumpet, signifying the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

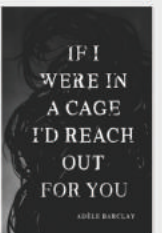
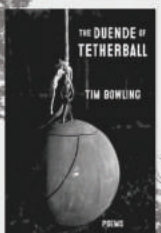
People began to move toward the

exits to start on their way home, no doubt looking forward to the end of their twenty-five-hour-long fast. Outside, Pepo and I lingered and contemplated the plaque on the wall of the gymnasium, on which was written, "To the memory of the boys and girls and the women and men of the 11th arrondissement who were assembled here between the 20th of August, 1941 and the 16th of July, 1942, before being taken to the extermination camp of Auschwitz because they were Jewish."

The irony of the Yom Kippur service taking place in a public space that had once been used as a holding cell for Jewish children before they were sent to their deaths did not elude us and for a while we stood there in silence. The sky clouded over. A gentle rain began to fall and we turned and walked along the Boulevard Voltaire.

*David Koulack is a writer. He lives in Winnipeg. Visit him at [davidkoulack.com](http://davidkoulack.com).*


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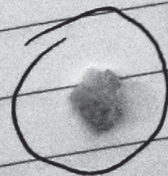


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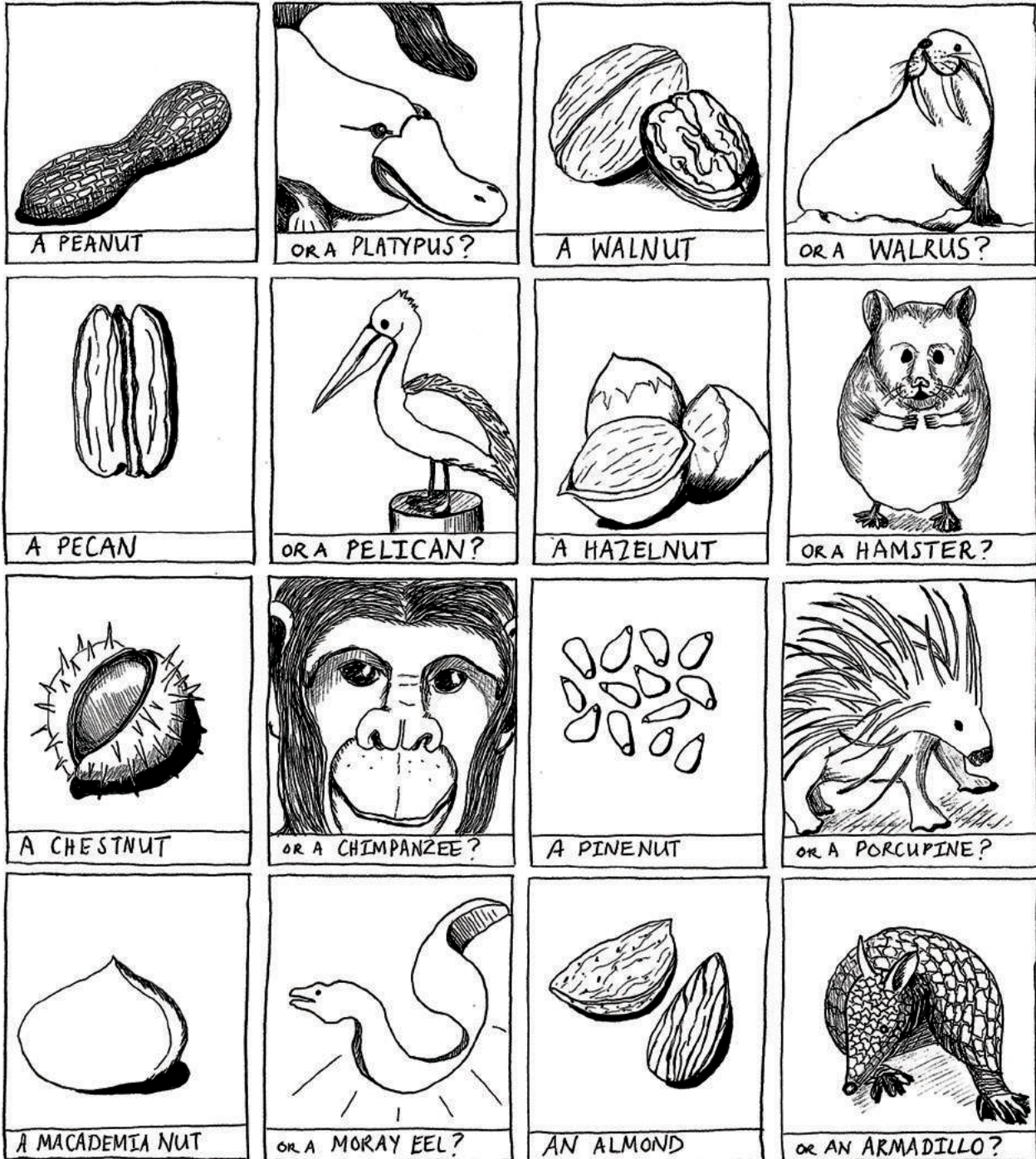
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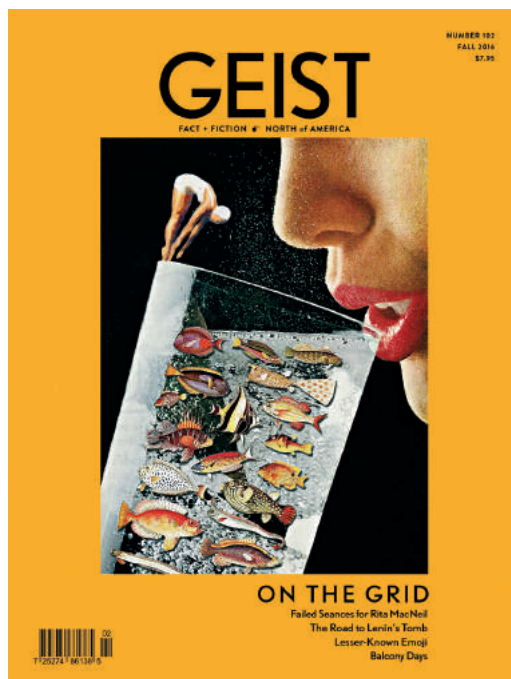
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# You Mean That as a Question

ROB KOVITZ

*Explanations for the Official SAT Study Guide Questions*



*In Antarctica in January, 2013—the summer at the South Pole—scientists released 20 balloons, each eight stories tall, into the air to help answer an enduring space weather question: when the giant radiation belts surrounding Earth lose material, where do the extra particles actually go? (NASA)*

I heard what was said of the universe,  
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;  
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

*Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass*

## p. 391–6

Since vivid descriptive phrases such as “river of clouds” and “like a feathery fishing line” characterize the passage followed by “wondrous spectacle” to describe the night sky, the answer must be about nature’s beauty and noticing it.

**D**

*Henry Davis, Explanations for the Official SAT Study Guide Questions: Detailed Explanations for the Answers for Every Question*

To show the difference between an occasion and merit and a button it is necessary to recognise that an honor is not forced so that there is no question of taste. To exchange a single statue for a coat of silk and a coat of wool is not necessary as there are appliances. A somber day is one when there is no pleading.

Made in haste, not made in haste, made in darkness, not made in darkness, made in a place, made in a place. The whole stretched out is not part of the whole block, the whole stretched out is so arranged that there is not stumbling but what is just as remarkable, pushing. An easy expression of being willing, of being hunting, of being so stupid that there is no question of not selling, all these

things cause more discussion than a resolution and this is so astonishing when there is nothing to do and an excellent reason for an exchange, and yet the practice of it makes such an example that any day is a season.

To be sure that the trees have winter and the plants have summer and the houses painting, to be sure of this engages some attention. The time to place this in the way is not what is expected from a diner. The whole thing that shows the result is the little way that the balls and the pieces that are with them which are not birds as they are older do not measure the distance between a cover and a calendar. This which is not a question is not reverse and the question which is a question is at noon.

...

A cause for disturbance rests in the fact that more time is used in a long time than in a short time. There is no criticism when the time is long. The time is so long that an answer comes promptly. This is so much the more satisfactory as the occasion for an answer is whenever there is cause for a question. The difference between this and no elaboration is extreme. No elaboration is not achieved in a question nor in an answer and this which is so eminently satisfactory is that there is no doubt that there will be no reason for the occasion. To be faithful is to be accustomed and the custom which is without that reservation has no circumstance to replace it. The time to state that is when there is no reason to doubt a result. There never is a reason to doubt a result if there is a promise. If there is a promise it means that idleness is only another name for a thing.

...

Nothing is perplexing if there is an island. The special sign of this is in dusting. It then extends itself and as there is no destruction it remains a principle. This which makes that reveals that and revelation is not fortuitous it is combined and ordered and a bargain. All this shows the condition to be erect. Suppose that there is no question, if there is no question then certainly the absence of no particular is not designed. And then when it is astonishing it is not liberty. Liberty is that which gathered together is not disturbed by distribution and not given without

remark and not disturbed by frugality and an outline. All this makes the impression that is so disturbed that there is no question.

...

To answer when there is no question, to intend to follow when there is no plunging, to embody that which has that knowledge, all that is the way to remain with the little button that has a button-hole. This is so attached.

...

The heat of hearing is not the silence of answering and nothing is produced when the question is the same as the name. That is one way to answer and there might have been more but it was different, it was the same.

...

To put that question does not mean the mention of an author. To repeat the name is not the same when there is no chair.

...

If the message is sent and received and if the tunes have words then certainly there will be soon the center piece which has not been removed. Every little flower has a number. There is that way to question.

...

If there is no question and an answer is not a toilet, if there is no question is there any strangeness in a garden. Certainly not, the danger is not any color. It has the bloom and the sign of an early summer. There is no necessity to deface anything. An escape is not needed.

There is one question. In not asking a question the permission which is continued is so courteous that there is no moon-light. The time does keep the rain from startling more than a diary. This shows that there is no question and an answer is no meeting.

...

Was the explosion that authority, did it succeed more than yesterday, was there tomorrow before, these are not questions asking, they are not existing missing, they are so applied that there is no joke, there is no pleasure. All the same the standard is there and the separation has a position, it has no repudiation, it has no



hurrying centralization, it has nothing there. If to be there is mentioned then the whole response is the occasion. It is and there is more. There is no answer. There is turning. Turning is not a victim, it has no protection, it has no authority, it has a receipt.

...

The answer in the house is that talking is not the same thing as a lamb. So that was the way it came to be and the second answer came before the first.

...

Frown nowhere and do not change that space, that is the way to use the time to purchase mining pictures. The little darkness and no large lamp, all the light being together does not make everything strange. Please the daylight, show the ruins that there is water, do not disturb the lamp, make more noise than resting and more that is changed is changed and an agreement shows the pink not to be redder. All that partial resemblance to a disagreement and a reunion is not more questioned than no answer. Not any more choice is so determined, and yet, why is the season so ingrained in the early morning when noon is no later. There is always a return of any answer.

...

Plant the union of a question later, all the time has that change, the pink length and the satin fixture this does not make any question uncertain. A question if there is no answer is a question where there is no answer. To place more is always a way.

...

A large moist blue and a paler color, a large dust rose and no water nearer, a small tall frame and no building finer this makes a prediction that necessity is work and then why is there no question. There is no question because investigation is miraculous.

...

The objection and the perfect central table, the sorrow in borrowing and the hurry in a nervous feeling, the question is it really a plague, is it really an oleander, is it really saffron in color,

the surmountable appetite which shows inclination to be warmer, the safety in a match and the safety in a little piece of splinter, the real reason why cocoa is cheaper, the same use for bread as for any breathing that is softer, the lecture and the surrounding large white soft unequal and spread out sale of more and still less is no better, all this makes one regard in a season, one hat in a curtain that in rising higher, one landing and many many more, and many more many more many many more.

...

I like to ask you questions. Do you believe that it is necessary to worship individuality. We do.

...

You mean that as a question.

...

They were questioned.

...

What is the difference between one order and a reading. A great many read in a park.

Words question it bakeries threaten it but really hotels receive it. Do we hear about books. Do we. And catalogues. And catalogues. Farmers for speech. A great many vines are said to be sold. In France. And in wealthy homes too. We do not understand the weather. That astonishes me.

*Gertrude Stein, Geography and Plays*

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*Sources: Henry Davis, Explanations for the Official SAT Study Guide Questions: Detailed Explanations for the Answers for Every Question, Henry Davis, 2010. Gertrude Stein, Geography and Plays, Boston: Four Seas Press, 1922. Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, Philadelphia: David McKay, 1891-2.*

# FINDINGS

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*From Burnt Forest by Brian Howell. These photographs were taken in the winter of 2014-15 in the Thompson River region of British Columbia, where thousands of acres of forests were destroyed by wildfires more than a decade earlier. Howell's photographs have been*

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## Last Chance

ÉRIC PLAMONDON

*From Hungary-Hollywood Express, the first novel in the 1984 trilogy. Translated by Dimitri Nasrallah. Published by Véhicule Press in 2016. Plamondon has written three critically acclaimed novels and a novella. He lives in Bordeaux, France.*

I'm about to turn forty and the questions that I asked myself at twenty are still burning, undecided, unresolved. I've had acne, I went to university, I fucked around, I got married, I took drugs, I traveled, I played sports, I read newspapers, I said "hello," I said "yes, thank you," I was class president, I was employee of the month, I fought for this cause and I fought for that cause. I opened

a bank account, I saved, I bought a car, I drove a little drunk but not a lot, I didn't burn through red lights, I ironed my shirts on Sunday evenings, I bought gifts for Christmas, birthdays, weddings, Valentine's Day. I've taken out life insurance, I bought a flat screen, a laptop, I've recycled empty bottles, paper, cardboard, plastic. I've eaten fruits and vegetables and dairy products. I've turned off lights

when leaving, I made sure faucets were closed tightly, I washed my hands, and I never pissed on the toilet seat. I traded in my vinyl records for cassettes, then my cassettes for CDs and my CDs for mp3s. I've got leather shoes for work, Reeboks for sport, cleats for the mountain, and galoshes for the rain.

I watched Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* because it's the biggest film in cinematic history. I watched *Titanic* because it's the film that was watched by the largest number of viewers in cinematic history. I watched *The Seven Year Itch* because it contains cinematic history's most iconic scene, in which Marilyn holds down her white dress atop the subway grates. I watched





*shown across Canada and internationally. Two books of his photography have been published by Arsenal Pulp Press. Howell lives in Delta, BC, and at [brianhowellphotography.com](http://brianhowellphotography.com).*

*Pierrot le Fou* because the New Wave changed cinematic history. I watched *Jaws* because my father wanted to take me to the movies. I watched *Star Wars* because I was ten. I read *Brave New World* because it was on the curriculum. I read Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians* and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* for the same reason. I've played baseball, I've played handball, I've played volleyball, I've played football, I've played badminton but I never played hockey. At fourteen, I picked vegetables to learn what it was to work. At fifteen, I worked as a babysitter to pay for the movies, a pair of jeans, a pack of beer, and an Iron Maiden album. At sixteen, I pumped

gas so I could spend a week camping in Cape Cod. At seventeen, I worked as a librarian to pay the return bus fare between Quebec City and Thetford Mines. At eighteen, I worked as a host at the Educative Society of Canada to pay for a shared apartment, and I worked as a waiter to eat.

I've owned a tricycle, I've owned roller skates, ice skates, a skateboard, a 10-speed Gitane, a moped, a Honda Civic, a Renault 5, a Ford Horizon, a Peugeot 305, a Peugeot 306, and a Peugeot 307.

I developed an allergy to cat hair, I smoked a pack a day for ten years and then I stopped. I kept my wisdom teeth, I donated my sperm. I shattered

a bus shelter. I built a house.

I've been a model, a journalist, a waiter, a farmhand. I've worked at a cement plant, in a hardware store, and in a chemistry lab. I've been a French instructor and an English instructor. I've done theater and I've pumped gas at a Petro-Canada managed by Ti-Cul Perron.

I've fished trout from the banks of rivers. I've fished bass from canoes on lakes. I've fished gudgeon from streams, I've fished salmon with a fly. I've listened to disco, rock, heavy metal, jazz, fusion, prog, country, grunge, classical, baroque, opera, and world music.

I've smoked weed and hash, I've snorted coke and mesc, I've

swallowed acid and ecstasy. I've gotten pissed from beer, I've gotten pissed from whisky, I've gotten pissed from red wine, I've gotten pissed from rum and from vodka. I've mixed, I've vomited, I've woken up with hangovers and done it all again, numerous times.

I've read Diderot, I've read Voltaire, I've read the Bible. I've read Shakespeare, I've read Melville, I've read Rabelais. I've read Baudelaire, I've read Flaubert, I've read Ducharme. I've read Pynchon, Williams, Capote, Irving and above all Brautigan. I've read Kerouac. I've read Miller, I've read Rimbaud, I've read Camus. And then also Blanchot, Yourcenar, Sartre, Bakhtin, Céline, Cyrano, Hesse, McLuhan, Sterne, Zola. I've also flipped through Plato, Nietzsche, Barthes, Freud, Newton, and Galileo.

I've been cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, snowshoeing, rowboating, windsurfing, and scuba diving. I've surfed, skydived, and wiped out in motocross. I've done tobogganing, rafting, and a little bit of spelunking.

I've caught toads, frogs, garter snakes, tadpoles, grasshoppers, snails, butterflies, caterpillars, mice, and voles. I've trapped marmots, muskrats, squirrels, and foxes. I've hunted partridge and set up rabbit snares.

I've ridden a Ski-doo, I've ridden a Sea-doo, I've watched Scooby-Doo. I've watched *Dallas*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and *Knight Rider*. On Saturday nights, back when I was young, I had dinner in front of *Space: 1999*. For four years on December 31st, Michel Fugain & Le Big Bazar struck in my New Year's Eve. While I played with my Lego on Saturday mornings, *Candy Candy*, *Belle and Sebastian*, *Captain Future*, and *Captain Harlock* flickered on the screen.

One summer, my dad took me to Old Orchard Beach in Maine. After three days of camping in the rain, we

## FREE AGENCY

*From Shiner, by Eva H.D. Published by Mansfield Press in 2016. Eva H.D.'s work won the 2015 Montreal International Poetry Prize. She lives in Toronto.*

My friend said,  
"I was having a tender  
moment with a woman  
when she asked me  
what was I thinking?  
I said that I was thinking  
about the Toronto Maple Leafs.

I know you're not supposed  
to say that you're daydreaming  
of the local hockey team  
when sharing a tender moment  
with a woman  
who is naked  
in your bed  
in the morning.  
But I feel strongly  
about the Leafs.  
I feel they're more than  
what they are, a narrative  
structure reaching back

and arcing forward  
that's bigger  
than any of us, me  
her, a single  
tender moment."

The bakery underground  
at Bathurst Station  
was filled with teenagers  
squawking, and pigeons  
on the tiles  
pounding beef patty crumbs  
like tequila shots,  
throats exposed.

"Sometimes it can be best to  
keep  
one's thoughts to oneself,"  
I said, and my friend,  
newly minted free agent,  
didn't disagree.

came back. Later, my mom took me to Ogunquit, which went better. The following year, it was Toronto and Niagara Falls. I participated in a student exchange program to Calgary.

When I was five years old, I visited Montreal, Rome, Amsterdam, Seville, Munich, Venice, Bordeaux, Paris, Bruges, and Auschwitz. When I was twenty-three years old I did it all again, going from Paris to Nice, then Monaco, then Brindisi, then Athens, then Corfu, then Rome, Geneva, Luxembourg, Bruges, Amsterdam, and back to Paris before returning to Quebec City.

I studied the sciences and mathematics (integral and differential calculus), and I took courses in politics (totalitarianism according to Hannah

Arendt) and economics (Adam Smith's invisible hand and Schumpeter's creative destruction). I also studied the history of cinema (from *Battleship Potemkin* to Frank Capra) and the historical novel (from Racine to Yourcenar).

I've traveled charter, I've traveled economy class, I've traveled business class, and I've traveled first class. I've crossed Canada by bus, I've crossed Europe by train. I've crossed the Atlantic in a 747, a 737, a DC-10 and an A-320.

I've participated on reading committees and editorial committees, I've sat with the board of directors, I've done brainstorming sessions, weekly reviews, monthly meetings. I've been project leader, coordinator, assistant,

## OVERUSED WORD ALERT ►

"Transcend"

TO BECOME AN EXPERT, TRANSCEND FACTS: True understanding goes much deeper. SKINNY JEANS TRANSCEND ALL AGES: What other piece of clothing actually transcends all ages and stages? We've





*The Mother by Brandon Constans. 60" x 54". Acrylic and medium on canvas, 2015. Constans' paintings have exhibited at Robert Kananaj Gallery, Only One Gallery and the Toronto International Art Fair. He lives in Oakville, ON.*

manager, director, and president. I've written summaries, technical manuals, I've implemented strategies.

