

# GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA

NUMBER 110

FALL 2018

\$8.95



## Mired in Artifice

Culturama  
Goulash Socialism  
Everything Turns Away  
Secret Heart of Albania



# freedom to read week

FEBRUARY 24 to MARCH 2, 2019

Order *Freedom to Read*, our annual review of current censorship issues in Canada, and our 2019 poster at

[freedomtoread.ca](http://freedomtoread.ca)

Visit our Facebook page and join the conversation  
 @Freedom\_to\_Read #FTRWeek

Book and  
 Periodical  
 Council

THE 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
*GEIST* LITERAL LITERARY

# POSTCARD STORY CONTEST

Winning entries will be published  
in *Geist* and at [geist.com](http://geist.com).

**DEADLINE**  
February 15, 2019

**DETAILS**  
at [geist.com](http://geist.com)

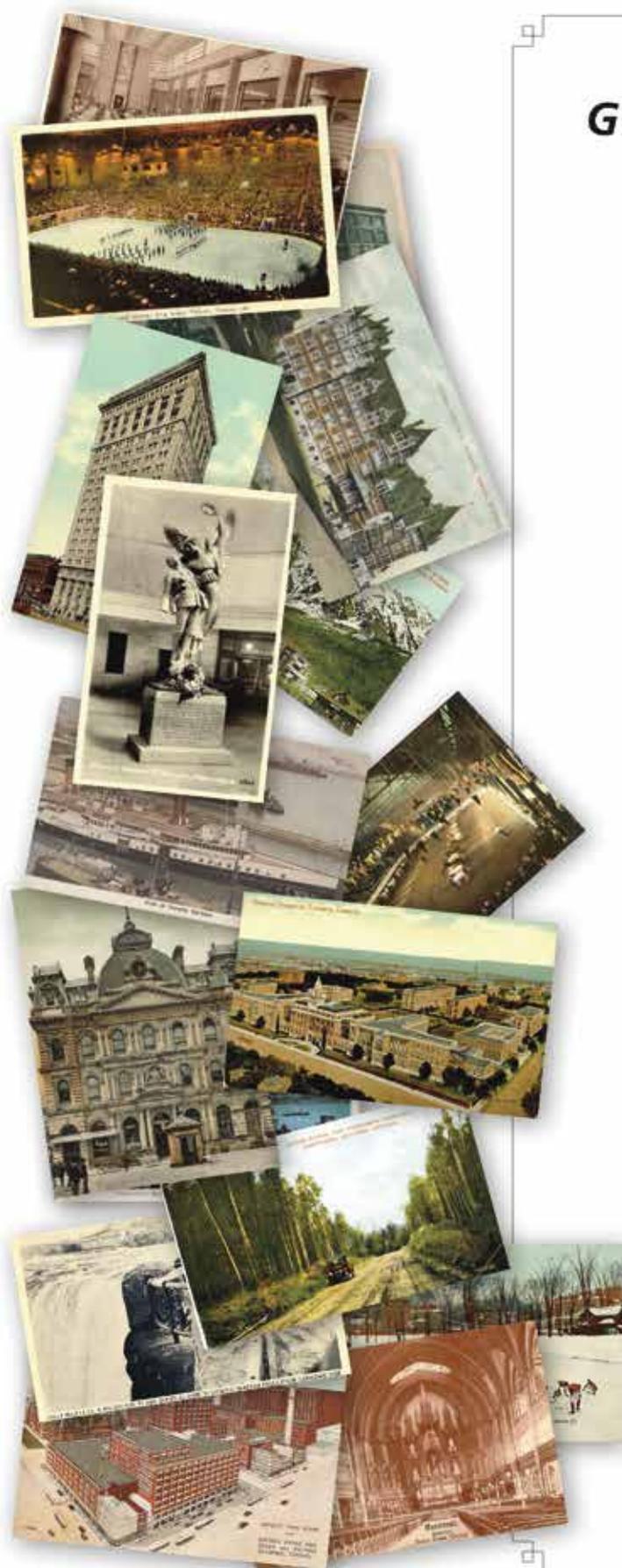
**CASH  
PRIZES**

"Just about the most fun  
you can have at the writing desk."

