

# GEIST

NUMBER 106

FALL 2017

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FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



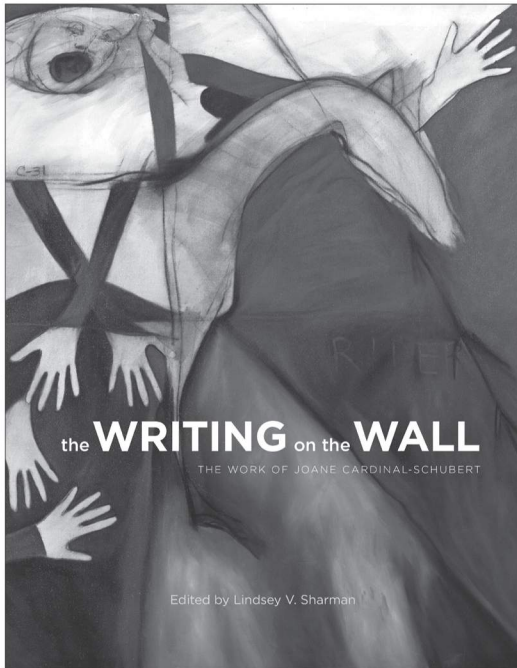
## BURIED TREASURE

Experiments in Expectation

Waiting Out the Big One

Road Safety



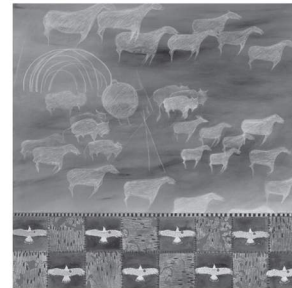


**THE WRITING ON THE WALL:  
The Work of Joane Cardinal-Schubert**

Edited by Lindsey V. Sharman

Artist. Activist. Poet. Joane Cardinal-Schubert was a phenomenal talent. Her work recognized the social and political ramifications of lived Indigenous experience, exposing truths about history, culture, and the contemporary world. She was a teacher and mentor, giving support to those who struggle against the legacies of colonial history.

This richly illustrated, intensely personal book celebrates her story with intimacy and insight. Combining personal recollection with art history, biography with poetry, and academic reading with anecdote and story, it is a crucial contribution to Indigenous and Canadian art history.

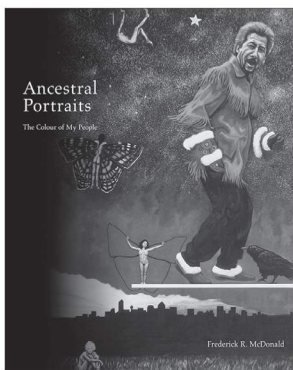


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ART IN PROFILE

September 2017

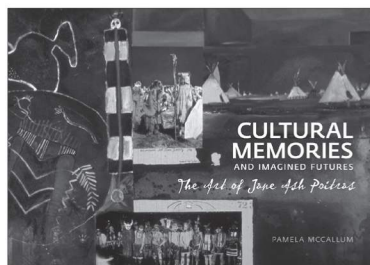
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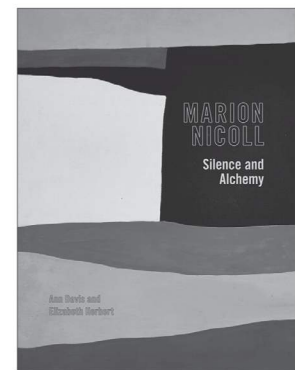
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Marion Nicoll's career is a story of determination and dedication. She was one of the passionate few who brought abstraction to Alberta. The first woman instructor hired at the Provincial Institute of Art and Technology (Now ACAD), Nicoll was a mentor to generations.

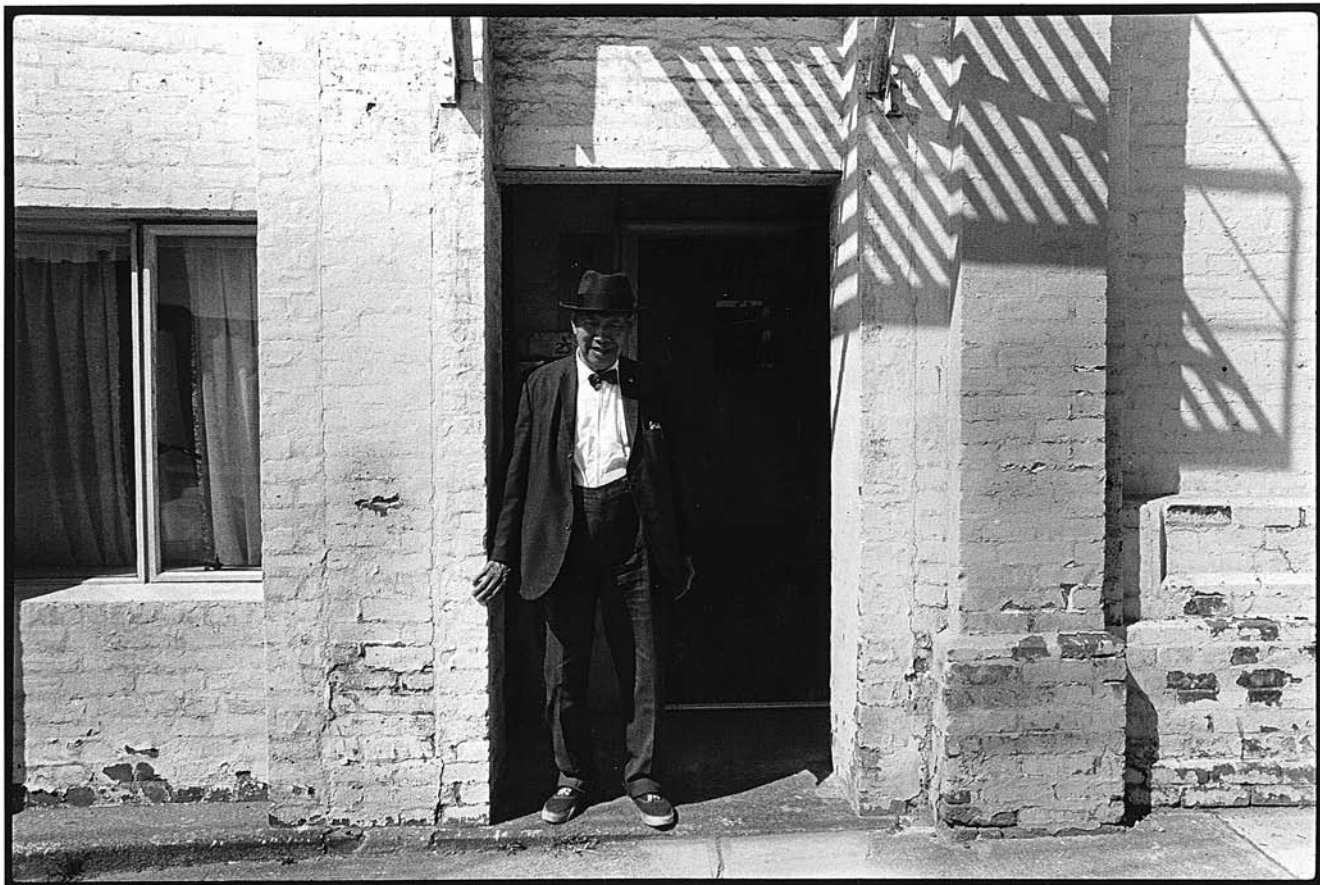
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# GEIST

Volume 27 • Number 106 • Fall 2017

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## FEATURES

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### FOLK SONG

Stephen Smith

*Boys, it's too calm to feed you*

35

### ALTER EGO

Carol Sawyer

*Imagined Modernism*

41

### POSTCARD LIT

*Winners of the 13th Annual Literal*

*Literary Postcard Contest*

48

# GEIST

*Don't worry, we got this.*



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## NOTES & DISPATCHES

Roy Alexander, Beverley O'Neil,  
Paul Winn  
*Contact No Contact*  
8

leannej  
*A Brief Lesson in Road Safety  
and Other Things*  
9

It is better to  
yield than to  
be dead.

Stephen Osborne  
*Waiting Out the Big One*  
10

Cara Schacter  
*Please Play Again*  
13

Randy Fred  
*Finally, A Sensible Approach*  
14

---

## FINDINGS

16

*Aus-piss-ee-ous*

*I Never Talk About It*

*Ordering the Bus*

*Whereas*



*Memoirs of a Really Good Brown Girl*

*Tiny Prince*

*Trans*

*Equal opportunity*

and more...

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## COLUMNS

**PERFECT BOUND**  
*Buried Treasure*  
Mary Schendlinger  
55

**AFTERLIFE OF CULTURE**  
*Rivers of Refuge*  
Stephen Henighan  
59

**CITY OF WORDS**  
*Counting Sins*  
Alberto Manguel  
61

---

## DEPARTMENTS

**IN CAMERA**  
4

**MISCELLANY**  
6

**ENDNOTES**  
64

**OFF THE SHELF,  
NOTED ELSEWHERE**  
71

**PUZZLE**  
72



**COVER:** *The image on the cover is Natalie Brettschneider performs Gladiator, Kamloops, BC, 1939. From Carol Sawyer's The Natalie Brettschneider Archive. See more from Natalie Brettschneider on pages 41-47 of this issue.*

## Camera Eye

This year the Venice Biennale, in its prestigious International Art Exhibition, is featuring the work of Kananginak Pootoogook of Cape Dorset, Baffin Island—the first time an Inuit artist has been so honoured.

Pootoogook, who died in 2010 at age seventy-five, studied art in Cape Dorset, where over a period of forty years he developed a distinctive body of work that combines “photographic” space and the traditions of Inuit art.

For much of the twentieth century, Inuit communities, like Indigenous peoples around the world, were often considered by tourists (and some anthropologists) to be features of the scenery, and, like the scenery, as legitimate subject matter “for the taking.” An early CPR promotion, for example, encouraged tourists to visit western Canada, where they could *Kodak the Indians*. On Baffin Island it was not unusual for white visitors to enter the homes of Inuit families without invitation in order to photograph them “as they really are.”

Many of Pootoogook’s images appropriate conventions of the snapshot. Some of them echo snapshots taken between 1940 and 1973 by his uncle Peter Pitseolak, who learned to operate a camera in the 1930s when he was recruited to take a picture of polar bear for a Kadlunak visitor too nervous to do it himself. (Pitseolak got the picture, after positioning a pal to stand by with a loaded rifle.)

Kananginak Pootoogook uses the “camera eye” as a starting point in many of his ink-and-coloured-pencil drawings; his vision, though, is not optical but *optical-esque*; the field of view is complicated by distortions of perspective, and several vanishing points might be seen to disrupt the single vision of the camera. At the same time, the vernacular sense of the snapshot is preserved and even intensified in the aura of the “personal” emanating from these images with their elements of whimsy and the “accidental” detail.

Since its invention in 1839, the camera has been a challenge to artists working in conventional media and has quickly colonized the artist’s function of representing the world at large, leading to a revision of ways of seeing and looking, in modes such as cubism, expressionism and abstraction. In the work displayed here, Kananginak Pootoogook reverses that process, as he allows his pencils to usurp the camera by co-opting and then distorting optical perspectives: we see “through” an imaginary viewfinder and also above, below and around that viewfinder—as well as reflexively: now we are looking back at the viewfinder.

Kananginak Pootoogook acknowledged the early influence of his uncle Peter Pitseolak, who taught himself darkroom work to avoid having to send the film south for processing (a round trip of up to a year); he perfected the technique of developing film in a snow house and exposing his negatives with a Coleman lamp. In 1947 he salvaged a red safelight and other equipment from the wreck of the supply ship RMS *Nascopie*. His archive of thousands of images, in the Canadian Museum of History, comprises an invaluable vernacular record of life on the land, in the camp and in the village. —*Mandelbrot*




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*The 57th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale runs until November 2017. More examples of the work of Kananginak Pootoogook selected for exhibition can be seen in the May 2017 issue of Canadian Art and on the Canadian Art website.*



*Kananginak Pootoogook, Untitled, 2010.  
Ink and coloured pencil on paper, 50.8 × 66  
cm. Private collection, Toronto. Collection  
Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron.  
Courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia and  
Dorset Fine Arts.*

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PUBLISHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (ON LEAVE)  
Michał Kozłowski

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER  
AnnMarie MacKinnon

ADMINISTRATION  
*Reader Services:* Jocelyn Kuang  
*Intern:* Lauren Dembicky  
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DESIGNER  
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ACCOUNTANT  
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CIRCULATION  
Larry Wyatt

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Metro Publisher

DISTRIBUTION  
Magazines Canada

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS  
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## MISCELLANY



### GEIST-O-MAT

My friend Steve sent this photo to me! It was the only thing in the laundromat in Hazelton, BC (that wasn't a washer or dryer). The laundromat was very isolated (like in the middle of nowhere) and this particular *Geist* (No. 88) just happened to be the issue that featured writing by both David [Wisdom] and me. It had been taken from a library. My friend read the entire issue, of course.

—*Connie Kubns, Salt Spring Island, BC*  
*Read "Strange Women" and other work by*  
*Connie Kubns at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

### WRITE TO GEIST

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

The Editor, *Geist*  
[letters@geist.com](mailto:letters@geist.com)  
*Snailmail:*  
#210 – 111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver BC V6B 1H4

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum.

### CONTACT NO CONTACT

We are pleased to announce the launch of Contact No Contact, a gathering of personal narratives from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal contributors on the subject of "contact." The project is supervised by Randy Fred in Nanaimo and coordinated by *Geist* in Vancouver. Randy Fred is a longtime friend of and contributor to *Geist*, and is the founder of Theytus Books, the first First Nations book publisher in Canada. If you'd like to be updated about the project, sign up for the *Geist* weekly newsletter. We'll be posting stories from the Contact No Contact project here in the pages of *Geist*. A selection of stories appears this issue in the Notes & Dispatches section on page 8. For more stories and information about the project, visit [contact-nocontact.ca](http://contact-nocontact.ca).  
—*The Editors*





### UNWRAPPING DIASPORAS

Michel Huneault and Sarah R. Champagne received the R. James Travers Foreign Corresponding Fellowship and with it completed “Unwrapping Diasporas,” a project documenting the hidden force of immigrant remittances “back home” on global economics. A photoessay of the project appeared in *Geist* 105. We’d like to let our Francophone/bilingual readers know that a multi-part series appeared in *Le Devoir* under the name “Monnaie d’échange.” It includes additional text, photos and some of the immersive video that was shot for the project, and can be found at [ledevoir.com](http://ledevoir.com).

—*The Editors*

### ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

**leannej** is a writer and text-based artist. Her work has been published in *FRONT Magazine*, *Geist* and other publications. She lives in Vancouver.

**Carol Sawyer** is a visual artist and singer working primarily with photography, installation, video, and improvised music. Since the early 1990s her visual art work has been concerned with the connections between photography and fiction, performance, memory, and history. Her work is represented by Republic Gallery. She lives in Vancouver.

### REPORTING LIES

In *Geist* 105, Alberto Manguel wrote “Reporting Lies” in response to Stephanie Nolen’s article about him, “Page Turner,” that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* in May, 2017.

Ethel Groffier wrote to the *Globe and Mail* to comment on the article, and sent her letter to *Geist* as well. It reads:

Page turner. Really?

Nolen’s piece was so disappointing! In it, she concentrates on controversies and petty politics instead of telling us about Alberto Manguel’s vision for the National Library of Argentina, where he is creating a vast network of intellectual exchanges, largely thanks to his own international fame. The library is beginning to attract praises in Argentina and abroad. Those of us in Montreal who had the privilege of visiting the exhibition “The Library at Night,” conceived by Robert Lepage on the basis of Manguel’s book of the same title and his own magnificent personal library, have an idea of what the interview could have been if the interviewer had been really interested in libraries rather than in gossip. The opening of the exhibition in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris will no doubt reflect favourably on its counterpart in Buenos Aires.

—*Ethel Groffier, Montreal*

Read “Reporting Lies” by Alberto Manguel at [geist.com](http://geist.com).

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Correspondence and inquiries: [subs@geist.com](mailto:subs@geist.com), [advertising@geist.com](mailto:advertising@geist.com), [letters@geist.com](mailto:letters@geist.com), [editor@geist.com](mailto:editor@geist.com).

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## Contact No Contact

The term “contact” is used to describe initial encounters of Indigenous peoples with settlers, non-Indigenous people and others, and carries a special charge in accounts of Indigenous history. For most Canadians, contact remains an abstract “historical” event, and it is one that has (d)evolved over centuries into a continuous state of “no further contact.”

**Contact No Contact** is a gathering of personal narratives created by writers and storytellers on the subject of contact: how contact appears in our lives and our memories and how we encounter our own culture, as well as the culture of others.

The project is designed to welcome Canadians into a conversation they might otherwise feel excluded from, by considering how contact started (or failed to start) in their own lives, and then how it went on from there—that is, how did “further contact” emerge or fail to emerge in their lives?

The stories below are transcribed from videos featured on the Contact No Contact website. For more stories and information about the project visit [contact-nocontact.ca](http://contact-nocontact.ca).

### Quiet Introductions

Roy Alexander

Early in the mornings I had a lot of free time and I was able to take my little Victoria boatworks clinker out and row around the islands. Almost every second day if not every day in the summer I would pass a gentleman named Jimmy McKay. I didn't know him. We would just pass quietly, me rowing and him rowing in his dugout canoe. We would pass silently every morning, I would wave and he would wave and smile. I was rowing my boat in the centre, English style, quickly out, and he was sitting on the back of the boat, rowing the boat facing forward sitting at the stern of the canoe. One day when I went by, I got close to him and I said “Jimmy, Jimmy, why are you rowing backwards? You're rowing backwards, and why do you sit up at the end of the canoe like that?” I thought maybe it was some special situation or something. He turned around to me and he just chuckled, and said, “Only the white man rows and can't see where he's going,” and just paddled away, and that was always my great memory of Jimmy McKay. And that was my very quiet introduction to Aboriginal people.

### Where Are You From?

Beverley O'Neil, Ktunaxa Nation

At 24 I started to get used to people asking, “Where you from?” After all, I'd only been an Indian for six years, and now had the Government of Canada letter to prove it. It read: “Congratulations! You're now registered as an Indian under the Indian Act of Canada.” Before this letter, I didn't look like anything except “out of place.” In my new legally recognized Indian Status, I was now equipped to answer anyone who asked “What are you?” One evening out with a friend, a fellow asked me, “We know your friend is Native, but we were wondering what you are?” I replied, “We noticed you too, and we were wondering if you're white.”

### A Lot Like Me

Paul Winn

My very first contact with First Nations people was when I was about 13 years old, in the city of Toronto. I was surprised because you never ever saw any First Nations people in the city of Toronto. I'm sure that there was more than the couple that I saw. They didn't look like First Nations people, or “Indians” as they were called, because my image of First Nations and “Indian” people were movies and drawings and comic books and things. These people were wearing clothes like I was wearing, they looked a lot like me. That was an interesting thing, and I remember it led to a bit of discussion [with my family] when I got home. And the reaction I got: “Well, you're stupid! What did you think?” They said, your ancestors were African, but you don't see us running around in the kind of clothes they wore in Africa in the past. We've modernized.

I want to yield to the car, but my friend keeps walking.

My friend and I start to cross the road when a car turns into the lane that we are crossing against.

I want to yield to the car, but my friend keeps walking.

So I follow, even though I am afraid.

And that makes me angry.

So I yield, but my friend walks ahead.

### A Brief Lesson in Road Safety and Other Things

I know that by ignoring my instinct to yield, I yield in a different way.

My friend thinks we are just crossing a road.

I know that by yielding, I give up my right of way.

And that makes me angry.

The car carries on into the intersection.

And that makes me angry.

Just before the car comes crashing through us, I jump back.

This story can only end in two ways, if the driver controls the narrative.

The car stops just before crashing into my friend.

My friend keeps walking, because he never has to question his rights.

It is better to follow and be nimble.

It is better to yield than to be dead.

by leannej

# Waiting Out the Big One

STEPHEN OSBORNE

*With our profound heart we sincerely thank all of you*



I wanted to tell you that I survived the earthquake this morning at 6:45 a.m. I was in bed reading *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt when a bang erupted from the wall and the bed shook: once, then twice. I recognized it immediately as a so-called *earth tremor*, and lay still with my gaze fixed on the door jamb. Had anyone asked, I might have said I was expecting the Big One, so-called, out of bravado perhaps, as so many have been expecting the Big One for so long on the radio and in the newspaper, especially top seismic minds at the university, whereas I had been expecting the Big One for mere moments and already I could feel my expectation fading even as I was thinking these thoughts, whereas the expectation felt by top seismic minds, it seemed to me, never fades; rather, it expands, it resides continuously, it abides and grows. Could expecting the Big One be different from expecting any other event, e.g. the squeal of the next SkyTrain passing by? Or lunch at the Joyeaux Café & Restaurant later that day with Slava, whom I hadn't seen for several months? Had I been expecting to see Slava for all those months? Or had I just begun to expect to see her moments ago, while

expecting the Big One or just after expecting the Big One? How does one expectation differ from another? These are questions that Ludwig Wittgenstein posed in his notebook in 1916 while under heavy bombardment in his observation post during the Brusilov Offensive. Are expectations articulated like sentences with internal stops and starts? For that matter, how does one experiencing an expectation know what it is that is expected? I did not seem to be at all uncertain about what was to be expected as I lay in bed in the moments after the earthquake this morning with *The Origins of Totalitarianism* open before me. One might say: "I don't know whether it is *only* this expectation that makes me so uneasy"; but one will never say: "I don't know whether the state of mind that I am now in is the expectation of an earthquake or of something else." The earthquake preparation notice posted near the elevator some years ago in expectation of the Big One recommended supplies of bottled water and crackers, candles, peanut butter, with an admonition in bold type: *Do Not Use the Elevator*. I remained where I was, in the bed flat on my back, it occurred to me, *exactly as if I were expecting something to happen*.