I've made love in the snow, I've made love in a pool, I've made love on a plane. I've fucked in the kitchen, I've fucked in the living room, in the den. I've fucked on a washing machine, I've fucked in a stairwell, I've fucked in a car, I've fucked in the middle of a field, under a tree, in the shower, and in a castle tower.

I've eaten poutine in Trois-Rivières, I've dined on goulash in Budapest, I've eaten schnitzels in Prague, I've eaten tapas in Seville. I've eaten a pizza in Naples, duck confit in Bordeaux, steak frites in Paris, grilled chicken in Porto, sausage in Strasbourg, lobster in Saly Portudal, suckling pig in Hong Kong,

fajitas in Hollywood, pad thai in Toronto, and a burger in New York.

I've given crayons to kids living in the baobab forests of Senegal. I've bought drugs by taxi in a Chicago ghetto. I've snorted coke in a Montreal tavern. I've eaten at Gaudi's Casa Batlló in Barcelona. I've pissed in the toilets of the Peninsula in Kowloon. I had my bags searched at the Ritz-Carlton in Istanbul. I've served beers to Renaud around the time he was singing "Miss Maggie." I've traveled next to Luc Plamondon as he slept. I've won story contests, photo contests. I've won a bronze medal, a silver medal, and a gold medal. I've lost many races.

I've repaired a washing machine, I've repaired a vacuum cleaner, I've

done plumbing, I've put up a wall, I've assembled a chicken coop, a doghouse, a table, a couch, and a birdhouse.

I've dissected dead bodies, I've filmed surgeries. I've dined with directors and surgeons, accountants, secretaries and economists, architects and the unemployed, professors and mechanics, the big, the fat, the small, the weak.

I've owned a Texas Instrument 99/4A, I've owned a Commodore VIC-20, I've owned a Macintosh Classic, a Power Mac, a G3, a G4, a G5. I've learned how to use Windows, Outlook, Word, Excel, Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Flash, Final Cut, Motion, Netscape, Gopher, iTunes, QuarkXPress, PageMaker, InDesign, Toast, and After Effects.

I've done layout, brochures, posters, books, video editing, digital shooting, 3D animation, audio mixing, photography. I signed myself up for Facebook, I created a blog, I used Google Docs, I opened a Yahoo account, a Free account, a Hotmail account.

I've also been a soldier. I've cut off cocks, heads, and arms. I've raped young girls and run over women with a Hummer. I've blown up embassies, I've gone AWOL. I saved lives, bandaged wounds, and fed children.

I've seen the Twin Towers on fire. I've seen a journalist beheaded like Saint John the Baptist. I've seen Salome belly dance. I've seen Genghis Khan's elephants cross the Mongol Empire, I've seen Roland carve the Pyrenees with his sword. I've seen Mount Vesuvius destroy Pompeii and Erina, who screamed as lava melted her feet, her legs, her trunk, her head, linger in her last look at me. I've seen Geronimo charge a cavalry line. I've seen skulls scalped by Iroquois. I've seen skulls scalped by white men. Under the watchful eye of Moctezuma, I took part in the sacrifice of six thousand virgins. I stabbed Caesar, I took the streetcar with Brando.

been tightly squeezed into the same pant style for almost 10 years. TRANSCEND SIN AND BE FREE: If you want to be enlightened with regard to the divine perspective of sin and transcend it for a more meaningful relationship with God, here's a perfect book for you. BIONIC ARTIST VIKTORIA MODESTA TRANSCENDS THE HUMAN BODY:

I've leapt from the top of the Statue of Liberty. I've pissed blood under the blade of Guillotin's invention. I've been shot in the neck and seen my blood splatter across the floor. I've seen the firing line before being blindfolded. I've soldered the bodies of Fords in Detroit. I sold everything in '29 before turning on the gas. I've died in the electric chair, and I've worked at Menlo Park.

In Vietnam I burned children alive with napalm. I climbed the stage at Woodstock. I set a foot on the moon. I fired at Kennedy. I bombed London. I entered Havana with Castro. I carried the stones for the Great Wall of China. I led a revolution with Mao. I was a Bolshevik. I blessed the Assembly. I've harpooned whales. I've sold brushes. I inaugurated the Panama Canal. I've marched against nuclear

energy, against the death penalty, against low wages, against the church, against violence, against war, against colonialism, against the cult of personality, against the massacre of Indians, against circumcision, and I've filmed orgies in the Californian villas of Malibu.

And now, I'm going to swim the 100-meter freestyle in under a minute. 🐬

## Then There Was the Awful Night

SKY GILBERT

*From Sad Old Faggot. Published by ECW Press in 2016. Sky Gilbert has produced nearly forty plays, six novels and three award-winning poetry collections. He lives in Hamilton, ON.*

Then there was the awful night.

I did something very embarrassing that made me realize I'm totally fucked up.

Though I'm sure that's evident to you by now.

It was the beginning of several awful misguided incidents, but this was the first.

So there's this young actor whom I have worked with several times. He is extremely beautiful. I don't know how to describe him except to say that. If I say that he's tall and blond and well muscled—well aren't there so many men like that? But then he has a perfect face, which is a killer for me. Very high cheekbones, thick straight lips, all angles, eyes with a slight feminine catlike slant to them, full blond straight hair. I cast him in a play that was directed by someone else at this summer theatre, and I spent the whole summer falling in love with him. Except I didn't.

How do I explain this? Well, of course I know that Nathaniel would never be interested in me sexually.

He is on the cusp of... What? Of everything, for Christ's sake. And I'm on the cusp of nothing. Literally. Anyway. I know that Nathaniel would never want to touch me. Or at least I thought I thought that. So when I was watching rehearsal of my play, I would just gaze at his thick furred thighs. In case you haven't guessed, I have a weakness for thick furry thighs in cut-off shorts, basically because they are attached to thick furry asses. He used to wear cut-off shorts to rehearsal, and it was very hard for me to remember that he wasn't wearing them for my benefit. The thing about cut-offs is you're always waiting for an errant dick or a ball to fall out of them. That never happened but... oh God, he drove me crazy. And we would get drunk together and have these long talks that were very intense but funny, you know, because Nathaniel is very campy and self-deprecating. Of course he thinks he's worthless and has nothing but lousy boyfriends who treat him like shit. Of course.

That's the way perfect guys always are. Everyone always thinks that perfect guys are conceited but most of them—even though they may know that people think they are hot—have no idea of their own self-worth. And yeah, so they get treated badly. Nathaniel always had a funny sad sob story to tell me about some hot guy who had mistreated him.

And I worried about him. I worried about him very much. In a fatherly way. Or maybe a grandfatherly way—he was like 35 years younger than me.

I have to admit that when I met Nathaniel, I was thinking about Larry Clemson.

I fell in love with Larry Clemson when I first came out.

He was again tall and blond, very pretty, and effeminate, and he had no idea of his self-worth. When I first came out I was in a "bisexual support group," which was basically a place for guys who were coming out to get preyed upon by older men. There was a guy who was after me in the group. His name was Spencer. He was absolutely completely unattractive to me—thin and hairy and just extremely effeminate in that way that he sounded like a gay character on a TV show. Of course he would have done anything to get me alone. (I think I actually gave in once and

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Modestasings in multimedia pop acts, and she rocks a different prosthesis depending on the performance. **JETPACK AMERICA** ENABLES RIDERS TO TRANSCEND WATER AND GRAVITY: Flyboarding is just one of a handful of hydroflight products that are the newest rage in water sports. **COMMUTE DRONES:** Uber hopes to transcend gridlock





Brejo Santo, Brazil. Edison, Francisco de Assis, and Dominguez. *From Cowboys of the Americas by Luis Fabini and Wade Davis. Published by Greystone Books in 2016. Fabini's work has been featured in photography books and numerous exhibits in North America and abroad. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.*

slept with him.) And Larry was being chased by Liam, the guy who ran the group, who was this 50ish university professor with a big belly and a bald head. Well, I was in love with Larry from the moment I met him because I was just coming out of the closet and he was sweet and beautiful. But who did Larry sleep with? Not me. Liam. I was really pissed off and shocked. I know it was just because Liam was fucking persistent and wouldn't let Larry alone until he fucked him.

This is for those of you who can't get laid. I don't know if you're aware of this, but the reason any old ugly guy can get laid is simply because they are persistent. I remember I was staying at a house once with a man who was the ugliest man on

earth. This was when I was working at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and when I was lonely, before I started fucking Christopher Newton. How shall I describe him? Basically he had a face like a hatchet and an ugly flabby body and (as I was to find out) a tiny penis. And I didn't even like him. But we were spending the night in the same room together, and we stayed up all night talking because he insisted on it. And then he wouldn't let me go to sleep until I let him suck me off. And you know I finally decided, okay go ahead, suck me off, I don't give a fuck, if it will shut you up, then okay. I think more people than you might know have sex with people just to shut them up and make them go away.

Well, Liam, who ran the group,

was like this. I asked him once what his secret was for getting laid. (I wanted to ask him about Larry Clemson but was afraid to actually do it.) And he said, "You have to proposition seven guys in one night. If you can't get laid by the seventh guy, then give up." Seven guys. Can you believe it? I can barely come on to one—I get all angsty and tortured and I usually have to be drunk, which means that I'm even less appealing than usual. (I always have to be approached by someone; I never approach.) So Larry was just one of the seven guys Liam approached one night. But with Larry he got lucky. And he probably got lucky because Larry could feel that Liam didn't really care... because he was going to ask another six guys anyway, so there

with, yes, flying cars. THIS HOLOGRAPHIC LIP GLOSS IS PRETTY MAGICAL: Makeup brand Sigma Beauty has come up with a collection of magical lip glosses named Double Whammy, Transcend and Flip Flop. THE NORTH SIDE'S THE FOUNDRY TRANSCENDS THE GASTROPUB SCENE: When we read about The Foundry offering "fresh

was no pressure. But also Larry probably gave in because he just wanted Liam to shut the fuck up.

Well, anyway, beautiful Larry and I did have one perfect time together; we went to Provincetown and we were sluts. He didn't have any luck getting laid but I met a really cute waiter named Dominic, who was all over me. This made me feel better after I had to watch Larry sleeping with Liam in our "bisexual" group. (Had any of the men in the bisexual group besides me ever had sex with a woman?) But it wasn't just schadenfreude, I really enjoyed going on vacation with Larry, and we became close friends.

Well, after we went to Provincetown, Larry met a guy from New York City. This was back in 1982. And what

happened? You guessed it. Larry got AIDS and died. Just like that. It was incredibly sad. Larry's boyfriend was Latino. He met Larry in Toronto but took him to New York. Then he broke up with him, and Larry really dove into Latino and black culture. Larry told me that he would go to all these black and Latino bars and he would be the only white guy in the room. Well, you can imagine. Larry being the only white guy in the room—and being perfect, a perfect pale flower—he opened up for all these men and got banged to death, literally. This was before AIDS was a chronic illness. This was when it could kill you just like that.

I remember Larry phoned me from New York City and basically

told me, "I've got it, the big 'A'."

I said, "Oh no, I can't believe it, you know can't they do anything?" I mean what the hell can you say? He said no and that basically he was going to die and hung up. It was horrible.

So Larry comes up when I think about Nathaniel. It's not that I think he's going to die of AIDS—they have all sorts of drugs to deal with that now. It's just that when someone is that beautiful and sweet and vulnerable, they are bound to come to a bad end. They will either get fucked around by men who only want them for their looks, or they will just—for sure—get old and stop being beautiful, when their whole existence revolves around that beauty. 🍷

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## Mr. Guest

JEAN-MICHEL FORTIER

*From The Unknown Huntsman. Translated by Katherine Hastings. Published by QC Fiction in 2016. Fortier works as a copy editor in Montreal. The Unknown Huntsman is his first book.*

We haven't slept since Saturday, we've been so excited by the arrival of a stranger, an odd sort of city mouse lost in the country. At first we thought—oh joy!—he was a constable come to re-establish order, drawn by some rumour carried on the wind all the way to the gates of the city, but word quickly spread that he was nothing more than a scientist. His oversized glasses made quite an impression on Mrs. Latvia, who likened them to those worn by a German philosopher, no doubt one from the Stone Age, and Angelina White, whose door he knocked on asking for a place to stay, seems to have traded her usual rags for corseted gowns

with all the requisite whalebone and tulle to resemble a lady from a great city. Farmer McDonald, who works night and day on the farm and rarely ventures into the village, spotted her near the woods picking periwinkle and daisies for her corsage, if you can believe it! We wouldn't be surprised if the stranger whisked her off her feet into a life of debauchery, poor Angelina, she's been waiting for her Prince Charming for centuries.

But Baker Leaven has no time for such nonsense, he's never been one for modesty, except in Mayor Gross's dreams, and he's certainly not afraid to show it:

"Mr. Mayor, with all due respect,

I believe I speak on behalf of my fellow citizens when I ask that you allow our Guest to speak. After all, 'tis a rare occasion..."

We have to agree with him there, it is rare indeed, just ask Sybille—she was there when they decided to build the road to the village—she'll tell you: They decided the road would go no further just to isolate us, we swear it's true, because when you live at the end of the road, squeezed up against the forest like a chain-link fence, it sure makes you feel like you live in the middle of nowhere. Now the Guest is getting to his feet. He's wearing a grey suit, his hair slicked back as if he's at Sunday mass, doing his best to appear serious:

"Good evening, everyone."

He smiles at us, and we return the nice Guest's smile, then Angelina White stands and speaks, the shiny soles of her shoes clacking on the floor, startling Cantarini, who had nodded off, he must have been

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takes on pub favorites," we mistakenly assumed it was another upscale sports bar. 2 MISSISSIPPI CHURCHES TRANSCEND RACIAL BARRIERS AFTER ARSON: Back in the 1960s, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. observed that Sunday morning is the most segregated time of the week. UKRAINIAN FRIENDSHIPS TRANSCEND OCEANS AND SOCIETIES:



dreaming about his native Trieste or his dearly departed Nicoletta:

"Mr. Guest is actually Mr. Census-taker."

Angelina the old spinster is looking pleased as punch, she's just said more words in one minute than we've heard from her all month, but it takes more than that to impress the baker, who crosses his arms and says:

"The Census-taker? And what exactly is he sensing here?"

The stranger raises his eyebrows, lowers his eyelids, puckers his brows, widens his eyelids again, appearing to delve deep into his thoughts before replying:

"I'm conducting a census!"

Ahh, he's conducting a census, so that's it, duly noted, thank you for the clarification, Stranger. We turn to Mayor Gross who, despite his limited talents as a public speaker, did in fact pursue an education somewhere, at some time or other, and has some understanding of science, or at least that's what Morosity used to say at the late Lisa Campbell's hair salon, and he says:

"The science of census-t-t-taking. B-b-b-brilliant." Well, at least there's one of us who knows what he's going on about, even Mrs. Latvia is looking disoriented, she hasn't pulled out her wretched hankies and gone all weepy on us yet, but it's only a matter of time. Fortunately the Census-taker sets the record straight:

"The science of statistics."

There he goes contradicting the mayor, oh these city folk aren't afraid of anything, we're telling you, and now the dynamics of the meeting have suddenly changed and here we are, a room full of pupils hanging on every word of a master who licks his lips and announces:

"I've been sent by the government." 🐞

## Nobody's Women

ANNE CAMERON

*From "Nobody's Women." Published in Common Ground: Stories by Women. Edited by Marilyn Berge et al. Published by Press Gang in 1980.*

...Big day room and small day room are noisy, a constant babble of voices, a constant surging movement of women trying to find some way to fill the day.

The lounge room is small and quiet and patients are not encouraged to sit there.

"Try to get them to join the others in the day rooms, try to get them to mix and maybe get themselves involved in a game; it isn't good for them to just sit there, staring at nothing."

Do something: Checkers, crib, bridge, canasta, monopoly, pickup sticks, embroidery, petit point, tatting, crocheting, mending...

They are awakened in the morning by the sudden glare of the overhead lights switching on, and from the big loudspeaker above the door a sudden blast of music.

Half an hour to wash up, get dressed, make the bed and join the growing snake of a line forming by the front door. The probies move around the dormitory urging the last few stragglers to hurry up and join the line.

Hurry along, Mary, we're keeping the others waiting.

Never mind packing things in your bag, Jane, we'll be back after breakfast and you can do it all then.

### COME, LET US BATHE MILTON ACORN!

*From Assdeep in Wonder, by Christopher Gudgeon. Published by Anvil Press in 2016. Gudgeon is the author of eighteen books and lives in British Columbia and Los Angeles.*

Come, let us bathe Milton Acorn in rosewater and red wine, let us rub him with fine oils and perfumed rags, decorate his hair with the feathers of eagles and smaller less-serious birds. Let us gild his hemorrhoids and paint his liver spots every colour of the rainbow. Let us wash his clothes in bleach and strong detergent, festoon

his coat with ribbons and coffee stains. Let us buy him a real belt with notches, not fashioned with scissors and a Phillip's screwdriver, but factory installed, like a new car smell. Shall we carry him through the traffic on carpets made of horsehair and fine cardboard? The sun will surely groan with wonder and everyone we pass will ask: is that a poet or merely some glorious human cigar? 🐞

I fully expected to be confronted by January's hungry wolves when I landed in Kiev, Ukraine. LOVE TO TRANSCEND DEATH IN BIG-SCREEN ADAPTATION OF GRAPHIC NOVEL: Though it's a slow-burning tire fire in pretty much every other way, 2016 has been a banner year for high-concept doomed romances. HOW TO TRANSCEND BABY

Come along, Doris, time for breakfast.

Finally the dormitory is empty and you make one last check to be sure nobody is hiding under the beds, then lock the door to the dorms and check the bathrooms to be sure nobody is hiding in a cubicle.

How could anybody hide in a bathroom with no doors, no walls, just little cubicles with walls that stop at knee level so you can see their feet and legs, see their shoulders and heads above the silly little half walls, how could anybody hide, curl up in the toilet bowl maybe?

Then join the other nurses and probies. The charge unlocks the door and you move ahead of the patients, take your place on the steps and count the heads as they file past you toward the next door. When everyone has passed you follow the column and as you pass the charge nurse waiting by the door to the dining hall you quietly murmur the number you got: Never the same two days in a row. Some of the women are in isolation, some of the women are off for therapy, some aren't feeling well and have permission to eat on the ward, some have been transferred, some have been admitted, the faces change, the ward never changes.

After breakfast is over your ward again lines up and the column reverses itself, heading up the steps and back to the ward, and again you count the number of heads passing you on the steps. Dale is busy in the dining room counting the number of knives, forks, and spoons left on the tables where your women have lunch. When she finds a fork missing she races up the steps to where the women are waiting in the lounge, waiting to be dismissed, and

## Wayne

KATHERENA VERMETTE

*From North End Love Songs, winner of the 2013 Governor General's Award for Poetry. Published by the Muses' Company in 2012. Vermette's writing has appeared in several magazines and anthologies, including Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water. She lives in Winnipeg.*

she forgot her keys  
and had to knock  
at the living room window  
her brother pulls  
up the blind  
points at the clock  
laughs

let me in she begs

her feet cold  
her friends  
as gone  
as her curfew  
he slowly lowers  
the blind  
turns up the tv

she could only  
wait  
sit in the old  
orange armchair  
her favourite  
of the discarded  
porch furniture

after he died  
and the world twisted  
like a rag rung out  
of water  
she would sit  
out there  
smoking  
cross legged  
on the porch table

the old one that used to be  
in the house  
and thought  
the world couldn't possibly  
change  
anymore

when he  
finally tires of his game  
and she hears him  
unlock the door

he doesn't say  
anything  
just goes back  
to watching tv 📺

she goes to the charge nurse.  
"One fork missing."

Everyone has to stay in the lounge until all the purses, handbags, shopping bags, string bags, pockets, sleeves, and pleats are checked. We find the fork hidden in a woman's hair, and her name

is marked down diligently in the book the charge keeps to record just such breaches of behaviour.

The fork is returned to the dining room, the counts are complete, the morning medication is given and finally the women are allowed to go into the day rooms. 🍴

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POOP TO BECOME A SPIRITUAL PARENT: Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg is no stranger to mulling over the big things in life. WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES HAS ARRIVED, AND NOBODY'S SAFE: *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* managed to transcend the "yeah, naked ape armies" premise and form an uncommonly effective allegory.