—a happy *Geist* Postcard  
Story Contest entrant

# GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



# GEIST

Volume 27 • Number 110 • Fall 2018

---

## FEATURES

---

### EVERYTHING TURNS AWAY

Steven Heighton

*Going unnoticed must be  
the root sorrow for the broken*

40

### CONVERSATION WITH VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

David Milne

*Without sensory input we experience  
transcendental things*

48

### PARADE OF LOST SOULS

*The Halloween Photography  
of Christopher Grabowski*

Carnival shows us different ways to be

54



# GEIST

*All walk, no talk*

---

## NOTES & DISPATCHES

Jeff Shucard  
*King Zog and the  
Secret Heart of Albania*  
8

Susie Taylor  
*We Smoke Our Smokes*  
12

Véronique Darwin  
*K to 7*  
14

Evelyn Lau  
*Burnt*  
16

Andrea King  
*Great Historical Curiosity*  
19

Geoff Inverarity  
*Grief*  
21

---

## FINDINGS

22

*Anna Wong, road traveler*  
*The Williams Treaty*  
*Plain English*  
*Monkey Chatter*  
*Culturama*



*Chick-o tries his first comic*  
*Bike Courier Forsees His Death*  
*What Barbie Knew*  
*White Supremacy in the Bush*  
*Windfall Advisory*  
*At Safeway*  
*Lay of the Land*  
and more...

---

## COLUMNS

**BIRD'S EYE VIEW**  
*Occupation Anxiety*  
Lisa Bird-Wilson  
58

**AFTERLIFE OF CULTURE**  
*Happy Barracks*  
Stephen Henighan  
60

**CITY OF WORDS**  
*How I Became a Writer of Colour*  
Alberto Manguel  
62

---

## DEPARTMENTS

**IN CAMERA**  
4

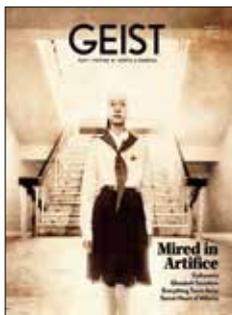
**MISCELLANY**  
6

**ENDNOTES**  
64

**OFF THE SHELF,  
NOTED ELSEWHERE**  
70

**PUZZLE**  
71

**CAUGHT MAPPING**  
72



**COVER:** *The image on  
the cover is by Nathalie  
Daoust. See more of her  
work on pages 4 and 5.*

# Korean Dreams



**K**orean *Dreams* is the most recent project of the Canadian photographer Nathalie Daoust. In it, she uses darkroom techniques to manipulate photos she took while visiting North Korea. The resulting images depict what she views as a country whose public sphere is mired in artifice, apart from reality and out of time, due to a way of life forced on the populace by a repressive authoritarian regime.

Samantha Small, an art writer from New York, writes: “Daoust deliberately

obscures her photographs during the development stage, as the layers of film are peeled off, the images are stifled until the facts become ‘lost’ in the process and a sense of detachment from reality is revealed. This darkroom method mimics the way information is transferred in North Korea—the photographs, as the North Korean people, are both manipulated until the underlying truth is all but a blur. The resultant pictures speak to North Korean society, of missing information and truth concealed.”



*Korean Dreams* will be exhibited in Espace F Gallery ([espacef.org](http://espacef.org)) in Matane, QC, until January 19, 2019, and in Watson Art Centre ([watsonart-centre.com](http://watsonart-centre.com)) in Dauphin, Manitoba, from February 1 to March 29, 2019.

Nathalie Daoust works primarily with analog photography techniques and often uses experimental darkroom methods. She is an award-winning artist whose work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions worldwide.

—AnnMarie MacKinnon



# GEIST

PUBLISHED BY  
The Geist Foundation

PUBLISHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
AnnMarie MacKinnon

OPERATIONS MANAGER  
Jocelyn Kuang

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Michał Kozłowski

ADMINISTRATION  
*Interns:* Fiona Dunnett,  
Kristen Lawson  
*Volunteers:* Anson Ching,  
Lauren Dembicky, Jonathan Heggen,  
Patty Osborne, Jennesia Pedri

BRAIN TRUST  
Stephen Osborne, Mary Schendlinger  
*Co-founders, Consulting Publishers*