I had been reading Hannah Arendt at the time, as I was saying, that is, upon waking up at 6:20 a.m. and switching on the bedside lamp. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* lay on the bedside table, opened face down at chapter 5: "The Political Emancipation of the Bourgeoisie." *The only secure form of possession is destruction*. The earthquake expectation notice next to the elevator was removed last year by order of the new clutter-free strata council. *For only what*

*we have destroyed is safely and forever ours*. At 8:00 a.m., a mere two hours after I felt the earthquake shaking the bed, the radio news said the earthquake, or earth tremor, had been centred in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which I knew to be in the so-called subduction zone identified in underwater maps by top seismic minds as a major source of earthquake expectation. While listening to the news report, I expected to hear the word *epicentre*, a technical term esteemed by radio journalists who relish pronouncing *epicentre* sharply, with a near-hiss;



terms like *epicentre*, *Richter scale* and *gale force* lend authority and the comfort that one expects of expertise in the media, along with the hinted promise of disaster, but that comfort was withheld from me today. In fact, as I recall, all of the news reports that I heard avoided the term *epicentre* entirely and said nothing about subduction zones, or tectonic plates for that matter, terms that I supplied immediately in retrospect. The so-called earth tremor was *not even felt* in the city, said the news at 8:00 a.m.; in fact, said the news person, the earthquake was felt *only by people on Salt Spring Island*. The people of Salt Spring Island, as is well known, are a sensitive people. As for me, flat on my back on the fourth floor of a leaky condominium

block built twenty years ago on Commercial Street at eye level with the SkyTrain track, where I had been since 6:20 a.m., no longer expecting what I alone in the city had been expecting at any moment for a few moments at least, but now expecting it no longer, even in the long term, the Big One so-called, I remembered the princess kept awake by the pea placed beneath her mattress as a test of her sensitivity. I can find no one else today who felt, or *experienced* the earthquake that I experienced, and which is said by the news to have been centred in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to have occurred at 6:47 a.m. and to have been of *magnitude 2.9*.

The lunch with Slava that I had been expecting on the day of earthquake, in fact I had been anticipating it from time to time for several days, never in fact materialized: I was well on my way to the Joyeaux Café & Restaurant on Howe Street, an anodyne stretch of the so-called financial district with nothing to recommend it save the Joyeaux Café & Restaurant, and had just come out of the Granville SkyTrain station when Slava texted to say that she had *fallen back* and was too weak to go out of the house. I went on alone, over to Howe Street and down the block to the Joyeaux Café & Restaurant where I studied the menu for some time before choosing *Xiu Mai* with shredded pork on vermicelli and green tea in a large cup. I wondered how the phrase *fallen back* was to be understood in the context of Slava's message, although I expect that I already knew; perhaps without knowing too much, I really wanted to know what *fallen back* meant to Slava, and whether *fallen back* carried with it the expectation of getting back to where she was before the falling back that prevented her from meeting me at the SkyTrain entrance. I put none of these questions into my reply to Slava's message, but instead sent her a picture of the note handwritten by the proprietor of the Joyeaux Café & Restaurant and pinned

to the wall above my booth, and which I had been looking forward to showing to Slava, had she been able to join me for lunch: *The lucky name I've loved a long time, don't correct the spelling please. Expressing the wish to entirely bring to all of our customers a lot of satisfaction and the hope that the suitable climate enraptures most travellers on the world. With our profound heart we sincerely thank all of you about the ultimate generosity on our service which might lack circumspection.*

Later in the fall, on my birthday, as a matter of fact, which was a week before Slava's birthday, I dreamed that I was trying to leave town once again, that is, not for the first or the second time, going back and forth and back again for supplies and more supplies and then for more suitable directions and some kind of map. In the end I decided to just start walking and soon found Slava sitting at the bus stop on Broadway, eating lunch. She had two sandwiches and a bottle of beer. I determined right away that she should accompany me into the country, and she seemed surprised and even pleased when I asked her to come along. I may have been expecting too much in any case, for the question remained long after I woke up: did Slava ever come with me on that walk into the country?

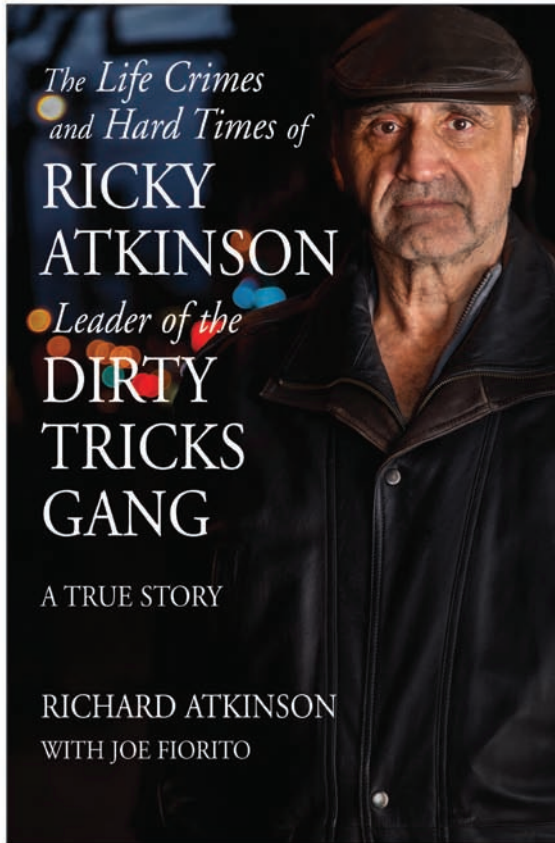


*Stephen Osborne was publisher of Geist for its first twenty-five years. He is the award-winning writer of Ice & Fire: Dispatches from the New World and dozens of shorter works in anthologies and periodicals. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# GEIST

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"Atkinson's memoir is as riveting as true crime gets. He's a veteran of gangland Toronto and as gifted as a story-teller as he was a street hustler. Working with journalist Joe Fiorito, he recounts all the bloody brawls and fast scores of Hogtown's gritty streets in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s... Atkinson mixes it up with Black Power radicals, forms the Dirty Tricks Gang, commits a string of larcenies, dodges bullets, and takes multiple trips to prison before leaving the criminal life in his later years... It's a revelatory and fascinating story told from a rare perspective."

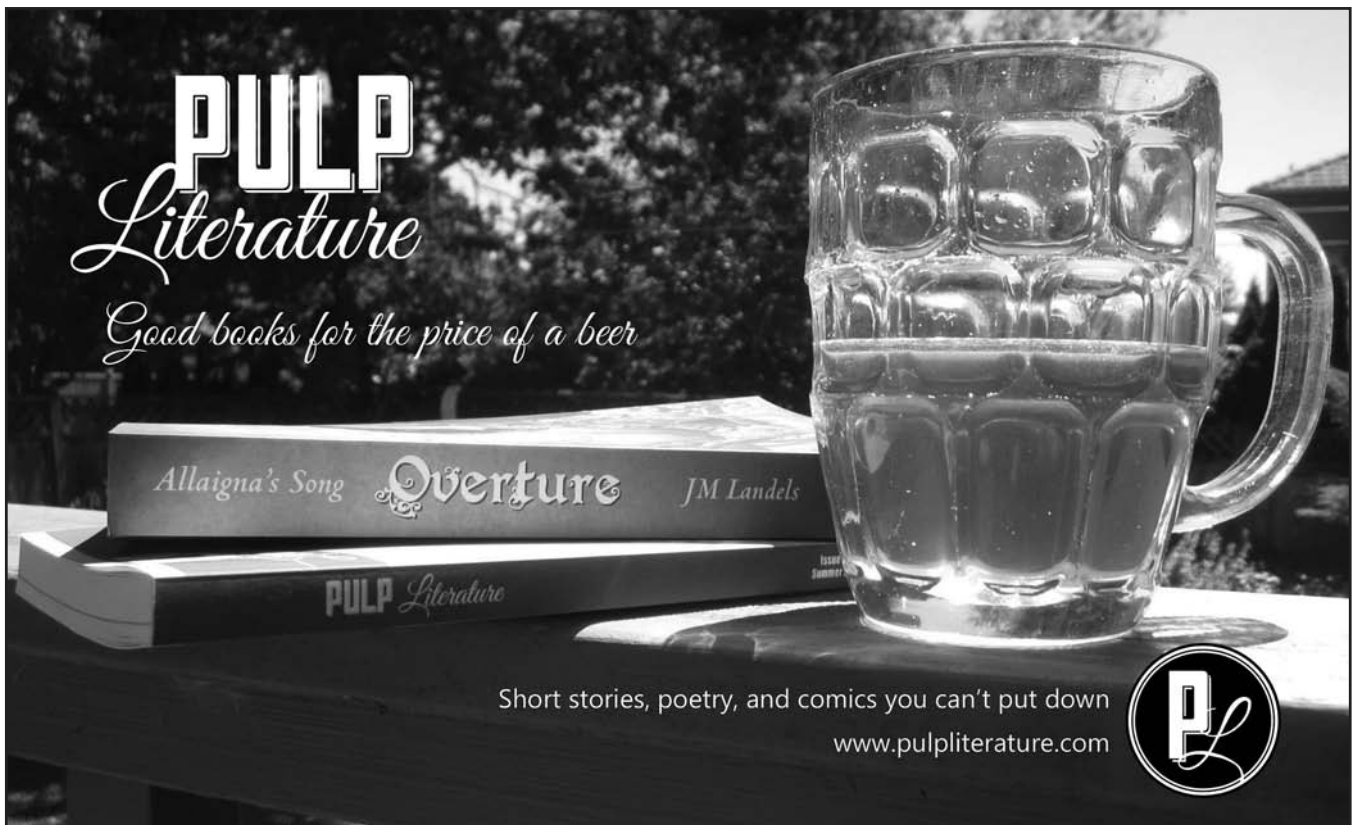
—Publishers Weekly, starred review

"Never heard of Ricky Atkinson or his Dirty Tricks Gang? Then buckle up for one wild ride... a no-holds-barred saga... that flings open a window onto our city's criminal history – the gangs, the police, the racism... A hypnotic storyteller, the man shares everything – beatings, friendships, loves, treacheries... Throughout, the writing is taut, exciting, dense with detail and characters who evolve – like *The Sopranos*, and far less violent... No longer addicted to the thrill of the score, today he counsels at-risk youth, coaches boxing and teaches pottery in the old neighbourhood."

—Toronto Star

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# Please Play Again

CARA SCHACTER

*An uncontrollable proliferation of cells*

There's always a line at this Tim Hortons.

I figured whatever Dad called to say  
would be said by the time I got to the front.

But he said chronic lymphocytic leukemia  
and I'm up next. I can't ask to call back  
but I can't mouth "Small dark roast,  
unsweetened, black, no room for milk."

- a. Too much to mouth.
- b. Could cry.
- c. Have to ask which cup sizes still have roll-up-  
the-rim rims.

I step slightly out of line and signal to the guy behind  
me to pass.  
The guy stands still.  
My hand motion eludes him.

I thought a buoyant sweeping gesture,  
as if wiping crumbs off an invisible counter,  
was universal for "Go ahead."

I sweep again with more gusto.  
No longer wiping crumbs from the counter,  
I'm shoving a cat off the table.

The guy stands still.  
A woman in a knitted headband behind the guy says  
"Hello??"

"This isn't one of the horrible cancers," Dad says.

I place my palm on the guy's back and gently shove.  
I mouth "Go." He goes.

"I will die of something else before this is a worry,"  
Dad says.

I blot a tear with the used Kleenex from my pocket.  
With my other hand, I flick invisible crumbs

at the woman in the knitted headband.  
She understands and passes.  
She was probably going ahead anyway.

"I'm sorry Dad," I say.  
"The best thing would be for everyone to relax," Dad says.

I flick crumbs at a boy in a fleece.

"How did it happen," I say.  
"What do you mean how did it happen," Dad says.  
"How did you get it," I say.  
"You don't catch cancer," Dad says.

I flick crumbs at two men with messenger bags.

"Ya but sometimes it can be lifestyle-related," I say.

Maybe the people passing buy losing cups and I land  
a winner.  
This is how you win: paternal cancer, huffy women in  
knit accessories.

"I don't get it," I say.  
"It's an uncontrollable proliferation of cells," Dad says.

I flick crumbs at a girl eating yogurt.

"It's chance," Dad says.

It's a prepaid Visa card or a 2017 Honda Civic.  
If it's potato wedges, I give up.

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*Cara Schacter's short story "Hummus" was long-listed for the 12th Annual Geist Literal Literary Postcard Story Contest. She lives in Toronto.*

# Finally, A Sensible Approach

RANDY FRED

*A new handle on the “land claims industry”*

**N**uchatlaht First Nation is a small group whose main reserve is near Zeballos on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island. Most of the population—fewer than 170 people—live away from home. Employment and business opportunities are scarce after 150 years of resource exploitation since Canada’s Confederation. Logging, mining and fish farming have compromised much of the land and waters in Nuchatlaht territory.

Like nearly half of the First Nation governments in BC, Nuchatlaht has spent a fortune in land-claims research and negotiation, as well as millions of dollars in legal costs, in the attempt to protect their Aboriginal rights and title. An entire industry has been created around “land claims.” Lawyers and non-Native consultants have been the major beneficiaries.

Several treaties have actually been signed. Time will tell whether these treaties are fair. I know that the late James Gosnell, who initiated the landmark Nisga’a Treaty settled in 1998, would never have signed it in its final form. When Pierre Trudeau asked him what Aboriginal title meant, James gave an answer that made him famous: “We own BC lock, stock and barrel.” But the treaty was drastically rewritten after James died, and it has been used as a template for all other BC treaties.

Not all BC First Nations have chosen to undertake the costly treaty negotiation process, and member tribes of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs do not support that process. This year, Nuchatlaht First Nation signed on with the Jack Woodward law firm. That company represented the

Tsilhqot’in Nation in their victorious historic land title case in 2014, when the court ruled that a semi-nomadic group using the land part of the time may still claim title.

The current treaty negotiations attempt to divide resources, but Woodward’s strategy is a much more sensible approach, proving occupancy and economic utilization of territory and resources by First Nation occupants. The Tsilhqot’in case will not rectify all of the wrongs of the past, but it levels the economic playing field and restores the Tsilhqot’in people to their rightful place in society. The recognition of their historic and traditional right to their territory is a positive first step toward economic self-sufficiency.

The Nuchatlaht people have made a great decision in moving forward with their Aboriginal title struggle with Jack Woodward. The court process will not cost millions of dollars or require decades to reach a decision—the precedent has been set. But it is a historic case. As Jack Woodward put it, “This is the first application of the Tsilhqot’in decision.”

An honourable political stance of the Nuchatlaht people is that they continue to use their traditional hereditary chieftainship system, known in their language as Ha’wilth. Walter Michael, Nuchatlaht’s Tyee Ha’wilth (head chief), is a descendant of a long line of chiefs whose responsibility was and continues to be the protection of the people’s territory. That territory, and its resources under the protection and management of the Tyee Ha’wilth, is called his Hahoulthi.

Chief Walter Michael and Jack Woodward are doing a great service to the Nuchatlaht people and all of Canada. Not only are they saving tons of money on legal costs, they are providing economic stability for generations to come.

*Randy Fred is a Nuu-Chab-Nulth Elder. He is the founder of Theytus Books, the first Aboriginal-owned and operated book publishing house in Canada. He lives in Nanaimo.*



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# FINDINGS

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Storybook West Side. *From The Special by Kevin Lanthier, a project that addresses Vancouver's transformation through digitally crafted, imaginary streetscapes made from photos of real Vancouver houses. The series was shown at Ian Tam Gallery in Vancouver in August 2017. Lanthier lives in Vancouver and at kevinlanthier.com.*

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## Aus-piss-ee-ous

SCAACHI KOUL

*From One Day We'll All Be Dead and None of This Will Matter. Published by Doubleday Canada in 2017. Scaachi Koul's work has appeared on BuzzFeed, in The New Yorker, the Globe and Mail, Hazlitt and many other publications.*

There are two types of people who insist that Indian weddings are fun. The first are white people, who are frequently well-meaning but stupid and enjoy things vaguely different

from themselves by exoticizing them. Do not talk to me about how you love the “colours” of an Indian wedding—the main colours come from blood and shit, not necessarily respectively.

The second type are any people who have never actually been to an Indian wedding in India with Indian people. Or, at least, have never been to the entirety of an Indian wedding, the full five to seven days, the multiple outfits, the familial requirements that forfeit your time and independence. No, these people swoop in for the ceremony and reception, they eat some pakoras and talk about how “cute” it is when little girls have unibrows, maybe



they show up early for the henna ceremony and ask for a lower-back tat, and then we never see them again. Indian weddings are a lot of things, but “fun” has never been their purpose.

My family was in Jammu for my cousin Sweetu’s wedding. Thanks to an Indian online dating service—Shaadi.com, which means Wedding.com because we as a race are hardly trying—Sweetu’s parents were able to arrange her marriage to a nice boy

with well-manicured stubble and a good job in America. It’s the dream.

If Indian weddings for Indian people are the furthest from “fun,” trips to India for Indian people are the furthest from “vacation.” When I told my friends about the upcoming trip, everyone purred about what a great time I’d have, told me to take a lot of photos, told me to eat everything. But if you’re going to India to see your family, you’re not going to relax,

you’re not going to have a nice time. No, you’re going so you can touch the very last of your bloodline, to say hello to the new ones and goodbye to the older ones, since who knows when you’ll visit again. You are working.

My parents were in Jammu to give blessings to Sweetu, to send her into her new life accordingly. They arrived with crisp, bank-fresh rupees and red velvet pouches filled with thick gold bangles. My brother and his wife, Ann,



East Van Relics. *From The Special by Kevin Lanthier.*

were there to show off Raisin, the latest addition to our family, the first grandchild of my father, the eldest son. As for me, a girl and therefore my mother's joy and my father's responsibility, I was there to prove my parents are a success. I was among the first to be born out of India within my extended family, proof positive that my parents moved to a faraway prosperous land for good reason. *Look at me*, I will say merely

by showing my beatific face. *I am fair-skinned, of average weight and height, my hair is long and shiny, I am university-educated and respectful of our customs and traditions. I know I don't speak the language, but you can see here on my nose the indent of what was once a nose ring, thus the mark of an authentic but modern Kashmir girl. The Kouls are thriving in the West. Feel free to signal your approval with a satchel or two of gold.*

After we dropped off our bags at the hotel and after I had a hearty twenty-minute argument with my parents, who neglected to book a separate hotel room for me and were expecting that I would, for fifteen days, sleep sandwiched between my sixty-six-year-old father and sixty-year-old mother (I stopped short of screaming, "I REFUSE TO SLEEP ON THE SAME SURFACE AS YOUR

OVERUSED WORD ALERT ►  
"aesthetic"

THE WHITE COMPANY'S MONOCHROME AESTHETIC COME TO THE US: This undated photo provided by The White Company shows the inside of The White Company's store on New York's Fifth Avenue. FROM TAROT CARDS



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RESPECTIVE GENITALS” before they made up a cot for me on the floor next to their bed), we headed over to the wedding venue, a fifteen-minute auto-rickshaw ride away.

There were already more brown people inside the venue than I had seen in the last five years combined. Nearly all my father’s family was there: his father’s last remaining brother; his sister who is actually his aunt (possibly

not by blood) but she’s younger than him so he calls her his sister; his mother’s brother; his actual sister; her son, Rohan, who got married in Delhi a few years earlier with a thousand guests at his reception (I did not go); his daughter, E, the same age as then-five-year-old Raisin; and my dad’s cousin, my Vee Masi, my mom’s friend who helped arrange my parents’ marriage.

If this sounds confusing, that is

because it is. Brown people rarely explain how anyone is related to anyone. You’re simply told that these people are your family and to treat them as such. My parents do not discuss the fact that one of my “aunts” is actually my dad’s aunt, or how my mom’s many “sisters” are not her sisters and are sometimes merely childhood friends. It’s rude to ask what would otherwise be a very reasonable question: “Hey,

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TO MACABRE HOODIES: WHY WITCHCRAFT IS ALL THE RAGE: But, while aesthetically everything is beautiful, the core is very macabre. EYELID CREASE COMPLEXITY: “There is triple the room for error compared to a traditional eyelid procedure,” Dr. Lee tells The Aesthetic Channel. SPARKLY CATSUITS AND SPONGEBOB PRINTS, FROM

Mom, why do you have forty sisters? Was your mother a sea turtle? Is that why she cried so much?” So the question of “how” is maybe less important than the statement of “this”: This is your family. You will hear a platitude about how much you look like them even if this is not true. You will smile. You will feel warm. *Behave.*

The venue was a three-floor home with a sprawling lawn for the receptions, a pyre for the ceremony itself, an indoor hall, and multiple rooms for out-of-towners to change and put their children down for naps. In one of the many bedrooms was Sweetu, sitting on a bed with her hair in tiny braids as is customary before a bride’s wedding week. (Did I mention Indian weddings last seven days? There are prison sentences that run shorter than Indian weddings.) Sweetu is my actual cousin, her mother being my father’s younger sister. This I am pretty sure about, because we look too similar to not share blood. Her hair is long and thick like mine, we have the same nose, same fair and yellowish skin. She’s sarcastic and dismissive, somewhat of a hothead until she knows she has to pull it together for the sake of her mother, whose body will literally grow hot when she’s angry. Sweetu laughs when everyone gets upset over auspiciousness, a term used nearly constantly at Indian weddings. The accents here also pronounce the word as “aus-piss-ee-ous,” fragmented and somehow even more dramatic. The wedding date? Must be *aus-piss-ee-ous*. The pairing itself? Must consult the stars and ensure it is an *aus-piss-ee-ous* union. The placement of napkins, the volume of food circulated, the darkness of the bride’s henna? Let us all be sure this is the most *aus-piss-ee-ous* of *aus-piss-ee-ous* days. No one, English-speaking or not, knows what this fucking word means, but it is important that we observe it. ●

# I Never Talk About It

VÉRONIQUE CÔTÉ & STEVE GAGNON

*From I Never Talk About It, translated from French by thirty-seven different translators, one for each short story in the collection. Published by QC Fiction in 2017. Véronique Côté is an actress, director and author, and her play Tout ce qui tombe was a finalist for the Governor General’s Award in 2013. Steve Gagnon is an actor, director and author, and his play La montagne rouge (SANG) was a finalist for the Governor General’s Award in 2011.*

## TRACTOR

Translated by Kathryn Gabinet-Kroo

I took my first trip to Europe five years ago. I was with my then-girlfriend; we started in Paris and followed almost the entire length of the coast, through Bordeaux, Biarritz and Arcachon until we reached the Pyrenees where we saw magnificent landscapes... haunted landscapes. Magnificent landscapes, but they were haunted and conspired against us.