*An Indian Game (Juggling Books)* by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, 1996. Acrylic on canvas. 60" x 82". Collection of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa. Photography by Rachel Topham, courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. From Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: *Unceded Territories* by Karen Duffek and Tania Willard. Published by Museum of Anthropology at UBC in 2016. Yuxweluptun's work has been exhibited internationally. He lives in Vancouver, BC.

## Skull Wrapped in Meat

DEBRA KOMAR

*From Black River Road: An Unthinkable Crime, an Unlikely Suspect, and the Question of Character. Published by Goose Lane Editions in 2016. Komar is a forensic anthropologist and author of several award-winning books, scholarly articles and textbooks.*

Although James Christie was a licensed physician, he fancied himself an artist. He often abandoned the scientific method in favour of his intuition, cobbling together his research designs from hunches and an eye for the dramatic. As the pathologist tasked with interpreting the bony remnants of two lives cut short, James sketched loose portraits of the victims from *Black River Road*: a well-to-do woman in her twenties and an infant

of indeterminate sex and age.

Having done what little he could with the question of who, Christie then turned his attention to how. Although the child's cause of death left no discernible trace on the surviving bones, it was obvious the woman was shot in the head. But where was the bullet? The projectile entered the skull, but there was no corresponding exit wound. No slug was recovered from inside the brain cavity,

nor was one found amidst the rotting grey matter left behind at the scene. What, the doctor wondered, became of the fatal shot?

Christie decided to experiment. He went to his cabinet of curiosities—standard accoutrement for scientific men of the age—and selected a skull, a cleaned anatomical preparation of unknown provenance. He set the skull on a table in his office, pulled a Smith & Wesson .22 calibre pistol from his desk drawer, and, from a distance of two feet, fired into the left temple. “The bullet went through both sides and mashed the skull a good deal,” Christie later reported. He had inadvertently obliterated a perfectly good teaching specimen.

HOW TO AVOID GETTING SCAMMED WITH FAKE YEEZYS: Yeezys have managed to transcend the sneaker community, winning over celebrities, soccer moms and others without losing their core appeal. DOES YOUR “FEAR OF MISSING OUT” DISTRACT YOU FROM CHRIST? What if you don't need to buy anything or go anywhere

The doctor was not satisfied. He suspected the fault lay in the execution rather than the research design. The problematic variable was the test subject: a clean dry skull was not a suitable analogy for a fleshed head. Christie hurried about his surgery gathering up the necessary materials, including another cranium. To simulate a fresh

human head, he “covered the skull with a muscular tissue and filled the skull nearly full with water.”

Christie never elaborated as to the source of the “muscular tissue” or specified how he kept the water inside a sectioned skull. Christie placed the leaking, meat-wrapped bundle on the table and took up his pistol. He

positioned himself at arm’s length from the unholy chimera and fired two shots directly into the skull’s left temple. When he then freed the skull from its fleshy coverings, he discovered “neither of them went through—both bullets dropped through into the skull.” Christie declared the experiment a smashing success. 🍌

## Diary of my Life

ETHEL GRANT

*From the SFU Library Special Collections and Rare Books. Ethel Grant was a farmer who lived in Saskatchewan with her husband, Allan Grant. More writing by Ethel and Allan is available to researchers at SFU Special Collections.*

On July 6, 1886 at Hull Yorkshire, England, I came into the world a bright and healthy child. At the age of three I began public school and remained there until I had passed grade seven, at thirteen years of age, then I went on to a higher grade school, but for only a few weeks, as my mother could not afford to let me continue, she being left a widow with seven other children to tend and care for, so I was placed as an apprentice at a large court dressmaking establishment for two years with no pay and after that began pay with the sum of fifty cents a week. That work I really enjoyed as we worked for nearly all titled ladies and for King Edward’s coronation made quite a number of the court trains, but we had to work long hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and sometimes until 9:30 p.m., late nights as we called them, with no extra pay either, especially when any big event was to occur. However I remained with the same firm seven years and had to leave on account of my mother’s sickness, as my sister was getting married, so I had to look after my mother, who was practically in bed for another seven years, but before this happened I had taken part in several sports, swimming,

gymnasium and singing. In swimming I entered most of the Aquatic Galas and managed to win several prizes. After my mother’s death I went back to work at another large store as an alteration hand and was with them until the World War One broke out, and at that time women were wanted on munitions and post office work, so I applied for the latter. There were twelve women who started to work at first as Postwomen, after we had had a test and I was one of them, and enjoyed every minute I was with the General Post Office. We not only delivered letters from house to house, but were put on sorting, stamping, parcels and papers and at Xmas time it was a sight worth seeing, parcels piled high up and more so with the parcels for the soldiers overseas. We had to work day and night for nearly three weeks, but were paid overtime and meals were free all Xmas time and there was a lovely dining room. I was sorry when I had to send in my resignation and leave all my fellow workers, both men and women, as we all had worked so well together during the four and a half years I was there, but it had to be as I had married a Canadian (Soldier) (but he was enlisted in the Imperial Army)

and as soon as he was demobilized we sailed for Canada, April 1919, and that was the last time I saw England.

We came over on the S.S. Scandinavian which had been a troop ship and landed at St. John’s, New Brunswick, after nine days crossing. At the immigration shed we were given sandwiches, tea and coffee, as there were several canteens belonging to the various organizations, and had to wait there for our train going west. We visited my husband’s relatives at Brockville, Winnipeg and Hanover, New Hampshire, en route and I stayed over at Winnipeg until my husband proceeded on to the prairie Coleville in Saskatchewan to get things a little in shape for my arrival, as he had a farm there. So after a two week tour around the stores etc. at Winnipeg, I proceeded on to the last part of the journey to my new home in Sask. to which I arrived after two days’ journey, and was met at the so-called station of Coleville, and there were a few of my husband’s neighbours there to meet us, and took me up to the farm which was three miles away. En route I saw all the little wooden shacks which looked so queer to me, after living in a city with brick buildings. Finally I arrived at my destination and had a good look around the shack. It seemed queer to me to see stoves in the centre of the room after being used to fireplaces at home.

---

to transcend your fear of missing out? 'IN HELL'—ATHLETES MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF ANOREXIA NERVOSA: In no other field can a person transcend ordinariness simply by kicking the winning goal or scoring the most runs. WHY ARE WE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THE SMILING POOP EMOJI? The smiling poop’s ability



I think it was a Saturday night when I arrived, and on the Sunday quite a lot of neighbours came over to see the newcomer, and I was busy unpacking some of the things out of my trunks. Next day I had to make bread which I had done from a girl at home, but these dry yeast cakes troubled me and I was half the night baking it. So after a time I got to make it in less time. I had to wrap it up well.

**T**he winters were the worst and that first winter in Canada was severe, as we had seven months of it. I was

expecting my first baby around May and my husband took me up to the hospital which was twenty miles away and doctor too in the buggy and there was snow on the ground as we had a blizzard a few days before, so it took us a long time before we reached the hospital, where I finally stayed and expected the baby to be born any day, but it was not until three weeks after and the suffering I went through was terrible. If ever there is such a place as hell, I was in it there. The baby died and I was in such a bad state and not expected to live and was put in a public

ward and screened off for dying. However I survived but was in the hospital nearly four months only to learn I had a big operation to be done as soon as I gained strength, so I insisted on coming home as I thought the change and scenery would benefit me more on the road to recovery, so my husband came with the wagon and team and took me home, and I recovered quickly. After three months I came out to Vancouver and had the operation done by two of the best doctors and was in the hospital only a few weeks and was able to return home again to the farm in Saskatchewan.

## LANGUAGE POLICE

*From “Pourquoi pas en français?” (Why Not In French?), an index on the Quebec Board of the French Language’s website (<http://bit.ly/2b5f7tg>) that contains translations of English words and phrases that did not previously have a French equivalent. The index is intended to discourage Francophones from speaking English.*

ENGLISH PHRASE → SUGGESTED FRENCH PHRASE → DIRECT TRANSLATION

Air guitar → *musique jouée à l’aide d’un instrument imaginaire* → music played with an imaginary instrument

Best-seller → *livre-culte* → cult book

Feel-good movie → *cinéma pur bonheur* → pure movie pleasure

Hashtag → *mot-clic* → word click

Hidden agenda → *intentions inavouées* → unconfessed intentions

Momentum → *avoir le vent en poupe* → have the wind in its sails

Post-mortem → *retour sur ce qui s’est passé* → return to what happened

Puck → *rondelle ou disque* → washer or disc

Think tank → *laboratoire d’idées* → laboratory of ideas

War room → *centre nerveux des opérations* → nerve centre of operations

BlackBerry → *modèle de terminal de poche commercialisé sous le nom de BlackBerry* →  
handheld model sold under the name of BlackBerry 📱

to transcend language barriers and political differences has seen it become one of the most popular emojis in existence. DEAR WHITE PEOPLE, MUHAMMAD ALI DIDN'T TRANSCEND RACE': When famous African-American celebrities die, you can bet your bottom dollar that if white folks liked them, the word “transcend” is going to pop

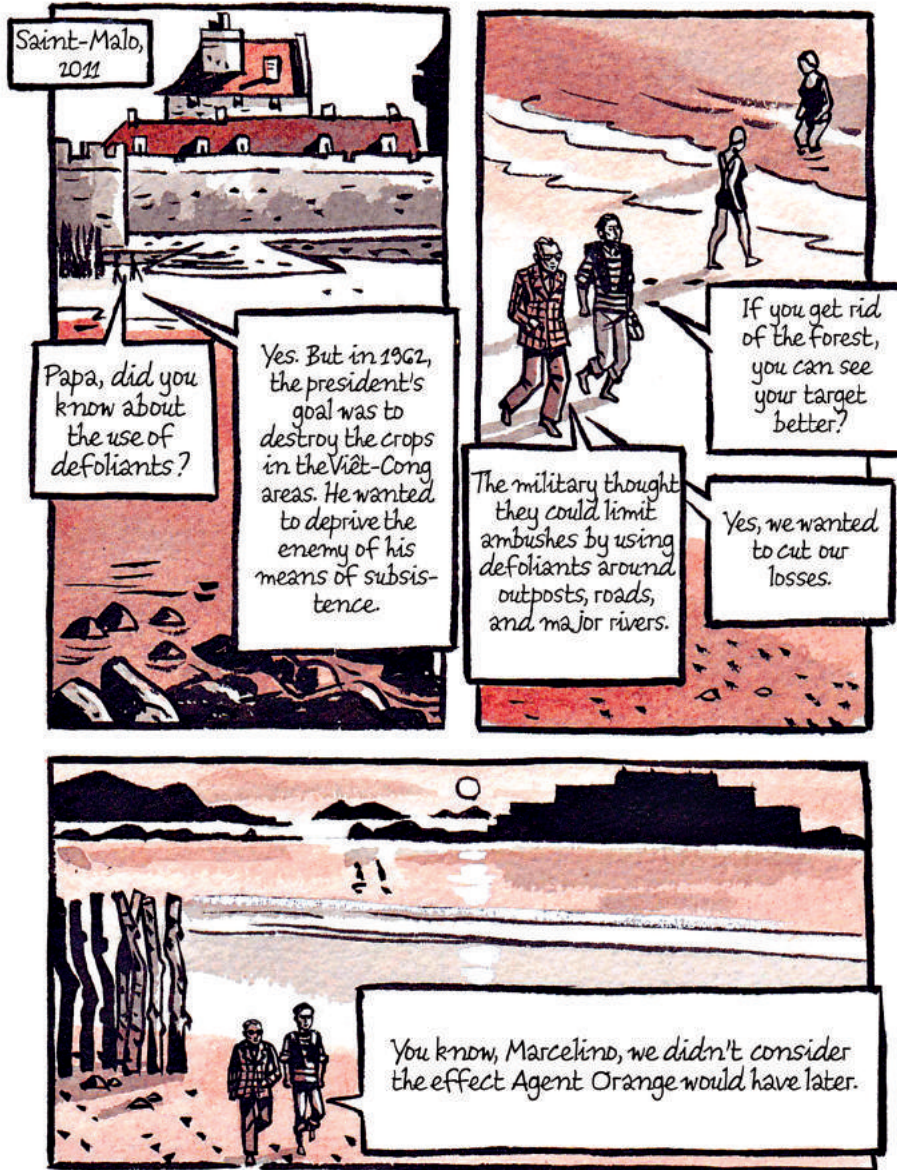
Plastic bowl from China



34 Geist 103 Winter 2016



And our father? He had access to all sorts of information.



*From Such a Lovely Little War: Saigon 1961–63 by Marcelino Truong. Translated by David Homel. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2016. Truong is an illustrator, painter and author. He lives in Paris.*

make the best of things, always kept my spirits and had a strong will, but still felt the loss of my little girl. My husband wanted me to adopt a child, but I was not willing, and was willing to run the risk of having another child of my own flesh and blood and said it was as good a way to die as any. I wanted another girl as I never had my mind off Edna. So on October 23rd, 1925 my third baby Winifred was born by the Caesarian section,

and I had to come out to Vancouver to the same doctor as I had for my two previous operations, and was in the Vancouver General Hospital six weeks, but got along well and the doctor said the baby was the re-incarnation of Edna.

So I sure felt pleased, and she was a bright healthy child, never had a day's sickness until 13 years of age. But at the age of seven she had to start school and we were four miles

away. I had to drive her in the horse and buggy morning and night, summer and winter, sometimes at 30 or more below zero and snow several feet deep in the winter. Would no sooner get her there when I had to fetch her back, so after two years and we had had no crop for seven years, decided to make a move and after a lot of persuasion my husband wanted to go to northern Sask. around Lac La Ronge, but I would not go. 🍷

justified. THE OLD MAN AND THE YOUNG PUNK—FRIENDSHIPS CAN TRANSCEND AGE: Why are we so supportive of diversity in friendships, except when it comes to age? ANGEL SOFT TOILET PAPER'S EMOTIONAL APPEAL CAN'T TRANSCEND PRODUCT CATEGORY: An inveterate romantic recently found himself wandering the

# nēpēwisiwin – shame

LOUISE BERNICE HALFE

*From Burning in this Midnight Dream. Published by Coteau Books in 2016. Halfe is author of three award-winning books and was Saskatchewan's Poet Laureate for 2005–2006. She lives in Saskatoon.*

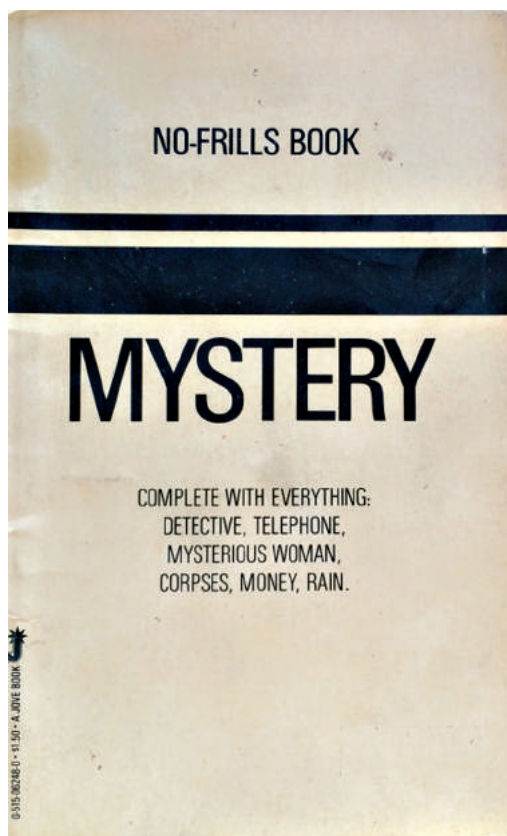
When I was in the plundering school  
I often visited the confessional.  
The earth moved under me  
and my knees wobbled into the pew.  
A rolling plough wind darkened  
the small light above the priest's head  
and bile spewed from my mouth.  
I'd confess. I wanted another girl's boyfriend,  
lusted for his mouth  
though I'd never been kissed.  
Another girl and I exchanged ugly words and  
she slammed the door on my bare feet.  
I wanted to get even so we fought outside the gym.  
I looked over Bryan's shoulder  
so I could spell my words.  
I vomited all over his back.  
I hated the supervisor, who stole my money,  
and said I was the lying thief.  
I hated another one who never taught me  
a girl's moon came every month and I had to hide  
this visit, hide my tiny breasts. I hated the woman

who marched the little girl, who peed her bed,  
in front of all of us.  
My eyes swelled, leaked pus,  
my morning breath foul from the confessional.  
The hail mary's slid down my belly.  
When I returned to the log shack all that was left  
was a hole filled with fireweed.  
My mother, my father were strangers.  
I'd watched them, how the devil took my father's hand  
and lifted another woman's skirt.  
My mother's feebleness fought against my uncle's  
goatishness. Those spirits we consumed  
brought each of us black-outs that only skid-row  
dwellers would know. I make no excuse  
for being a dog-in-heat or the raging beast  
I'd become in this dark forest.  
If I could take back that night when  
I dumped my friend in the fields of nowhere  
in my drunken rage  
to hitchhike the thousand miles of fright, I would.  
But instead, I collect these night visitors  
to tell this story  
to reach the heart where history placed its frost-bite  
on our ragged souls.  
I've dredged this artesian well and if I could  
I'd burn my flesh and kill this fiend. 🍄

---

toilet aisle at a Lowe's as part of an elaborate plan to surprise his wife. USING ART TO TRANSCEND AND ILLUMINATE: The Juilliard Journal breaks down walls by presenting a festival of Latin American music of the 20th and 21st centuries.





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# South of Buck Creek

TERENCE BYRNES

*A Canadian memoir of black and white in America's unhappiest city*

**I**n the fall of 1966, when I was eighteen years old, I began taking photographs in the town of Springfield, Ohio, a few miles down the road from the college where I had begun my second year of studies in the liberal arts. My uncle had given me an Agfa Ambi Silette camera, which I carried with me, along with a few rolls of Tri-X film. I continued to travel to and photograph Springfield for the next forty-five years.

On my first day in Springfield, I watched a strangely calm man grab another man's ears as if they were jug handles and smash his head into a wall. A perfect semi-circle of blood fanned onto the stucco above them. I peered into the fly-specked windows of a defunct tannery whose entrance was surmounted by a bull's head staring out at Main Street from vacant leathery eye sockets. Just down the street, I found a store that sold voodoo love charms in suede pouches (choose your own set of real chicken feet) and Copenhagen and Red Man snuff in tins stacked high on shelves like canned salmon. In a junk shop, I bought a tiny lapel button with a faded portrait encircled by the legend "Lord Byron, English Poet," and a photo album recording a local family's trip to the 1936 Berlin Olympics; a pencilled note on one of the photographs expressed their pleasure at being seated close to Adolf Hitler.

Such was my introduction to Springfield, Ohio, which I came to know as a true "cabinet of wonders," drawing me into itself and awakening a need, or possibly a vocation, that I hadn't known I possessed.

I made several trips to Springfield during the academic year. Once my studies finished and I returned home to Montreal, I began travelling down to Springfield at least once

a year to photograph life south of the city's racial and class frontier, bordered by a muddy waterway called Buck Creek. Springfield had once been a successful manufacturing city but, in the mid-twentieth century, it became a bellwether for industrial decline in North America and an exemplar of truly disastrous urban planning. When I started taking photographs in Springfield, I knew little of that history. It was enough for me to spend a week or so every year walking from one end of ruined and depopulated Main Street, through the city, to the other end and back again, my camera always in hand.

Over the years, my role in the territory south of Buck Creek changed from spectator to participant, and I became used to voices calling out "Hey, Canada!" or "Picture dude!" Thanks to my accent, my clothes, and even my gait, I didn't fall into any local category. Black people who barely had a notion of Canada as a country (like many of the white residents) nonetheless knew it as a terminus for the Underground Railroad and as a place where medical treatment and bankruptcy did not go hand in hand. This fact often opened the door to trust. White people were sometimes a different story because they couldn't categorize me. I learned to watch for beer bottles thrown from car windows by laughing white men or, worse, vehicles swerving to the shoulder of the road to sideswipe me. Often, men driving past screamed, "Faggot!"

In 2011, Springfield gained notoriety when the Gallup organization completed a three-year "survey of American misery" and proclaimed it the "unhappiest city in America." That same year, I made my last trip to Buck Creek; I had produced over 10,000 images.



My photographs were starting to repeat themselves and the world I had known was changing. An entire neighbourhood south of Buck Creek had been demolished, and many people, unhoused, some with a little cash in hand from buyouts, had dispersed. After I stopped

photographing Springfield, my appetite for the opportunity to slip out of one life and into another clung like the urges of an addiction. Then it fell away entirely, leaving only the memories of an experience along with these photographs of a foreign land.