DESIGNER  
Eric Uhlich

PROOFREADER  
Helen Godolphin

ACCOUNTANT  
Mindy Abramowitz CGA

CIRCULATION  
Larry Wyatt

WEB ARCHITECTS  
Metro Publisher

DISTRIBUTION  
Magazines Canada

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS  
Barbara Zatyko

FIRST SUBSCRIBER  
Jane Springer

MOST VALUABLE PUZZLERS  
Jim Lowe & Brian Goth

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS  
Jordan Abel, Bartosz Barczak, Kevin Barefoot, Kathy Battye, Trevor Battye, andrea bennett, Jill Boettger, Jasmine Cham, C.E. Coughlan, Brad Cran, Melissa Edwards, Robert Everett-Green, Daniel Francis, Randy Fred, Lily Gontard, Michael Hayward, Gillian Jerome, Brian Lam, Thad McIlroy, Billeh Nickerson, Christine Novosel, Patty Osborne, Eric Peterson, Dan Post, Debby Reis, Kris Rothstein, Norbert Ruebsaat, Jane Silcott, Roni Simunovic, Paul Tough, Eric Uhlich, Michelle van der Merwe

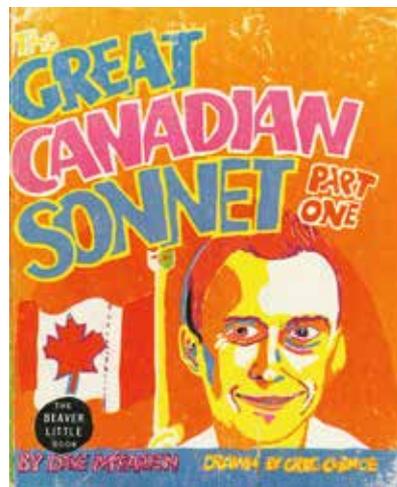
SUPPORT THE GEIST FOUNDATION:  
GEIST.COM/DONATION

WWW.GEIST.COM

## MISCELLANY

### REMEMBER DAVID MCFADDEN

When David McFadden died in June of this year, I looked for my copy of *The Great Canadian Sonnet*, which McFadden wrote in collaboration with the artist Greg Curnoe in 1974, and which became for many writers and artists a spring of new energy flowing not from New York or Toronto but from Hamilton and London, obscure cities in an obscure hinterland that became another country in the counter-culture that we had hoped was out there somewhere. But my copy of *The Great Canadian Sonnet* had disappeared in some wanton fit of lending-out, so I



went to the public library and read an unborrowable copy in Special Collections, and my suspicion was confirmed immediately that the genius of David W. McFadden will abide forever. In the non-special collections I found *A Trip Around Lake Erie*, his travelling narrative, which had been a formative text in the early years of *Geist*, so I checked that one out, along with a copy of *Shouting Your Name Down The Well*, McFadden's wonderful collection of haiku and tanka (in his persona as Genmai, he was the original adjudicator of *Geist's* long-running haiku contests). I was halfway through *A Trip Around Lake Erie*—that is, somewhere outside Sandusky, Ohio—when a slip of paper fell from its pages; it was a Hold notice made out in February of this year to the poet Judith Copithorne, whose work is contemporaneous with the work of David McFadden. The Hold notice says that she had had 8 days at the time to pick up the copy of *A Trip Around Lake Erie* that I was holding in my hand. I wondered how well they might have known each other's work, when I spotted among the blurbs for *Shouting Your Name Down The Well* a blurb by Judith Copithorne, who wrote that her favourite story was the one about following a cow swimming all night across Lake Erie.

—Stephen Osborne

### IN MEMORIAM

Priscila Singh Uppal  
1974—2018

Priscila Uppal was a smart, joyful, hard-working writer, author of fifteen books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, as well as short stories, plays, essays, memoir and literary criticism. She was also an editor, a beloved teacher and mentor, a passionate advocate for the arts and, according to *Time Out London*, Canada's coolest poet.

At *Geist* we were quite taken by Uppal's truly original memoir *Projections: Encounters with my Runaway Mother*, her account of finding her long-lost mother online and travelling to Brazil to meet her. Mum is a film critic whose life is built around movies; Uppal structured the story in the same way: ten chapters, each named for a film her mother had seen a hundred or more times, or a film about Brazil or mothers and daughters. "It's a very real way in which many of us attempt to understand the difficult people in our lives," she told CBC in 2014. "We look at the role models in art." Read an excerpt at [geist.com/findings/absent-mother/](http://geist.com/findings/absent-mother/)

## TOMATO, POTATTO

Mary Schendlinger's Parker pen story ("World's Most Wanted," *Geist* 108) reminded me of a CBC interview between (if my memory serves me right) Peter Gzowski and a woman who had come to Canada from the Caribbean to teach somewhere in the north. She was met at the airport by a man who drove her to her hotel and who, en route, instructed her to go to the local Hudson's Bay store and buy a parka. She thought it odd that he would instruct her to buy a pen, but she later dutifully went to the Bay and bought herself a nice Parker pen. The next morning she travelled farther north in a small plane. As she hurried across the tarmac at her destination she became aware of an odd sensation, which she only identified after she had sat for several minutes in the front seat of a pickup truck, between two men in parkas, and felt their warmth penetrate her freezing body.