We were camping and at first glance we looked pretty outdoorsy, but we were only camping because it was a whole lot cheaper, and it turned out to be more complicated than anything else and an even bigger pain in the ass since we had to schlep our tent around, and it was way too heavy, putting it up, taking it down, in short, we’ll never do that again, but in any case, we were camping.

One morning we got up, we’d planned to climb the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, so we got up early, really psyched for it, and the tent got disgustingly hot in the morning anyway, so we left.

When we got there, we found out it was a fairly touristy place, but once we got further away, we discovered gorgeous scenery, it felt like we were in a movie, like we were in *Lord of the Rings* (minus the whole medieval thing). We were on sort of a hill with a really adorable river at the bottom of it. The greenery and the grass were beautiful, there were sheep off in the distance,

everything was perfect. The only thing was that there was some kind of pony or whatever it was, but there was some kind of repulsive little horse and it had an erection and it kept walking around us. With an ERECTION! And another little detail, there was a big tractor doing who knows what, but it came to pick up some stuff not far from where we were, disappeared into the mountains and then came toward us to collect more stuff, disappeared again... like that, ad infinitum, like a ghost.

In fact, I think it was a ghost tractor that still haunts the Pyrenees to this day. But none of that kept us from lying down, my girlfriend and me, beside the river, from lying down more or less away from prying eyes, but in any case there weren’t too many eyes around to see us and we were carried away by some sort of magic, lightheartedness, calm adrenaline; we were carried away by some crazy romanticism, we were deliciously detached from “whether or not this is suitable behaviour” and we made love. We TRIED to make love. This story happened in two parts. In the first, we kissed, touched each other, took off some of our clothes, I tried to penetrate her, the tractor arrived, I pulled out, we both lay on our backs, side by side, platonically, so that the tractor would think that nothing more was going on other than two lovers stretching out in the grass, the tractor went away, we started again, we kissed a bit, I tried again to penetrate her... this

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A DESIGNER WHO WANTS YOU TO DRESS LIKE KATY PERRY: He has achieved this substantial global success with a design aesthetic that favors cartoon characters, retina-searing colors, garish decorations and the sense of humor of a precocious kindergartner. COOL AND CLASSIC WITH A TWIST: The small downstairs living space retains that airy



A modern version of the *Tale of Genji* in snow scenes. By Toyokuni Utagawa, 1853. From the Library of Congress's collection of more than 2,500 woodcut prints. Many of the prints are of a style called "Ukiyo-e," or "pictures of the floating (or sorrowful) world," from the Edo period (1600–1868), and were made in the city of Edo, now known as Tokyo.

happened three or four times. That was the first part. In the second part, later, when I finally managed to stay inside her for a little longer, some kids, kids who came from I have absolutely no idea where, maybe they were children born of nature or the mountains, elves or angels, because I have no goddamn idea where they came from, but kids most definitely showed up. We didn't know they were there at first, but we became aware of them pretty quickly since they were throwing rocks at us, rocks that were much too little to cause any sort of landslide—though they were still highly unpleasant when they landed on our faces and bums—so anyway, these kids came and threw rocks at us. I was in the Pyrenees with my girlfriend, I was magically penetrating her out in nature, it was good, there was a ghost tractor but we ignored it, and kids came and threw rocks at our asses and faces, I was in the Pyrenees, my shorts on the ground, half-erect and there

I was, running through the grass. I ran through nature with my underpants around my ankles, running after those fucking little brats, and I heard them laugh, and at that precise moment, I swear, it was at that very moment that the pollen gave me an unbearable allergy attack, I was helpless as a newborn babe and just as naked, I was out of breath and butt-naked, I must have looked even more ridiculous than the pony with his erection, even more vulgar than the pony with his erection, and the pollen chose that very moment to give me shit, nature suddenly took on a whole new meaning for me, pulled the damn rug right out from under me. I turned back toward my girlfriend, who was traumatized, she wasn't angry or embarrassed, she didn't think it was particularly funny, she was completely traumatized, her happy-go-luckiness had taken a beating, I went back to my girlfriend, red as a beet, ah-chooing non-stop,

we put our clothes back on, we left and returned to the tourist area, I had no desire to hike up the Pic du Midi de Bigorre but my girlfriend did, so we had a fight and finally went up in some kind of elevator, we felt ridiculous because it cost us 35 euros to go up the Pic du Midi de Bigorre in an ELEVATOR, and once we got to the top, we took about thirty pictures and then went back down.

For the past five years, I've had horrible allergies that start in May and only stop in September, I take Aerius every day, four months a year, I'm 22 and I've already taken 600 Aerius tablets in my lifetime and I hold the bratty little imps 100% responsible for this, I hold those kids wholly responsible for my allergies and also for the fact that sex with my girlfriend was never the same again. As if... I don't know. I don't know if you could call it a trauma, that's probably an overstatement, but I never again felt her completely let herself go when we made love.

quality due to Helps's strategic use of a black-and-white palette, an aesthetic she first began to appreciate through her love of old Hollywood black-and-white films. AESTHETIC OF EVERYDAY LIFE: JUNYA SUZUKI SHOWS US WHY THE JAPANESE PREFER THE MUNDANE: Since ancient times, the Japanese have had a unique aesthetic referred to as

## ORANGE

Translated by Dmitri Nasrallah

Every summer, you could say I have something like a crisis of faith, I feel down, I feel guilty. Every summer I get my act together and tell myself that I'm a grown-up, someone who's self-aware, like the ones I see every week at the market. I find it deeply ennobling to go there, I feel it's even more deeply ennobling to buy my fruits and vegetables from their stands and to go there all the time, to the market, hunting for fresh produce, grown here. I find it's a very inspiring place, in the end I find that food-radio personality Francis Reddy has a point: it's true that it makes us feel healthier, makes us feel closer to real life's truths. At the start of every summer, I tell myself that this will be good for me, going to the market, that it's right at the corner anyways, but finally, out of habit, I go only once or twice and that's it.

Except for this year.

It's only May, it's not even theoretically summer, but I've already gone a dozen times.

Because. Because there's a shop girl at the fruit kiosk by the entrance.

The fruit "toucher" at the entrance.

The shop girl whom I asked the other day, "Is orange season coming up soon?" And who answered me with a smile, "No, orange season is in the winter." I said, "Too bad." She replied, "Yes, it's too bad." And I said, eyeing those oranges that were just under her breasts, right before her navel, "Does that mean that these ones here are no good?" I could have said something else. I could have said something more intelligent instead of lobbing a dumb question posturing as an unfunny joke.

Being around her makes me want to eat all her fruit. The whole lot. I don't know if there's such a thing as eating too much fruit, but in any case,

in my case, for the past month I've really been eating too much, I've been eating some every day and there are days when I throw some away because I stop by the market every two or three days and I haven't even come close to eating all the fruit I buy.

I don't know how to talk to girls. It was obvious before. Now it's crystal clear. All told, I'm pretty astonished by my inability to say anything intelligent or worthwhile to the pretty fruit vendor.

She looks like someone sculpted her from marzipan. I can't say that to her.

She looks like someone who smiles a lot and who's generally in a good mood most mornings. Maybe she even wakes up that way because she's been laughing in her dreams, maybe her waking up every morning is the result of an uncontrollable burst of dream-laughter. That's not something I can seriously ask her either. "Do you laugh in your sleep?" After a month of small talk about seasonal fruits, she finds me pretty strange.

I can't ask her if she has a boyfriend either. I don't get the impression that she does. In any case, I don't really care. I think if she does have a boyfriend, then she's not with the right guy.

I don't know where to begin. What's between, "Hello, how much are the tomatoes?" and "Hello, I think you're beautiful. I think you're as beautiful as Île d'Orléans. I think your beauty is... as unbridled as a river flowing in springtime"?

I don't know what I could say to her.

And I'm pressuring myself more and more, because now she thinks I'm really into fruit. It's beginning to feel like there's no way out. And then, on top of that, another thing to keep in mind is that I'm worried she's beginning to think I'm gay because, realistically, even if it must be cute, it's not exactly virile for a twenty-five-year-old guy to stop in and talk raspberries and tomatoes almost every day, and to

buy something every time under the pretext that I cook a lot, that I make the best turnovers, the best jams, the best tomato and parmesan tarts, that I can't wait for the small cucumbers to be in season so I can make my own dill pickles. None of which is true, for the record. I make no jam, I wouldn't know where to begin with jams, much less a tomato tart. I mean, dill pickles? Come on!

All told, what would've been much more virile would be to go, tomorrow, to see my lovely little gardener and to tell her, once and for all, that I've fallen for her, I think. But without the "I think" because that wouldn't sound too convincing and it would mute the overall desired effect. Is it possible to love someone in life if all they've ever done is smile and sell you fruit? Someone who just answers all your produce-related questions, who has only taken the time to laugh at every single one of your flat jokes, who has just chosen the best-looking strawberries for you? The answer is yes. I am proof that you can say whatever you want to someone for a disproportionate span of time, just so you don't have to say, "I love you." I am proof that we can jabber on endlessly about matters out of our reach just to keep from kissing the girl who gives you back your change. Being in love is overrated. When you think about it and you're not in love, it's not hard to feel like it will solve all your problems, that you'll at last find a way to live, a path to follow, that you'll have some control over your life and fate, that once you love, everything will make sense, fall into place, but no, it's more difficult than that. That's what Francis Reddy should talk about on his radio show, not all the different flavours of peppers. Because it doesn't help anyone to talk about peppers, about maple syrup or zucchinis or precious

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"wabi-sabi". EMO RAPPER LIL PEEP EMBODIES SADBOI AESTHETIC IN NEW ALBUM: Listening to his music, it is not hard to understand that the New York rapper focuses on the melancholy and dramatic. CL3'S TEA HOUSE IN CHINA USES WOOD, BAMBOO AND MARBLE TO REFLECT ON THE ZEN AESTHETIC: the Hong Kong based firm CL3



strawberries. Fuck. Next time I go to the market, I won't buy any fruit, and I'll tell her I love her. I think.

## SNOT

Translated by Jessica Moore

I eat my snot. Because—well, just because. Because it's salty. And I like that. Salty things. Because I like the texture. Because it's free and I like free stuff. Because I'm high-strung and it channels my stress. Because I kinda like having a bit on my fingers.

Because I can't help it. When I feel a booger inside my nose, I can't think about anything else.

Because yeah, okay, you might call it a mental illness, but that's just how it is and anyway it's not that big of a deal.

Because in any case, there are worse things out there. I mean—there are people who rape children because they can't help it.

My thing doesn't hurt anyone.

Because it's natural. Every other animal does it and it doesn't hurt them.

Because, and I'd be willing to spend hours arguing this point, I'm convinced it's full of vitamins.

Because if it isn't full of vitamins, it must at least be full of minerals.

Because my body is my body and I'm not grossed out by it. (I might not go so far as to eat my turds, but whatever. That's not the same thing anyways.)

I'd never eat someone else's snot, though.

Because it doesn't make you gain a single pound. I may eat my snot but there are people out there who have seriously fat asses. I'd rather eat my snot than be obese.

Because I'm sure that 76% of the population does it but won't admit it.

Because it doesn't make me any more of a chump than the 1.5 million people in the world who watch *Deal or No Deal*.

Because in my opinion it's damn fine proof that we live in a free country.

Because some people scarf down speed, sperm, scotch, McDonald's, or kiss their cats, dogs, or ferrets on the mouth.

Damnit, because I see people in public washrooms who shit and then leave without washing their hands.

I eat my snot unconsciously, it's a vice, I know, and I could make an effort to correct it, but then I tell myself that if some people have such an anger problem they beat their wives or children and if some people are so cheap they slip sandwiches into their purses at a season opening at the Trident theatre, if some people are such liars they make everyone believe for thirty years that they've written a book and it's coming out soon, if some people are so selfish they let their parents die in old age homes, and if there are so many alcoholics, compulsive gamblers and junkie prostitutes who wreck their own lives and the lives of others, then I don't see why I'm the one who has to worry about the fact that I eat my snot! Yeah, ok, I eat my snot, but for fuck's sake I'm not the only one who should have to make an effort

to be civilized and try and seem like I'm sane and well-adjusted. I'm not the only one who should have to make an effort to seem normal. Christ. We're up to our ears in mental cases who don't have a clue how to live and I'm the one who gets stared at when I eat my snot.

I may eat my snot, but at least I'm not in the army.

I don't have a big-ass truck spewing pollution just for fun.

I don't have kids by accident.

I don't give other people AIDS just because I don't give a shit.

I don't drive drunk.

I don't tell everyone to fuck off when I'm drunk.

I don't knife anyone in the doorway of the bar.

I don't do illegal deals.

I never put pills into anyone's glass of beer.

All I do is sit sometimes on a park bench or at home quietly in front of the TV—I just sit down quietly now and then and eat my snot.

Fuck!

Seriously. Does that really bother anyone?! 🍆

## VANITY

*From the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia's list of rejected vanity plates. Published by taxpayer.com on December 9, 2013. Rejected plates were deemed to be offensive, suggestive, not in good taste, political, religious, too long, or related to alcohol, drugs or speeding/racing.*

DR.MEAT

2ND SUN

BADASS

G WHIZZ

SIK DUK

NUDZ 4U

-JUNK-

#1ELF

STOLEN

NORSPCT

ICBC

RIP ODB

BONE-YD

CUTI333

WUTANG

TALLYHO

MOVEOVR

GUN-NUT

LMAO :)

NEVERL8

CARGASM

TIT TAT

DIABLO

PEWPEW

architects has utilized a quite simple style and zen aesthetic to bring a tranquil and free space to the bustling city. DEFINING SIDES IN A SPLIT AESTHETIC: It is difficult to imagine a more effective champion of the music of Richard Wagner than WASO's principal conductor Asher Fisch. SINGAPORE DOCTOR DIES IN BALI DIVING ACCIDENT: According



Teahouse at Koishikawa the morning after a snowfall. By Hokusai Katsushika, circa 1890. Library of Congress.

## Ordering the Bus

EAMON MCGRATH

*From Berlin-Warszawa Express. Published by ECW Press in 2017. McGrath is a musician and writer with more than three hundred written and recorded songs. He lives in Toronto.*

As you go further eastward from Alexander Platz, the front line of communism, you plunge deeper and deeper into a web of cultural, political, and economic recovery, and into Poland. I had taken the Berlin-Warszawa Express to Warsaw once before, but had never made my way down into the southeastern region of Silesia, the Polish heartland, its biggest cities Wrocław and Katowice.

The first thing you notice is how grey the skies get the moment you cross the border. Immediately things go dark. Anything east of Berlin is a

thousand times cheaper than anything west of it, and a different rhythm—a fascinating rhythm—descends over the tracks as you go further east. So I’d always promised myself that I’d be heading back to that grey and overcast Polish sky, with all those broken windows in former factories that line the railroad and its rickety trains.

When Wilfred and I first arrived in Katowice following our tumultuous weekend in Berlin, we were taken to about four or five bars in the town square that were free for us as performers, and we were introduced to

everyone who worked there.

“Later on,” someone said, “we will have to drink some Polish vodka.”

The promoter took us to the venue, a newly open and yet-unnamed art space in the middle of town, down the road from the cathedral. We sound-checked, had a drink, and planned our trip to Vienna the following day. After finishing our encore with the same run of Neil Young covers that had wound us all up in a frenzy in Chemnitz a few nights before, Wilfred and I dropped the bags off at the hotel room and went off in search of the real Katowice.

One thing you learn very quickly about drinking when you’re on the road is that there are conversations you can have with people only at one in the morning, conversations that you would never have at noon.

These conversations tap you right into the heart of a place. One

to her colleague Alicia Lau, Dr Wong worked as an aesthetic doctor in a clinic at Novena Medical Centre. ALL IPHONE X COLORS WILL HAVE BLACK BEZELS TO ENSURE ‘BETTER AESTHETIC DESIGN’: This will ensure “better aesthetic design,” hiding the front-facing camera sensors on the iPhone X’s notch, which would otherwise stand out as

interaction with a person who lives there can give you a glimpse into the nature of the stories of everyone's lives. Drunken, hazy, one-in-the-morning talk about art, politics, and culture transforms you from a patron of the bar to an angel of history, sacrificing the cells of your brain for a piece of someone's honest and uninhibited story.

Most often, you strike out, and all you get for trying is a pounding headache in the morning. But sometimes the alluring siren that is alcohol provides you with a golden experience, and it's the act of looking for gold that propels you deeper and deeper into the soothing darkness of the night.

With this in mind, as we were taken to a bar across the road from the venue, we were instructed by our Polish guide to "order the bus."

I told the bartender, across a few different language barriers, that that was what I wanted, and he went off to the back of the bar to retrieve the top piece from a tall stack of piled cardboard. I could feel a confused stare forming on my face, and as he unfolded the piece of cardboard to reveal five small holes, each about the width of a shot glass, I started to get an idea of what I was in for.

As he poured the five shots of vodka that I would be cheered on into drinking in under five minutes, I saw the outline of a school bus on the outside of the cardboard piece. He dropped the shot glasses full of vodka into the holes, and they sat there, motionless, waiting for me to drink them, like five tiny children on their way to class.

"Holy fuck," I said to myself, not sure if I'd said it aloud. I realized that I'd been drinking to the point of complete blackout intoxication for about six or seven nights straight, so by now there were holes the size of craters forming in my mind.

"And remember," someone said from

## HELLO NAZI!

George D. Drury

*Published in the mid-seventies in 3cent Pulp.*

Hello Nazi!	Some Like It Nazi
Nazi And Harriet	The Nazi Game
Uncle Tom's Nazi	The Nazi Bunch
Nazis Say The Darndest Things	One Of Our Nazis Is Missing
Edge Of Nazi	Citizen Nazi
Planet Of The Nazis	Good Neighbor Nazi
Nazi For A Day	Birth Of A Nazi
Leave It To Nazi	77 Sunset Nazi
Mr. Nazi Goes To Washington	I Remember Nazi
I Married A Nazi	Life With Nazi
Thanks For The Nazi	A Taste Of Nazi
Sorry, Wrong Nazi	Jonathan Livingstone Nazi 🍷

somewhere around me, "when you order the bus, *you* have to drink it all."

Trying to fight off the hallucinations that come with holding off drinking during such a bender, the liquor pouring out of the pores in my pale skin, eyes probably yellow, beard long, voice broken, forehead damp, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but I drank them all and felt all those symptoms vanish as the last shot hit my bloodstream.

I imagined the vodka shots having little arms and book bags, yelling Polish children's songs, and cheering whenever the bus bounced. I imagined my mouth and throat and stomach as being the dark black cloud of adulthood that was going to instantly swallow all of that up, and I imagined the blackout that came after slamming the bus's five shots of vodka in under three minutes as being the death of an old, suffering man. From the cradle to the grave, all life, I imagined, came down to that dying second of intoxication and the darkness that followed.

I started to become incredibly animated, like I was brought back to life. They brought us some great

traditional Polish food and I started hugging and kissing everybody, the roof of my mouth tasting of boiled potatoes, beef tatarski, pickled herring, and lots of vodka. I gripped the glass of beer tightly and then things are really hazy after that. I'm sure there was some kind of deep conversation that occurred, but I'll never remember who it was with.

A faint green fog descended on the town square and I stumbled out the door of the bar and was met by the spire of a massive cathedral rising up over the haze, its bells ringing low. Wilfred shouted out at me and there was a hum of barroom laughter echoing off the brickwork of the road and buildings, and I fell down onto my knees, my guitar case smashing on the stones.

Morning came with the familiar feeling of weight. All the symptoms that the vodka had cured came rushing back to me once it had left my body. It's like all your thoughts are pained and clogged, and goop flows through your existence—the kind of viscous, molasses hangover where everything is slow. Then we got on the train and we went to Austria. 🍷

little black dots on a white bezel. SKB ARCHITECTS IMBUES WASHINGTON RESIDENCE WITH ART GALLERY AESTHETIC: Inside, the architects sought to create a gallery-like aesthetic, with white walls accommodating the owners' art collection. THE LATEST IN SCAR RESEARCH: Dr. Vicari, who is a strong proponent of laser for aesthetic procedures, is

# Whereas

LAYLI LONG SOLDIER

*From Whereas. Published by Greywolf Press in 2017. Long Soldier is a recipient of a Lannan Literary Fellowship, a Native Arts and Cultures Foundation National Artist Fellowship and a Whiting Award. She lives in Santa Fe, NM.*

WHEREAS a string-bean blue-eyed man leans back into a swig of beer work-weary lips at the dark bottle keeping cool in short sleeves and khakis he enters the discussion;

Whereas his wrist loose at the bottleneck he comes across as candid “Well, at least there was an Apology, that’s all I can say” he offers to the circle each of them scholarly;

Whereas under starlight the fireflies wink across east coast grass I sit there painful in my silence glued to a bench in the midst of the American casual;

Whereas a subtle electricity in that low purple light I felt their eyes on my face gauging a reaction and someone’s discomfort leaks out in a well-stated “Hmmm”;

Whereas like a bird darting from an oncoming semi my mind races to the Apology’s assertion: “While the establishment of permanent European settlements in North America did stir conflict with nearby Indian tribes, peaceful and mutually beneficial interactions also took place”;

Whereas I cross my arms and raise a curled hand to my mouth as if thinking as if taking it in I allow a static quiet then choose to stand up excusing myself I leave them to unease;

Whereas I drive down the road replaying the get-together how a man and his beer bottle stated their piece and I reel at what I could have said or done better;

Whereas I could’ve but didn’t broach the subject of “genocide” the absence of this term from the Apology and its rephrasing as “conflict” for example;

Whereas since the moment had passed I accept what’s done and the knife of my conscience slices with bone-clean self-honesty;

Whereas in a stirred conflict between settlers and an Indian that night in a circle;

Whereas I struggle to confess that I didn’t want to explain anything;

Whereas truthfully I wished most to kick the legs of that man’s chair out from under him;

Whereas to watch him fall backward legs flailing beer stench across his chest;

Whereas I pictured it happening in cinematic slow-motion delightful;

Whereas the curled hand I raised to my mouth was a sign of indecision;

Whereas I could’ve done it but I didn’t;

Whereas I can admit this also took place, yes, at least; 🍷

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not surprised by the study results. THIS CALCULATOR IS NERDY AND AESTHETIC: Look at graphing calculators for example. They still embody an aesthetic from the 80s and 90s, and not in a good way. LADY GAGA’S HAIR INSPIRES HER ENTIRE AESTHETIC: Lady Gaga’s hair inspires her entire aesthetic when she’s on tour as it forms the base for

# Memoirs of a Really Good Brown Girl

MARILYN DUMONT

*From A Really Good Brown Girl: Brick Books Classics 4. Published by Brick Books in 2015. Dumont is the award-winning author of four poetry collections and has been writer-in-residence at numerous libraries and universities across Canada. She lives in Edmonton.*

*You are not good enough, not good enough, obviously not good enough. The chorus is never loud or conspicuous, just there.*

Carefully dressed, hair combed like I am going to the doctor, I follow my older sister, we take the shortcut by the creek, through the poplar and cottonwood trees, along sidewalks, past the pool hall, hotel, variety store, the United Church, over the bridge, along streets until we reach the school pavement. It is at this point that I sense my sister's uneasiness; no obvious signs, just her silence, she is holding my hand like she holds her breath, she has changed subtly since we left home. We enter a set of doors which resemble more a piece of machinery than a doorway, with metal handles, long glass windows and iron grates on the floor, the halls are long and white, our feet echo as we walk. I feel as though I've been wrapped in a box, a shoebox where the walls are long and manila gloss, it smells of paper and glue, there are shuffling noises I've never heard before and kids in the rooms we pass by. We enter a room from what seems like the back door, rows of small tables lined up like variety cereal boxes, other small faces look back vacant and scared next to the teacher's swelling smile. (I have learned that when whites smile that fathomless smile it's best to be wary). I am handed over to the teacher. Later I will reflect upon this exchange between my older sister and the teacher as the changing of the

guard, from big sister to teacher, and before that, when I was even younger, from mother to big sister.