---



#### **TERRIA (1966)**

The first day I visited Main Street, I met a young girl wearing cat's eye glasses, a pleated wool skirt and an impeccably ironed white blouse. She held the hand of a younger boy, her brother, who was impatient to get going. When I asked permission to take her picture, she seemed not to understand what I wanted, much less why. For a moment, in her confusion, she released the little boy's hand and grasped her own wrist. I didn't learn her name but her gesture never left my imagination. Forty-three years after this picture was taken, I received an email from a Springfield newspaper reporter. The subject line read, "I found your girl." Amazingly, he had. Her name was Terria and she lived in California. When I eventually spoke with Terria she told me that she had been able to recognize herself because of the mole on her right forearm. Her family home had burned down, her brother had died unexpectedly and this image had become her only concrete link to the past.





## SOUTH OF BUCK CREEK (2001)

The last recorded lynching of a black man in Springfield happened downtown in 1904. A white crowd then set fire to black neighbourhoods. The racial divide was still there eighty-seven years later, in 2001, when this image was taken, and sometimes it was expressed hatefully. As in the old days, people usually kept to their own turf. North of Buck Creek was white and middle class; south was Appalachian white, black and Latino. That class

and racial divide could be so taken for granted that it would disappear from consciousness in daily life. Then a graffito praising the Ku Klux Klan would appear below a painted American flag, or a drawing expressing a grotesque longing for lynching would turn up on a garage wall and restore the divide to full consciousness. Even chalk drawings left by children on the side of a church revealed the legacy of a stubbornly malign racial consciousness.



## JOY (1999)

This little girl's mother was slow-moving, quick to smile and trusting. When I asked to take pictures of her daughter, she just nodded agreeably and sat on a nearby porch to watch us. The little girl was a firecracker, filled with energy, wit and good humour, and I knew she would give

me a lively image. This bothered me almost as much as it pleased me. Poor black people have too often been represented as somehow ennobled by their poverty and repression, somehow better able to reach deep and pull up reserves of joy and warmth found beneath the adversity in their lives. But poverty doesn't work that way. The simple joys of the poor,

unburdened by possessions and excessive ambition, are a guilty invention by the rest of us. I tried to constrain the representation of this girl's joy by imprisoning her in straight lines of black and white and to present her as though she were overseen by the tall windows at her back.



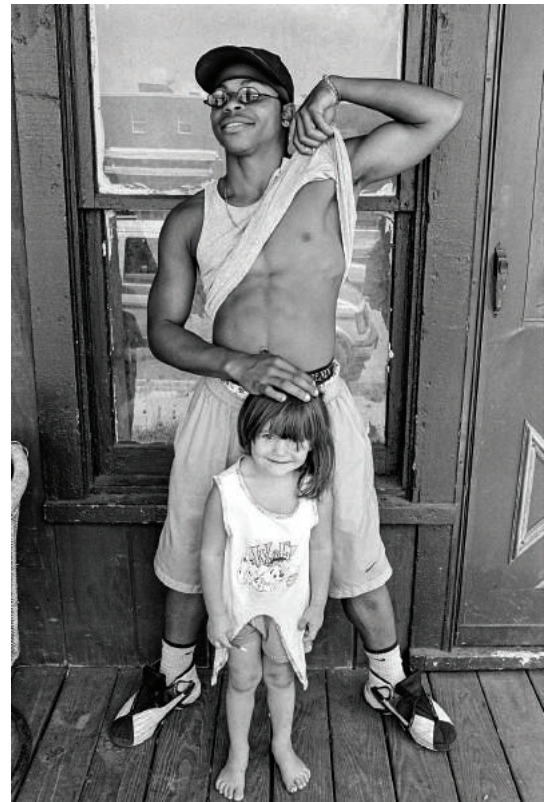


#### MARRIAGE (1998)

I caught sight of this woman and her twins sunbathing in their front yard and asked to take their picture. The woman was hesitant—and why not? I was a complete stranger with a camera. However, after a moment's reflection, she collected the girls and, with no direction from me, guided them into the pool. “Now, you have to be fast,” she said, “because my husband comes home at three.” I remember glancing at my watch and seeing that it was about four minutes before three. “And if he catches you here doing this,” she went on, “he’ll kill you.” There was no hint of irony in her voice. She bit her lip and smiled at the same time and I grabbed a few shots. “Now, I’m not tellin’ you my name,” she said, as though her name would reveal more than a picture of her in her bikini. In the later years of this project, women wouldn’t so easily agree to have their pictures taken. They were afraid, as one told me, that their faces would appear atop a nude body on the Internet.

#### MANHOOD (1994)

For years, I visited two neighbouring houses whose messy yards appeared to generate children in the way rags and wheat were once thought to generate mice. Every time the kids spotted me, someone would yell out, “The picture guy is here!” There was always half a dozen or more of them playing in the yard or the street, or being teased by the young, single men who also lived there. The kids’ parents, somewhat to my distress, seemed not to know “parent” as a verb, and never questioned my presence. This young man was showing off his little friend to me and, inexplicably, lifted up his shirt. Another young man who was watching us saw my confusion. “You know why he do that?” he asked, lifting the hem of his own shirt. I admitted that I didn’t. “Why, he a man!” the friend said. I still don’t know if it was the well-muscled torso or the “Pooh and Friends” stitched into the broad waistband of his underwear that proclaimed his masculinity.





#### WORKING WOMEN (2006)

A woman who had turbanned her wet hair with a white towel approached me and asked, "What're you doing here?" When I told her I was from Montreal and that I was taking pictures and meeting people, she said she had just returned from Alabama, where she had been in jail. She was studying to be a truck driver to help pay for her daughter's college education when her instructor attempted to sexually assault her in the cab of a truck. She told me she took out her knife and "cut him up." The trial that followed found she had no proof of the attack and put her in jail for aggravated assault; now, she was happy to be free. At the end of her story, she caught sight of an older woman wearing a leopard print dress walking toward us on the sidewalk. "Here's someone for you to meet," she said. "She's the oldest streetwalker in Springfield!" With that, she embraced the woman, who wore a hospital bracelet on her wrist and a "Wittenberg University" lanyard around her neck.

#### MUSCLE AT CITY COUNCIL (1999)

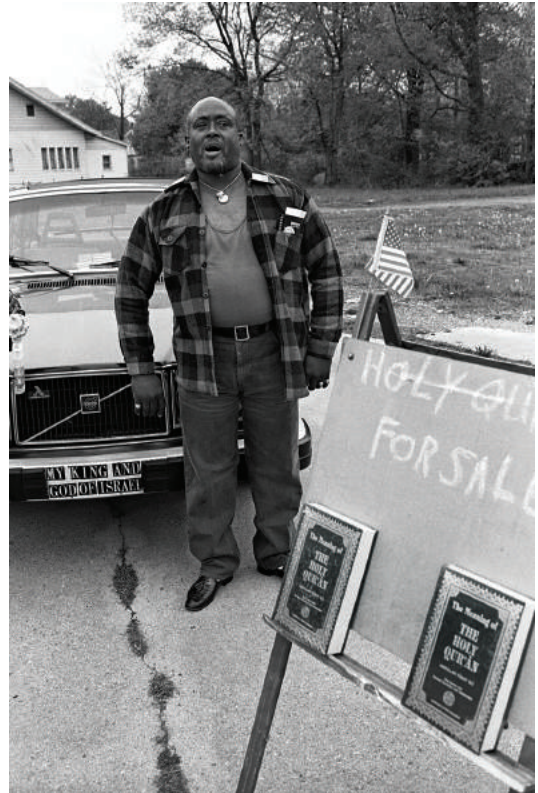
The street was empty save for a boy in army fatigues doing push-ups on the sidewalk under a red and white beach umbrella. His face was beaded with sweat. I squatted in front of him to ask if I could take a few pictures and he grunted his assent. I sat on the sidewalk and focused on his face, adjusting the angle so his body would appear foreshortened. I then stood up and thanked him, but my thanks was interrupted by an urgent whirring sound. Within moments, I had been corralled by three large, protective-looking black women on electric golf carts. They explained that the boys were residents of a home for troubled kids and that pictures couldn't be taken without the permission of a parent or a guardian. A few minutes later, a tall, self-possessed man who identified himself as the CEO of the home, Vision for Youth, came to speak with me. He said he liked my ideas about portraying the poor and underprivileged. "How can we help?" he asked. "Do you need some protection? Some muscle at city council?"





## THE “C” LANGUAGE (1999)

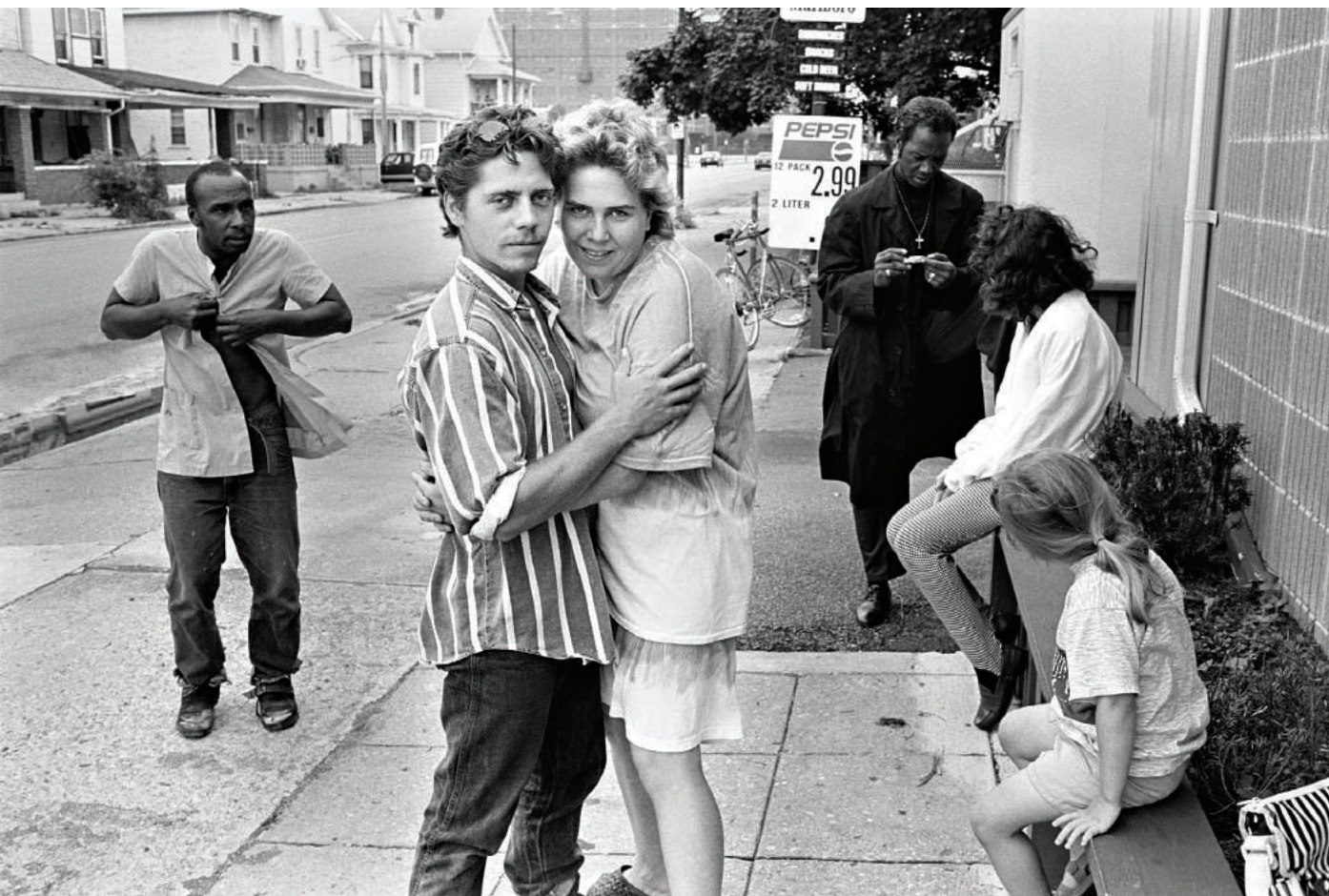
I walked up the street past the Vision for Youth residence with a couple of boys, a male counsellor and a convoy of white golf carts. Wrecked military vehicles incongruously parked in a primly mowed side yard affirmed the home’s “boot camp” approach to rehabilitation. The boys saluted their counsellors and addressed them smartly as “Sir!” We stopped at a vegetable garden the boys had cleared, planted and maintained. One of the boys told me that his father had raised him at US military bases around the world. He had taught himself to write computer programs in the C language, and was articulate and cosmopolitan, completely unlike the other kids. “When we moved back to Springfield,” he told me, “everything was race. You were black or white and that was all you were.” When I told him about the students I saw in Montreal socializing in groups indifferent to race, he teared up and wiped his eyes. For a crazy moment, I fantasized about adopting him.



## RELIGION (1985)

I watched this man park his immaculately clean Volvo on a stretch of asphalt that meandered pointlessly across an empty plot of land. He spread the legs of a display stand, balanced two books on it, and topped it off with an American flag. When I approached, he introduced himself as a reverend from a nearby Christian church. It wasn’t clear to me why he was selling a book about the Qur’an, but one of his parishioners did stop at the display to buy a copy. It was also never clear to me why so many of the desperately poor—people covered in bedbug bites, or people who had just declared bankruptcy to escape the burden of life-saving medical bills—cherished, displayed and clothed themselves in American flags and symbols. It took me years to recognize that it was not the nation that succoured them, nor one god over another, but the comforting matrix of belief itself.





## FRIENDS (1997)

This group of people waited across the street from the place that paid for blood plasma. They were killing time, they told me, “waiting for our blood to clear.” A schizophrenic man paced up and down the street buttoning and unbuttoning his shirt while the others talked quietly. A man wearing a striped shirt asked for a photograph with his girlfriend. His expressionless eyes unsettled me. My notebook from that day in 1997 identifies

him only as “scary guy.” I carried a print with me for years in the hope of delivering it to him. About ten years after this was taken, I met his father, Mr. Poe. He was in a wheelchair because he’d lost his legs when he fell asleep, drunk, stretched over a train track. He told me that his son was in prison for killing a man in a fight over a bottle of beer. When I gave him this photograph, he gazed at it and shouted proudly, “That’s my son. That’s my son!”





### SCRAP (2000)

Donald and Louen dreamed of owning their own home. They worked long hours for that dream by filling the bed of their Chevrolet pickup with scrap metal all day long and selling it to a dealer. When I ran into them, they were trying to separate hundreds of metal clothes hangers they had found on the curb on trash collection day. It was impossible to move the heavy tangle of hangers. Donald told me that he didn't have a

driver's license, but he knew how to fix his truck and how to drive. When I gave him my notebook and asked him to write contact information so I could send a photograph, he hesitated, and then laboriously drew each letter of his name. Louen was crackling with impatience. Her pager had just sounded, so she quickly wrote their address in my notebook, telling Donald that they had "a pile of lamps to get before they're gone!"



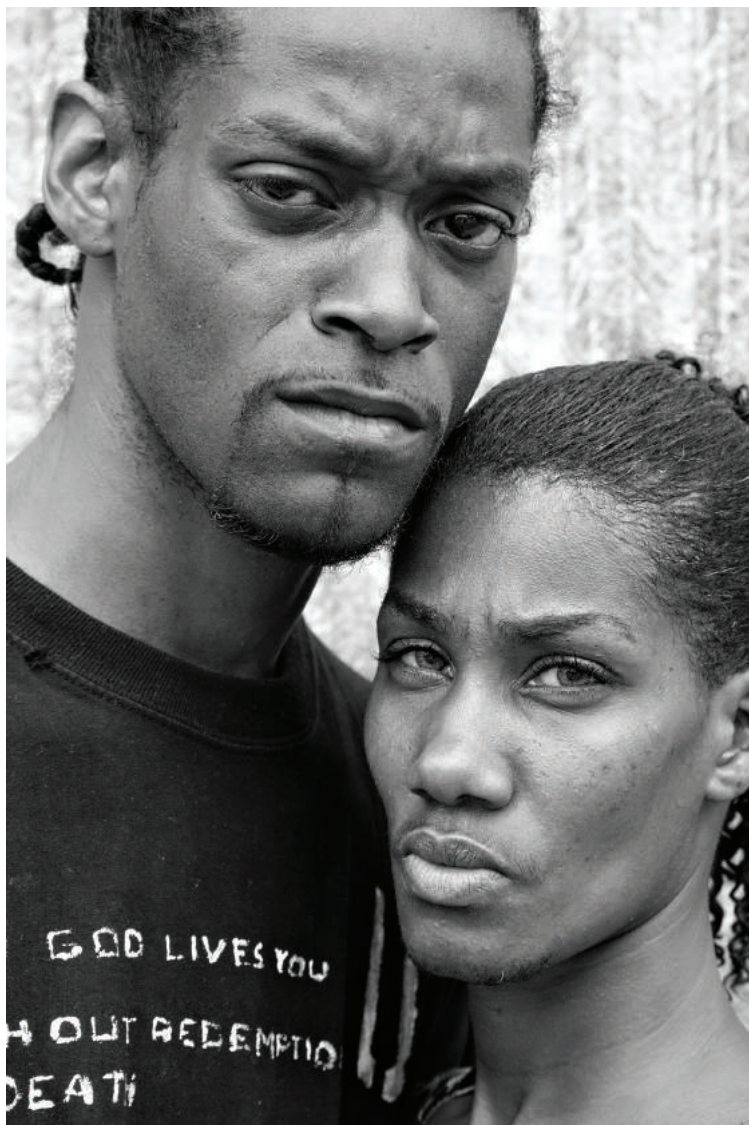


#### THE 440 LINE (2000)

I met Howard Rude when he was demolishing a small building with no tools other than a crowbar, a hammer, and a shovel. He said his son had left him there in the morning to do the job. He repeated himself frequently, lost his thoughts and sometimes drifted away for a few moments until he found what sounded like an often-told story. He told me about a Springfield city official in the 1920s who had murdered a lover but who had enough political pull to escape prosecution. He remembered

Springfield as a wealthy, unruly town where one's life could change in an instant. One of his own life-changing experiences had occurred when he worked as an electrician: "I was up in the rafters at a plant running a 440 line," he said. "There was this big black woman working on an armature, wearing a leather apron, just below me. When I fell, she heard me yell and stretched out her apron to catch me. A big, fat woman. I landed in her lap. I woulda been dead. I was a racist before that, but never again."





## UGLY WORLD (2006)

Back in Montreal, the phone rang and I picked it up to hear an oddly intimate, vaguely threatening voice with an American accent. After a moment, I realized it must be someone from Springfield. The caller was the front man for the band Ugly World and he went by the name of “B-Steelz.” He wanted me to photograph the band for a CD jacket. Ugly World played rap, blues, country and Sinatra. Their name was an agglomeration, standing for “Under God Lives You/With Out Redemption Lies Death.” When I first met B-Steelz and his violet-eyed sister, eternal damnation wasn’t up for discussion. Instead, we drank lemonade with the band and appreciated Charlie Pride. But when it came time to make a photograph, B-Steelz and his sister, unlike the white people I photographed, instantly adopted sullen, angry expressions for the camera. When I asked why—a question only a foreigner could get away with—he said, “That’s just the way you gotta look in this world, man.”

Terence Byrnes is a writer and photographer. He was born in Toronto in 1948. As a young student, Byrnes earned a trade certificate in electronics, but chose a different career path. He turned down a position at the Kennedy Space Center, as well as an offer from Cornell University to study industrial psychology. Instead, he took up studies at a liberal arts college in southern Ohio, near the city of Springfield.

Byrnes began photographing Springfield in 1966. Over the next forty-five years, he

produced tens of thousands of images of the city, selections from which have been shown at art galleries in the United States and, in 2009, in a solo show at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. He has also edited magazines, published fiction and non-fiction, ghost written autobiographies, and, as he says, “written hack work that included a stint as Maria the Fortune Telling Gypsy for a large tabloid.”

Terence Byrnes now teaches in the Department of English at Concordia University, in Montreal, where he also lives. His

most recent book is *Closer to Home: The Author and the Author Portrait* (Véhicule Press, 2008). A selection of his author portraits called “The Imagined Portrait” was awarded an Honourable Mention in the 2009 National Magazine Awards. In his current photographic project, *Sovereign*, he examines the nature of representation in portraiture by having his photographic subjects make and wear crowns that express their area of expertise. More Springfield photographs, and samples of his current work, may be seen at [terencebyrnes.com](http://terencebyrnes.com).