—Patty Osborne, *North Vancouver*

## CAUGHT READING

A young reader in Houston, Texas, enjoys a recent issue of *Geist*.



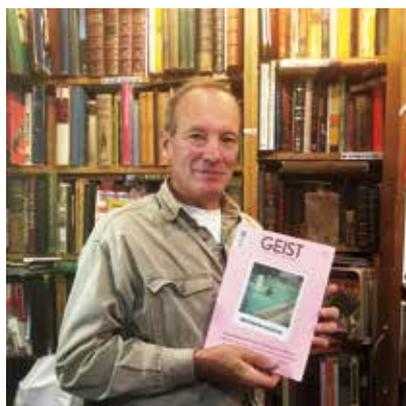
## CAUGHT MUNCHING

Our tiny friend in Vancouver, BC, enjoys a recent issue of *Geist*.



## GEIST AT LARGE

Long-time *Geist* contributing editor Michael Hayward visited Brian Spence, the proprietor of The Abbey Bookshop, a Canadian bookshop in Paris and gave him a copy of *Geist*. The shop in "Paris's Latin Quarter has for the last twenty years become a cultural epicenter for Canadians, Anglophones and Anglophiles from all corners of the world."



## WRITE TO GEIST

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

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

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum.

*Geist* is published four times a year.

Contents copyright © 2018 The Geist Foundation. All rights reserved.

Subscriptions: in Canada: \$25 (1 year); in the United States: \$40; and elsewhere: \$45. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

Correspondence and inquiries:  
subs@geist.com, advertising@geist.com,  
letters@geist.com, editor@geist.com.

Include SASE with Canadian postage or IRC with all submissions and queries.  
#210 – 111 West Hastings Street  
Vancouver BC Canada V6B 1H4

Submission guidelines are available at  
geist.com.  
ISSN 1181-6554.

*Geist* swaps its subscriber list with other cultural magazines for one-time mailings. Please contact us if you prefer not to receive these mailings.

Publications Mail Agreement 40069678

Registration No. 07582

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
Circulation Department,  
#210 – 111 West Hastings Street  
Vancouver BC Canada V6B 1H4  
Email: geist@geist.com  
Tel: (604) 681-9161, 1-888-GEIST-EH;  
Fax: (604) 677-6319; Web: geist.com

*Geist* is a member of Magazines Canada and the Magazine Association of BC. Indexed in the *Canadian Literary Periodicals Index* and available on microfilm from University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

The Geist Foundation receives assistance from private donors, the Canada Council, the BC Arts Council, the City of Vancouver and the Cultural Human Resources Council.



## King Zog and the Secret Heart of Albania

JEFF SHUCARD

*There is no trace of any discrimination against Jews in Albania, because Albania happens to be one of the rare lands in Europe today where religious prejudice and hate do not exist, even though Albanians themselves are divided into three faiths.*

—Herman Bernstein, the United States Ambassador to Albania, 1934



On the eve of World War II, as Hitler polished up his war machine for global conquest, Benito Mussolini, his fascist ally to the south, parodied the Führer by invading the small, isolated kingdom of Albania, whose shores lay, perhaps symbolically, within kicking distance of the heel of the Italian boot. A remote and neglected outpost of the Ottoman Empire for more than four hundred

years, Albania remained an impoverished feudal kingdom, largely inaccessible, lacking railways, telephone lines and electric power beyond the capital of Tirana. To complete this picture of backwardness, there were few public schools; the population was largely illiterate and people lived as serfs in mountain clans whose only system of justice was an ancient code of honour and blood vengeance called *Kanun*.