This is my first day of school and I stand alone; I look on. Most of the kids know what to do, like they've all been here before, like the teacher is a friend of the family. I am a foreigner, I stay in my seat, frozen, afraid to move, afraid to make a mistake, afraid to speak, they talk differently than I do, I don't sound the way they do, but I don't know how to sound any different, so I don't talk, don't volunteer answers to questions the teacher asks. I become invisible.

I don't glisten with presence, confidence, glisten with the holiness of Ste. Anne whose statue I see every year at the pilgrimage, her skin translucent, as if the Holy Ghost is a light and it shines out through her fluorescent skin, as if a sinless life makes your skin a receptacle of light.

The other kids have porcelain skin like Ste. Anne too, but unlike her, they have little blond hairs growing out of small freckles on their arms, like the kind of freckles that are perfectly placed on the noses of the dolls I got each Christmas. In fact, the girls in my class look like my dolls: bumpy curls, geometric faces, crepe-paper dresses, white legs and patent shoes.

My knees are scarred, have dirt ground in them from crawling under fences, climbing trees, riding skid horses and jumping from sawdust piles. I remember once, when I was a flower girl for my brother's wedding, I was taken home to the

city by my brother's white fiancée and she "scrubbed the hell out of me." All other events that took place on that visit are diminished by the bathtub staging, no other event was given as much time or attention by her. I was fed and watered like a lamb for slaughter. I was lathered, scrubbed, shampooed, exfoliated, medicated, pedicured, manicured, rubbed down and moisturized. When it was over, I felt that every part of my body had been hounded of dirt and sin and that now I, like Ste. Anne, had become a receptacle of light.

My skin always gave me away. In grade one, I had started to forget where I was when a group of us stood around the sink at the back of the class washing up after painting and a little white girl stared at the colour of my arms and exclaimed, "Are you ever brown!" I wanted to pull my short sleeves down to my wrists and pretend that I hadn't heard her, but she persisted, "Are you Indian?" I wondered why she had chosen this ripe time to ask me and if this was the first she'd noticed.

How could I respond? If I said yes, she'd reject me: worse, she might tell the other kids my secret and then they'd laugh and shun me. If I said no, I'd be lying, and when they found out I was lying, they'd shun me.

I said "No," and walked away.

I just watched and followed; I was good at that, good at watching and following. It was what I did best, I learned quickly by watching. (Some learning theories say that native kids learn best by watching, because they're more visual. I always knew that I learned by watching to survive in two worlds and in a white classroom.) I only needed to be shown something once and I remembered it, I remembered it in my fibre.

I lived a dual life; I had white friends and I had Indian friends and the two

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which make-up artist, Sarah Tanno, expands on. CHICAGO LIBRARIAN CAPTURES PUNK AESTHETIC, LATINO CULTURE IN NEW KIDS' BOOK: Her punk aesthetic doesn't line up with her school dress code and the popular kids aren't sure what to make of her. BRIDE'S PARENT THINKS BRIDESMAID'S LIMP WILL RUIN WEDDING'S 'AESTHETIC':

never mixed and that was normal. I lived on a street with white kids, so they were my friends after school. During school I played with the Indian kids. These were kids from the other Indian families who were close friends with my parents. At school my Indian friends and I would play quite comfortably in our own group, like the white kids did in theirs.

I am looking at a school picture, grade five, I am smiling easily. My hair is shoulder length, curled, a pageboy, I am wearing a royal blue dress. I look poised, settled, like I belong. I won an award that year for most improved student. I learned to follow really well.

I am in a university classroom, an English professor corrects my spoken English in front of the class. I say, “really good.” He says, “You mean, really well, don’t you?” I glare at him and say emphatically, “No, I mean really good.”

## Tiny Prince

ROBERT EVERETT-GREEN

*From In a Wide Country. Published by Cormorant Books in 2017. Everett-Green’s short fiction has won a silver National Magazine Award and his short non-fiction appears regularly in the Globe and Mail. He lives in Montreal.*

“Oh crap. Jasper, look at this thing.” Corinne held out the two pieces of the makeup compact that had come apart in her hands. She was sitting at her mirrored vanity in the semi-furnished flat we rented in Winnipeg, in the spring of 1960.

I peered at the coral-coloured plastic, and the wire spring. “The hinge is busted.”

“It’s almost brand new!” She shook the pieces at the vanity glass in both fists, with a fierce look on her face, as if she were angry with herself and not the manufacturer. Then she threw the mirrored part on the carpet. “I can still use the makeup,” she said. “Put that in the Drawer of Shame.”

I picked up the mirror and cupped it in my palm. I liked the way my mother’s compacts felt in the hand, the way they sprang open, the muffled click they made when they closed. It had taken many slaps from her to convince me not to flip one open and shut like a castanet, not to fondle the soft pad or poke the cake of skin-coloured makeup with my dirty fingernail.

I carried the mirror to the kitchen, where we reserved a drawer for things that were ugly or disappointing: an unflattering photo, a broken toy, or a dress pattern that hadn’t worked out. The Drawer of Shame also held things Corinne disliked on sight, which she sometimes swiped to include in the collection. I had mixed feelings about putting the mirror portion of the compact in there, but at least I would see it again when we sorted the drawer, as we sometimes did, discarding items that no longer meant anything.

I returned to Corinne’s room, where she was fastening her hair back with a big tortoise-shell clip. She inspected her reflection with a cool, appraising eye, as if the face there belonged to someone else, then began brushing things onto her skin.

I often lurked around when Corinne got ready for work, watching her in the mirror or drawing pictures, usually of warriors bristling with armour and ready for battle. The deliberate rhythm of her makeup ritual had a calming effect on both of us. It was a good time for talking, and especially for telling her anything bad.



Control Room by Michael Love. From the photographic series *The Diefenbunker*. Love is a photographer whose work has been published in *Next Level*, *Prefix Photo* and *Blackflash* magazines. He lives in Vancouver.

Weddings are a stressful business, especially when people feel the need to offer unwanted opinions on everything from the flavour of the cake to the arrangement of the flowers.

ROCK YOUR KAWAII AESTHETIC THIS HALLOWEEN WITH THE ALPACA LOOK: If you’re looking for the cutest and cuddliest Halloween costume, stop your search.

"I spilled Coke on the carpet," I said. Corinne stroked a soft brush against the closed lid of one eye, as if trying to smooth away an invisible mark.

"It's not our carpet," she said absently to the mirror. "Throw a rag on it." She dabbed the brush on the narrow cake of eyeshadow, and leaned in to do the other eye.

"They're your shoes," I said. "On the carpet. Where the Coke spilled."

Something between a sigh and a grunt issued from her throat. The brush continued its overlapping strokes, from the eye's inner corner to the edge of the brow bone. "So wet a rag," she said slowly, "and wipe them off." Her lips moved like those of a person dropping off to sleep. "Little mucker."

The mineral-lipped bathtub spout coughed cold water onto the rag. I wiped the patent leather pumps that lay on the carpet outside the bathroom, and pushed the rag down the slope of the inner sole, where the Coke was already drying into a sticky lacquer. The steep arch of those gleaming high heels was permanently fascinating to me, as was the creamy, popcorn-scented sole, from which her heel had ground away the silver script of the maker's name.

I left the rag on the carpet and returned to the drawing I had started on the floor next to her chair.

"There's nothing to do," I said.

"You're doing something."

"I'm sick of drawing. Tell me something."

With a finer brush, Corinne applied a lighter tone to the crease above the eyelid. "Tell you something," she murmured at the glass. "Like a story, you mean." She licked her finger and smoothed the eyeshadow tones together, then drew in the eyebrow, thicker, longer and more arched than it really was.

"Once there was a boy who was very small," she said. "He was no bigger



Office by Michael Love. From the photographic series *The Diefenbunker*.

than his father's nose. He never grew, no matter what he ate. The farmer took him to the fields on the brim of his cap. But a giant came and snatched the boy away, and carried him off to his castle."

She leaned in and drew the other eyebrow, slowly and silently. She took so long about it that I almost thought she had played a trick on me and ended the story with the kidnapping.

"The giant's wife fed the boy from her own breast," she said. "He grew and grew until he was a giant himself. He ran away back to his parents, who were frightened to see a giant coming through the forest. He did all his father's work, and brought his mother cartloads of flowers in his arms. But he was so big, he emptied the larder in two bites. When he slept, his body filled the house. His parents went hungry and had to sleep outside. My shoes had better not be sticky."

"They're not," I said, but scampered back and again pushed the damp rag

down to the point of the toe.

"When the boy woke up, his parents were gone," Corinne said. "He caught up with them as they ran across a bridge. He stepped in the water to stop them, and shrank back to his tiny size. He floated away, and was swallowed by a fish."

She spat on the black cake of her mascara, made a few quick circles on it with the brush, then dragged the bristles the length of her eyelashes, several times. I started another warrior.

"The king's fisherman caught the fish and brought it to the palace," she said. "When they cut it open, the boy popped out. The king was so amazed, he adopted him and made him a prince. The boy was happy, but told the king he would be happier still if he could see his aunt and uncle. The king sent a golden coach with six white horses to find them, without knowing they were the parents. I thought you were sick of drawing."

"I'm doing the prince," I lied.



Amerikakoku. By Yoshitora Utagawa, 1865. Japanese triptych print shows view in America of a crowd gathering to watch a balloon ascension. Library of Congress.

Corinne took a red makeup pencil and drew the outline of her lips. The mouth she drew was better than her own, bigger and more shapely. Not for the first time, I thought of how wonderful life would be if I could draw a better me.

“The coach brought the parents to the castle,” she said, her drawing completed, the lips still pale between the lines. “When they saw the tiny prince on his throne, they bowed down low. He touched them on the shoulder, and said ‘Arise! I am your son.’ ‘Our son is drowned,’ said the father, and began to cry. Each tear became a diamond as it fell.”

Corinne wound her lipstick up from its cylinder, and daubed on the colour.

“The prince gathered up the diamonds and gave them to his mother,” she said. “When they touched her skin, they became tears again. She knew he was her son after all.”

She took a paper tissue and pressed it between her lips, and pulled the comb from her hair. Something about the tone of her last words told me the story was finished.

“Was the king angry?” I said. “Did

the parents get to stay in the castle?”

“How should I know? They were happy, that’s all. When people are happy, the story’s over. Now scoot so I can do my hair.”

She brushed her hair, briskly as she usually did, tearing at it from the roots. I went out and closed the door against the coming clouds of hair-spray, which made me sneeze. I picked up the Coke bottle that still lay on the rug where I had knocked it over near the shoes, tapped the mouth of the empty bottle against one glossy toe, and said “Arise!” A few last drops rolled onto the patent leather, and shone there like black pearls.

When Corinne came out, I zipped her into her dress. She gave me a long, close hug, as she often did after making herself up. Fresh makeup almost always put her in a good mood, or at least a better one. Her heart beat through the cloth, and the sharp, sweet scents of hairspray and perfume settled around me.

“We need to go somewhere and see about a modelling job,” she said.

“Sounds boring.”

“Tough luck. We won’t be long, and we’ll go for supper with Dean right after.”

I trudged out to the car and sat so low in the passenger seat, my eyes were level with the bottom of the window. We had an old Sunbeam then, an ugly car that coughed blue smoke.

“Are you going to sulk the whole way?” Corinne said.

“Not if you tell me the rest of what happened.”

“There’s never enough for you, is there?”

We drove several blocks in silence. The green metal under the window vibrated against my cheekbone.

Corinne took a cigarette from her clasp purse, and pushed the car lighter in. “Okay,” she said. “The parents are at the castle and everyone’s happy. But the giant comes, and lays siege to get the boy back. The king goes to the castle wall and shouts, ‘We’ve got food for a month. You’ll starve first.’”

She let this scenario sink in till the lighter popped out, then lit her cigarette with the glowing coil.

selected travel influencers, it adds insult to injury and appears suddenly tasteless, over-branded and crass. INTERNATIONAL BEAUTY AND AESTHETIC MEDICINE EXHIBITION DUE IN CITY: Beauty Azerbaijan brings together industry specialists, manufacturers and distributors of cosmetics from many countries. SOLAR PANELS GET AESTHETIC



# Trans

GWEN BENAWAY

*From Passage. Published by Kegedonce Press in 2016. Benaway is a poet and recipient of the inaugural Speaker's Award for a Young Author and a Dayne Ogilvie Honour of Distinction for Emerging Queer Authors from the Writer's Trust of Canada. She lives in Toronto.*

"The giant starts throwing big stones over the castle wall," she said. "The first one crushes a dog. The second kills an ox. The third knocks a big hole in the throne room. The prince jumps on a mouse, and rides out to stop the giant."

"How could he stop him?"

"Give himself up. But he doesn't get to the giant. The mouse runs for a crack in the castle wall, and a cat pounces. You can guess what happens next."

I had seen barn cats with the mice they caught dashing through the straw. They left only the tail, and maybe the hind legs. "What about the prince?" I said.

"That's up to the cat, don't you think?"

We stopped at a light. A little girl was crossing with her mother, skipping on her skinny legs, her hand hidden in her mother's white cotton glove.

"I don't like this part of the story," I said.

The light changed, and we moved on. Corinne took another drag on her cigarette. "What if the cat's actually a witch?"

"That's not better," I said, with a tight feeling in my chest.

"Say she's a good witch. She could carry the prince over the wall, and make him a giant again. He could fight it out with the big lug."

"Just tell me the story the way it's supposed to be."

"Whatever that is," she said. "I told you that already and you didn't like it." She was getting annoyed. "Look, forget this bit. Go back to what it was. They're all at the castle. There's no giant, everyone's happy. The end."

But I couldn't go back. The boy was off his throne. The cat was after him. The ending had unravelled into something bloody left in the straw, or a fight with a giant that might be just as bad.

I would know better next time. I wouldn't ask for more, after an ending that was good enough. 🌧️

I'm like the lumberjack  
in Monty Python,  
the husky guy  
with wide shoulders,  
a heavy beard.

he wants to wear  
women's clothing,  
high heels, tights,  
hang around in bars,  
call boys "Hun."

just like me,  
on weekends in leather,  
second hand dresses  
purple wig, bad makeup—  
zero fucks, no date.

it's not enough,  
dangerous roleplay  
in tolerant clubs, 80s parties  
with strangers who laugh,  
pose for pictures.

it's the best we have,  
the lumberjack and me,  
a comedy show for straights,  
jokes for guys, snickers—  
daring to touch us.

but I like the feeling  
of being mistaken  
for a woman, the fun  
of transformation,  
my second life.

if it feels wrong,  
like cheating myself  
by not going far enough,  
if it makes me sad  
to wipe away my makeup,

at least it's funny  
to someone, my body  
stuffed into a form  
it can't quite mimic,  
my eyes luscious.

there's power  
in admitting you aren't  
the real deal, in facing  
the crowd, the indifferent boys—  
my calves tired, my face

radiant in the exhilaration  
of reaching for myself,  
in showing the truth  
of my mascara heart,  
nothing is more beautiful

than a woman who knows  
exactly what she wants  
and what I want  
is myself. 🌧️

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DESIGNS: Spurred by recent advances in technology, solar panel makers are scrambling to come up with neater and cleaner products that will overcome the aesthetic objections of home owners to traditional solar panels. 🌧️



Self-portrait. *Jim Wong-Chu (1949-2017)*

# Equal Opportunity

JIM WONG-CHU

*From Chinatown Ghosts. Published by Pulp Press in 1986. Jim Wong-Chu was a community organizer, historian, radio broadcaster and founding member of the Asian Canadian Writers Workshop and Ricepaper magazine. He lived in Vancouver. He died in July 2017.*

in early canada  
when railways were highways

each stop brought new opportunities

there was a rule

the chinese could only ride  
the last two cars  
of the trains

that is

until a train derailed  
killing all those  
in front

(the chinese erected an altar and thanked buddha)

a new rule was made

the chinese must ride  
the front two cars  
of the trains

that is

until another accident  
claimed everyone  
in the back

(the chinese erected an altar and thanked buddha)

after much debate  
common sense prevailed

the chinese are now allowed  
to sit anywhere  
on the train 🚂



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# Folk Song

STEPHEN SMITH



In the folk song, the ship is *sailing away to sea, to sea, a-sailing away to the sea*. Meanwhile, on the wharf, she—at first, we only know her as *she*—is crying out her heart *as though it were broken / tearing rags of her hair, for to send him with a token*.

Sounds painful. And yet as it turns out, the hair-pulling is really no more than a gesture, the *Grebe* has already slipped her lines and weighed out into the Gut, while on deck, at the taffrail, *I take one last look back, never to forget her / already on my way below to tell her in a letter*.

That's how it starts. For me, I don't know, it all seems kind of rushed. Who are these people, and how old? Married or just sweethearts? Where are we, in what era? What's the weather? But no, no time for that, the folksinger has his tempo to maintain, and it's a brisk one he's got going with his guitar, strumming lustily or maybe, better yet, *stormily* ahead.

*Brrrrung-da-da-dung-dung-dung-da.*

I, of course, isn't me. I hope that's clear. Is it the folksinger himself, singing out his own story? That's what you kind of want to think. Would be nice. Would be *easier*. If you look at the CD cover, too, the singer does have a maritime look about him, a nautical haircut, plus those are lobster traps in the slightly out-of-focus background, I think. When you listen to him singing, he does sound very

personally involved, as if the hawsers he talks about hauling are looped around his own heart.

*Gazing back, never to forget her / already on my way below to tell her in a letter.*

Big no-no, of course, because—do I even have to say this?—the ship hasn't even passed the harbour light and you're down writing letters? Captain Eli is a fair man, forgiving, has been in love himself, but even so, duty is duty. Unfortunately for I, it's the mate who sees him going below, Clem, a shifty bastard, a bully and a schemer, always with an eye out for taking advantage. His price for keeping quiet? An IOU that I is quick to sign—actually thanks his black-mailer, apologizes: won't happen again. Up on deck again, *hauling away, away, haul away me boys, away*, it's hard for I to believe his luck, could have been so much worse. Though of course it's just then, as *Grebe* makes open sea, that the cook comes on deck to say, *fellas, it's too rough to feed you*.

Ho boy.

Drums thunder where, before, no drums thundered. I guess they must have been there with the folksinger in the studio the whole time—obviously—but still, they come as a surprise. My guitar—the guitar of I—suggests strengthening winds. Somewhere a tin whistle begins to trill. All

hands on deck! Heave away! Even the seabirds are trying to get out of the storm's way, petrels and gannets and scaups fleeing the lowering clouds. Like those birds, Captain Eli means to outrun the storm. The *Grebe* piles on sail.

The folksinger says—sings—he sings *thems* and *thars* and *ain'ts*. It sounds okay. It doesn't sound forced. *Them lonesome clouds, over thar, be blowin'! ain't no cure for no big green ocean.*

Meaning the North Atlantic, of course. Obviously. Is anybody else interested in where, specifically, we're talking about here? The horse latitudes is my hunch, the calms of Cancer. I'm a bit of a details man, I guess, not to mention (also) a map man.

A second guitar joins in here, briefly, with what you might call a Spanish signature—suggesting, maybe, that the *Grebe* has set course for southern seas? Could just be that it sounds great, though, spanishing along.

*'Twas a witch in the wind  
And she spake with a poisonous temper  
Cap'n Eli stood up strong,  
Advised she was wrong,  
Told her, hurry back to hell, that November.  
The cook, meantime, comes back:  
Fellas, he says, it's been good to know you.*

Which seems kind of unnecessary—uncalled for. With all the hands on deck, it's lost on no one that Cookie is the only one not even to be pretending to rush around in the effort to speed the ship from danger. And as far as feeding goes, what about sandwiches? When is it *ever* too rough for sandwiches? Wouldn't a cook worth his sea salt have prepared sandwiches at the first whiff of foul weather for later distribution, maybe some trail mix and, you know, carrot sticks? You can see how the men, struggling at their work, saving Cookie's skin as much as their own, would be strongly peeved. Talk about disappointing—talk about unprofessional.