# Can't Lit

*Winners of the Can't Lit Without It CanLit Short Story Contest. Entrants were asked to generate a premise for a story from [canlitgenerator.com](http://canlitgenerator.com), a CanLit premise generator built by Adam Brady. The generator uses JavaScript to randomly output event, location and character combinations, drawn from a database of crowdsourced suggestions. At present, 900,000 premises are available.*

## 1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE

### Category: Performance Art

KATHERINE FAWCETT

*Premise: Two dogs get government funding and maybe have sex with a bear, unless that was a dream, I can never tell.*

I hate these kinds of meetings.  
Yeah. I hope it doesn't take long.  
Well, it's blown up on Twitter and Facebook.  
It'll be forgotten by tomorrow.

I don't know. I can picture the headline in the *Globe and Mail*: "Dogs receive Canada Council Arts Grant: Opposition Calls for Public Inquiry."

Someone must have leaked it. Committee decisions are supposed to be confidential.

Do you know their names?

The applicants?

Yeah.

Squidgy and Max.

Never heard of them.

They're not well known. Until now.

Heads are gonna roll, I guarantee it.

Well, everyone has a different definition of art. That's why our office is so important to Canadian culture. That's why we work at arm's length from Parliament. We give *all* artists a voice. All applications are considered objectively, based on—

I know, I know. But can you imagine being one of the artists rejected this year? Beat by a couple of pooches? How humiliating! You're working on the Great Canadian Novel and have to give it up due to lack of funding.

To be fair, you're talking about the Literary Arts department, sub-group Creative Writing.

This was under Performance Art, sub-group Artists and Community Collaboration.

I heard there was a bear in the proposal as well. Unless I was dreaming.

No, you're right. The proposal's title was "Two Dogs Having Sex, and a Bear."

Is mammal-on-mammal porn eligible under the current mandate?

It's not porn. It's performance art.

Still, I think some things should go straight to the National Research Council.

The people who do the time signal? Why would *they* fund this?

Because it's more scientific than artistic. Two dogs having sex with a bear? How is that even possible?

The dogs don't mate *with* the bear. The bear *watches*. It's avant-garde. It forces us to ask hard questions: How does the bear's reaction engender our own response? How is our sexuality wrapped up in our species? What emotions are triggered in the watcher? The watched? How do we come to terms with and observe our own animal nature?

But dogs have sex all the time. Doesn't mean it's art.

And stories happen all the time. The sun always rises. It's in the framework, the writing down of the stories, the painting of the dawn,



the staging of the dance that transforms everyday acts—love, violence, beauty, betrayal, sex—into art.

Did the applicants, Squidgy and—?

Max.

Squidgy and Max. Did they specify how the funds would be spent?

Their application was complete. Which is more than I can say for some of the Contemporary Music Project grants.

What breed?

Labradoodle and a Weimaraner.

Those are nice breeds.

Really nice.

Hot.

I agree.

Still, the optics aren't good.

I'll give you that.

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*Katherine Farwett's recent short story collection The Little Washer of Sorrows (Thistle-down Press) was shortlisted for the Sunburst Award for Excellence in Canadian Fiction of the Fantastical. She lives in Pemberton, BC.*

## 2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE

# Part of the Family

CATRIONA WRIGHT

*Premise: A family tersely raises a sheep that may or may not talk, which they then adopt as their own.*

Mother sloshed water into Bethany's pail. She spread new woodchips in Bethany's stall. She petted Bethany, her hand disappearing in the sheep's fine, tightly crimped wool.

"Almost shearing time," Mother said.

"Over my dead body, bitch," Bethany said.

"What?" Mother removed her hand from its soft resting place.

"Baaaahhh," Bethany said.

Mother returned to the cabin. Normally she would put the kettle on, mix the oats, set the table, but today she sat in the corner and stared.

"When will morning repast be served?" Brother said.

"I'm starving," Sister said.

"I can prepare breakfast if you aren't feeling well, dear," Father said.

"Over my dead body, bitch," Mother said.

Brother assumed Mother's Bethany duties. He let Bethany out into the pasture, watched her nibble on clover.

"Do you think I'll ever escape this place?" Brother said. "I want to go to the city and become a writer. My ambitions are so stifled by this stifling life. But I'll never forget my prairie roots. Wheat fields shimmering in the sun. Good, thick cream in a sturdy pitcher."

"Rot in hell," Bethany said.

"I fear I already am," Brother said. A lover

of Aesop's Fables, Brother was not fazed by the prospect of a talking animal, though he hadn't expected such salty language.

Bethany stared at him, her eyes vibrant with a dark, inscrutable power.

Brother never came back from school that day. Money had gone missing from Father's drawer.

Bethany's care fell to Sister. She trimmed a section of Bethany's wool and shoved it down her pants. She waggled her crotch sweater at Bethany.

"The girls at school will think I'm such a hoot," Sister said.

"They think you're fat," Bethany said.

Sister threw the ball of wool at Bethany. "You stink. You smell like feces."

Bethany rolled on the ground, her shorn wool sticking to her unshorn wool.

Sister refused to eat breakfast, refused to eat lunch. She shrank and shrank and shrank.

With Sister too weak and listless to help, Father attended to Bethany. Father sang Bethany sweet hymns and fed her carrots out of his hand. Bethany sucked on his fingers, rubbed her wool against his legs.

"Aren't you a delight!" Father said.

Bethany batted her thick eyelashes at him.

"A great lady," Father said.

Bethany slurped her water. She put her snout in Father's corduroy pocket, searching for more carrots. She followed Father back to the cabin. At the threshold, Father hesitated. Mother was sitting on a chair, scowling at the fire. Brother's books lay unread on a table. Sister whimpered on the floor, her thin body drowning in her

gingham dress.

"After you," Father said.

Bethany stepped inside.

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*Catriona Wright is a writer, editor and teacher. Table Manners, her debut poetry collection, is forthcoming from Véhicule Press in April 2017. She lives in Toronto, ON.*

### 3<sup>RD</sup> PRIZE

## Levelled Ground

CLAIRE LAWRENCE

*Premise: An old man tries to live for...reasons.*

On my knees, I claw the rusty soil with raw hands, push seed potatoes between the stump roots and cover them with ash. I stand up and survey the land. I felled an army of wood and replaced the canopy with mounds of spuds. Let them eye and push against the dead: I do it every day.

Again, I raise my hand to God. Pas! You will not take down Jean Aucoin.

My mother and I were torn from this island by the English and herded like pigs onto a ship bound for Pennsylvania. The captain kept me as a cabin boy and I never saw Maman again. Nowhere was home until they marooned me in Malpeque—right back where I began. The Aucoin name had returned to Acadian land.

I married late. I was afraid of losing all that I loved. I was right to be afraid.

Rosalie cradles my boy. Her wisp and shadow lie with him, buried in the red soil. I remember the North Atlantic winds whipping at her legs while the bloody flux ran, pinking the snow with her life. How her lips cracked and bled as I carried her back to the sod house, everything smelling of smoke, hay rot and livestock.

Rosalie, my bride, bore my son. He lay limp in the well of her thighs as she burned with fever. No spoonful of sugary gooseberry could stop the dwindling. Tender Marié, heavy with calf and weak herself, lay beside them offering warmth.

I prayed. I fasted. At mid-Lent, there was no miracle. My precious faded and took mon petit bébé with her.

I raised my fist and cursed God, "Tabarnak! Casse-toi!"

God did not strike me down. I survived the winter.

Marié snorts and paws at the ground. Her brindled calf was born this morning. She flicks her tail and walks toward the snake fence. I lean over the zigzag wood and palm a seed potato. She lips my fingers before seizing the spud.

I baptize the calf Lazarus. His tiny frame reminds me of my son. My eyes well up. Suddenly, the calf buckles and falls to his knees. And I fall too, praying to the Almighty though it goes against me. The calf struggles and rises. Marié gently nudges him and he staggers to the open green.

I rise and gaze toward my small, dead family.

My old bones drag me across the damp earth, which gloms onto my feet. The fusty smell goads me on. My spirit is ignited.

"Lâche pas la patate!" Do not give up.

At the gravesite, "Ma chère, I miss you! But I will not enter the valley of death—not yet. The Aucoin name must survive. I will take another bride. But you will always have my heart."

The sun is setting on my levelled world. I keep my eyes on the horizon and do not look up at the stars.

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*Claire Lawrence won the Sampad South Asian Arts International Writing Competition and was published in an educational book, Inspired by Gandhi. Her short story "Warrior Caste," was nominated by the Dime Show Review for the 2016 Pushcart Prize. She lives in Port Moody, BC.*



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SHORT STORY

# Will There Be Any Stars?

SUZANNAH WINDSOR

*The moon makes me a little nervous, like it's my mother watching*



**T**he rink gate is chained so we stand on a snowbank to climb the boards. Lacey hops over first and sticks the landing like a gymnast, then grabs me by the back of my coat, pulls me onto the ice. I land on my ass. Dan and Markus don't notice. They've already dropped their backpacks in the penalty box and are pulling their laces tight. By the time I get up and shuffle over to the bench and open my bag, the others are skating in circles, carving up the ice with their blades.

I sit on the bench and ease off my boots. My wool socks feel prickly in the cold. We're hidden from the dead-end street by a bank of spruce trees, but the moon makes me a little nervous, like it's my mother watching. She loves to tell everyone the story of how I was born on a full moon, at home, a month early. The midwife got there just in time to catch me. My mom was by herself in the kitchen, squatting with her hands up on the counter and a tea towel underneath her. A pork chop was still sizzling on the stove. The midwife took

one look at me and called me Agongos, which means chipmunk, because I had pretty fat cheeks for being a month undercooked. She figured it was my fat head that saved me, that kept me stuck inside my mom long enough for her to get there. They joked about how I'd smelled the pork chop and come running. Mom can't seem to let go of that one.

My fingers are freezing by the time I finish the bow at the top of my second skate. I haven't skated in a couple of years, not since those winter days we walked the creek between the elementary school and the rink. Single file with our skates slung over our shoulders, shuffling in our snow pants. I'd slip and fall every hundred metres or so, but after the first couple of times, no one would bother to help me up anymore. Our teacher's red toque was our guide. When she'd round a corner, disappear behind a clump of snowy trees, it seemed we were on our own. Maybe the snowflakes would blind us. Maybe we'd lose our way and wander through the forest, be eaten by wolves.

Now my skates are too small, my toes scrunched inside. I ease myself along the ice but hold onto the boards. Lacey twirls like a pinwheel, trying to impress Dan and Markus. Her yellow hair is loose under her hat and the tips fan around her. The guys make wolf sounds. They howl at the moon.

## Maybe we'd lose our way and wander through the forest, be eaten by wolves

Lacey's good at everything except school. She's good at getting people to do what she wants and eating small quantities. She never has to try to be cool or worry that she's not cool but doesn't know it. Lacey doesn't have to wear Sorels or the kind of clothes my mother makes me wear. Her mother lets her do whatever she wants. Lacey gets to be whoever she wants to be.

My mom, she doesn't care for my army surplus or Doc Martens. She's the first in her family to have a university degree and she's not about to let people forget that. Last Christmas, just like every other Christmas, I got an expensive new winter coat. This one's even worse than the last. Navy, cinched waist, makes my bum look twice as big as it is. On Boxing Day Mom put all my old coats in our band's charity box. I felt sorry for the girls on the reserve whose mothers would make them wear them too, but even sorrier for myself.

Before that first day back at school in January, Mom stood behind me at the hall mirror and smiled with her hands on my shoulders. I stared at my reflection. She pulled my hair into three sections and started braiding it, holding an elastic between her teeth. "No," she said. "You do not look skid. You look exactly like a girl your age should." She kissed the top of my head. Not for the first time, I resented that she smelled of Chanel No. 5 and was on her way to her important job. Seems to me the more successful she is, the bossier she gets. My mother is a director at the Thunder Bay Native Canadian Fellowship Centre. She's a large woman. Not fat, just big everywhere. Her shoulders are wide and straight, and her hair lies in a single, perfect braid over one shoulder. There is no arguing with my mother.

When I was twelve, she came home from work and caught me watching *The Young and the Restless*. Well, didn't she throw out the TV. Just like that:

unplugged it, wrapped the cord around it and carried it out the door. "You think that's love?" she said. She threw her hands in the air and laughed. Her belly and breasts shook with the effort, her feather earrings swayed. I skulked to my room and looked at the *Seventeen* hidden under my mattress. I wished to be beautiful.

That coat has caused me nothing but problems ever since. When Lacey first

saw me wearing it, she asked me why I insisted on dressing like a preppy. She tried to give me one of her old jackets. I got it on, but the two halves of the zipper wouldn't meet.

"I keep telling you to stop eating so much," she said.

My arms are airplane wings. I'm a big, sputtering airplane at the edge of the rink. Corners are tricky. I round them slowly, cross one skate over the other. I keep wondering if this is better than the alternative—maybe it would've been better to stay home and have no one know I can hardly skate. I'm watching my feet and don't notice Markus behind me until his voice is gravel in my ear. "What did you say your name was, again?" He loops around me and skates backward so we're face to face. Dan is Lacey's new boyfriend and Markus is Dan's friend, but this is the first time I've met either of them. They are nineteen. They work at the A&P selling gas and smokes.

Markus's gloved fingers are pushed tightly through the handle of a travel mug like the mug is an extension of his hand. He moves his arm like a robot, stiff and mechanical, so he doesn't spill. I can't make him out too clearly in the dark, but he has long hair and a patch of fuzz in the dip just under his lower lip. None of the boys in my class have facial hair yet.

"Frankie," I say—the nickname I've been trying to weave into all aspects of my life. When Mom calls me Frances, I say Frankie. When my teachers say Frances, I say Frankie. They humour me. They correct themselves, palms up like they're surrendering. But Frankie won't stick. Not even as well as Agongos.

Markus says, "Francie?"

"No, Frankie."

And then Lacey yells: "Frances Freida Rabideaux! Frances Freida Rabideaux!"

Everyone laughs. I tell them to shut up.

Markus scrapes to a halt. "Francine? Rita? Rabid-Dog? What?"



"Frankie," I say.

In a second, even those two syllables run through him and disappear. "Here, hon," he says and grabs me at the elbow. "Let me show you how it's done." He pulls me along and tells me to bend my knees a little, to trust him. So I do. I take a deep breath. He pulls me along. I lose track of where Lacey and Dan are, I'm so focused on the feeling of Markus's hand, my blades moving over the ice. And for a moment it seems we skate in perfect, slow togetherness, like he's somehow become me and is skating for me. When we get to the other side of the rink, he drops my elbow. I windmill my arms to keep my balance. He shakes his head and says, "You think too much." He passes me his mug. "This will help."

Our gloves touch as I try to grasp the handle. I rest my lips on the rim of his mug, where his lips have rested. I tip my head back to siphon the drink out of that itty-bitty hole in the lid. I'm expecting hot chocolate. I cough what tastes like ice-cold poison all over my coat.

I'm supposed to be at my youth group's cosmic bowling night. I'm supposed to be bowling with fluorescent balls so big I have to roll them with two hands—so big you can't possibly miss the pins—and glow-in-the-dark stars stuck all over the ceiling and walls to make it look like you're outside under a night sky. Lacey only came to youth group with me once. She says those kids are all fake: "No one's that happy." After bowling they'll sit in a circle on the floor, and the mentors will give a talk about embarrassing and untrue things. "You Are Special." "You Are Perfect The Way You Are." "Only Insecure People Need Drugs Or Alcohol To Be Confident." They'll join hands and say the Youth for Today motto. They'll be home early enough to play board games with their families.

But my mom's coordinating a charity benefit tonight and won't be home until late. By the time she walks in the

door, I'll be fast asleep. My youth group leader thinks I'm sick with girl troubles.

The sting of the vodka doesn't bother me long. It's surprisingly easy to ignore. I polish off half of Markus's cup while he goes on and on about his band, Gustapa Fan Club for Life, but I don't ask what the name means. I'm afraid everyone else already knows. I hope he doesn't ask me any more about myself. My whole body is on fire, like dry-ice-on-fire. My jeans are frozen to my thighs.

In the middle of telling me about his drums, Markus interrupts himself to say, "I gotta take a piss." He turns around and glides to the far end of the rink. I try not to think about the mechanics of peeing outside when it's minus whatever. Lacey drags me to the penalty box for a smoke. We huddle to ignite the lighter and aim the ends of our cigarettes into the flame, holding them steady with puckered lips. She takes a drag and puffs the smoke out in Os.

"You know how older guys kiss?" she says. We drink out of her flask and watch Dan sneak up behind Markus, who is trying to zip up his pants without taking off his gloves. They shove each other, try to knock each other off their skates.

Lacey knows I've never kissed an older guy or even a guy my own age. But Roberto Giulio, the Italian exchange student from youth group, once held my hand a little too long during circle time. His palms were sweaty. I didn't tell my mom—I don't talk about guys with her. She says she was raped by a white man when she was drunk. She says after that, she never let alcohol pass her own lips. I guess it's true because in all my life I've never seen her take a drink.

Lacey points her chin at Markus. "They hold both sides of your face, just like in the movies. It's so sexy."

Lacey only dates guys who have legal ID, so she gets whatever she wants from them. But even though Dan is old

enough to drive, he doesn't have a car. He and Lacey don't go out to movies or dinner together. Dan lives in his mom's basement, listens to Nine Inch Nails with his curtains closed. He takes the city bus everywhere. Lacey says they spend most of their time in his room.

I ask if Dan kisses that way, holding

I'm expecting hot chocolate and  
I cough what tastes like ice-cold  
poison all over my coat

both sides of her face. She scrunches her nose. "Dan is more, shall we say, utilitarian. Like he just wants to do it and get it done."

I think she means utilitarian. Lacey tries to use big words, tries to steal them from other people's vocabularies but usually she doesn't make sense. Sometimes she asks me to rewrite her assignments for her. I correct her spelling, move sentences around, cut long passages into paragraphs. We even came up with a secret code for multiple choice tests. I don't mind. It gives me something to do after school. I do it because it's the kind of thing best friends do for each other. And because if she fails a grade I won't have anyone to sit next to in class.

I take a drag of my cigarette. "I wish I weren't so fat. Guys don't kiss fat girls."

Lacey says, "What you need is some makeup. Your skin is almost yellow." She reaches over with a bare hand and tweaks the fleshy parts of my face, hard. Her fingers feel freezing on my face. She tucks them back inside her sleeves. If you look at Lacey in the light, you'll see her cheeks are perfectly flushed with pink like she's always blushing. But if you get close enough, like you're telling a secret in her ear, you can see the powder sitting on top of her skin. She wears a lot of eyeliner, but by the end of the day it smudges and she's always swiping at it with her fingers like she's been crying. I wonder what she

really looks like under all that paint.

"Have you ever thought about high-lights?" Lacey says. She passes me the flask again but it's almost empty. "You could totally pass for white."

**I**t's snowing now. Big, fat snowflakes, the kind you can catch on your tongue. Markus is telling a joke, something about a bar and a prostitute and a priest, but his voice is moving in circles and I can't quite catch it. I'm moving fast, faster than I ever expected I could in my little skates with the scuffed toes. Faster than I ever skated as a kid. I've got it now, the rhythm of it. There's laughter following me, and now a chorus of words, familiar words.

"FRAN! SEEN! RAH-BID-DOG!"

"FRAN! SEEN! RAH-BID-DOG!"

Everyone's watching. Everyone's smiling. I spin around the corners, picking up speed, gaining confidence. The evergreens blur. The graffitied rink boards melt into a grey horizon. My mind is all Nine Inch Nails and black curtains and vodka, and I can't slow down. And then I'm face down, spread-eagle sliding. When I stop it takes me a moment to know it because everything else is still moving. I roll over. The moon is there, staring back at me. Someone's laughter is coming closer. Someone is breathing on me, holding both sides of my face. Someone's lips press against my mouth. A wet tongue grazes my tongue, and the feeling is a mixture of good and bad, like an ice cube on a broken lip.

"Hon," Markus says. His hair dangles in my face. "You. Are. A. Fucking. Star."

It takes all of them to drag me over the boards into the snowbank. We lurch together toward a spruce tree to sit under its branches. We light more cigarettes, pass drinks back and forth. I can't feel my toes. We are all so close, I can hardly tell my legs from Lacey's legs, my boots from Dan's boots, my hands from Markus's hands. I am one of them, I am part of this. I don't know how I'm

going to be able to walk home alone.

**T**he cubicle and two gas pumps sit like an oasis in the A&P parking lot, next to a dirty mountain of plowed snow. I'm on my way to school. Streets ahead, high on the hill, the classroom windows are bright against the dark sky. The wind is like a hand pushing me and my backpack along the slippery pavement. It's been five days: "Long enough to not look desperate," Lacey says.

I crack open the door of the cubicle and stand half-in, half-out. I pull off my gloves. Markus is behind the counter reading a magazine with a woman on the cover. She is blonde and has big, shiny pink lips open like she's about to say something. I can only see the top of Markus's head above the magazine before he drops it to see who's come in.