Albania's ruler during the 1920s and '30s, Ahmet Zogolli, the self-appointed King Zog, is one of modern European history's most fascinating characters. Educated in Istanbul, Zogolli was the privileged son of an Ottoman *bey*, or chieftain. After youthful sojourns in Constantinople and Vienna, where he acquired a taste for café society and bespoke attire, he returned home and entered Albanian politics, being a signer of the Albanian declaration of independence in 1912. Educated and ambitious, Zogolli advanced rapidly in the fledgling Albanian state, becoming prime minister, then president, before crowning himself king. Inspired by his contemporary Muslim reformer in Ankara, Atatürk, he attempted to modernize his backward kingdom by introducing a European judicial system and universal primary education. A fiscal alliance with Italy opened the door to the world of progress.

But King Zog was not without his enemies. The price of Italian investment was onerous and the psychological leap from clan to centralized government, contentious. It is reported that no fewer than six hundred blood feuds were issued against him and that he survived fifty-five assassination attempts, being wounded twice in gun battles with would-be killers: Zog, no coward and raised in a culture of sanctified killing, carried a loaded pistol with him at all times.

If such accounts sound apocryphal, we might well add the 200-cigarettes-a-day jag he is said to have adhered to faithfully. The European press portrayed Zog as a charming, exotic oddity. In formal photographs we see him decked out in the full despot regalia of the epoch: chest laden with outsized medals and ribbons, shoulders replete with gold-braided, tasselled epaulettes.

He looks for all the world like Errol Flynn playing Chaplin's Great Dictator, right down to the pencil-thin moustache, the insouciant smile and the rakish tilt of the visor cap.



Ironically enough, of all the fanciful stories western journalists concocted about Zog, it is the seemingly least believable reportage that is the most remarkable: the claim that Albert Einstein spent three days in Tirana as Zog's guest at the royal manor. Although a more unlikely social pairing would be difficult to imagine, it must be understood the visit was not a social one, and that Einstein was hardly alone in journeying to Albania. Scores of fellow Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slavs, Greeks and others were suddenly making their way to Zog's isolated kingdom for the same singular purpose: to escape the Nazi death camps. For although this story has never been told, King Zog, despite his impoverished monarchy, despite the isolation and archaic circumstances of his kingdom, despite the fact that Albania was the only predominantly Muslim country in Europe, despite all we know of the Holocaust through literature and film, did something truly remarkable and singularly courageous in a world about to experience unimaginable cataclysm: he opened

his borders to all those seeking safety from Nazi persecution. This act saved thousands of lives, and revealed what I call the secret heart of Albania, that to this day remains unknown to the world. So, yes, I can imagine Albert and Ahmet deep in conversation, in a dense miasma of tobacco smoke, on the eve of destruction, for Albert was only one of thousands of Jews who were welcomed into this humble kingdom as honoured guests, sheltered and protected. This story now makes perfect sense to me, for in a way, it is my story as well.

The chances of having an Albanian as a neighbour in Vancouver are very slim. In all of Canada, there are only some twenty thousand ethnic Albanians, half of those residing in Toronto. According to Statistics Canada, Greater Vancouver is home to only about six hundred Albanian souls. That works out to about .024 percent of the population. Most probably, like myself at one time, you have never met an Albanian or know anyone who has ever been to Albania or could even place it correctly on a world map. Don't feel bad. Albania, like Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, all those other obscure *-stans*, barely registers in our consciousness. Yet sixty-some years after the Albanian people saved every single Jewish citizen and refugee who knocked upon their kingdom's door, an Albanian newcomer to Vancouver saved yet another Jewish life: my own. If our DNA is mapped as a journey between the invisible dots the Greeks perceived as Fate, then every step of my journey to the secret heart of Albania has been guided along from one dot to the next by an unseen hand upon my shoulder, gently nudging me on.

King Zog would have been shocked by the Albania into which the symphonic conductor Bujar Llapaj was born in 1956. The once fiercely independent people who had continually resisted Ottoman occupation,

who defied the Nazis in saving thousands of guests at risk of losing their lives, no longer existed. By late 1944, while Zog languished in exile in England, the political vacuum created by the Nazi retreat from Albania was filled by a group of Communist partisans led by the enigmatic Marxist Enver Hoxha. Hoxha, a complex, paranoid sociopath, looked to Stalin and then Mao as role models—Khrushchev being far too progressive for his taste. Mao, quick to recognize a kindred malevolent spirit, admired Hoxha's brutality in crushing his enemies (real or perceived) and his total lack of empathy for his fellow man. The Chairman shipped Hoxha tons of grain while literally starving his own population to death. Hoxha, returning the compliment, created his own Cultural Revolution, a brutal campaign of dehumanization in which thousands were imprisoned and tortured. By the 1960s Hoxha had succeeded in erasing Albania from world consciousness, turning it into the North Korea of Europe: a failed totalitarian society from which no citizen escaped, and into which no outsider ventured. When he died in 1985, he bequeathed the citizens of the People's Republic of Albania an average annual income of \$15 a month. So much for Uncle Enver's beneficence.