Meanwhile, back at home, she's weeping all the time. **M**She as in Her—I's sweetheart, whose name we won't know for a few more bars yet is Leslie. From the sound of it, she hasn't left the wharf since the *Grebe* disappeared over the horizon, at least not for long, maybe a few quick trips home to shower, rest up ahead of the next bout of sorrowing.

People do their best to console her though it's easy to tell, just from the sheer volume of the weeping she's doing, that now's not the time for consolations. The tears and the vodka are, in a word, voluminous. From the sounds of it, reading between the folk-song lines, the weeping sounds more like full-on wailing, and while there's nothing explicit to indicate just how distressing the sound of her torrential grief is for the people of the town to hear, we do know that there's a general concern

abroad regarding how nobody feels all that comfortable going down to the wharf now, due to the atmosphere of torment, and the ongoing rending of garments, hair, etc., not to mention every time she finishes a bottle of vodka, she smashes it on the stones of the breakwater.

*Leslie*, people say, *please! Get a grip!* Well, that's what they mutter. Mostly what the people do is keep their distance, pretend not to see, even though of course they *do* see, from their remove, overcoming their born reluctance to stare—that's the kind of town it is, very buttoned up, no big shows of emotions, it's not as though there's any bylaw against them, but there may as well be, any complaining or criticizing the people do is behind closed doors, a sob-stifling hand held to the mouth, eyes averted, there's nothing they hate in this town so much as a fuss. They worry about Leslie scaring off whatever tourists might happen by, not that many ever do, because who wants to visit a cod-smelling buttoned-up seagull-ridden smugglers' hideaway where the fishery is dying and women lie weeping by the hair-bestrewn breakwater that's littered with the glass of smashed Absolut bottles? The people don't want to go down there, so why would a tourist? Especially if that tourist happens to have seen their own love sail away to sea, and wailed, and soaked themselves in vodka, before pulling themselves together and going on vacation—only to have their sorrow hurled back in their face as they step off the bus.

Are they jealous? The people—of Leslie. They have always been a little in awe of her, her poise and beauty, her easy smile, her perfect nose, straight posture. Leslie's hair is fantastic, and her smile has a radiance beyond anything an oil painting could depict, let alone a mere folksinger. So nobody is too surprised when her grief outstrips any of the grief they've known in the town, or have felt themselves.

So, yes, there's resentment. It seems so easy for Leslie, everything does, always has. If only she didn't take everything for granted the way she does. Example: people are happy to bring her more vodka, and do, that's what neighbours are for—but a thank you would be nice. Would go such a long way. Could she at least offer to pay? A few coppers for the

### **There's a bunch that goes unsaid in the folk song: symptoms and yearnings, night fears, morning relief.**

vodka fund? As a gesture? Or you know what would be a good enough gesture—not smashing the empties on the wharf so that somebody not so awesome as Leslie could return them for the deposit.

*Brrrrung-da-da-dung, da-da-da-da-dung-da.*

There's a bunch that goes unsaid in the folk song: symptoms and yearnings, night fears, morning relief. Meals? There are next to no mentions of meals. There's a lot of downtime that doesn't find its way into folk songs generally, this one and all the rest, because if you included all the downtime, how long a folk song would that be? Also routinely left out of nautical folk songs in particular: all the St. Elmo's fire; most of the livelier descriptions of the Sargasso Sea; many anecdotes involving bioluminescence.

In I's case, the folk song has almost nothing to say about the studying he's doing for his mate's exams. Fair enough—you'd have to be a pretty confident folksinger to tarry long in a studious aside. I is a slow and open-mouthed reader, we do learn, and draws a finger across the words on the page as he goes, as though to smudge them into action. He drools, just a bit, in his concentration, and when he doesn't understand something, hums. That's about it, though, as far as mentions of I's exams: mostly his study is silent.

*The cook comes on deck to say, boyos, it's too calm to feed you.*

Back home, other than the mess on the wharf and the wailing, people talk about what they've always talked re: Leslie, i.e. how did she ever end up with I in the first place? Nothing personal, everybody in the town likes him well enough, it's with nothing but respect and fondness that they agree that Leslie was—is—never wasn't—way, way out of I's league.

Even his friends say so, if only among themselves. In the folk song, they tell Leslie that if there's anything they can do—that she needs—anything, all she has to do is call. Anytime. Dinner, say. She has to eat. What about dinner? Nothing fancy. What about Francesca's? Ever been to Francesca's? Pick you up around 8?

Not interested. All Leslie needs right at the moment is maybe a little more ice for her vodka. I's friends don't need to be told twice to leave her alone, especially after Corey, I's best friend, cuts his knee on the glass down at the wailing wharf.

*Drum solo: tkkkka-tkk-tkk, tkk-tkkkka-tkk.*

Far away, I swabs the deck he should be holystoning, a mistake that will soon land him in trouble with Clem, again. As he swabs, he starts on another letter to his love, in his head he writes his letters, never really stops, it's how he holds on to Leslie, always with the drafting and the re-drafting of letters such that, when the time comes to sit down by the light of a guttering oil lamp below, it's as if they're spilling through his arm, into his pen, out onto the paper.

Always writing letters in his head is how he gets his reputation as a dreamer, absent in his mind, probably he hit his head on a spar, or fell out of the rigging, that's what the crew decides, either way, best to yell at him if you're trying to get his attention. Clem leads the pack on this, which is to say, the yelling; because he's in charge of the mail, he's also

the one who oversees the systematic opening and reading of I's letters. He's a snooper, plain and simple: he reads the mail because he can, extracting money and keepsakes.

It's here, just about halfway through the folk song, that I gets the terrible news: Leslie is dead. What? *Dead* dead? It's a hammer to the heart, of course, or (as the folksinger puts it) a dagger forged of ice. His voice cracks and, if you listen closely, you can just hear a guitar string snapping from pure desolation. He feels like he's falling, like he's drowning, turning, burning, jabbed by a thousand needles. It's unclear, in the folk song, how the news reaches him at sea, the *Grebe* not having seen a shore (and vice versa) in months. Maybe a friendly ship passing by reports the news, or is it conveyed by a brave long-range courier puffin—or on the freelance wind? Doesn't matter. I lies in the scuppers, trying to find one breath amid the sobs, sluiced by waves, despised by gulls.

It's at about this same time that word reaches Leslie that I is lost at sea. Washed overboard, struck down by scurvy, swallowed by a black squid, died with all his shipmates in a reef-wreck? Nobody knows. Doesn't matter. Doesn't change anything. She's *stunned*. She's out with Dylan at the time, not a real estate agent so much (he says) as a manager of real estate agents. A man with a black turtleneck and a tidy beard. A good if not great kisser. As first dates go, this one's going *fine*. Dylan is a fantastic cook who's invited her over for homemade pizza followed by, after dinner, a spell in his little back garden.

Admiring Leslie's laugh-lines, he wonders whether he might be permitted to touch them. That's when she gets the stunning news about I, right then, somehow. "Take a minute," Dylan says. Things are speeding up, now: it's no more than a few minutes later that Dylan's wife gets home, Rhonda. Oh, no! Hard to say whose distress is stronger, hers or Leslie's, but they're both extremely distressed. What a scene. Dylan churches his fingers and backs away slowly down the garden. "Sorry about your feller," Rhonda tells Leslie with a grave dignity when the women are standing there by themselves.

"Don't mind if I do," says Leslie, just to be saying something.

It can be tricky, for a folksinger, to convey the passage of time. There are those who, hearing the folk song, get the wrong impression about this next part, where Leslie and Rhonda both ditch Dylan, Leslie refocuses, lets her hair grow long, takes up fencing, applies to business school, does some hospice volunteering, gets into biz school, packs up, leaves town all in the space of a week—but no, wrong. It's months that pass. She feels good, healthier: the last we hear, in the folk song, Leslie is doing just great, with new blonde highlights, and talking about maybe training for a half-marathon.

Wanders up steep streets that wind back on one another in the town he doesn't remember coming to. The houses are steep, too, lean in, loom. It's hard to see the sky. Brown rain surges in the gutters. The cobblestones slip under his boots. How did he get here? What happened to the *Grebe*? Whose very dangerous boots are these? He tries to write a letter in his head but it's no good, the words won't sit, they jump and jar, sink, dissolve. For a just a moment he can see Leslie's name though he can't speak it. Then: gone.

He sleeps in a hedge. Come the damp morning, an old tar passes by with a peg leg and a tote bag filled with library books, takes pity, helps I to his feet, shepherds him to a little seaman's tavern down by the Custom House where he can get a feed and a drink and a talking-to from the innkeep about shedding old skin, heading for new horizons. Nobody knows anything about Captain Eli or the *Grebe*, but that's okay, he takes a job sweeping up at the tavern—a sweeping-up job. It doesn't last. At first he's drinking only while he's sweeping, tiny refreshing sips of whatever's at hand, sherry, old beer, but that doesn't really work, it makes for unsatisfying sweeping *and* drinking. In what he later will describe to a biographer as an epiphany, the recipe for what the rest of us know and enjoy as a bullshot comes to him, and that's when he *really* starts to drink, plus the amount he's drinking combined with the needing to brew up new drinks means that he's not meeting any of his sweeping deadlines. It would be different if his drink were, say, vodka, but he's picky, will only drink bullshots of his own devising, it's really more of a soup than a cocktail, a boozy beef soup with a salted rim that he trusts no one but himself to concoct. The devil, he likes to say, is in the seasoning.

He's supposed to register with the police. There's some good reason for that, Lyle at the Yardarm Inn explains it to him, but due to the depths of his distress and drunkenness, I doesn't take it in, fails to report, which makes him a wanted man in these parts—a change, at least, he tells his miserable self, from all those months of no one caring whether he lived or didn't.

He thinks about hurling himself into the ocean, under a tram, from the roof of the Yardarm, doesn't, can't quite, what he does instead is he keeps drinking until he can drink no more, *drinks to forget, drunk with regret, lost everything I had, nothing good you can say when it's all gone so bad.*

He starts to wander, and the wandering takes up a lot of the night. Down at the docks, where he's well known for his very specific begging, no one can spare the allspice he's after, the celery. Can't, won't—don't. He doesn't despair. Lying in muck, listening to wind, watching sky, he feels ... not so bad.

It's while laid out by the curb that I discovers, deep down in a pocket, a review booklet for the mate's exam that once seemed so imperative. Later, testing himself with quiz

questions, he falls in love with a mermaid. That's a part of the folk song that actually would be worthwhile fleshing out, but the folksinger doesn't seem too interested, or doesn't want to slow down the momentum he's built up, though it's here, right in the middle of the verse, that the folksinger does clear his throat with a thick roar that many people find authentic even if it puts off an equal or slightly larger segment of folksong fans. What we can glean is that the mermaid, whose name is probably Erin though possibly Marian, is vivacious and soulful, a heavy smoker, a single mother, a tough bird. She doesn't back down. She's been around the block and back again, had her heart scorched, in and out of marriages, worked ten different jobs before she scraped together the money to buy the souvenir stand.

*Wow*, I thinks the first time he sees her. She has long red hair and leptoid scales, which, she explains, are highly unusual: most of her kind (she says) have the placoid scaling of sharks and rays. I smiles, *Oh, yes*, he nods, *Uh huh*. Erin is surprised. Most of the men she meets are interested in one thing only, and it's not the finer points of marine biology.

I laughs. That feels good. Different, strange, new. Thinking about laughter, he misses most of what Erin says about applying for a licence, some kind of ... snack licence? She wants to be selling snacks to the souvenir crowd and possibly ... beer and coolers? I nods. That feels almost as good as the laughing.

Trouble is brewing. This is somewhere else, miles away, on yet another foreign shore, in a little coastal town. Stavanger's cramped postal office is really no more than a corner carved out of a busy pharmacy, so it's a real fight, every day, for the postmaster to assert his right to be there, which is maybe why they call him Tiger. He's not a suspicious sort, or prone to persecution fantasies, but in the morning it's not just that the prescriptions crowd his space like armies of occupation, the pharmacists definitely trying to screw with him with all those suggestive anti-psychotic pills they leave littered around, the ointments for embarrassing rashes and sexual sores.

He does his best to carry on, but he can feel himself starting to doubt himself, does he still have what it takes to be postmastering, for example, all of these dozens of ragged letters that have come in addressed to Ms. Leslie Dafforn, not one of them sufficiently stamped, really he'd be within his rights to toss them in the stove, why hasn't he, what's wrong with him, is it possible that he's losing his groove?

He keeps them, takes them home. Let's be clear that Tiger is no saint, not one of those benevolent old codgers you sometimes run across in stories who recognize the signs of true love when they see a pile of letters and, when they have no address, undertake to see them to their destination whatever the cost. Let's say, instead, that Tiger is a practical man, a harried realist with a headache who



normally wouldn't dream of breaking the sacred postal code of never opening someone's letter except for the morning, one morning, when he strays.

He can't get out of bed, is how it starts. The pills he's carried home with I's letters are powdery blue and dry-tasting and probably downing ten of them at once isn't the wisest thing, not to mention he almost chokes and is instantly very hungry and unable to hold his point of view, which slips out of his body and rises up to the top of a high

## I lies in the scuppers, trying to find one breath amid the sobs, sluiced by waves, despised by gulls.

cupboard and looks down on himself as he reads one after another of I's messy pages telling Leslie how much she's missed, loved, the only one whose hand he wants to hold, whole paragraphs telling her about her own hair and skin.

Tiger laughs. He feels relaxed and cherished. His fear of heights is old history, forgotten. He wills himself up, high and higher, until he's spidering his fingers along the ceiling. As the chorus comes up again, it seems like he may have melded, merged, become one with I. I'm not here to explain it. All I can say is that this is the part of the folk song where some listeners lose their way and, so to say, abandon ship, complaining later of confusion and disorientation, of queasiness and even wooziness, of having to lean their heads down between their knees, as if they themselves have gulped too many dusty blue pills, suffering a reaction not unlike the one Tiger/I experiences with the lofty laughing and the relaxing and the transmogrifying. Those of them who demand a refund on the download do so with maximum irritation.

A couple of fast chord changes, knuckles rapping out a beat on soundboard: that's all it takes to get us back aboard the *Grebe*. She's lying quiet, becalmed, sun baking the lines, her shrouded sails. I'm able to guide myself down to the deck with little paddles of hands: down, down, down. Captain Eli is pleased to see me, or at least—it may be that I've been telling a funny story. It's clear—I become aware—that I've been promoted. It's *Mr. Mate* and *Lieutenant, sir*; though I don't know that I sat my exams, let alone passed them. They come to me, too, for Bible advice, the men do, that seems to me to be a role I've been cast into, where to start, they ask, what's the best part, how does it end? I tell them, and they tell me the ship's news, fill in my gaps, which are many. I make my peace with Clem, who apologizes if he was a bully. He's a different man now, has been ever since Cookie died.

This is a disappointing part of the folk song where you think, *Oh, no*. Because—well, it can't end like this, can it?

I'm starting to flag. You can hear me falter, my voice has thinned, I'm holding my words a beat too long. The guitar, too, sounds weary, uncertain. Maybe a folk song was the wrong kind of song to have started to sing. Maybe a protest song would have been better, railing—a cappella?—at everything that's wrong with folk songs. Or else the blues, the folksong blues, *oh, Lord, got 'em bad*.

A mandolin plinks, evoking rain that's starting to fall or else maybe somebody creeping on tiptoe. Is that the right verb for a mandolin playing? I don't know. I wonder. Starts to ... stroll? Plod? Canter isn't right. The notes sound lonely and cold, October ... plinking. So, so tired. *What's a body godda do to get a nighta rest in this life?* A real, non-shrubbery rest. I'm at the end of my rope, if not of the song itself. I don't know. Do I care? If I've lost the will to go on, when did I lose it? Do I want it back? Even more important, this letter I'm holding in my hand—where did that come from?

Has Leslie heard about Erin? That's a big dread that's been hanging over me that now seems to be dropping down, threatening to crush me, but no, there's nothing in the letter accusing me of cheating on her with mermaids. I think it's from Leslie—must be. It's one of those letters that never really gets around to its point, and I avoid reading between the lines as much as possible. The pages are thin, frail, and the lines of ink seem to be paling as I'm trying to read them. It's not easy to do, with a guitar in hand. The words are written big and, as best I can make out, they're good words, *fondness* is one and there's *marsh* and *marigold* and also *Godspeed*, but there's something else too in those paragraphs that feels like resistance, a fight being put up, plus it's been such a long time since I've seen a letter, I'm out of practice: my eyes water.

My heart is too full. Or ... not full enough. Either way, I can feel its whole weight in my chest, all its sharpnesses, and minute twitches and squeezings.

In the folk song, right at the end, the buttons on the sleeve of my sportcoat knock on the guitar as I play, clumsy percussion that makes me play faster. There's a dog that strays into the session here, too, you can hear it in the background shaking off its swim near one of the standing microphones. People always ask me, now, whose dog is that you can hear in the folk song, in the background, and what's his name? I don't know. I'm not a big fan of people's pets in the studio, so I'm probably not the person to ask. I have no idea why they left it in the mix.

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*Stephen Smith is a sometime contributor to McSweeney's, Canadian Geographic and the New York Times, as well as the author of the book Puckstruck: Distracted, Delighted, and Distressed by Canada's Hockey Obsession (Greystone, 2014). He lives in Toronto.*

# 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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# Alter Ego

CAROL SAWYER



The images on the following pages are from the Natalie Brettschneider Archive, a collection of photographs, films, letters, paintings and other documents pertaining to the life and practice of Natalie Brettschneider\*, an interdisciplinary artist who worked in British Columbia and throughout Canada and Europe from the 1920s to the 1970s. The archive, created and maintained by the artist Carol Sawyer, places Brettschneider within a community of women interdisciplinary artists whose work goes largely unrecognized in the annals of mid-century modernist art history and which is, by and large, under-represented in collections. The archive, in its inclusion of these artists, represents an alternative view of how the course of modernism was shaped during the early twentieth century and how that, in turn, led the way for the interdisciplinary practices of the 1960s and 1970s.

The Natalie Brettschneider Archive will be shown at the Vancouver Art Gallery from October 28, 2017, to February 4, 2018.

\*Natalie Brettschneider is a fictitious character.















All images courtesy Carol Sawyer/Natalie Brettschneider Archive. **P. 41.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Burnt Tree*, Kamloops, B.C., 1949. Archival ink jet print from original negative. Gift of Ray Perrault, 2010. These images, taken when Brettschneider visited Kamloops on two separate occasions in 1939 and 1949, were found in a box of negatives left in the attic of the former Chalmers residence in Kamloops. Local photographer Ray Perrault recognized Brettschneider from the advance publicity for her 2009 Kelowna exhibition *Natalie Brettschneider in British Columbia*, and generously contributed these previously unknown images to the archive. **P. 42, top.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Profile Mask*, c. 1952. Archival ink jet print from original negative. Acquired with the assistance of Kathleen Taylor, 2015. **P. 42.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Nancy Cunard's Hat*, Paris, c. 1925. Silver gelatin print. **P. 43, top.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Oval Matt*, Paris, c. 1920. Silver gelatin print. **P. 43.** *Natalie Brettschneider and unknown pianist*, the Banff Centre for the Arts, c. 1951. Archival ink jet print from original negative. Acquired with the assistance of Sarah Fuller, Banff Centre, 2012. **P. 44, top.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Moche Warrior*, c. 1949. Archival ink jet print from original negative. Acquired with the assistance of Kathleen Taylor, 2015. **P. 44.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *masque africain*, Paris, n.d. Silver gelatin print. In her performance *masque africain*, Brettschneider appears to reference Man Ray's 1926 photograph *Noir et Blanche*—without knowing a date, the reverse is also possible. **P. 45, top.** *Natalie Brettschneider and music ensemble at Booth family residence*, Ottawa, c. 1947. Archival ink jet print from original negative. Gift of Justin Wonnacott, 2015. Staff of the Laurentian Leadership Centre, housed in the former Booth family residence in Ottawa, recently found this snapshot lodged behind a baseboard on the sun porch. The Ottawa artist and photographer Justin Wonnacott was able to identify the subject as a Natalie Brettschneider ensemble. Carol Sawyer is grateful to Wonnacott for contributing this digitally restored performance document to the Brettschneider archive. **P. 45.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Mirror*, Paris, c. 1934. Silver gelatin print. **P. 46.** Natalie Brettschneider performs *Rapunzel and Medusa sit down to chat about war*, c. 1947. Archival ink jet print from original negative. **P. 47.** *Last Known Photograph of Natalie Brettschneider*, Vancouver, 1986. Archival ink jet print from original negative. Gift of Erika Heininger Sawyer, 2002.

# Postcard Lit

*Winners of the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Literal Literary Postcard Story Contest*

1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE

## The Foggeries

TAMMY ARMSTRONG



Many years ago, fog was manufactured in long, white foggeries like D'Eon & Sons Fog Distributers and South Shore Weather Processors, Ltd. In those days, the industry employed entire villages, and no one had to collect their tool belts and best boots and move out west.

Back then, fog came from the warm breath of shorter animals as they stood on dewy lawns and along forest edges. Taller animals, of course, created clouds. As the animals breathed out, someone would hold a metal box attached to a long stick near their mouths. The fog catcher would squeeze a handle on the stick, springing the box, and if they were lucky, trap the fog unawares. It was hard work, with long hours, as many animals only came out at night.

After the catchers delivered the fog, the women sorted the boxes. The thickness of a fog was largely determined by the animal's characteristics. Dog fog, bellowing from such a big heart, tended to be twitchy in anticipation of a good time. Hare fog was thick and thoughtful. It mixed well with finer fogs to create that can't-see-your-hand-in-front-of-your-face experience. Flash fog, the sort that skitters quickly across the road, came from chipmunks and squirrels. It was rarer and therefore more expensive to manufacture. Deer fog was one of the most difficult to collect as deer have such keen peripheral vision. Their fog was light and shadowy—much like the drifty state between waking and sleeping.

In the boom years, the foggeries exported many, many crates of fog: ground fog, hill fog, valley fog, frozen fog, sea smoke, steam fog, pond mist and specialty fogs—sent in collectible crates with gold foil wrap. These—less constant and apt to change direction quickly—were the fogs of poets, creeping in on little cat feet, encircling a country Christmas party where someone sang off-key, “Thank you, thank you, thank you, fog.” Other specialty fogs were shipped great distances. Tule fog, for instance, went to the San Joaquin Valley, where it rolled like warm wax all the way up the Carquinez Strait, shimmering and steeping San Francisco in a smoky haze. La garua fog—spun into a fine and intimate mesh—could only live in the present tense. And where the warm Agulhas and cool Benguela ocean currents collided, desert fog blanketed the succulent Karoo and the Namaqualand daisy, breaking their brief world open with blossom.