I shouldn't be scared to talk to him. He kissed me, held my hand. He told me he's always been into Native chicks, whispered it in my ear like it was a secret. It was strange, because until that moment I'd never really thought of myself as a "Native chick" or anything else in particular. For days I thought of what I could give Markus, something of mine I could let him have so he could think of me whenever he saw it. I searched my drawers, my jewellery box. I found a bracelet made of soft leather straps I'd made at youth group. I put it in my pocket with my five bucks for smokes.

I shouldn't need to do anything but step to the counter and hold out my money. I wonder if Markus will say, "Here you go, hon," and pass me a pack of Du Maurier, or even say, "As if I'd make you pay." I think about whether I should give him the bracelet right away or just as I'm leaving. I wonder if he'll want me to meet him after school when he's done work. Or skip class. Or be alone with him in his bedroom. Maybe he'll expect other things. I finger

the leather bracelet in my pocket. I wait for that first flicker of recognition. All the possible combinations of what Markus might say run through my mind while he stares at me and says nothing. I push my hood off because it could be casting a shadow over my face. I run a hand through my hair because I think I wore it different that night. I smile.

"Yeah?" Markus says.

The light is so bright in this little box. I have to blink a few times because everything's so clear. Now I can see an oil stain on Markus's jacket sleeve, a tear at his shoulder seam with the stuffing poking out. I squint. My eyes adjust and they start to feel like lasers—they can see down to the threads, to the pores. They scan the skin on his cheeks and its texture is like raw chicken, bumpy and pale. He looks me up and down—from toque to boots—but I don't shrink under the weight of his stare. I don't melt.

I grow.

Now I am twice his width, twice his weight, twice his height. My coat is heavy, its waterproof shell and plaid liner like armour. Its neck covering my neck, its pockets deep and wide for my hands.

A sedan pulls up to the unleaded pump, the back end swishing as it skids to a stop, waits for service. Markus pulls on his fingerless gloves. He scrunches an eye. "Can I help you?"

I lift my hood back over my hair and pull the strings tight around my face. I sink my hands into my pockets. I step backward out of the cubicle and pull the door shut. I turn toward the school and steel myself against the wind.

---

*Suzannah Windsor is working on a collection of short stories set in northwestern Ontario. She lives in Thunder Bay.*





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# Pressure Change

EVELYN LAU

## PRESSURE CHANGE

When someone sends a message  
that he's dead, I shut down  
the computer and go into the living room,  
but it's on the news. So I hide in the bathroom  
a long time, as if needing time  
to compose myself, but the problem is  
I can't pee. It's a peculiar  
symptom of stress, a nervous tic  
like a twitching eyelid or a clenched jaw—  
the bladder seizes up, and that's that.  
I sit on the toilet, looking at the speckled floor,  
let the news anchor's voice staccato  
the space beyond the locked door.

Then another person relays the news,  
and another, plumbing emotion—grief  
or poorly concealed delight? A sleepless night,  
a yellow Valium. No tears. The composure  
that eluded me those desperate years  
has finally surfaced, along with the other  
muted blessings of middle age.  
That long stain he left on my early life  
impermanent after all. He had chosen to die

at noon on one of the last days of summer,  
before the predicted deluge. It arrived  
as heaviness in the air, a mass of humidity  
a pressure change that sent me to bed after lunch  
with a migraine. Then the spatter of rain  
on the deck, rain close to hail  
with its loud contempt, like hot spit  
hawked onto the sidewalk. Pain,  
Dickinson wrote, has an element of blank—  
but so does its absence, so how  
to tell the difference?

## JULY

The grey obscures the blue. Last year's  
drought-damaged trees, half-drowned.  
The conversation, when it's not about  
weather, or real estate, is

Are you writing? No one's writing.  
Everyone's in a funk, waiting for words.  
We sit and stare at screens, sharpen pencils,  
self-medicate. The lucky ones

go on retreats, eat local and organic,  
pay a guru to teach them stillness  
for a week. Somewhere there's a stash,  
a cache of words, if we wait. If we listen

and meditate. Or try the reverse—  
grab a coffee, catch a movie, pretend  
normalcy. Maybe that'll jar something  
loose. Maybe the muse doesn't like

to be courted, doesn't want the red carpet  
laid out for its arrival. Prefers to drop in  
unannounced when we're in the shower  
or asleep. Yes, we're aware of the limited

time left, these dwindling days a blur  
of cloud and rain. We're waiting for the blaze of July,  
its brief and precious light. All the tour buses

are full, their upper decks under canopy,  
under sky. Tourists huddled in ponchos,  
faces hidden by cellphones. The first day  
of the August heat wave, we'll complain.



## FLOORED

At first, the flooring guy at Home Depot  
flirted with you, cocky in his orange apron.

By the umpteenth visit he was curt and clipped,  
casting his gaze over your shoulder

at the next customer. The problem was,  
you couldn't commit. For two years

you crisscrossed the Cambie Street bridge  
to pace the flooring aisle,

head swivelling left and right—  
lamine, engineered hardwood, vinyl.

You clicked through spinners,  
fingered quarter rounds and transition pieces,

poked spongy squares of underlay.  
This was the dilemma of choice—

sweet sugar maple, cinnamon gleam  
of cherrywood, buttery slats of bamboo.

In the end, you went grey—  
a whitewashed oak, scraped and sanded,

a silver fox. This floor was aspirational,  
floated in from a glossy magazine

where everyone wore Ralph Lauren  
and lived on Martha's Vineyard.

Love it or hate it, it would be yours for life.

## PACIFIC INN, SAN DIEGO

Amtrak passes in the night, a rumble  
on the wrong side of the tracks. The homeless  
in San Diego have been roasted by the sun

into psychosis, ponchos caked desert-  
brown, faces spiked like cacti. Afternoons,  
you nest in the lobbies of luxury hotels,

pretend you belong among white orchids  
and golden chandeliers. Avail yourself  
of free Internet in the business centre,

avoid the doors marked Private Banking.  
The paper towels in the granite bathroom  
seem spun from silk and linen,

the finest vellum on which to pen your poems.  
By economic measures, you've failed at everything.  
Is this what's called falling

out of the middle class? Now the dollar  
is below seventy-five cents, and at Whole Foods  
you can't afford to eat the rainbow.

You pay with a clutch of coupons,  
order tap water from the dwindling resource.  
Shame is a spending spree, a waste of energy.

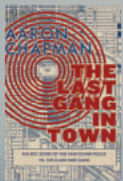
A store owner gives you a too-ripe persimmon  
and you carry it through the streets  
of Little Italy like a beating heart

cupped in your palm. Thirty years ago,  
you were a homeless teenager, and now  
you remember how to live on nothing.

---

*Evelyn Lau was Poet Laureate of Vancouver from 2011 to 2014. She has published works of fiction and non-fiction, and seven volumes of poetry. Her most recent collection is Tumour (Oolichan, 2016).*

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Sarah Schulman

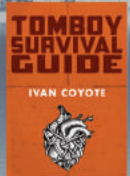
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# Victims of Anti-Communism

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

*Anti-communism, retired by most Western governments,  
receives monumental status in Canada*



Twelve Points in a Classical Balance by Chung Hung. Ottawa, ON. Photo by Stephen Henighan.

Of all the legacies of the West's Cold War struggle against Communism, the most destructive is anti-Communism. This vacant doctrine, proposing no positive model of society, condemned any deviation from orthodoxy as the advance guard of Soviet subversion. In the United States, where it was refined, anti-Communism enjoyed two high points: the late 1940s and early 1950s, when it fuelled campaigns to expel everyone from civil servants to Hollywood scriptwriters, from their jobs; and the 1980s, when President Ronald Reagan employed the rhetoric of anti-Communism to fund murderous proxy wars in poor

countries. Anti-Communism gripped the West and its allies. From 1937 to 1957 the premier of the authoritarian government of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, used the Padlock Law to expropriate houses or businesses that were "propagating Communism." In apartheid-era South Africa, the Suppression of Communism Act silenced government critics and banned dozens of books. In many Latin American countries, particularly during the Reaganite 1980s, students, teachers, journalists or union organizers who expressed ideas seen as "Communist" were jailed, tortured or disappeared. In many cases, anti-Communism mutated into an

all-purpose ideology of hatred that targeted people for being men with long hair or women with short hair, or foreign or Jewish. The paranoid legacy of anti-Communism lives on in contemporary nativism, racism and Islamophobia, yet at a formal level this ideology has been retired by Western governments—except in Canada. In 2007, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity Jason Kenney, the standard-bearer of social conservatism in Stephen Harper's Conservative government, visited a statue of a man crucified on a hammer and sickle that had been erected in a private park in Scarborough, Ontario, by Canadians of Czech and Slovak descent. The same year, in Washington, DC, President George W. Bush inaugurated the Victims of Communism memorial, a replica of a statue created by Chinese students during the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising. Kenney persuaded Prime Minister Harper to plan a memorial in Ottawa with the same name as the one in Washington. But whereas the American Victims of Communism is a discreet three-metre-high statue, the Ottawa project was envisioned as a series of tiered concrete rows, rising to a height of fourteen metres, that would face a gargantuan concrete bridge across an empty concrete square. The memorial was to loom over the Supreme Court of Canada in exhortation to those who interpret the nation's laws to implement the ideology of anti-Communism. The irony that, in its hulking gigantism and strident lines, the proposed memorial resembled a Communist relic, such as one might find in Russia or Bulgaria, rather than a freewheeling expression of liberty, was lost on the project's official promoters, a nine-person board who call themselves "Tribute to Liberty." Seven board members identify themselves in their biographies as being of Eastern European heritage; two identify as being of East Asian heritage. Most have ties to the

Conservative Party.

Under Minister of National Heritage Mélanie Joly, the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau is perpetuating this avatar of anti-Communism. Adding the words “Canada, a Land of Refuge” to the “Victims of Communism” moniker, Joly has asked five companies to compete in the creation of a new design. The Liberals plan to move the memorial’s site to the Garden of the Provinces and Territories, diagonally across the street from the national archives. Containing the floral emblems of the provinces and territories, the garden assembles essential symbols of Canadian unity. The modernist statue *Twelve Points in a Classical Balance*, a celebration of Canada’s ten provinces and (prior to 1999) two territories, by Chinese-born Canadian artist Chung Hung, will undergo “sensitive and appropriate” removal to make way for the inclusion, as one of the constituent elements of our nation, of a shrine to anti-Communism. The declared intention of the memorial

is to honour people killed by Communist regimes, as the planned National Holocaust Monument will commemorate victims of the Nazi genocide. But the two are not the same. The Holocaust memorial will have its own site; Victims of Communism, by contrast, will weave the creed of anti-Communism into the national fabric. Minister Joly’s addition of the words “Canada, a Land of Refuge” accentuates this bias by suggesting that Communism was the only Cold War ideology that produced refugees.

This erases the traumatic experiences of those who fled oppressive Cold War-era anti-Communist regimes in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Spain, Portugal, Greece, the Philippines, Iran, Indonesia, East Timor, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa, among others.

The memorial’s addition to the Garden of the Provinces and Territories constitutes a message from the

Government of Canada that if your uncle died in the Gulag we respect your suffering, but if he was tortured to death by the Argentine junta you are a non-entity, if not an enemy of the state. The victims of anti-Communism should receive the same respect as the victims of Communism but they are unlikely to get it. Belonging to communities almost none of whose members have been as financially successful as the most affluent Eastern Europeans and East Asians, they are at a crushing financial and organizational disadvantage. When I asked leaders of affected communities to go on record, people I’ve known for years declined to respond. According to one leader, who asked for anonymity, many of the victims of anti-Communism, being less integrated into Canadian society than the victims of Communism, have little emotional engagement with Canada’s choices of symbols. More involved in the politics of their families’ countries of origin, they are conscious of being less fluent in English, less white and less aligned with Canada’s power structures than their opponents. They perceive their host country as democratic, yet, as the planned memorial confirms, supportive of the anti-Communist ideology that persecuted them. The night in 1973 when a Chilean friend of the community leader I spoke to arrived in Canada as a refugee, the hotel where he was lodged was picketed by Croatian-Canadian demonstrators demanding that he be expelled from Canada and sent back to General Augusto Pinochet’s jails as a “Communist.” He’s never forgotten his Canadian welcome. As oppressive as he finds the Victims of Communism memorial, he’s afraid of speaking out against it.

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*Stephen Henighan’s most recent novels are The Path of the Jaguar and the forthcoming Mr. Singh Among the Fugitives. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [stephenhenighan.com](http://stephenhenighan.com). Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*

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# Dictionary Story

ALBERTO MANGUEL

*Everything we know, dream of, fear or desire is in a dictionary*

*This is part two of a two-part piece;  
part one appeared in Geist 102.*

It is an old, old story. After creating Adam “out of the dust of the ground” and placing him in a garden east of Eden (as the second chapter of Genesis tells us), God went on to create every beast of the field and every fowl of the air and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever Adam called each living creature, “that was the name thereof.” For centuries, scholars have puzzled over the curious task that God gave Adam. Was Adam supposed to invent names for the nameless creatures he saw? Or did the beasts and the fowl that God created indeed have God-given names, names that Adam was meant to know, and which he was to pronounce like a child seeing a dog or a dove for the very first time?

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, words are the beginning of everything. According to Talmudic commentators, two thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth, God brought into being seven essential things: his divine throne, Paradise set to his right, Hell to his left, the celestial sanctuary in front, a jewel with the name of the Messiah engraved upon it, a voice calling out from the darkness “Return, ye children of men!” and the Torah, written in black fire on white fire. The Torah was the first of these seven and it was the Torah that God consulted before creating the world. With some reluctance, because it feared the sinfulness of the world’s creatures, the

Torah consented to the world’s creation. Learning of the divine purpose, the letters of the alphabet descended from God’s august crown, where they had been written with a pen of flames, and one by one the letters said to him: “Create the world through me! Create the world through me!” From the twenty-six letters, God chose Bet, the first letter in the word “blessed” and thus it was that through Bet the world came into being. The commentators note that the only letter that did not put forward its claims was the modest Aleph; to reward its humility, God later gave Aleph the first place in the Decalogue. Many years later, Saint John the Evangelist somewhat impatiently summed up the lengthy procedure and simply declared, “In the beginning was the Word.” From this ancient conviction stems the metaphor of God as author and the world as book: a book we try to read and in which we are also written.

The magical letters, capable of making up words that hold in their utterance everything that is known, became Adam’s privileged inheritance and even after the expulsion from Eden, this gift, as our libraries prove, was not taken away from him. Adam and his children continued the task of naming, either as makers or as unriddlers, as authors or as readers, in the deep-rooted belief that everything in the world is the name we give it. If that is so then next to the book of the world there should be another volume, a book listing the names that Adam and his progeny gave to the things in the world. And while the world in all

its mystery can forgo a clear method for lending meaning to its madness, a book of the world’s words, a dictionary, requires just such an order. The alphabet, invented (it seems) by the Egyptians in about 2000 BCE, suits this purpose perfectly.

A quarter of the world’s population uses non-alphabetic writing. China and Japan, for instance, have other methods for ordering their dictionaries. The Chinese developed three lexicographic systems: by semantic categories, by graphic components and by pronunciation. The first Chinese dictionary we know of was assembled in the third century BCE under the title *Approaching Correctness* and contained lists of synonyms arranged in nineteen semantic categories such as “Explaining Trees” and “Explaining Insects.” The obvious inconvenience was that the user needed to know the meaning of the word before being able to find it in its proper semantic group. The second system allowed words to be grouped according to recurrent graphic components known as “radicals,” of which there exist over five hundred. Since many are hard to recognize, a *Chart of Characters Difficult to Look Up*, arranged by the number of strokes of a character, was provided as an appendix. Finally, Chinese dictionaries can be ordered according to the rhyme of the logogram’s last syllable; the earliest of these “rhyming dictionaries” dates from the seventh century. These surprising lexicographical methods should not surprise us. An order based on hierarchies of meaning, on similarities of trait or on similarities of sound, is doubtlessly as good as any other for tidying up the unruly universe.

In the alphabetic world, the conventional sequence of letters serves as the dictionary’s practical underpinning. An alphabetical order is one of exquisite simplicity that avoids the tinge of hierarchy implicit in most

other methods. Things listed under A are not more or less important than books listed under Z, except that, in a library, the geographical disposition sometimes has it that the A books on the top shelf and the Z ones on the bottom are less courted than their brethren in the middle sections. Paying homage to the ubiquity of the alphabet, Jorge Luis Borges imagined a universal library containing all books written and unwritten, past, present and future, made up of all possible combinations of the alphabet's letters. Jean Cocteau, with becoming modesty, judged that a simple dictionary was enough for such a purpose, because "a literary masterpiece" he noted, "is nothing but a dictionary out of order." Indeed, every book, whether or not a masterpiece (and including, of course, dictionaries themselves), is "a dictionary out of order," since, in a dizzying game of mirrors, all of the words used to define a given word in a dictionary must themselves in turn be found defined in that same dictionary. If, as we said, we are the language we speak, then dictionaries are our biographies. Everything we know, everything we dream of, everything we fear or desire, every achievement and every pettiness, is in a dictionary.

The term "dictionary" has blended with that of "encyclopedia" and now denotes not only inventories of words but thematic repertoires of everything under the sun, including the sun. In my library alone, there are dictionaries of cuisine, of film, of psychoanalysis, of German literature, of astrophysics, of heresies, of forms of address, of surrealism, of Jewish religion, of opera, of phrase and fable, of the Koran, of birds of northern Europe, of spices, of the Quixote, of bookbinding terms, of Baudelaire, of clouds, of Greek and Roman mythology, of Quebecois expressions, of African art, of difficulties in French, of saints and of devils. There is even, I believe, a Dictionary

of Imaginary Places. But in its truest, primordial, archetypal form, a dictionary is a dictionary of words. Because of this simple fact, because a dictionary is first and foremost a collection of the building blocks of a given language, its core identity does not depend on how it is presented. Its earliest incarnations (Pamphilus's lexicon, for instance) are not essentially different from its appearances today on screen. Whether in the guise of a scroll (in the case of Pamphilus) or as an imposing set of codices (in the case of the complete Oxford) or conjured up in electronic windows (in the case of an online dictionary), it is the chosen container that grants the dictionary all the characteristics, privileges and limitations of its own particular form. In itself, a dictionary is like a Möbius strip, a self-defining object of one surface only, collecting and explaining without claiming a narrative third dimension. Only in association with a specific container does a dictionary become an ongoing sequence of definitions, or a listing of conventional signs, or the jumbled story of our language or an almost limitless storehouse of disconnected word fragments. It is readers who, preferring one form over another according to their own requirements and inclinations, choosing either a printed codex or a virtual text, recognize in a dictionary one or several of many books: an anthology, a hierarchical catalogue, a philological thesaurus, a parallel memory, a writing and reading tool. A dictionary is all these things, though not perhaps all at the same time.

One more question: dictionaries are catalogues of definitions, but can we trust those definitions? Novalis, in 1798, wondered how it was possible to trust words to carry the meaning of things. "Nobody knows," he wrote, "the essential characteristic of language, namely that it

is only concerned with itself. If only one could make people understand that language is like a mathematical formula—it constitutes a world of its own, it simply plays with itself. And that is the very reason why the strange play of relations among things mirrors itself in language." For Novalis, the power of language is not that words define things, but that the relationship between words is like the relationship between things. A dictionary is then a collection of touchstones, marking points in an incommensurable web whose individual nature remains unknown to us but whose constellations allow us a glimpse, however brief, however slight, of the machinery of the universe where everything we lose is gathered and everything we forget is remembered.

I began by speaking of loss. I want to end by speaking of recovery. If books are our records of experience and libraries our depositories of memory, a dictionary is our talisman against oblivion. Not a memorial to language, which smacks of the grave, nor a treasury, which implies something closed and inaccessible. A dictionary, intent on recording and defining, is in itself a paradox: on the one hand, accumulating that which a society creates for its own consumption, hoping for a shared comprehension of the world; on the other, circulating what it amasses so that the old words won't die on the page, and new words are not left out in the cold. The Latin adage *Verba volant, scripta manent* has two complementary meanings. One is that the words we speak have the power to soar, while the ones that are written remain rooted to the page; the other is that words spoken can fly away and vanish in the air, while the written words are kept tethered until called for. In practical terms, dictionaries collect our words both to preserve them and to give them back to us, to allow us to see what names



we have given to our experience throughout time and also to discard some of those names and renew them in an ongoing ritual of baptism. In this sense, dictionaries are life preservers: they confirm and invigorate the lifeblood of a language. There are, of course, historical dictionaries of terms no longer in use and dictionaries of so-called dead tongues, but even these grant their subjects a brief resurrection every time someone consults them. Borges, studying the ancient Northern sagas, often looked up words in Bosworth and Toller's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, and liked to recite the "Our Father" in the language of the ancient inhabitants of Britain "to give God," he said, "a little surprise."