As contact with the outside world was eliminated, so too was knowledge of Albania's affairs and history. This was the epoch of the great

Totalitarian Magicians, the masters of the act of disappearance. Poof, *et voila*, the past, the present (and, in effect, the future) gone in a cloud of smoke. As Milan Kundera wrote in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*: “The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster.”

The new books were the *biografi*, the dossiers compiled by the secret police in which one’s very thoughts could be used as evidence of subversion. The new culture was one of enforced atheism augmented by idolatry of Uncle Enver and abject poverty. Bujar, who grew up in a small mountain village outside Gjirokaster, where his father’s one cow provided the family with milk and butter, one day watched as it was led away to a collective farm whose collective milk return to them was zero. By the time he married, there was no milk or almost anything else of value left in the entire country. As Bujar recently put it, being penniless or a being a millionaire made no difference, as there was nothing to buy, not so much as a light bulb. It was during this period of paucity that he and Lindita had a child. Lindita took their child and crossed the border into Greece.

I met Bujar shortly after he and his family arrived in Canada and he joined an ESL class I was teaching for newcomers. In a decade of teaching many hundreds of immigrants to Vancouver, I had never had an Albanian student. Neither had I ever had a student involved in the creative arts, let alone the celebrated conductor of

his national symphony. We quickly became friends over Brahms and Schubert, and as we were neighbours, we often socialized. In exchange for teaching Bujar how to drive and his son Albi the rudiments of baseball, I was often invited to dinner. I always felt that I got the best of that bargain.

Late one night at home I found myself in terrible pain, paralyzed on my living room floor, stricken with a rare condition called discitis. What had begun as a backache during the day got progressively worse until I could no longer move. I began to panic. I felt as though I were being stabbed to death by a very large, sharp



knife. Luckily, I was able to pull the phone over and I dialed my new Albanian friends’ number. Bujar was at my door a few minutes later to scrape me off the floor. In the ensuing days of hardship, while I struggled to get proper care from a hospital staff that misdiagnosed my condition, Bujar never left my side. I could not have survived without him.

It was while convalescing at home, regaining my ability to walk, that I also took my first tentative steps toward Albania. I could not possibly have known that the compassion Bujar showed me extended beyond himself to something much larger. I had no reason to imagine otherwise, yet I felt compelled to learn all I could about Albania and travel to his native home—in search of what, I couldn’t say.

Perhaps I was simply looking for a way of thanking him for saving my

life, for there is no effective way, I discovered, to express one’s gratitude for this ultimate act of compassion: the act is at once too enormous and too ordinary for either of you to give voice to. Bujar to this day shrugs off any notion that he saved my life, yet I know without doubt that I wouldn’t be here without his help. It’s an agreeable sparring session we’ve long engaged in: my gratitude vs. his humility.

Isaac Bashevis Singer once wrote that every secret yearns to reveal itself. He could well have been writing about the secret heart of Albania. I spent several futile months searching book stores and the internet for materials on the country. Unfortunately, I didn’t find anything of value—even twenty years after the fall of Hoxha it seemed there was very little interest in this forgotten land. Beyond some lifeless scholarly articles and books, and equally

mundane volumes of Albanian folk tales and customs, real insight into this country was nowhere to be seen. Even the one biography of King Zog had no mention of Albert’s visit or the official sanctuary given Jewish refugees.

Meanwhile, Bujar and family settled into their new lives. Lindita found work as a violin instructor and Bujar became the principal conductor of Vancouver’s West Coast Symphony. I too returned to work, grateful to return to society, although my gait, for the moment, resembled that of Frankenstein’s monster. But I hadn’t given up my search, and one day I detected the faintest of signals that just barely registered on the Google Geiger counter of knowledge. The signal emanated from an obscure academic item, a review of a humble, poorly edited, self-published book: *Rescue in Albania: One Hundred*

*Percent of Jews in Albania Rescued*, written by a Palm Springs lawyer named Harvey Sarner. The book was only available through a direct request to the author.