After some years, however, much of the labour at the foggeries was outsourced to countries where wages were lower. Inevitably, the south shore industry collapsed. Their little factory windows were boarded over, and their roofs became playgrounds for crows and herring gulls. Everyone still bought fog, but the quality was shoddy, and often there would be a hole right through the middle, where it ought to have been thickest.

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*Tammy Armstrong's most recent poetry collection is The Scare in the Crow (Goose Lane Editions). She lives on the south shore of Nova Scotia.*

# The Fastest I Fell in Love

JESSICA LAMPARD



First day of grade 5, a girl sitting near the front has rolled up her sleeves to form a tank top. I need to look twice to be sure the shirt is simply her proper uniform gussied up. From my seat in the next row, I watch her roll the T-shirt sleeves back down with sharp tugs of her fingers. Sister Rose walks in and the girl sighs—she's gotten presentable just in time.

I lean back in my seat, ready to forget her. But when Sister Rose turns her back and grips the chalk, a small bloom of fuchsia pokes out of the girl's pale-glossy lips, then slips back into her mouth. Too vivid to be tongue. Giggles spatter the room. The disco-bright bubble pushes out again from her mouth, this time into a full globe, and us students all follow it with our eyes as the hush-hush sound of inflation fills the air.

Sister Rose shuts up and her hand pauses against the board in mid-stroke. For a hot moment, everything balances. The students and Sister Rose and even the ticking of the clock seem to hold up the growing bubble. I feel responsible for some of the magic, like I can't let my eyes drop or the gum will burst.

I've been in school long enough to know this sort of lawlessness simply doesn't happen. It gives me a feeling like those blissful, upside-down days the power goes out or heavy snowfall builds up along the grass or that time, back in grade one, when Nancy Donaldson vomited down the back of another kid's shirt as our class was walking single file to the school gym.

Sister Rose is a rustle of black fabric and clicking shoes as she walks across the room to stand beside the girl. Wordlessly she reaches through the veil of dark hair, grabs hold of an ear, and yanks. The girl remains sitting, but her cheeks rust red and her lips press together so tight they erase. Her eyes go wild, shifting and blinking, until they happen to find mine and here they settle and hold for *one, two, three, four, five*—Sister Rose has started counting—*six, seven, eight, nine, ten*.

---

*Jessica Lampard is a graduate of the University of Victoria's creative writing program. She is currently working on a collection of short stories.*

# Ingrid Everywhere

RACHEL JANSEN



Ingrid is everywhere all at once. “How?” her classmates ask.

“I don’t know,” she says. “I just know that I’m here, but I’m also in a bowling alley in Chicago, and on a beach in Mumbai.”

“Look.” Out of her open hand falls a fistful of sand.

The teacher says, “Eyes forward everyone,” and the children’s heads swivel, forgetting about the girl who simultaneously swings from a tree swing in Ecuador and hunts fairies in Scotland.

“And so that, kids, is where babies come from.”

Ingrid holds up a baby, sticky and warm from the pediatric ward in a hospital in Saint John’s. She gives her thumb for it to suck in place of its mother’s nipple.

“Ingrid?”

“Yes, Miss?”

“Won’t you put that dolly away?”

“It’s not so easy to go back.”

“Ingrid.”

Ingrid makes the baby disappear, and the children’s eyes ask how she’s done it again. In Tasmania, where

Ingrid also exists, a teacher would never explain sex in such a symbolic way. Plus: bees sting. She informs the teacher as much, but the teacher only inquires what it is that Ingrid wants, exactly.

“I just want to run together into myself, but it’s very hard to see where the centre is, Miss.”

Lunchtime computer privileges are revoked and at recess Ingrid takes requests: a Hello Kitty toy from Japan, pistachio gelato from Italy, a lemur from Madagascar. Can’t go back in time so no dead mothers, sorry. She stuffs the wad of cash into the crotch of her leggings.

At night, while Ingrid listens to Metallica to lull herself asleep, her little sister shuffles into their room, mucus like a slug on the back of her hand. From Siberia, Ingrid brings ice to the place where her sister hurts, tells her the swelling will go down soon.

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*Rachel Jansen lives in Vancouver, where she is currently completing her MFA at the University of British Columbia.*



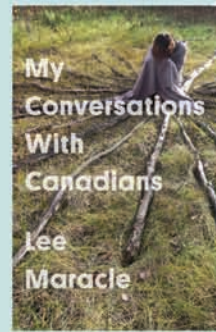
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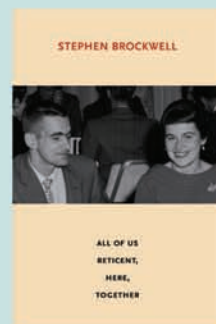
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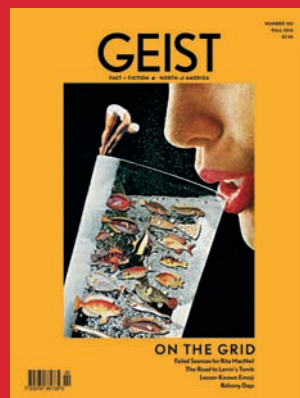
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# Buried Treasure

MARY SCHENDLINGER

*For half a century, Blanche Knopf, one of the most productive, versatile, savvy principals at Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., was ignored, shouted down, bullied and passed over*



Just by hanging around the book business for a few decades I have been vaguely aware that in the past there was a Blanche Knopf associated with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. That was all I knew of her. Then, in spring 2016, I opened *The New Yorker* to find a long review of *The Lady with the Borzoi: Blanche Knopf, Literary Tastemaker Extraordinaire* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), a biography of Blanche by Laura Claridge. I signed up for it on the library hold list and tucked right into the review—which filled me with dismay.

From the get-go, Charles McGrath, the reviewer, seems unable to admire or even respect the biographer or her subject. I found passage after passage dismissive, even contemptuous. In *The New Yorker*. Was it a bad book about a bad publisher?

No. *The Lady with the Borzoi* is a well-researched, meticulously compiled biography filling four hundred pages, including notes, bibliography, acknowledgements and index.

In 1915, when large parts of the world were at war and American

women did not yet have the right to vote, the new company Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., made its daring debut in the New York book publishing scene. The founders, in their early twenties, did not expect to be instantly welcomed into polite publishing society: they were Jewish, and they didn't come from money. But they lived for books and reading, they had identified their literary market niche, they had a few contacts and they understood branding, decades before the term came into use.

Their idea was to acquire literary books published in Europe and to translate them into English, set the text in sumptuous type, wrap them up in posh designs and market them as a glam blend of old-world tradition and dynamic new literature. The books would be promoted through tried-and-true advertising, author events and bookseller-schmoozing, and with thoroughly modern American techniques such as billboards and street hawkers.

Knopf produced twenty-nine titles in 1915–16, its first year in business, sixteen of them translated from Russian. The next year they brought out thirty-seven, including a book of prose by Ezra Pound. By the late 1920s the company had also published T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, Robert Graves, Nella Larsen, Elinor Wylie, Wyn-dham Lewis, H.L. Mencken, Knut Hamsun, Emile Zola, James Baldwin and many others, and the prolific Willa Cather had moved from Houghton Mifflin to Knopf with her novel *One of Ours*, which in 1923 won the first Pulitzer Prize for the company. Knopf had also developed the wildly popular *Borzoi* Mystery Stories, the Depression-era hard-boiled detective novels by Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, Eric Ambler and others. By the 1960s, Knopf's list included books by Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, D.H. Lawrence, Ethel Waters, Edward Albee, John Updike, Wallace Stevens, Lillian Hellman, Muriel Spark and Sigmund Freud, and translated works by Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and Knopf authors had won twenty-seven Pulitzer Prizes and sixteen Nobel prizes—an effort of literary excellence and diversity that we can envy today. The principals of this upstart company were, in order of authority, Alfred A. Knopf, Sam Knopf (Alfred's father) and Blanche Wolf Knopf (Alfred's wife).

The story of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.,

like other success stories, comes with buried treasure. From its founding in 1915 to the 1960s, one of the firm's most productive, versatile, savvy, loyal principals was deliberately devalued, ignored, silenced, shouted down, bullied, passed by and passed over. That person was Blanche Wolf Knopf, Alfred's wife, who co-founded the company and worked tirelessly from day one until she died in 1966. Alfred took credit for her work for half a cen-

### From the get-go, the reviewer seems unable to admire or even respect the biographer or her subject.

ture; Laura Claridge wrote *The Lady with the Borzoi* to set the record straight.

Alfred and Blanche had talked about their publishing company endlessly during their courtship, and—Blanche believed—had vowed to be equal partners in the firm. But Alfred and his father, Sam, arrogated authority and assets from the start, giving Blanche only 25 percent of the company and a title that was always beneath Alfred's, even when everyone got promoted. The men explained that “three names on the door would be excessive.” In quarterly newsletters, Alfred wrote about the company's accomplishments and growth, always in the first person, with no sign of Blanche. To celebrate Knopf's fifth anniversary in 1920, Alfred published an elaborate book of testimonials about “my first five years,” “my authors,” “my staff,” etc.—and mentioned he was pondering an interesting new manuscript “found by Mrs. Knopf.” All his life Alfred denied having made any equal partnership agreement with Blanche. “Looking back to the days when I was on the board,” he

said, three years after Blanche died, “the idea of a woman being part of it is something that I simply cannot become reconciled to.”

The trouble with Charles McGrath's *New Yorker* article on Blanche Knopf starts at the top of the page, with the “dek”—that bit of teaser text that runs under the title and author of an article. It read: “How Blanche Knopf helped make Knopf.” *Helped?* Blanche did the lion's share of acquisitions—finding out what was being seen, heard, talked about, read and written, then signing up the best books and writers to be found, usually in person, at the modest rates the company could afford. She scrutinized manuscripts and translations, poring over every page with an ear to the subject, tone and music of the writing, and she worked with typographers and designers to ensure the perfect “look” of many a finished product. She took care of writers, staying in touch, encouraging them, loading them back on the wagon long enough to finish a manuscript, sending food overseas during food rationing, campaigning for their well-deserved literary awards, walking them through contracts and schedules, talking them in off the ledge when they were stuck. Nine days before she died painfully of liver cancer, she was dictating correspondence to authors and agents. The writer Elizabeth Bowen said of Blanche: “She never asks a single question which is hurtful or improper to the person of creative imagination.” Blanche hosted dinners and afternoon gatherings for artists, musicians and writers, encouraging them in their work, exchanging views on the cultural scene, building community and generating new book ideas. These attentions are gold: to this day many authors will choose an enthusiastic, respectful publisher over a higher advance.

Blanche travelled everywhere she could, whenever she could, to maintain

her connections with authors, agents and publishers, and to immerse herself in local culture to meet new ones. Then she followed up, responding to letters, contracts and manuscripts that had been generated or come in as bycatch on scouting trips. In 1942, when it was unsafe for Americans to travel to Europe, she went to South America as an unofficial envoy for the US State Department. There she visited government leaders as part of Washington's attempt to discourage connection with Axis powers, then spent several days in each of six countries, carrying out her publishing work. In 1943, Blanche flew to London and met her authors and agents as planned, despite the nightly bombings. She and Alfred were so highly thought of that they were invited to witness the Nuremberg trials in 1946, and Blanche did so. In 1949 she became a chevalier of the Legion of Honour for her work with French writers.

Wherever she was, Blanche was alert to publishing opportunities. In the 1930s, when Dashiell Hammett attended a meeting with Blanche and brought his lover, the famously prickly Lillian Hellman, Blanche acquired her play *The Children's Hour*. In 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, she went scouting for a book on the subject. A few years later, when she was spending long hours with hairdressers because of the effects of cancer treatments, she acquired a memoir by one of them. Alfred and his father Sam handled sales and finances, and they were aces at it, but they'd have had little to sell without Blanche's skill at identifying winners and presenting them to discerning American audiences.

So: "helped make Knopf." It would be a supreme insult even to suggest that Alfred "helped" make Knopf, so why is it okay to say it about Blanche? Charles McGrath likely did not write that dek, but the *New Yorker* copywriter who did would have done so based on a quick read of McGrath's text. Which includes this passage, a few lines later:

"[Alfred] Knopf was just twenty-two when, in 1915, he started the business... his assistant and only employee, other than an office boy, was his fiancée, twenty-year-old Blanche Wolf, whom he married a year later..." Even Alfred would describe Blanche as a colleague, not a hireling. And my good-



ness, how smoothly McGrath's sentence relegates Blanche to "employee," at the level of an office boy.

Even a punctuation mark can twist a fact. Blanche's "formal education ended with the Gardner School," McGrath writes, "which was mainly a finishing school for Jewish girls who couldn't get into Brearley or Chapin." In other words, Blanche wasn't smart enough to get in. Had McGrath or one of *The New Yorker's* legendary fact-checkers inserted a comma after "Jewish girls," that passage would read "mainly a finishing school for Jewish girls, who couldn't get into Brearley or Chapin," meaning that Jewish girls were excluded from Brearley and Chapin—which, with very few exceptions, was true.

As a trademark, McGrath writes, Alfred "stamped his books with a borzoi." No. Most of "his" books were products of Blanche's expertise and attention, and the powerful leaping borzoi image was her concept, not

his. As for Alfred's "biggest success... Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*," in fact Alfred came close to driving that cash cow right out of the pasture. The company had published a few chapbooks by Gibran that didn't catch on, and Alfred and Sam recommended that Gibran be released. But Blanche had a hunch about Gibran; she put up a fight and somehow persuaded the company to keep him. *The Prophet* came along soon after; it has been translated into some forty languages and has not gone out of print in English since Knopf, Inc., first published it in 1923.

McGrath mentions Blanche's claim of an equal-partner agreement, then follows it with "Not always a reliable witness, Blanche..." suggesting dishonesty. Or perhaps he is referring to Blanche's reinvention of herself, at age twenty(!), when Knopf got underway with tiny cash and big ideas. The company she and Alfred conceived would be exclusive rather than flashy, emphasizing quality rather than volume, trading in prestige, a sort of boutique publisher ahead of its time. For each title they fussed over every detail of type, paper, cover design and marketing strategy. Even Knopf's modest sales figures became part of the Knopf brand, emphasizing quality over mass. Blanche and Alfred placed themselves in the public eye as fashionable, globe-trotting, thoroughly modern cultural tastemakers, and they dressed the part inside and out. Alfred became known for his flamboyant outfits; Blanche wore designer clothes, shoes and jewellery, and spent many an hour reading manuscripts and contracts while in the care of the staff at Elizabeth Arden. She torted up her lineage as well, describing her father, Julius Wolf, as a "gold jeweller from Vienna" when in fact he had been a Bavarian farm labourer and later a garment manufacturer in New York. If McGrath sees this as dishonesty, we might draw his attention to the hundreds of times Alfred Knopf said "I"

when the truth was “she,” and occasionally “we.”

In fact, the word *prestige* comes from the Latin *praestigiae*, which gives us *prestidigitation* (sleight of hand), tricks in which spectators are complicit—everyone loves a great magic show. Blanche Knopf understood this dance perfectly: consumers of Borzoi Books were members of an exclusive club.

McGrath seems not to understand that the image Blanche projected—the clothes, the hairstyles, the parties, the world travels—was part of her stock-in-trade as an arbiter of literary taste. Luckily for the company, she happened to enjoy it. “She relished the glamorous side of publishing,” he writes, “and, like her husband, became a clotheshorse... she grew her red-painted fingernails so long they resembled talons.” Oh dear.

“She was a far more complicated and interesting character [than Alfred],” McGrath continues; “brilliant and ambitious but also lonely and self-thwarting.” In other words, if she was unhappy and unfulfilled, it was her fault. Alfred, on the other hand, “was needier than she, a bit of a blowhard... he didn’t like giving credit to anyone...” No self-thwarting there, just a couple of executive tics. (Then eighty-three words on why there is not yet a biography of Alfred.)

Blanche “began a series of affairs,” McGrath writes; then, coyly enlisting the reader: “not with authors, as you might guess...” Why would we guess that? It is highly unprofessional to dance on the same table you eat from, as McGrath must know. In fact it was Alfred who took up with a Knopf author, whom he married less than a year after Blanche’s death. But McGrath plows on, offering no evidence: “The affairs seem less grand passions than attempts to assert her own importance.”

“Blanche was also a victim of sexism, and not just her husband’s,”

McGrath writes, apparently without irony. He points out that in 1965, a year before her death, Blanche was still barred from meetings of the guys-only Publishers’ Lunch Club; and that her stellar work in Brazil inspired this headline in the *New York Herald Tribune*: Brazil Honors Mrs. Knopf: Makes Publisher’s Wife a Chevalier in Order of the Southern Cross. But there is no mention of Blanche’s lifelong eating disorder and her ingestion of “diet pills” containing DNP, an ingredient of dynamite. Or her obituary in the *New York Times*, reassuring

### In 1943, Blanche flew to London and met her authors and agents as planned, despite the nightly bombings.

readers that “Mrs. Knopf was petite and chic; she was once plump, but for the last 35 years of her life weighed no more than 100 lbs.”

“Claridge argues that Blanche was actually the more important and influential of the two Knopfs,” McGrath continues. He declares, again with no evidence, “That’s a stretch,” then deftly commends Blanche while keeping her well away from the male bastion: “but her book is still a long-overdue acknowledgement of the pioneering role Blanche played at a time when women were nearly invisible in the business world.”

Then McGrath scurries back to the real problem: Blanche “could be her own worst enemy, and many people... found her impossible to get along with.” Well, everyone is their own worst enemy. And nowhere does McGrath mention the scores of writers, publishers, booksellers, et al. who adored Blanche—especially in the

years she could make time to accompany her irascible, tactless husband on selling trips. No, for McGrath the real trouble seems to be a woman who refuses to turn herself inside out to accommodate others. Blanche’s long red talons say it all.

Only twice in his 2,700-word review does McGrath write, without overt qualification, that Blanche was under-acknowledged: “She was hardworking and brought to the book business both passion and intellectual fierceness. She read manuscripts, accompanied her husband on sales trips, and entertained writers at their home... And it was Blanche... who signed up Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and James M. Cain, establishing a tradition of publishing high-end thrillers that remains a Knopf hallmark.” And: “she never received the credit she deserved.” But even these are miserly versions of the truth. It is as if McGrath cannot forgive Blanche for being better at publishing than most men.

Toward the end of the article, McGrath complains that the biographer, Laura Claridge, “largely ignores [Alfred’s] importance as a marketer, businessman, and literary impresario.” Um, excuse me, Claridge was writing a biography of *Blanche* Knopf.

Finally, McGrath opines, almost sentimentally, that “the Knopfs had [accidentally] stumbled on a very successful publishing formula: an out-sized, public personality balanced by a more sensitive and thoughtful one.” Good grief. Where are those long red talons when we really need them?

---

*Mary Schendlinger is a writer, editor, retired teacher of publishing and, as Eve Corbel, a maker of comics. She was Senior Editor of Geist for twenty-five years. She lives in Vancouver. Read more of her work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# Rivers of Refuge

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

*The rivers in England's cities once hosted the outcasts of society*



In Cambridge, the paths along the banks of the River Cam are thronged with bicycles. The factories that used to stand on the city's outskirts, beyond the walled colleges of the late-medieval centre, have been demolished. In their place stand low-rise apartment blocks housing the new England: Western European and Asian high-tech workers, Central and Eastern European labourers, people from all over the world who have been drawn to Cambridge's hospitals, medical research institutes and famous university. Ten minutes'

walk from the river, the city's fringes resemble those of many English towns: terraced cottages, zebra crossings, off-licences and betting shops. The compact blocks of flats close to the water, like the helmeted cyclists who whisk past them, are more reminiscent of Amsterdam or Copenhagen than of the industrial cities of the English heartland.

The rivers and canals were once the no man's land of English society. The country's class system,

enforced by the schooling options available to each social group and consolidated by the accents taught in their respective schools, obliged young people to accept their assigned places in a society where a person's vowels defined the employment they were able to hold. Traditional English society offered few alternatives to dying in the same circumstances in which one was born. Aside from emigrating to Australia or Canada, or enlisting to fight in a war, one of the few reliable escapes was to take to the rivers.

When I was a graduate student in England, an undergraduate scandalized faculty and students at my school by arriving for his first year in a canoe, having made a journey along the rivers to reach the university from his home. As a foreigner, I couldn't understand why this harmless stunt elicited outrage. The widespread revulsion I witnessed now strikes me as indicative of the role rivers and canals have played in the English imagination. Their traditional image is the opposite of those multicultural cyclists racing along the banks of the River Cam: rivers and canals received not only chemical deposits from factories, but also hosted the outcasts of English society. The rivers were a realm apart from the bucolic "green and pleasant land" evoked by William Blake and later poets. The vaunted "messaging about in boats" that kept the middle class entertained on weekends occurred on the coasts, in small sailing vessels. River folk, by contrast, moved about in houseboats or lived on barges because they could not afford a house. "Growltiger was a Bravo Cat, who lived upon a barge," T.S. Eliot wrote in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939); "In fact he was the roughest cat that ever roamed at large."

Eliot's rough cat captured the popular imagination's conception of the rough people who lived on barges. In E. Nesbit's juvenile classic, *The Railway Children* (1906), Bill the Bargee is a rancorous, "disagreeable" character. Nesbit redeems him, but only after reiterating the stereotype of the bargee. One of the promoters of the vision of England's rivers as a repository for society's most alienated citizens was Charles Dickens. The opening scene of *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), the last novel Dickens completed, depicts a "grizzled" pair, young Lizzie and her father Gaffer, who scour the banks of the River Thames for corpses. Lizzie

and Gaffer earn their living by stealing money and jewellery from the bodies of those who have ended up dead in the water. Dickens describes this father-and-daughter team and their rowboat as "Allied to the bottom of the river rather than the surface, by reason of the slime and ooze with which [the boat] was covered, and its sodden state." Through their plight, Dickens expresses his disenchantment with Victorian society's failure to put prosperity at the service of alleviating poverty. More conservative writers, such

**The rivers and canals of England's cities, once the no man's land of society and literature, are no longer a sanctuary for refugees and immigrants.**

as Eliot, avoided social debates and preferred to highlight the scary images of river people. While the sea stories of Robert Louis Stevenson, C.S. Forester and John Masfield thrilled younger male readers in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England, there was little literary romanticization of the rivers or canals. Novels that exalted England's countryside and history as sources of mystic belonging, such as the 1,200-page *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932) by John Cowper Powys, reserved their darkest scenes for the rivers. The land, in this novel, is the home of affectionately described flowers and plant life, and resonant ruins such as those of Stonehenge; the river is the scene of the protagonists' discord and darkest revelations.