**T**o lose, to shed, to forget is our lot: this is what we need to remember. We begin to be dust long before we return to dust. I only hope that as I go, I might be allowed to still name at least some of the landmarks and sights along the way. Long ago, during the sixties, in Argentina, just before the bloody military dictatorship that was to hideously parody this quiet erosion by making people "disappear" and forcing new identities on stolen children, a courageous poet and singer, María Elena Walsh, wrote a song about the things that are taken away and the things that remain.

So many things have departed  
To the kingdom of oblivion,  
But you have never left me,  
*My Short Illustrated Larousse.*

---

*Alberto Manguel is the award-winning author of hundreds of works, most recently (in English) Curiosity, All Men Are Liars and A History of Reading. He lives in New York. Read more of his work at [alberto.manguel.com](http://alberto.manguel.com) and [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# The London Library Caper

MARY SCHENDLINGER

*The burnished shelves, booky aroma and whisper of readerly footfalls*

**A** few years ago during a visit with my sister Cookie in London, England, I indulged in some literary tourism. One afternoon I wound up in St. James's Square, the inspiration for the fictional posh living quarters of Bertie Wooster, P.G. Wodehouse's beloved upper-class twit, and Jeeves, his brilliant "gentleman's personal gentleman." There could not be a more perfect setting than this expensive but understated enclave, right in central London, yet sheltered and private, seemingly miles away from the hurly-burly. I took my time walking the perimeter, and that is when I saw the London Library for the first time.

The library was tucked away in a corner and labelled so subtly that I might have missed it. I walked up the steps and pulled open one of the big wood-and-glass doors. Inside was the familiar apparatus of a library: a busy but quiet reception area with counters for queries and books in and out, a book drop for returns, a rack of brochures and maps of the library. Between these amenities and me was a subtle but definite set of security apparatus, including an electronic turnstile and a guard. In hallways just beyond this entrance area, people walked around with books—old-looking books; past them I could see open stacks. Now a smiling staff member stepped over to greet me. Could she help? I said I would like to visit the library. Was I a member? No. Hm, well, mm, terribly sorry but one must be a member, in that sweet, deferential tone that Brits deploy even when telling you to sod off. I said I would

like to become a member. Right, she said, passing me a brochure with library information and details of the *application process* (emphasis hers). "One may apply online," she said, "and then the Librarian must approve membership." Gosh, I thought, in Vancouver you just have to show them a Hydro bill. But London is a city with a living memory of being under attack, so... The security man stood by, mellow but alert.

Finally I got it. "Is this not a public library?" Indeed, it was not. I took the tube back to Cookie's house in Clapham, yearning to be inside the London Library. The burnished shelves, the booky aroma, the whisper of readerly footfalls on the carpet, the quiet assurance of browsers who had been approved by the Librarian. The London Library was an old library, a weird library, a brilliant library—I could tell. But I was to fly home to Vancouver the next morning, so it would have to wait.

Cookie poured red wine, listened intently, tsk-tsked at my account of security measures at the library. She then volunteered, in her capacity as a retired contract manager and a double Virgo, to assist when the time came.

The next London Library opportunity arose in summer 2014, when Cookie and I were planning my visit to London. By then I was even more in love with the library, having read and reread the brochure, the entire website and the Twitter feed, and having browsed the online database (still under construction—how sweet!). The London Library opened in 1841 at the insistence of Thomas Carlyle,

who had got fed up with the British Museum library. The London Library moved to its current home in St. James's Square in 1845 and purchased the property ("admittedly," wrote the biographer A. I. Dasent, "the worst house in the square") in 1879. Now it has a million books on seventeen miles of open-access shelving, and the staff have never thrown away a book. During World War II, the Librarian sandbagged the skylights and often slept in the building. The library was hit in 1944; sixteen thousand volumes were destroyed. "There were heavy losses," the Librarian wrote later, "in biographies of persons with names beginning G to J and S to Z."

In combing the website, I had also stumbled on a sampling of the London Library's "shelfmarks"—sub-categories of books within larger sections. Under Food &c, for example: Cheese, Hops, Vegetarianism; under Psychology: Perception, Laughter, Shellshock; under Religion: Holy water, Muggletonians, Dogma (Hist. of). Somehow I

must get into the London Library. "No problem," said Cookie on the phone. She would call the library next day and get things rolling.

Three days later she reported that after nine tries she had finally reached a human. Yes, the library had a *limited number* of one-day Temporary Tickets; Cookie's sister would be welcome to apply. Was Cookie a member of the London Library? Not at this time. What subject did her sister wish to research? Hm, she would consult her sister and call back.

My subject? Only one? It was a library. But it was a private library, Cookie noted, with specialties; perhaps they steer some visitors to libraries with larger collections in certain research areas. I chose the subjects Art and Anecdotes. I knew of no other library with a whole section devoted to Anecdotes.

Cookie reported my subjects to a staff member and added that her sister would also very much like to browse other parts of the collection if this was

allowed. Oh, of course, certainly!—*if your sister is approved*. Cookie asked when she could follow up; the staff member said she would be in touch.

Two days later Cookie reported the library's response: thank you so much and could your sister please browse the online database and name *specific books* that she wishes to consult. A transatlantic frisson ran from sister to sister. Why did they need this information? Yes, Londoners were subject to some of the most intense surveillance in the world, but come on—this was a *library*. Cookie sent me the email address to use when complying with this request, surely the last one.

I opened my laptop and wrote a short email message to the London Library, listing my qualifications as a high-value Temporary Ticket library visitor: the subject, tenor and *raison d'être* of my work-in-progress; my research to date at the Vancouver Public Library as well as the libraries of both major local universities, where I taught writing and publishing to graduate students; my sister's sterling reputation and twenty-six-year residence at her home in Clapham; my fervent wish to visit the legendary London Library, where I planned to consult the following five print books (title, author, publisher, copyright date) and to browse other holdings as time would permit.

The next morning I opened an email message from the London Library, approving my Temporary Ticket and saying that the books I had requested would be ready when I arrived. Best wishes, etc. Cookie and I celebrated on the phone, jumping about in our respective rooms, 7600 kilometres apart.

On my assigned Temporary Ticket day I took the tube to central London, walked to St. James's Square, pulled open one of the big wood-and-glass doors, walked in and presented my credentials. A smiling young woman took my 15 quid, then reached under the counter and pulled out my books, praising me for being so very well





prepared. Cradling the books expertly in one arm, she took me on a short tour, pointing out main sections, stairways, exits, loos. And work areas. Here was the Writers' Room, full of people tapping at their devices, quiet except for the simmering-pot sound of fifty or sixty keyboards at work. And the Reading Room, where only silent devices are permitted: clean soft rug, generous carrels exactly the right size, height, seating, lighting. Did I have a preference? Oh, yes.

She laid down my books and slipped away. I sat down and pulled out my notebook, ducking my head so no one would see my silly grin, though I needn't have bothered in this city where people crammed cheek-by-jowl in a tube carriage somehow manage not to touch or look at each other. To steady myself I wrote a few jagged lines in my notebook; it did slow my heart rate, but to this day the passage is indecipherable.

The books I had arbitrarily selected from a computer screen nine time zones away turned out to be rich sources of new material, and there were others, many others. At lunchtime I returned them to the desk and staggered out onto St. James's Square, took a bit of lunch at a café, then hurried back to the library to explore further. First I walked along the narrow metal-grille floor past Biography and Autobiography to a large bank of shelves full of books of anecdotes, hundreds of them. Military anecdotes, anecdotes about writers, royals, religious leaders. "Memoirs, Allegories, Essays and Poetical Fragments, Tending to Amuse the Fancy, and Inculcate Morality," read the title page of one volume published in 1797. I stood at a bit of empty shelving, taking notes, then realized that the worn wooden desk and chair in a corner were not someone's office but a reading/note-taking spot for anyone. And that other well-used chairs and desks were tucked away here and there, probably throughout the stacks.

Now to Art, in a big, high, open space enhanced by glass and daylight.

I moved along the first tier, pulling out a book and paging through, then another and another, any of which could have occupied me for the rest of the day. I browsed and burrowed until I was dizzy. One measly day in this wonderland—what was I thinking? Well, I'd do my best. First I'd get my organizational bearings. I peered at the book spines again to determine whether they were catalogued by Dewey or Library of Congress.

But none of the books on this shelf had call numbers. In fact, none of the books in the Art Room, or in Anecdotes or anywhere in the library, had call numbers. Everything was shelved by category and sub-category—those charmingly idiosyncratic shelfmarks I had seen on the website weeks ago—and then alphabetically by author's surname. Art books were also shelved by size. These were the organizing principles of *one million books* acquired over 175 years. No wonder the staff had been so keen to pull out my requested books before I arrived! They weren't

prying; they were being efficient.

At closing time on a blissful day of searching, browsing and note-taking, I pushed open one of the big wood-and-glass doors and left the London Library, yearning to stay but eager to report to my sister Cookie, who would want to hear every detail of what she was now calling the London Library Caper.

I have travelled to London four times since then, but not to work in the London Library. Cookie became sick with cancer soon after that first visit, and she died about a year later. During one of my last visits with her, she made me promise that I would travel to London again after she was gone. "Because it's London, and you've only seen a tiny bit of it," she said. "And anyway, I know you're not finished with that library."

Mary Schendlinger is a writer, editor, comics maker (as Eve Corbel) and retired teacher of publishing. She was Senior Editor of *Geist* for twenty-five years. She lives in Vancouver.

**Room magazine's  
CONTEST CALENDAR**

**SHORT FORMS CONTEST**  
(500 words and under in any genre)  
Deadline: January 15  
1st Prize: \$500 + publication (2 top prizes)

.....

**CREATIVE NON-FICTION CONTEST**  
Deadline: March 8 (International Women's Day)  
1st Prize: \$500 + publication | 2nd Prize: \$250 + publication

.....

**FICTION / POETRY CONTEST**  
Deadline: July 15  
1st Prize: \$1,000 + publication in each genre | 2nd Prize: \$250 + publication

.....

**COVER ART CONTEST**  
Deadline: November 30  
1st Prize: \$500 + publication on the cover of *Room*

.....

Entry: \$35 CAD (\$42 US for International entries). Entry includes a one-year subscription to *Room*. Additional entries \$7. For more information, visit [roommagazine.com/contests](http://roommagazine.com/contests).

*Room* also accepts submissions of poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and art on an ongoing basis. For more information on upcoming calls for submissions and contests, visit [roommagazine.com](http://roommagazine.com).

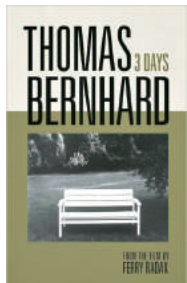
**Room**  
LITERATURE, ART, AND FEMINISM SINCE 1975

# ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

## THOMAS BERNHARD: THE GNARLY WORK

When faced with the gnarly writing of Thomas Bernhard (*Frost*, for instance, or *The Woodcutters*, *Concrete*, *The Loser* or *Wittgenstein's Nephew*), readers experience again and again the difficulty of summarizing what they are reading, of *thematizing* what they have read. The work resists. In the summer of 1970, over a three-day period, Thomas Bernhard delivered an informal monologue on his life and work for the filmmaker Ferry Radax. The result is the film *Thomas Bernhard: Three Days*, recently released (with subtitles) in DVD. A transcription of Bernhard's meditations, with the same title, translated by Laura Lindgren and arranged with photographs in a generous and "non-flowing" layout by Blast



Books, is designed to resist the reader while inviting the reader to resist not reading it. One response to Bernhard's work is simply to quote from it. Here is a glimpse into the soul of the writer, or the soul of writing—where resistance resists itself:

"To make oneself understood is impossible; it cannot be done. From loneliness and solitude comes an even more intense isolation, disconnection... and you are always alone with your increasingly dreadful work. At the same time, the only joy—and the same time ever greater pleasure—is the work.

"The sentences, words, you construct like a toy, essentially, you stack them atop one another; it is a musical process.

"If a certain level should be

reached, some four, five stories—you keep building it up—you see through the entire thing...

[considering his ancestors, many of whom committed suicide:] "...to think of these people is as gruesome as it is pleasant. Just as when you're sitting in the theatre and the curtain rises, instantly you divide the people you see onstage into the good and the bad—and not only into good and bad *characters* or *people* and *individuals*, but into good and bad *actors*.

"From the start there is nothing but resistance. The brain needs resistance. Resistance when you look out a window, resistance when you have to write a letter—you want none of it, you *receive* a letter. Again a resistance. You throw it right out; nevertheless at some point you answer. You go out on the street, you do some shopping, you drink a beer, everything is irritating; it's all resistance... you read books—resistance... you *must* get up despite all resistance. You *must* leave the room, the paper materializes, sentences emerge, in fact always the same sentences.

"I am no writer, I am somebody who writes... I am a *story destroyer*, *I am a typical story destroyer*. At the first sign of a story taking form, rising somewhere in the distance behind mound of prose, I shoot it down.

"On the other hand... [silence]... What? Absolutely nothing comes to mind...

"The very authors who are the most important to me are my toughest opponents, or enemies. It is an incessant fight against the very same to whom you are addicted.

"It is the conversation with my brother that does not exist, the conversation with my father, the conversation with my mother. It is the

conversation with the past that does not exist, and *which* no longer exists, *which will never exist*.

"This is *daily life*, from *which* you must distance yourself. You have got to *leave it all*, not *close* the door behind you but *slam it shut* and *walk away*.

"And everything must of its own accord recede and, without a sound, *disappear*." —Stephen Osborne

## PATH OF THE JAGUAR

This past December longtime *Geist* columnist Stephen Henighan did a promotional tour of western Canada for his latest novel, **Path of the Jaguar** (Thistledown Press). *Path of the Jaguar* follows the goings-on of Amparo Ajuix, a young Mayan woman who lives in a small village near Antigua and struggles with the in-between nature of her life: as a Native person, she feels



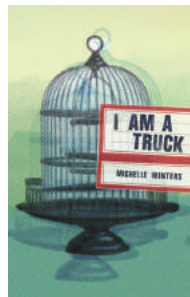
she can't be accepted into Spanish-speaking Guatemalan culture, but she has lost touch with her Cakchiquel-speaking roots; she's Catholic, but

believes in traditional Mayan gods; and she runs a savings cooperative for women, but it's upsetting the more traditional older women who run the market where she sells her handicrafts. On his Vancouver stop, Henighan read at The Paper Hound bookshop. The reading brought up much discussion around voice appropriation, identity politics, the role of the writer and the role of the reader and it carried on late into the evening. —*Geist* Editors



## KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

It's to be expected that a novel set in New Brunswick would contain a fishing trip, a lobster shack, pickup trucks, dirt roads and a radio playing Acadian folk songs, but what's unexpected about **I Am a Truck** by Michelle



Winters (Invisible) is that the dialogue is in *chiac* (a mixture of French and English) and language is a catalyst that changes lives. Martin is a car salesman who

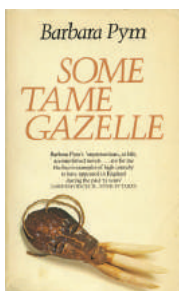
keeps to himself and speaks only English—that is, until he befriends a fellow named Réjean, who speaks only French. The French coming out of Réjean's mouth sounds so authoritarian and masculine that Martin decides to learn French, but once he feels fluent in his new language, he does not know how to come out of the closet as a French speaker. Then Martin meets a mysterious underworld figure from France, Réjean disappears (at least from his current life), Réjean's devoted but now-lonely wife makes friends with a vivacious anglophone named Debbie and everything opens up from there. This fast-paced, quirky, heart warming and hilarious novel captures the fast and loose crossovers of language and culture that make southeast New Brunswick unique.

—Patty Osborne

## A CUP OF PYMS

About two years ago at a Christmas party, a friend recommended the British author **Barbara Pym**, who was, she said, her favourite writer. “What do you like about her books?” I asked. “Nothing happens,” was the reply. I read Pym's two most acclaimed works (*Excellent Women* and *Quartet in Autumn*) and liked them but it wasn't until I read her first novel, *Some Tame Gazelle*, published in 1950 (Jonathan Cape), that I understood the intense

charm of this lack of action. The novel concerns unmarried sisters Belinda and Harriet Bede, who live in the English countryside. Pym's loving but sly take on the world is reminiscent of Jane Austen, but I find Pym funnier and somehow more shrewd and gentle in her satire. Most of Pym's novels concern middle-aged spinsters, often with ties to the church. Belinda harbours an unrequited love for the archdeacon next door while her sister

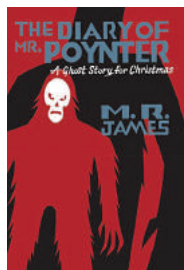


fixates on every new curate who comes to town. However, both are supremely happy with their lives. Other novels progress persistently toward happy marriages, but when

the proposals come to the Bede sisters, both are horrified. They are doing just fine, thank you. —Kris Rothstein

## SCARY STOCKING STUFFERS

Ghost story aficionados will appreciate a new series called **Christmas Ghost Stories** (Biblioasis), selected and illustrated by Seth. Seth is one of Canada's most spellbinding artists, and his retro graphics blend seamlessly with these selected tales. (Note: for current information on Seth's work, please



refer to the latest issue of Devil's Artisan (#78), for the essay “Heading to Palookaville: Seth and the Art of Graphic Autobiography,” by

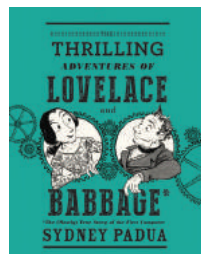
Tom Smart, curator of the Peel Art Gallery.) The five initial offerings in *Christmas Ghost Stories* are enduring examples of the classic English-language short story: “The Signalman” (1866) by Charles Dickens, “Afterward” (1910) by Edith Wharton, “The Diary of Mr. Poynter” (1919) by M.R. James, “One Who Saw” (1931) by A.M. Burrage and “The Crown Derby

Plate” (1931) by Elizabeth Bowen. There are also plans to publish more recent authors in future volumes, such as Robert Aickman and Shirley Jackson, two writers whose legacy of other-worldly vision is unparalleled. As the cover blurb explains: “Reading a ghost story on Christmas Eve was once as much a part of traditional Christmas celebrations as turkey, eggnog, and Santa Claus.” I was aware of this only from many seasons of hearing Andy Williams lift his velvety voice to “It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year”; as you may recall, the bridge goes, “There'll be scary ghost stories / And tales of the glories / Of Christmases long, long ago...” The most phantasmal of these first five stories is Edith Wharton's “Afterward”; the most chilling book cover is “The Crown Derby Plate.” Don't take my word for it; have a look at these during some appropriately shadow-driven, mist-filled evening. Hopefully this series can revive some of the sharing and interactivity that we've all but lost in the digital era. —Jill Mandrake

## STEAMPUNK CRIMEFIGHTERS

**The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage** by Sydney Padua (Pantheon; also available at sydneyepadua.com) asks the question: what would the world be like if mathematician Ada Lovelace and inventor Charles Babbage had succeeded in creating the first Victorian computer? The answer, of course, is that they would use it to fight crime. Explored in a steampunk pocket universe, Lovelace and Babbage invent the first spell checker, avert a revolution of mathematicians and mingle with our favourite Victorian figures such as George Eliot, George Boole and Queen Victoria herself. Through exciting comic panels, contemporary sources and wry footnotes, Padua explains the historical and social contexts of the duo's mathematical discoveries in a way that makes the development of the

analogue computer entertaining and accessible. Even a Victorian enthusiast like myself learned new things about the era's culture and science, and Padua's clear passion for the grumpy Babbage and his grand ideas made the book a pleasure to read. I especially enjoyed the literary references sprinkled throughout the comic: in one scene, poetry-hating Lovelace is the infamous



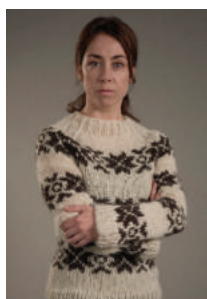
Person from Porlock who interrupts Samuel Taylor Coleridge's composition of *Kubla Khan*; in another section, the Analytical Engine is drawn as Wonderland and Lovelace is the Alice who must make sense of it all. *The Thrilling Adventures* is, above all, a humorous reimagining of two characters formulating a technology that changes the world. I loved the peek into a universe where the computer reigned a hundred years early, and I wish the magic of the functional Analytical Engine could bleed a little more into our own reality.