Even before Mr. Sarner's illuminating little book arrived with all the facts, narratives and testimonies (including an account of his own serendipitous journey to the heart of Albania), I could now intuit that Bujar's compassion was not singular in nature. But who could have imagined an entire culture predicated on an ancient tradition of compassion, loving kindness and a desire to help those in need? This tradition, conceived in the ancient Illyrian principles of freedom and independence, became a code of honour: *besa*, the keeping of one's word, faith or promise, which even today stands as the highest ethical code in the country. One who embraces *besa* is someone who keeps his word, someone to whom one can trust one's life, the lives of one's family and guests—in fact, anyone who crosses your threshold or your border. The door King Zog opened was for the “guests” of his nation. Their protection and well-being in time of need was a matter of national pride, the pride of a people who, although isolated by geography and oppression, possessed a humanity that was universal. The Albanian people, it must be understood, did not hide their Jewish neighbours and foreign refugees from the occupying Nazis: acting as one, the entire nation, from their king to members of government down to the humblest peasant, made them all “Albanians,” issuing passports, letters of transit, identity cards, work permits, whatever documents were necessary to protect them, and welcomed them into their homes as aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, grandmothers and grandfathers, at great risk to their own lives. In one brutal instance, the SS machine-gunned an entire village, ninety people, for refusing to provide

lists of Jews within the country. Not one “guest” was ever handed over. Albania was the only European country to have a larger Jewish population after the war than before it.

It is now March 2018, and I am on a two-week concert tour of the Balkans with the West Coast Symphony, led by Maestro Llapaj. My assignment is to write an account of the tour, but today we are taking a break from our hectic schedule to visit Bujar's childhood home near Gjirokaster. The musicians do not know of my special history with Bujar, or of my long search for King Zog, *besa* and the secret heart of Albania. But they know their conductor. Their respect and love of his passion and dedication to the orchestra, and his talent, good humour and generosity, go without saying. For me, visiting Bujar's home, meeting his brothers and sister, seeing where he grew up, the craggy heights above the plateau, is the culmination of this journey. Sitting on the sofa in the little parlour with his family, sipping his brother's raki, I feel the unseen hand lift from my shoulder and I shed a few tears. Luckily no one notices. I lift my glass in a toast to King Zog, to Harvey Sarner, to the mountains and the proud, fiercely independent people who inhabited these barely accessible regions, who through the mysterious connecting of the dots brought Bujar, *besa*, to my door.

Today, Albania belongs to those post-communist nations generally designated by the West as “emerging” countries. Superficially, a pleasant patina of well-being coats the cities and towns, rural villages and agricultural lands we have seen and visited. Unfortunately, a cursory scratching at the surface reveals the crippling problems of a struggling economy and a political body being eaten away by corruption. On a profound level, though, it is the psychological *re-emerging* from the collective damage of decades of totalitarianism that

represents Albania's greatest challenge. As Mirela Kumbaro, the Albanian Minister of Culture, expressed in my interview with her in Gjirokaster, this unlocking of the prison doors, the squinting, so to speak, into the blinding light of the free world, has not necessarily been an easy transition. Kumbaro spoke of the importance of this tour, the building of cultural bridges through music, new friendships, the donating of musical instruments to young music students and the sitting down at our hosts' tables and breaking bread. I'm already working on my next visit.

---

*Jeff Shucard was born in Paterson, New Jersey. He attended the Minneapolis School of Art and Franconia College. After a decade of foreign travel, he settled in Vancouver for twenty years and worked in education and music. Now he lives in Portugal. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

## Self-Publish.ca



All you need to know  
about  
**SELF-PUBLISHING**

Call for a free  
consultation  
**604-929-1725**  
[info@self-publish.ca](mailto:info@self-publish.ca)

The Vancouver Desktop  
Publishing Centre  
4360 Raeburn Street  
North Vancouver, BC

HELPING SELF-PUBLISHERS SINCE 1986

# We Smoke Our Smokes

SUSIE TAYLOR

*You'd think May's daughter was frickin' Einstein the way May goes on*

I start my day with nicotine. I have coffee too, but it's less important than that glorious first smoke that sets my head straight and gets everything moving. That first smoke baptizes my brain and clears out all the shit from yesterday.