After World War II, the waterways receded from England's literature. They put in a striking appearance in Graham Swift's novel *Waterland*

(1983), where the sordid acts with which they are associated link them to Great Britain's post-1945 loss of its empire. In the late 1990s, when I lived near Regent's Canal in the East London borough of Hackney, I witnessed the extinction of the waterways' status as a refuge. In the midst of the most multicultural neighbourhood I've inhabited—home to refugees and immigrants from some of the world's poorest countries—a dwindling community of working-class white English people, clustered around the canal, perpetuated the customs of Cockney culture: fishing, eating jellied eels, hanging out at the pub. During the three years I lived in Hackney, these people became increasingly alienated, lowering the Union Jack from the flagpole over their pub to fly the nationalistic St. George's cross, and voting for the anti-immigrant British National Party. Recently, when I returned to my old neighbourhood, the Cockneys, like the overseas refugees and poorer immigrants, were gone. Derelict factories had given way to new flats, and restaurants overlooking the water. Regent's Canal resembled the River Cam, albeit with fewer bicycles. The people I saw were well-educated professionals from many cultures. The English class system, which dispatched the poor to the waterways in search of social freedom or the means to earn a living, has been surpassed by class divisions that are global. The new social order offers opportunities to people from many parts of the world, but poorer locals no longer find refuge on the water.

---

*Stephen Henighan's fourth collection of short stories, Blue River and Red Earth, will be published by Cormorant Books in March 2018. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [StephenHenighan.com](http://StephenHenighan.com). Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*

# Counting Sins

ALBERTO MANGUEL

*For as long as we have been human, we have enumerated and ranked our wrongdoings*



We are nothing if not numbering creatures. Lists, libraries and codes, catalogues and yearbooks, ranks and hierarchies give us the illusion of a mappable universe and a semblance of knowledge. With charts in hand we can tell that the elements that compose the cosmos are 98, that Hamlet's melancholia is number F32.3 in the international *Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* published by the World Health Organization in Geneva, that only nine overworked Muses watch over our entire imagination.

Even our errands are, following

this urge, not only accountable but countable. In the thirteenth century, Saint Thomas Aquinas, following the observations of Saint Gregory, determined that of all our sins, only a certain handful are truly noxious. Like the marvels of the world, like the sorrows and joys of Mary, like the days of creation, like the soldiers against Thebes and the honour-seeking Samurai, like the ages of man, like the Japanese Gods of Luck, like the hills of Rome and the seas of the known world, the sins that according to Aquinas we must call "deadly" because they poisonously

give rise to others, are merely seven: Pride, Covetousness, Gluttony, Lust, Sloth, Envy and Anger. In Dante's geography of Hell, the list of sins varies, and the sin of treason, embodied in Satan, ranks first in deadliness and is trapped in the ice of Hell's very centre. Lust, for the carnal Dante, barely deserves a second place.

For the earlier church, the sins were eight. In the fifth century, for instance, the ascetic John Cassian ignored the sin of envy and included instead the sins of vainglory and dejection. Closer to our time, the poet Edith Sitwell

demanded that hypocrisy be counted as the deadliest sin of all. In the sixteenth century, the German reformer Philipp Melanchthon argued that the number of sins didn't matter: what mattered was that all sin was deadly because it incapacitated the heart. For Melanchthon, a sin was more than an external act of evil: it was a rot that reached beyond reason into man's will and emotions, corrupting the roots and making it impossible to do good.

Centuries earlier, Saint Augustine, having somewhat vaguely defined sin as "a word, deed or desire against the eternal law," noted that sin, in order to be sinful, must stem from our own will. "Unless sin is voluntary," wrote Augustine, "it is no sin at all." For Augustine, sin contradicted Nature; for Aquinas, it contradicted the Law. Nature, for Augustine, was not to be contradicted, a concept that led him to see sin as opposed to "that which is natural." The Marquis de Sade (who tacitly agreed with Aquinas) refuted Augustine's argument by showing the

horrific character of that which we call natural.

For the pre-Christian Greeks, sin was not necessarily a deliberate violation of the rules set out by the gods, but a failure to achieve the true expression of one's self as part of the complex universe. Like someone suffering from a sickness of the soul, the sinner's punishment came from that very sickness; each individual wrought his or her own hell that no other could share. To Sartre announcing "Hell is other people," Oedipus replies "Hell is in me," and Orestes is pursued by private furies that are for him a Hell that even his sister Electra cannot see. For these ancients, a seven-part classification of sins generous enough to accommodate the whole of humankind would have seemed incomprehensible: Clytemnestra and Medea don't share the same infernal realm. For us, after Hiroshima, after the Holocaust, after ethnic cleansings, the seven deadly sins fall short of their colossal calling. The story of

the Holocaust, for example, cannot be divided by seven.

On a smaller scale, however, as an attempt to categorize the convolutions of bad behaviour, the setting aside of seven sins for our terror has, throughout the ages, inspired less apprehension than curiosity. To deter from its attraction, theologians compiled a parallel list of seven virtues—Faith, Hope, Charity, Justice, Fortitude, Prudence and Temperance—but, as with most sequels, the second septet was far less successful and, except as female names in Spain and in Victorian England, the virtues found little fortune in the imagination of the world. The seven sins, however, flourished. Formalized into a useful *vade mecum* of illicit conduct, they became an inspirational source for countless generations of artists and writers from Jean de Meun and the *Roman de la Rose* to David Fincher and his bloodthirsty film *Seven*, all of whom explored the degrees and hues of these vast forbidden areas, the tangled forests of Covetousness and the burning deserts of Anger, and justified in their own way Saint Augustine's assertion that human society is not as much an assembly of saints as a school for accomplished sinners.

Perhaps every one of our accomplishments and choices determines our perdition or salvation in the eyes of whimsical gods. In her "Report on Heaven and Hell," Silvina Ocampo concluded: "The laws of heaven and hell are flexible. Whether you're sent to one place or the other depends on the slightest detail. I know people who because of a broken key or a wicker birdcage have gone to hell, and others who for a sheet of newspaper or a glass of milk went to heaven."

*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 Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he serves as director of the National Library. Read more of his work at alberto.manguel.com and geist.com.*

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# ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

## LITERARY GAYDAR

I can't help but whip out my gaydar when I read, scanning every interaction on the page for even a hint of homoerotic subtext. Many queer\* people might know the feeling of reading something in which a character is obviously queer-coded, and waiting with breathless excitement as tension in their relationship with another character mounts. They wonder, "Is the author going there? Is this what I think it is?" Too often, this is followed



by crushing disappointment when they learn that, no, the two characters whom they wanted to kiss are not going to kiss. But sometimes, in all the twists and turns of a great story, two characters of the same gender kiss and it almost makes up for all the times when they didn't.

*Listening for Jupiter* by Pierre-Luc Landry, translated by Arielle Aaronson and Madeleine Stratford (QC Fiction), follows the crisscrossing lives of Hollywood, a graveyard groundskeeper who lives without a heart, and Xavier, a troubled pharmaceutical salesman; they live in different cities, but they meet in their dreams. Global weather patterns go haywire and Montreal melts while Europe swirls with snowstorms, and the two men grapple with relationships, their health and a series of confusing, complicated events that bring them together and apart.

*Listening for Jupiter* isn't marketed as LGBT Fiction, which begs an inquiry into what's being said when a work is categorized as LGBT Fiction. It's often considered its own genre in

some weird act of segregation, as if literary fiction, sci-fi, fantasy, poetry, comics and memoirs can't deal with queer themes. If queer creative work needs to be labelled as such, then Hollywood blockbusters where the chemistry-void male and female lead end up together should feature a warning about compulsive heterosexuality. So *Listening for Jupiter* isn't LGBT Fiction. It's a concise, dreamy, breathtaking novel in which two men fall for one another; I won't say which two men and spoil it for you more than I already have. Their attraction isn't a main point in the narrative, nor is it an awkward footnote: it just happens, as naturally as it might happen in real life. For this relationship to exist organically in a novel full of magic realism is especially encouraging to see—dynamic non-heterosexual characters existing in a well-considered narrative isn't half as common as you'd think.

You should read *Listening for Jupiter* for its beautiful language, engaging dialogue and genuinely unique story, or because it's whimsical, funny, heartfelt and pleasantly absurd, but I wouldn't blame you if you read it because you're thirsty for queer representation. Of course, none of this is to say that novels with a dash of gayness are better than novels that centre themselves around gayness, but there's something so exciting about being led shyly into queer written love, as thrilling and nerve-racking as navigating the tumultuous queer dating scene in real life. —Roni Simunovic

\* *When I use the word "queer," I use it as a term to mean anyone who identifies as something non-heterosexual.*

## ORDINARY BODIES

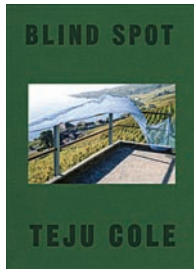


Ruth Kaplan, whose astonishing photographs of naked bathers appeared in *Geist* No. 40 in the spring of 2003, has collected her "bathing work" into a deluxe volume from Damiani. Together the images in *Bathers* constitute a supreme study of ordinary bodies, and demonstrate in visceral ways just how unique is the ordinary body: no two alike, each an expression of itself. Realizing this truth can be a shock, given that the bodies displayed in the media are processed to reproduce a polished original, with the result that men and women in movies are all nearly identical. In the clothed world of the rest of us, we strive for a similar sameness: there is no unique body in the processed world. Nevertheless, we all have one, with its own knees, thighs, buttocks, shoulders, breasts and arms, etc. Kaplan's work is proof that we are not Other to ourselves; as Robert Everett-Green wrote, "Kaplan is a most humane photographer, who may question the nature of the natural but who never doubts the nobility of the human." The book includes accompanying essays by Marni Jackson and Larry Fink. With the rise of the selfie and fear of smartphones in public, this may be the last work of its kind. Copies may be ordered from [www.damianieditore.com](http://www.damianieditore.com).

—Mandelbrot

A BLINDNESS AT THE CENTRE OF SEEING

Teju Cole, photography critic of the *New York Times Magazine*, and one of the most consistently interesting of contemporary writers, is an heir of sorts to James Baldwin, W. G. Sebald and John Berger. Cole's most recent book, **Blind Spot** (Random House), a generous hardcover printed on glossy stock, presents Cole's photographs on recto pages, with brief, allusive essays



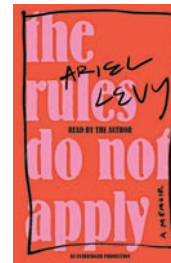
on the facing verso page. The book's title refers to an incident in 2011, when Cole awoke to find himself blind in one eye, the blindness caused by papillophlebitis, or perforations to his retina. "The photography changed after that. The looking changed." Cole's essays do not speak directly to the photographs they accompany, but, over time,

themes and preoccupations gradually emerge, the principal among them being the medium of photography itself. In the text accompanying a photograph taken in São Paulo, Brazil, Cole describes a moment in which he "lost faith": "The world was now a series of interleaved apparitions. The thing was an image that could also bear an image. If one of the benefits of irreligion was an acceptance of others, that benefit was strangely echoed in the visual plane, which granted the things seen within the photographic rectangle a radical equality." *Blind Spot* includes a map, and an index that locates the photographs: cities from Ypsilanti to Seminyak to Lagos to New York (Vancouver, the only Canadian location, is represented by a pair of photographs). As Cole puts it in a postscript: "This book stands on its own. But it can also be seen as the fourth in a quartet of books about the limit of vision."

—Michael Hayward

FREE TO BE

In paragraph 2 of Ariel Levy's preface to her memoir **The Rules Do Not Apply** (Random House), she writes: "In the last few months, I have lost my son, my spouse, and my house." Oh,



no. She launches chapter 1 with a childhood memory of playing a game with her dad. She already knew she could be anything she wanted. Her love of adventure, "the crackling fascination of the unfamiliar." Always the writing: "the solution to every problem—financial, emotional, intellectual." Her story powers along; eventually she will arrive at the start, returning to the losses set down in the preface, losses so terrible we won't mind if she chickens out. But she won't. Writing for *New York* magazine, falling in love at age twenty-eight. "I got married a few years later—we all

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did.” Flying off to Africa “to report the most ambitious story of my career,” about Caster Semenya, the powerful young runner from Limpopo who has undergone many a “gender testing” exam because some colleagues and officials believe Semenya is a man, or more man than woman. Then back to the USA and Levy’s mother, who prepares meals with “no-nonsense competence, spunky pride, and seething resentment,” and who says, frequently and with vigour, “You never want to be dependent on a man. You *have* to make your own living.” Then Levy falling for the beautiful Lucy through a wild, wanton, alcohol-drenched courtship. Then a lunch of sushi with David Remnick, who hires her as a staff writer for the *New Yorker*. Writing writing writing. Turning thirty-five, now or never for children. Then insemination. How about “one last brush with freedom” before turning to her life with spouse and kids? “My doctor told me that it was fine to fly

up until the third trimester. When I was five months pregnant, I accepted an assignment in Mongolia.” I can’t tell you any more without wrecking it. Please read this book. Everyone’s a memoirist, but this woman is a writer. —*Mary Schendlinger*

#### NOTES ON NAVIGATION

**This Accident of Being Lost** by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (House of Anansi) is a sharp collection of short stories and poetry that resists the colonialism of contemporary Canada and explores the struggle of urban Indigenous people to preserve tradition in a continuously changing environment. The interwoven stories are stream-of-consciousness first person, often epistolary, addressing a changing “you” to whom



the speaker relates their insecurities of self, frustrations with an ever-encroaching white society and loss of traditional culture. Kwe is the central character of the stories: in one, she is getting her firearm licence in rural Ontario; in another, she’s coaching the narrator into meeting their long-distance partner; in another, she steals a disused canoe. Simpson’s anger is more forceful in the poems. The most memorable for me was “i am graffiti,” in which she confronts the attempted erasure of First Nations genocide. Several of the stories depict the stress of navigation: navigating the tensions of race and colonialism, navigating the ancestral land despite contemporary infrastructure, and navigating relationships via text messaging. Highlighting this are scenes of characters fighting to practice traditions in spaces they have been pushed out of: tapping for maple syrup in a white upper middle-class neighbourhood; harvesting wild rice in cottage country;

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drinking kombucha flavoured with maple and blueberry (“sometimes stolen Nishnaabeg things are better than no Nishnaabeg things at all!!”). My favourite story in the collection is “Big Water,” which combines the stress of modern text communication (“I look at my beloved screen every four minutes... We all do and we all lie about it”) and the urgency of environmental damage: the flooding Lake Ontario is personified as Nübish, who demands attention by texting the narrator in all caps as she reshapes the earth. What I enjoyed most about Simpson’s book was her quiet, lyrical storytelling and the collective voice that swept me up in the reading.

—Kelsea O’Connor

### GUTSY GIRL

Why would an elderly couple from the north drive all the way to Indian Head, Saskatchewan, to adopt an ugly little girl who has a scar across her face? This is the question that nine-year-old Briony asks herself as she leaves the Orange Order Orphanage to start a new life. Moll, her new mother, is easy to get close to just by helping in the garden and the kitchen, but her new father, Dagget, is gruff and unapproachable—until Briony gets curious about the yellow Norseman bush plane he flies. Pretty soon Briony has her own overalls and is puttering around, learning about engine repair and maintenance. From there she goes on to the co-pilot seat and eventually she gets her pilot’s licence. Briony’s story is filled with twists and turns that will keep the reader turning pages, and eventually she figures out the answer to the question she asked herself on her last day at the orphanage: part of Briony belongs to the north. Along the way, we find out how to land a plane on water and on ice, how to preheat a frozen engine without setting fire to the plane, how difficult it is for a female pilot to keep from peeing her pants on long flights, how to make a “deadstick

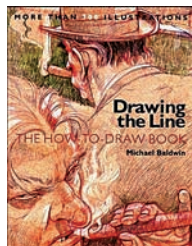


landing” (the dead stick is the propeller that isn’t going around anymore because the plane has no power) and how to fly a bush plane from northern Saskatchewan to England without running out of fuel (you have to stop a few times). The beauty and remoteness of the north permeate the pages of **Heart Like a Wing** (Ronsdale) by Dan Paxton Dunaway, which, although it is classified as a YA novel, will appeal to grownups too.

—Patty Osborne

### UNABASHED DRAWING

Besides providing stimulating instruction for graphic artists, Michael Baldwin’s **Drawing the Line: The How to Draw Book** holds the following distinction: it was originally self-published in 2006, and, after selling out because



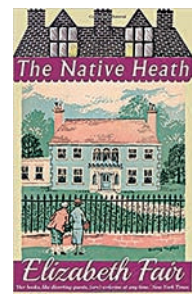
of its popularity and demand, was reprinted last year by Humber Press, demonstrating that self-publishing doesn’t have to be a shunned endeavor; it can also make available fine work that might not be shown otherwise. *Drawing the Line* is best suited for young artists who are interested in graphic novels or comic stories. The book is divided into three sections: perspective drawing, figure drawing and visual composition. At the end of each section, the author uses examples from his own comic story, “The Piano Review,” to demonstrate concepts that the reader has just learned—concepts such as centre of vision, atmospheric perspective and visual hierarchy. *Drawing the Line* inspires its readers to pick up an HB pencil, plus a few coloured pencils and a pencil sharpener (all that is needed), and begin drawing right away. That’s what this reader did, attempting a portrait of

our Endnotes editor; I haven’t felt so spontaneous about unabashed drawing since I was in primary school.

—Jill Mandrake

### THE NATIVE HEATH

Stolen honeycombs, a fiancé training to be a missionary in Africa, a picnic marred by quicksand and fog, a fundraising party for pig pensions: these are just a few of the plot points of **The Native Heath** (Dean Street) by Elizabeth Fair, published in the UK in the 1950s and available again after many decades of obscurity. It is a satire both gentle and barbed about vil-



lage life after the war. But these modest domestic and social interactions speak volumes about human nature and the effect of landscape and environment

on the English psyche. Some things are changing, like newly planned towns, aristocratic eccentrics who espouse yoga and natural medicine, and girls who think for themselves. But other things are the same, like the eponymous ancestral home passed down to Julia Dunstan, the widowed heroine of this novel. Elizabeth Fair came from a pretty typical upper middle-class background, but her time driving ambulances during World War II and then working overseas with the Red Cross widened her vision and allowed her to see her own people more clearly. This is smart English comedy in the very best tradition of Jane Austen.

—Kris Rothstein

### TEMPORARY IMMORTALITY

One of the pieces collected in Jamie Reid’s **A Temporary Stranger** (Anvil), is “Only the Good Die Young,” a tribute to T. Paul Ste. Marie, a Vancouver-based spoken-word artist and poetry impresario, who hosted open mike

nights at the Montmartre Café until his death in 2007 following a brain aneurysm. Reid notes the ephemerality of T. Paul's art, describing it as "a once-only kind of thing... unlike the words that last apparently forever on the pages of books." The words "apparently forever" are key, and poignant; print has never been a guarantee of immortality: charity shops and used bookstores are full of dusty books by authors who are now forgotten. There's a melancholy air to *A Temporary Stranger*, one third of which is devoted to essays—eulogies, for the most part—on writers who have at one time or another been part of Vancouver's vibrant literary scene. Sadly, many



of the names he celebrates would now be known only to a select few: fellow writers all. Reid himself passed away in June 2015 at the age of seventy-four. *A Temporary Stranger* is a thoughtful collection from a "writer, activist, and arts organizer," one of the original founders of *TISH*, an influential Vancouver poetry newsletter from the 1960s. You can't help but come away from this book sobered, and respectful of all who continue to write, regardless.

—Michael Hayward

## BACK TO THE NORTH END



John Paskievich's portfolio of images of the North End of Winnipeg, a lifelong project spanning forty years, appeared in 2007 as *The North End* from University of Manitoba Press, and was featured in *Geist* No. 66.

Now another eighty images have been added to that work, which reappears this year as **The North End Revisited**. Paskievich is a street photographer of enormous patience and great talent; his images of Winnipeg offer a city of people rather than buildings; people on the streets and lawns, on the sidewalk, in cars and living rooms, in the cafés, the corner stores and alleyways of a corner of the city once known as the Hub of the Dominion—an always troubled, magnificent crossroads of Empire. Paskievich is at home in the street, where, as Stephen Osborne writes in the introduction: "his camera becomes an agent of the *tableau vivant*: Women in the North End are frequently seen in a stooping posture: leaning toward the ground, toward children, toward each other. They enact their lives. Whereas men in the North End tend to appear singly, even when in groups, and in a variety of postures: reclining, lounging, squatting, resting, snoozing, reading. They are solitary men waiting for the next thing to happen, and we do not intrude on them." *The North End Revisited* also includes a fascinating semi-biographical essay by George Melnyk and an informative interview with the photographer by Alison Gillmor.