— Kelsea O'Connor

## SARAH LUND'S SWEATER

In Patti Smith's wonderful *M Train* (reviewed in *Geist* 100, and at [www.geist.com/fact/reviews/time-tested/](http://www.geist.com/fact/reviews/time-tested/)) she reveals that she is a huge fan of the serial crime drama *The Killing*—the American version though, not the original Danish version (*Forbrydelsen*), which aired from 2007 to 2012. How, I wonder, can Patti Smith fail to be fascinated by the mysteries of Sarah Lund's sweater, which Lund wears in every one of Season 1's twenty episodes—without the sweater needing to be changed or laundered? Lund's sweater, a form-fitting Faroe Island knit, has a fan club of its own, as well as its own website: [sarahlund-sweater.com](http://sarahlund-sweater.com) (from which I learn that “The Faroe Islands lie to the north

of Scotland, equidistant from Iceland, Scotland and Denmark,” and that “Faroese knitwear is very traditional, with jumpers being worn for totally practical purposes, all winter through. The wool used is undyed organic wool from hardy northern Faroese sheep. The black wool in a jumper comes from black sheep—it isn't dyed. Organic wool is not just warm, it is lightweight, breathable and hypoallergenic”; perhaps this latter property explains why Lund never



needs to change, or—it seems—to shower?). In 2013 (the last time the sweater's website was updated) the original sweater could be purchased through the website for £230; further research

reveals that the current price for Lund's Season 1 sweater—the official version, mind: not some cheap knockoff—is €308 (€312 for the men's version). Lund sports a different Faroese sweater in Season 2 (where, once again, she seems never to have time to change). Her wardrobe has diversified somewhat in Season 3: in the opening episodes she sports a Faroese sweater with a chevron pattern; later, she changes into a heavier weight sweater in blue. For those who have the skills and time, Sarah Lund's sweater's website offers useful tips on how to knit your own: “You're going to need some fat needles for starters! 7mm as a minimum, but I'd recommend 8mm”; and “KNIT IT TIGHT! The yarn will stretch once you wear the jumper—tradition says that the sleeves should be ‘smeared on.’” Good luck! — Michael Hayward

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## OFF THE SHELF

Paul Newman and Paul Martin cavort through the Ottawa Valley in erotic golf-based attire in *Jettison* by **Nathaniel G. Moore** (Anvil Press). **Joanne Arnott** watches crow fucking crow on a morning grey in *Halfling Spring: an internet romance* (Kegedonce Press). In *The Photographer's Last Picture* (Gaspereau Press), **Sean Howard** discusses the Canadian capture of Vimy Ridge and says: when you've stolen that much land, what's a fucking ridge? According to *Bozuk* by **Linda Rogers** (Exile Editions), Americans keep the population down by arming everyone and shooting people who believe in birth control. **Rob Taylor's** baby hangs hammocked in sleep inside their mother in *The News* (Gaspereau Press). Tomi wants to shank Szeles over fallen rock candy in *Never, Again* by **Endre Farkas** (Signature Editions). **Genevieve Lehr's** grandfather douses potatoes with kerosene to kill the rot in *Stomata* (Brick Books). A mobster plays golf because it's difficult to bug a putting green in *Acqua Sacra* by **Keith Henderson** (DC Books). **Ken Belford** outlives a paradigm of bullshit, power and desire in *slick reckoning* (Talonbooks). In *Works and Days* (New Directions), **Bernadette Mayer** claims that the sea slug carries a disposable penis. James and Warren explain rhizomatic cartography and the Peruvian novella to a hospital full of infants in *Involuntary Bliss* by **Devon Code** (BookThug). The Ministry of Culture wants to control the flying canoe in *accordéon* by **Kaie Kellough** (ARP Books). A granny starts a basement grow-op and can't decide whether to call her plants "buddies" or "girls" in *Gone to Pot* by **Jennifer Craig** (Second Story Press). A flirtatious woman inspires a deadly passion in a too-sensitive young cleric in *The Woman Priest* by **Sylvain Maréchal**, translated by **Sheila**

**Delany** (University of Alberta Press). Beautiful blooms stretch their necks up to the sun with pistils tonguing the air in *Hiroshima: A love war story* by **concetta principe** (Pedlar Press). It's someone's job to tidy the execution room after prisoners' loved ones slobber on the glass in *Shine on Me* by **A.G. Mojtabai** (TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press). Witches are scrutinized in media headlines for casting liberty spells under the name Feminism in *Friendly + Fire* by **Danielle LaFrance** (Talonbooks). A prisoner recites poetry to keep the rats and scorpions away in *Behold Things Beautiful* by **Cora Siré** (Signature Editions). A boy's disembodied head ricochets off a diner wall and lands in a plate of waffles in *RATS NEST* by **Mat Laporte** (BookThug). Shelley Duvall was forced to cry for twelve hours per day while filming *The Shining*, according to *Kubrick Red: A Memoir* by **Simon Roy** (Anvil Press). William Seabrook is offered a clean spoon with which to drink goat blood at a voodoo ceremony in *The Abominable Mr. Seabrook* by **Joe Ollmann** (Drawn & Quarterly). In *Yes or Nope* by **Meaghan Strimas** (Mansfield Press), the kids who live in the shithole down the street with all the broken toys in the yard own a hamster with a hole in his cheek. **Zondra Roy** chops tomatoes at the sandwich shop while the guy next to her weighs cocaine in *Homecoming* (JackPine Press). Carrie bakes bread wearing pink panties on her head like a hairnet in *Hearing Echoes* by **Renee Norman** and **Carl Leggo** (Inanna Publications). **Henriette Valium** suggests that smart, broke people should deal dope to get love and respect in *The Palace of Champions* (Conundrum Press).

## NOTED ELSEWHERE

The *Globe and Mail* calls *Tomboy Survival Guide* by **Ivan Coyote** (Arsenal Pulp Press) "quietly radical"; Julene on GoodReads says it reads

"more like a blog than a book"; *PopMatters* says that the book's line drawings give the text "a pleasantly butch-y feel"; 49th Shelf tagged it as "non-classifiable" and the *Vancouver Sun* calls Coyote "a Gandalfian figure." *The Star* says عملية Operación Opération Operation 作業 Операция by **Moez Surani** (BookThug) "alternates between dull and crushing"; author Charles Bernstein calls it "a new kind of elegy"; the *Winnipeg Free Press* says it's "both absurdly funny and darkly unsettling." Author Wayne Grady says *The Archaeologists* by **Hal Niedzviecki** (ARP Books) "resonates with the rage that unbridled modernity raises in all of us"; *Macleans* says that the book's major characters are "all whiners" and also "compelling"; the *Winnipeg Free Press* calls it "a mystery wrapped in a study of psycho-social malaise"; *All Lit Up* calls the novel's serialization process "a really cool idea and kind of a throwback"; *Quill & Quire* says *Tumour* by **Evelyn Lau** (Oolichan Books) "introduces a wry wit that distinguishes it from her other works." Author Mike Steeves calls *Involuntary Bliss* by **Devon Code** (BookThug) "a literary derangement of the senses"; the *Literary Review of Canada* says the novel belongs to an "art-obsessed subgenre of bildungsroman"; author Jonathan Bennett says it's "wry, dark, and mercifully self-aware"; *Quill & Quire* calls it "complex, sometimes brilliant, often frustrating" and says "some readers may find the novel's mysteries annoying."

## CONGRATULATIONS

To *Geist* contributor **Steven Heigh-ton**, whose poetry collection *The Waking Comes Late* (House of Anansi) won the 2016 Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry, and to **Ivan Coyote**, whose memoir *Tomboy Survival Guide* (Arsenal Pulp Press) was longlisted for the British Columbia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction.

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# The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

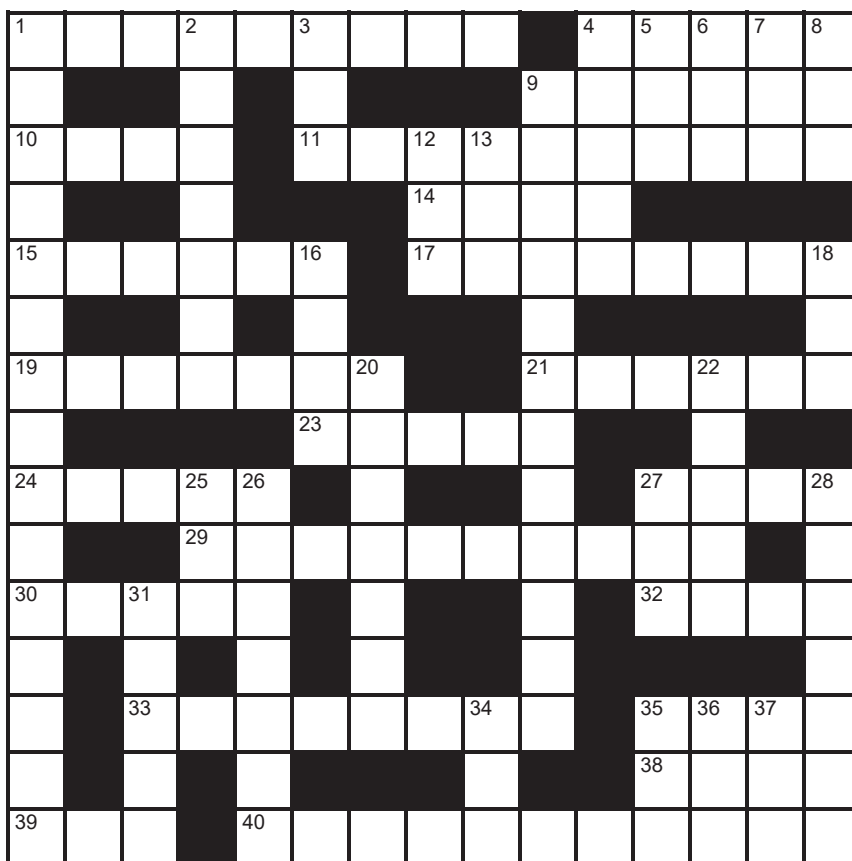
Send a copy of your completed puzzle, along with your name and address, to:

Puzzle #103 GEIST  
210-111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4  
Fax 604-677-6319

The winner will be selected at random from correct solutions received and will be awarded a one-year subscription to *Geist* or—if already a subscriber—a *Geist* keychain. Good luck!

## ACROSS

- 1 He regularly waves at the bride, a lot, but it's too tedious to disturb my surfing (2)
- 4 That easterner sounds macaronic but she looks like a chic girl
- 9 Naturally, Chuck looked inward to select the provincial capital
- 10 You can't beat those trial programs, but some of them are second rate
- 11 Grab it by the horns, Tom. It is coffee time! (2)
- 14 Get in line, the choir's going north
- 15 We read that the little one could make change
- 17 Hey bros, let's crack up, melt some butter and enjoy!
- 19 Sounds like the end for the origins of angry birds
- 21 I think all those dirty places belonged to J.R.
- 23 She lost patience when George complained about paying
- 24 After putting on his boa, he consulted the sorcerer
- 27 Let's all relax before the bad weather
- 29 In the cove they put Buffy on day shift at 1 (3)
- 30 The Pole kept track of things
- 32 One short question: why is Saskatchewan so mixed up?
- 33 A noble use for a big ship or an easterner
- 35 Murray loved green but she is no saint
- 38 He told us to recline in the chair to take the exam
- 39 Herb was hairy but he could also be saucy
- 40 Envious of well-painted trim, thirty-five generals beg to peek in (2)



## DOWN

- 1 Check the data before you decide what should go into the cotton fleet's ban (3)
- 2 That guy in New Orleans is a little short for Canada, I hear
- 3 Don't let the horse bite even 8 tiny morsels
- 4 The singer packed up everything and flew south. Bye bye!
- 5 That old girl shouldn't adjust her secretions just because her shrink told her to (abbrev)
- 6 The start of Wayne's star-spangled fight
- 7 Hey, that's my scotch!
- 8 The middle of that structure makes me anxious (abbrev)
- 9 When's that blueblood due? He wants twice the fat and twice the sugar! (2)
- 12 Looks like the loan term for the big owe has ended (abbrev)
- 13 That group of people is not on the left (abbrev)
- 16 Out there or back there, it's all sounding a bit Asian
- 18 Help! I need a scrub
- 20 We watch Leo hang around and pump gas when it stays light longer
- 22 In the forest, God likes to sit upright so nothing spills on landing
- 25 When maritimers were caught short he made it plain they had to go south
- 26 In the beginning, Miss Piggy ate

- sandwiches there
- 27 Oh, FYI, we're protecting you here (abbrev)
- 28 Molly played shell games in Dublin
- 31 She laps up patchy videos
- 34 She's a saint for visiting that hospital (abbrev)
- 35 If there's nothing else let's adjourn (abbrev)
- 36 In this country those sticks have a ring to them (abbrev)
- 37 God bless us if the Brits think that up here we all talk the same (abbrev)

There was no winner for Puzzle 102.



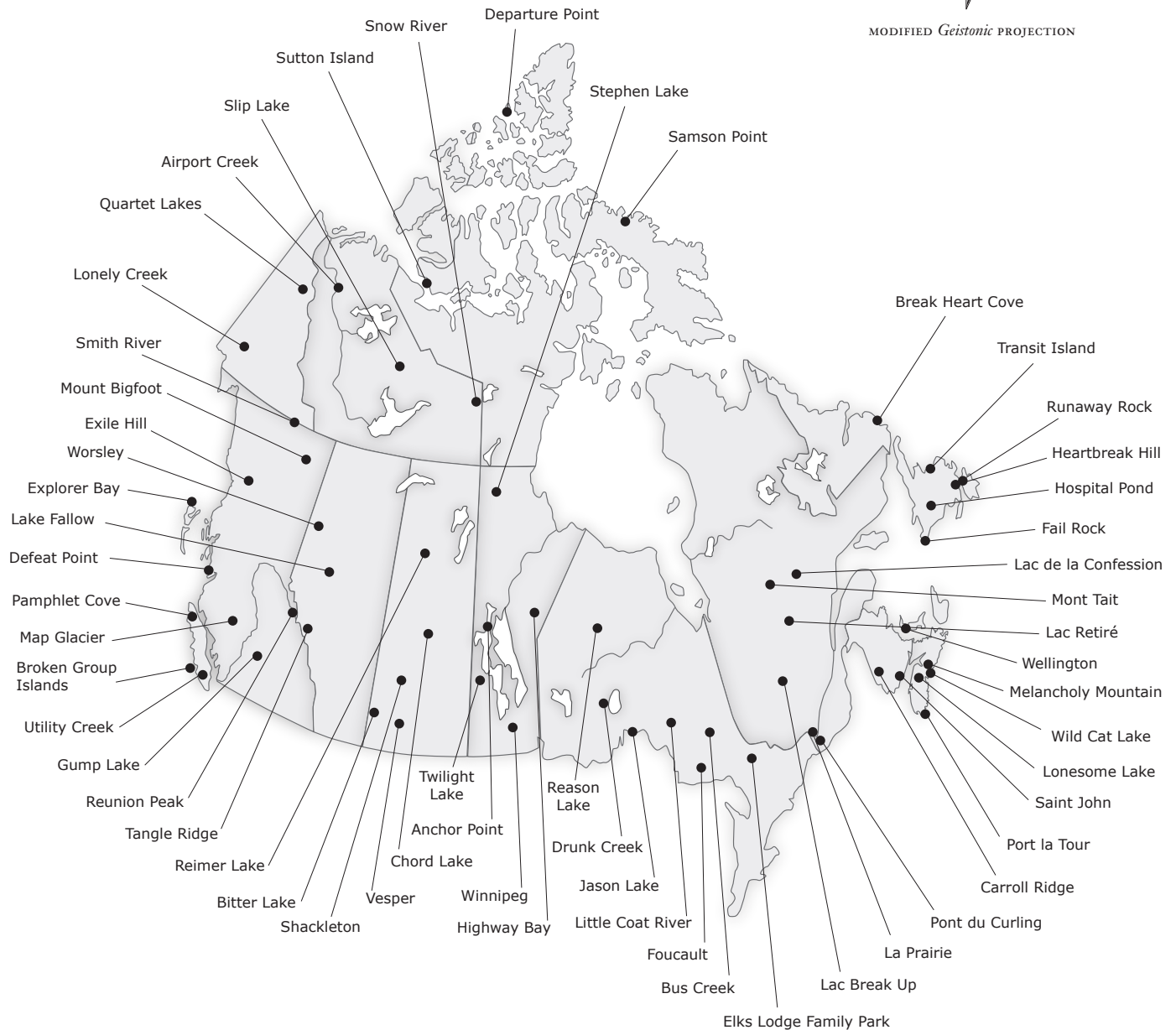
# One Great Country!

*The Weakerthans Map of Canada*

by Roni Simunovic



MODIFIED Geistonic PROJECTION

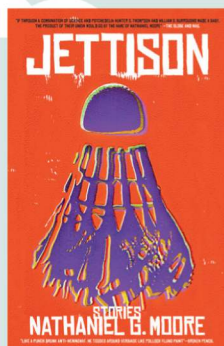


For more Geist maps and to purchase the *Geist Atlas of Canada*, visit [geist.com](http://geist.com).



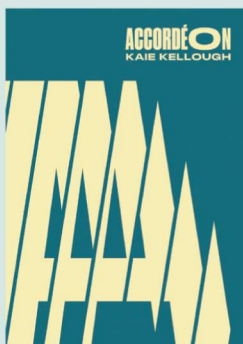


ALL AVAILABLE NOW!



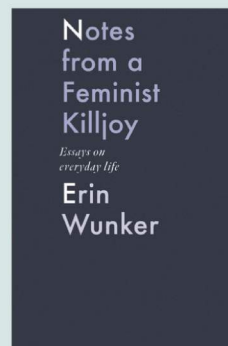
"Jettison is nothing if not daring."  
—*The Winnipeg Review*

ANVIL PRESS | SHORT STORIES



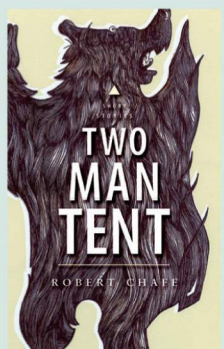
An experimental novel and piercing deconstruction of Québécois culture.

ARP BOOKS | FICTION



A conversation about gender, feminism, and living in our inequitable world

BOOKTHUG | NON-FICTION



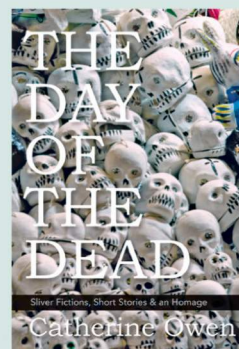
A debut collection of short stories from one of Canada's best playwrights.

BREAKWATER BOOKS | SHORT STORIES



"Subversive, illicit..."  
—*Quill & Quire*

BRINDLE & GLASS | SHORT STORIES



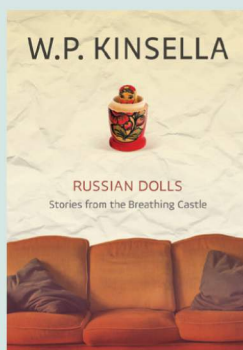
Unapologetically short, sharp, and stuck in the heart.

CAITLIN PRESS | SHORT STORIES



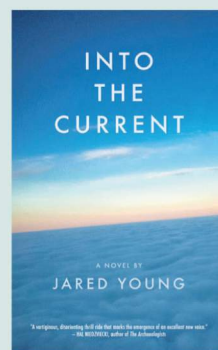
"Robertson proves hard to explain but easy to enjoy..."  
—*The New York Times*

COACH HOUSE BOOKS | POETRY



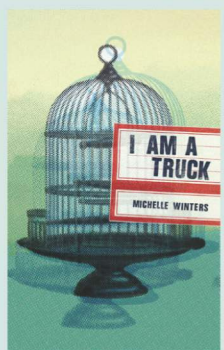
A series of linked stories nested in a novel.

COTEAU BOOKS | SHORT STORIES



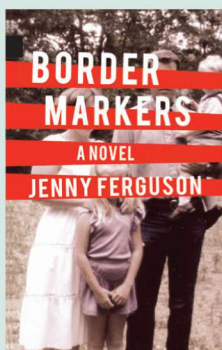
Sex. Death. Regret. If only that was the worst of it.

GOOSE LANE EDITIONS | FICTION



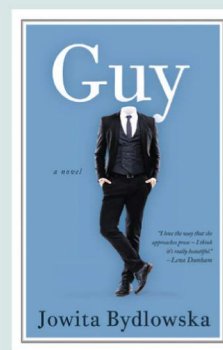
A novel about a man, a woman, and their Chevrolet dealer.

INVISIBLE PUBLISHING | FICTION



A teen's death fractures a family.

NEWEST PRESS | FICTION



Darkly funny and utterly offensive.

WOLSAK & WYNN | FICTION

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