—Mandelbrot

## FRIEND IN NEED

Helen Garner's novel **The Spare Room** (House of Anansi) opens in Melbourne as the protagonist and narrator, a middle-aged woman also named Helen (hmm), prepares for the visit of Nicola, her dear friend. Nicola has late-stage cancer and is to stay with Helen for three weeks while undergoing a last-ditch alternative treatment. At the airport Helen is shocked to see how depleted her friend is. But that's nothing compared to her horror upon seeing the "clinic," with its "scene of disorder, as of a recent arrival or imminent flight," its scatty personnel and its air of reverence

toward intravenous vitamins, ozone, cables, tents and other apparatus that screams of full-on quackery to Helen. Nicola, who has much more to lose, is all bravado and breeziness, saying that her apparent pain and DTs are really



"the vitamin C driving out the toxins." Helen wants very much to call the palliative care people; Nicola refuses because "it's the last thing before death"; Helen

struggles hard to support Nicola on her terms. Finally Nicola says, "I need you to believe in [the treatment]," and Helen writes, "Now I took my first real breath of it, the sick air of falsehood." But the nights are hard, and Nicola does accept a morphine prescription. One morning they go to tea at a friend's house and Nicola leaps out of the car and charges in, "grinning wildly" in a "tremendous performance of being alive," setting Helen's teeth on edge. Out in the garden, as Nicola prattles on gaily about how well her treatments are working, Helen—who gets Nicola and herself through the terrible nights—picks up the secateurs and goes after the wilting blooms like Mommie Dearest in the rose garden. Does one laugh or cry upon reading this scene, remembering one's own shameful irritation with loved ones who have refused to accept the inevitable, or have caved much too easily? "I had always thought that sorrow was the most exhausting of the emotions," Helen writes. "Now I knew that it was anger."

—Mary Schendlinger

## TRUE STORIES OF PAIN AND LOVE

**The Education of Augie Merasty: A Residential School Memoir** (University of Regina Press) is a harrowing account from a survivor of the residential school system in

Saskatchewan. Merasty, who died in March 2017 at the age of eighty-seven, attended the St. Therese Residential School in Sturgeon Landing, Saskatchewan, from 1935 to 1944, where he and other First Nations children, separated from their families and their communities, endured sexual assault and institutionalized racism. David Carpenter, formerly a professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan, edited Merasty's drafts, his letters, and his testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, into a slim volume. Reading it, you can't help but be moved by Merasty's resilience and his persistence: the many attempts, spread over many years—in the face of childhood trauma, and the deep psychological and emotional scars left by his abusers—to make his story public.

**You Don't Have to Say You Love Me** by Sherman Alexie (Little Brown) is a memoir of love and loss: the complicated love of a son for a neglectful

mother who lied habitually; the loss of that same mother, at age seventy-eight. Alexie, a writer of Spokane-Coeur d'Alene descent, grew up in Wellpinit, Washington, on the Spokane Indian Reservation, where he was raised by parents who were emotionally ill-equipped for their responsibilities. He has described his mother as "brilliant, funny, beautiful, generous, vindictive, deceitful, tender, manipulative, abusive, loving, and intimidating"; the mix of adjectives gives a vivid sense of the conflicting feelings that form the core of the book. *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me* is a frank account of the debilitating effects of growing up in conditions of extreme poverty, the target of racism and repeated bullying. It is also a story of escape: Alexie managed to break out of the cycle of poverty and neglect by leaving the reservation, choosing, at age twelve, to attend high school in the nearby town of Rearden. He excelled there, and discovered his vocation as a writer. Now a resident of Seattle, Alexie calls himself "an urban Indian," having

lived off-reservation since 1994. *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me* is not just another "misery memoir"; it is frank and self-deprecating, and leavened with humour. The writing is a patchwork of short prose pieces and poetry, a mix that is surprisingly effective. Alexie himself comes



across as confident and charming; surprisingly well-adjusted, considering the experiences he describes. And yet the emotional scars evidently go deep: In July, Alexie cut short the promotional tour for this book, "citing depression and his belief that his mother's ghost has been haunting him." Escape is an ongoing process. —Michael Hayward

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DRAWN TO CHANGE  
CUBA BEYOND THE BEACH  
FEAR OF A BLACK NATION  
GABRIEL NADÉAU-DUBOIS IN DERISANCE  
FLIGHT AND FREEDOM

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and mushrooms requires passion and creativity not unlike the impulse to write. Last year the tasting event at BC Distilled (the annual festival of BC craft spirits) made me ponder the relationship between alcohol and literature. And while I found books on distilling one's own spirits, cooking with craft beer and creating cocktails based on Canadian geography, it was a challenge to find literary works on the theme. This year I dug deeper to find some fascinating books. My favourite was **Proof: The Science of Booze** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), which follows the science of alcohol from the activities of yeasts, sugars and fermentation, the human discovery of distillation, the ways aging changes and deepens flavours, how we taste, how the brain reacts to alcohol and finally to the science of the hangover (understudied and not understood!). The book's author, Adam Rogers, believes the fun part of science isn't the answers, it's the questions, and the story of alcohol

is still full of questions. The book is both anecdotal and comprehensive and includes visits to places like the national collection of yeast cultures and university labs designs to look like bars, where researchers investigate what is actually happening in the brain when we drink. Rogers finds makers who are willing to try ever-crazier techniques in order to distill the perfect drink, from using barrels of different wood, aging with different sound frequencies in the background or aging barrels on boats to include briny flavor and slosh liquid around the barrels more. The book is perhaps a little detail heavy, and includes more captivating knowledge than is even possible to absorb.

Many great writers have been inspired by alcohol but it has also driven them to despair and destruction. In **The Trip to Echo Spring: On Writers and Drinking** (Picador), British author Olivia Laing investigates this juxtaposition through the story of six towering figures of American literature. Hemingway,

Fitzgerald and Tennessee Williams are among those whose relationship with alcohol was partly responsible for failure and death. "I wanted to know what made a person drink and what it did to them. More specifically I wanted to know why writers drink, and what effect this stew of spirits has had upon the body of literature itself," she writes. And in a journey across America she probes the ways writers used drink to stimulate creativity and to buttress themselves when troubled. The list of daily drinks downed when these writers thought they were taking it easy is truly staggering. A few of the writers turned their lives around, but only after drink had taken a terrible toll. *The Trip to Echo Spring* occasionally becomes a little dry and meandering, but it's a serious investigation of the topic and is well worth reading.

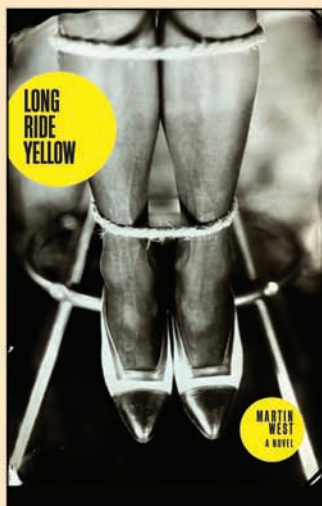


—Kris Rothstein



# FRESH from the FORGE!

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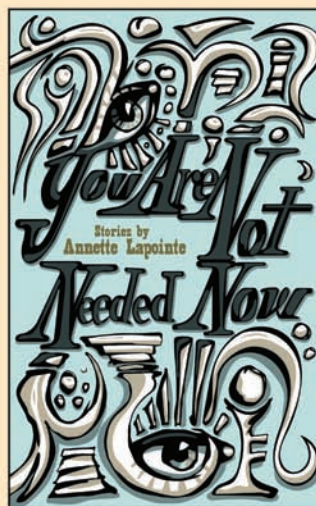


## LONG RIDE YELLOW

by Martin West

The debut novel from the author of *Cretacea & Other Stories from the Badlands*, *Long Ride Yellow* explores the limits of sexual desire. Nonni is a dominatrix who likes to push the boundaries; she is also easily bored. Her disdain for all that is conventional and "vanilla" launches her on a journey of personal discovery.

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## YOU ARE NOT NEEDED NOW

by Annette Lapointe

*You Are Not Needed Now* is a brilliant new collection of stories from Giller-nominated author Annette Lapointe. Often set within the small towns of the Canadian prairies, the stories in *You Are Not Needed Now* dissect and examine the illusion of appearances, the myth of normalcy, and the allure of artifice.

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## OFF THE SHELF

An audience member yells “You fucking suck!” when **Shawn Hitchins** jumps on stage to sing “We go together” in his memoir *A Brief History of Over Sharing* (ECW Press). A girl kicks the side of the cabin, lifts her fist, sticks out her middle finger and yells “Haven’t you got anything better to do than stare at me?” in *Hummingbird* (Locarno Press) by **Tristan Hughes**. In **Marcelino Truong’s** graphic novel *Saigon Calling* (Arsenal Pulp Press) Marco ogles titty magazines at the barbershop. Laura Sabia says calling pro-choice a sin is controlling and insulting to women in *150 Fascinating Facts About Canadian Women* (Second Story Press) compiled by **Margie Wolfe**. A wife demands her tongue-tied husband cut his tongue so he could pleasure her orally in *Bozruk* (Exile Editions) by **Linda Rogers**. In *Rose & Poe* (ECW Press) by **Jack Todd**, Skeeter and Moe seek out the Sasquank, which is not to be confused with Bigfoot, Yeti or Sasquatch. A female dog urinates next to a guy wearing wildflower-scented clothing in *Anima* by **Wajdi Mouawad** (Talon Books). Rinzai and Soto don elvish attire; Artemis and Apollo plan to be two of the three musketeers; Poe paints on a goatee and wears a dented tin pot in *Blood Fable* (Book Thug) by **Oisín Curran**. Aimé styles patchwork trousers with criss-crossed suspenders on the tram in the unbearable heat in *The Longest Year* (Anansi) by **Daniel Grenier**. Matt tosses snack-sized Doritos bags into the crowd in *to me you seem giant* (NeWest Press) by **Greg Rhyno**. In *The Original Face* (Véhicule Press) by **Guillaume Morissette**, Jane wanders deserted, eerie streets feeling like she is in a post-apocalyptic film. Ralph Nguyen delivers milk to Daisy for her tea in the morning in *If Clara* (Coach House Books) by **Martha Baillie**. In *The Dusty Bookcase* (Biblioasis), the cover of Adopted Derelicts entices an adolescent **Brian Busby** because it

reads “murderers, gunmen, prostitutes” at the top. **John Waters** declares he has been suspended, kicked out and arrested in *Make Trouble* (Algonquin Books). **Tabatha Southey** speculates the discovery of a sea slug with a disposable penis is the reason the pope resigned in *Collected Tarts and Other Indelicacies* (Douglas & McIntyre). In *This Side of Sad* (Goose Lane) by **Karen Smythe**, Rob’s penis smells like stale bread. In *Smells Like Heaven* (ARP Books) by **Sally Cooper**, Wendy’s father flies out of their station wagon. **Juliette Storr** equips the reader with a list of acronyms and initialisms that include BC (Before Christ), UK (United Kingdom), COSTAATT (College of Science, Technology, and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago) in *Journalism in a Small Place* (University of Calgary Press). **Wendy Donawa** explores the shapes and forms grief takes in the poem “Metamorphosis” in *Thin Air of the Knowable* (Brick Books). Vicki pulls off her girdle and Jack tosses aside his tie as desire rises between them in *Plastic* (Porcupine’s Quill) by **Margaret Gracie**. **Leslie Stein**, in illustrated form, boils water in pots and pours it into her tub for a hot bath in *Present* (Drawn & Quarterly). In *cabana the big* (Tight Rope Books) by **Ron Charach**, an honest druggist cringes watching Henry lick his fingers clean of dark chocolate. In a heated debate, Mauricio and Tenorio quarrel over seduction in *Fog* (Northwestern World Classics) by **Miguel de Unamuno**, translated by **Elena Barcia**. Jonathan freaks out and yells at Estelle when he learns she put MDMA in his wine in *Sports and Pastimes* (Book Thug) by **Jean-Philippe Baril Guérard** translated by **Aimee Wall**. In *Gone to Pot* (Second Story Press) by **Jennifer Craig**, Jess evades capture with bags filled with pot plants. A customer panics when Darwin and his gang empty out the wrong house of furniture in *Darwin’s Moving* (Newest Press) by **Taylor Lambert**.

In *Dinner at the Centre of the Earth* (Penguin Random House) by **Nathan Englander** the guard dips a fry in ketchup to taunt Prisoner Z. A banana and orange divert arguments in the poem *What the Leaves Say in Everything We’ve Loved Comes Back to Find Us* (Gaspereau Press) by **Allan Cooper**. Manue barges out and eats three tubes of caramel sundae ice cream next to a picnic bench in *Behind the Eyes We Meet* (QC Fiction) by **Mélissa Verreault**.

## NOTED ELSEWHERE

*Globe and Mail* says *In a Wide Country* by **Robert Everett-Green** (Cormorant Books) “conjures the sixties without wallowing in nostalgic detail”; N. on Goodreads says “the imagery is so clear, I could see details of my own mother getting dressed in those 1960s outfits”; the *Winnipeg Review* says the book is “a provocative exploration of masculine identity formation”; Pablo Strauss from the *Montreal Review of Books* says “the story may be interesting, but the telling is phenomenal.” Celina Silva from *Malabat Review* says the lines in *My Ariel* by **Sina Queyras** “seem to hurl themselves onto the page and are quite epiphanic”; *Coach House Books* says Queyras “barges into one of the iconic texts of the twentieth century...exploring and exploding the cultural norms, forms, and procedures that frame and contain the lives of women”; a *CBC Books* interviewer asks, “How did a book that deals with such heavy subjects end up as something lighter?”

## CONGRATULATIONS

To **Alberto Manguel** for winning the 2017 International Alfonso Reyes Prize for his work as a writer, translator, editor and literary critic; to **Richard Kelly Kemick** for being shortlisted for “The Most Human Part of You” and long-listed for “The Unitarian Church’s Annual Young Writer’s Short Story Competition” for the 2017 Journey Prize; to Jill Mandrake on the publication of her chapbook *Maybe Tomorrow I’ll See It All from Heaven*.

# The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

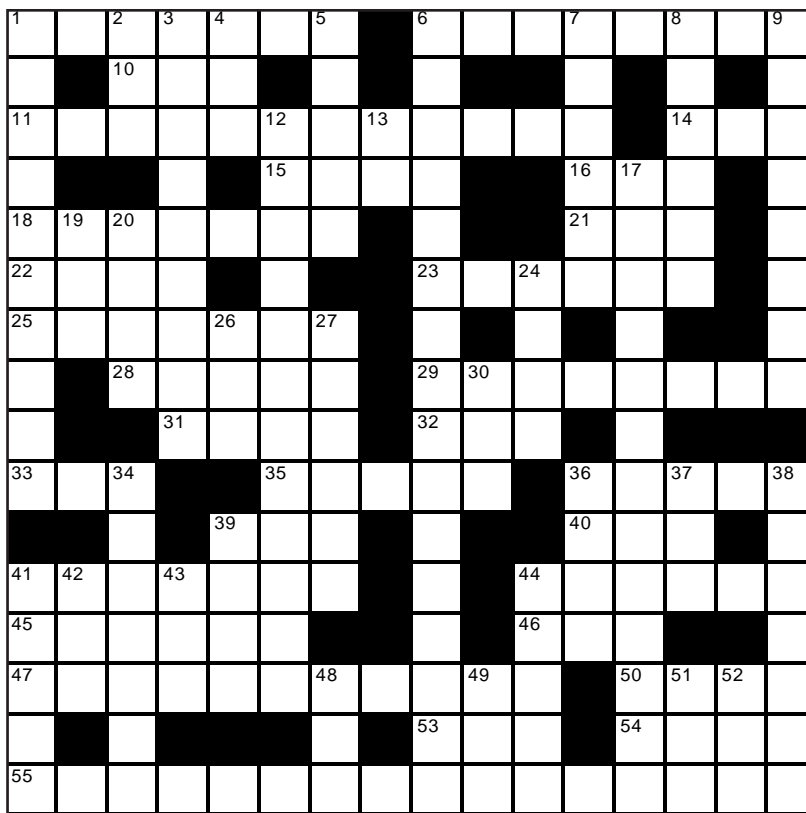
Send a copy of your completed puzzle, along with your name and address, to:

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Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4  
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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* magnet. Good luck!

## ACROSS

- 1 According to the statistics, wandering around now costs money
- 6 Howie held a bad pâté until it smoothed over (2)
- 10 Our sad brother came to life on Saturday nights
- 11 The handwritten sign said not to tip a ballcock in the centre of Ottawa (2)
- 14 Curses! But at least the Cree had the energy to fight at Jim's store
- 15 Sorry, Tom, I always leave you out
- 16 They're looking for frozen and/or alien life
- 18 Aretha sure puts her heart into it
- 21 I got crones there and not by looking north
- 22 Galactic empire stoners get dusty
- 23 I like the ass end of those vehicles but I might prefer station wagons
- 25 Don't get spooked, the guy will be here at 10 to get rid of that nut head
- 28 Goody! I'm one of 8
- 29 Anna, come and visit that male person in the pointy vessel
- 31 These days it sounds like their spelling is pretty confusing
- 32 They're mining Fred and Carrie's place
- 33 Which party will be a barrel of laughs?
- 35 Granny Mac phoned to say she took a bite
- 36 Where are the ideas and culture around here?
- 39 After 7 it worried her that it was eroded
- 40 How much did she normally score for this time?
- 41 Get off your high horse, put on your jodhpurs and your hat and take mine out too
- 44 What's for dessert at the queen's jubilee?
- 45 I get more confused when she's at odds with my total (2)
- 46 In Halifax, Werner's transformative weekends were always on time (abbrev)
- 47 That air mile song is so provincial!
- 50 That little imp! I bet he joins the African regiment
- 53 That indigenous campaign has an ambitious plan for the US



- 54 Was Roberts a dentist or a surgeon?
- 55 Let us celebrate this year in quiet cleanness

## DOWN

- 1 The Toronto party avoided an overshoe (2)
- 2 Sounds like he made a big fuss when he said goodbye to Trois Rivières
- 3 Father John, you're making big money in the restaurant! \$1.50, eh?
- 4 Invisible election pointer
- 5 Hey Mr! Gas up at one of these units!
- 6 Is that guy local or is he from England or South America? (2)
- 7 It sounds like a girl fell in the sinkhole
- 8 They may have seniority but they're not always the Weisers
- 9 Don't bank on Toronto making your day—it's just not their territory
- 12 Do you think it's appropriate to use Cinzano oil to take over?
- 13 Sorry, I know this is too short but it does represent a deliciously long number!
- 17 In '67 I talked Anne into joining and bringing her island
- 19 Where Mario works when he's in the EU (abbrev)
- 20 The galleries south of that street in Texas get lots of oohs and aahs
- 24 That great dog loves pastry
- 26 Does that group of northern WASPS like Guinness? (abbrev)
- 27 Sounds like those sheltered politicians up there were stymied by tissue
- 30 Edgar was reading with the Buddhist-sounding group. Whatcha doin'?
- 34 They all resent that bear they're stewing
- 36 How Justin gets his waterfall

- 37 Sam, the doctor says this writer is to be there in the morning (2)
- 38 We can visit the block up there, but no camping (2)
- 39 Ten to the minus 18 would suit us to a T
- 41 Around here we ride horses to the sea
- 42 Joy, how much should you get for those lyrics?
- 43 Will that Canadian organization keep the mosquitoes out? (abbrev)
- 44 Hey Butch, the other one might be fatal
- 48 As the story goes, the conductor used gas
- 49 The baby took care to put her mother beside her
- 51 That makes an attractive sound picture, doesn't it? (abbrev)
- 52 My dad joined the psychologists in Edmonton (abbrev)

The winners for Puzzle 105 were Jim Lowe and Brian Goth. Again. You're too good!



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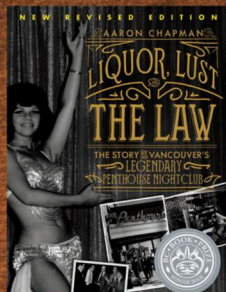
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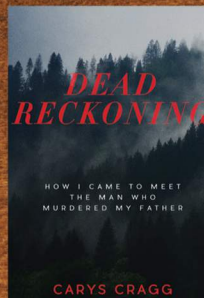
# A FALL FOR ALL



## LIQUOR, LUST, AND THE LAW

*Aaron Chapman*

An updated edition of Chapman's colorful history of Vancouver's legendary Penthouse Nightclub, including new material and photos.



## DEAD RECKONING

*Carys Cragg*

A gripping and emotional memoir in which the author comes to meet the man who murdered her father twenty years earlier.



## FIGHTING FOR SPACE

*Travis Lupick*

"Travis Lupick's fascinating book should help inform a more rational understanding of addictions treatment and drug policies everywhere."  
—Dr. Gabor Maté

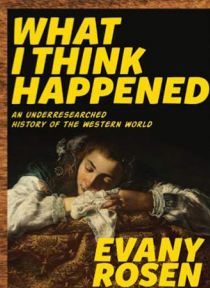


## SAIGON CALLING

*Marcelino Truong;  
David Homel, trans.*

A graphic memoir about growing up Vietnamese in London as the Vietnam War intensifies. "An excellent combination of personal insight and historical sweep."

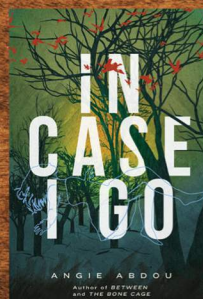
—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred)



## WHAT I THINK HAPPENED

*Evany Rosen*

From Charles Demers' new humour imprint Robin's Egg Books. "If this blurb has the power to make you do one thing today, may I politely suggest that you get on the stick and read *What I Think Happened?*"  
—Samantha Bee



## IN CASE I GO

*Angie Abdou*

"Angie Abdou has written a grown-up work of fantasy, transporting as it is grounded and real."

—Andrew Pyper



## DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO

*Dina Del Bucchia*

"Dina Del Bucchia writes that fictional line that divides tragedy and comedy, a line is also unrelentingly, achingly human."

—Jen Sookfong Lee



## ORACLE BONE

*Lydia Kwa*

"A transfixing narrative that bears the intimate familiarity of a dream with the grandeur of a historical epic."

—Doretta Lau

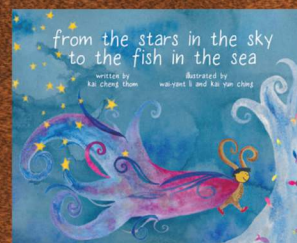


## TARRY THIS NIGHT

*Kristyn Dunnion*

"In a time when real life can feel like a dystopia, *Tarry This Night* reveals the fatherly face of bullying and repression."

—Emily Pohl-Weary



## FROM THE STARS IN THE SKY TO THE FISH IN THE SEA

*Kai Cheng Thom*

A beautiful children's picture book about a gender variant child and their mother's enduring love. Illustrated by Kai Yung Ching and Wai-Yant Li.