Once I'm out the door I reward myself with another cigarette as I drag my ass down to work. When I get there I unlock the door, count the float, and then I get on with it; I sell people what they need. I like it to be busy but not too busy. Not like the days when we get the delivery for beer and chips the same time: store's so small I got to stack the boxes in the aisle, and then I got to make sure no youngster (or middle-aged skeet) helps himself to a box of Doritos while I'm checking his nan's tickets.

First thing in the morning I only get two kinds of customers: the ones driving into town and the b'ys headed down to the boats. They all come in for cigarettes. The ones commuting usually have a smoke standing under the awning with me before they drive off. They won't smoke in their cars. It's like they think it don't count if they smoke 'em outside. Those that work around here buy their Canadian Classics then slam their car doors shut and peel out, lighting up the same time.

Next, I get some school kids coming for breakfast: Joe Louis and a Pepsi, bag of chips, sometimes a bar. We got bananas and apples on the counter but they never take those. 'Round the same time, my drinkers show up. We just sell beer and I can't sell none till eight-thirty so they waits around twitching till I can ring 'em through. Few of them get the shakes so bad they can't wait till they get home to have a drink. They down their first beer of the morning

sitting in front of a steering wheel or 'round back of the store. I pretend I seen nothing and pick up the bottles later. Some will have been at it hard all night; won't stop till they pass out. And once in a while one of them will stop coming altogether and we get a funeral notice to hang in the window.

I don't get a real break, but I don't mind. I pop out now and then for a quick puff. Mid-morning you only get a few customers. People run in for toilet paper, milk, a couple break-opens and cigarettes. There's always someone coming in for some smokes and a chat. I talk about the weather and who's pregnant, or dead, or up to the hospital for chemo.

At noon Brenda or May comes in. We get another run from the school at lunch time; kids in for a bar and a can of pop. And jerky. They all got a thing for jerky these days, and the weirder the flavour the more they seem to like it. Brenda thinks it's just a fad but May, she's got some weird ideas. She thinks they put chemicals in the meat that make it addictive. Calls it Meat Crack.

The afternoon slump is hard. That's when the boredom sets in and May starts really grating on my nerves. She talks too damn much about her daughter up at the university. I know Louise and she ain't no smarter than anyone else 'round here. You'd think she was frickin' Einstein the way May goes on.

**M**e and Jimmy, we got no kids. Just never happened. Of course, when we were younger we used protection, sometimes anyways, but later when I was done school we stopped with the condoms. A couple times my period was late and I had a little shimmer of excitement but then I'd start

bleeding. We never talk about it. May asked me once why we got no kids. I said to her, "Mind your own fucking beeswax," and that shut her up.

I guess it must be my tubes or whatever. And now I'm forty. Old enough to be someone's nan. And Jimmy, he's stayed with me even though I couldn't give him no children.

It's on slow afternoons that you get customers who hang 'round too long. Sometimes it's just a harmless old one, in to buy some milk or a paper they don't need. Makes me sad how many people end up alone. I'll chat for a bit and then start moving stuff around when they gots to go. They always get the message.

The dirty men, they're different. They come in a few times and then one day they hug you. *He's just old and lonely*, you think. But then he'll be back the next day, and the next, and then his grubby fingers start reaching to touch your bum or a little bit of your boob and you think, *No, he can't be*. But he is. May says I'm overreacting and it's all political correctness gone mad. "He just wants a little hug. He ain't doing no harm," she'll say, like it's part of my job to get touched up by some old pervert every now and then. These days when I see one of them coming I get in behind the counter. I've even pretended to be talkin' on the phone. Brenda crosses her arms over her chest when one of the creepy ones shows up and grunts in response to any chit-chat. They always fuck right off when they sees Brenda.

At three, school's out: bars, chips, cans, jerky—the occasional smart-ass asking for cigarettes or trying to bring a case up to the counter.

Most evenings I'm off at four. Every couple of weeks one of the part-timers calls in sick or quits. If it's me and Brenda working, she'll stay 'til close at eleven. and I'll hang on until six so she gets her supper. But if it's May I always end up working the night shift, even though I been in that damn place since 6:00 a.m. She's always got some

excuse: her mom needs her insulin shot, her husband's home from off-shore, her back's hurting. I got excuses too, but somehow I always got to be the one that stays. I smoke a lot when I work nights. It helps calm my nerves.

I don't get put on night shifts regular no more, not since I got held up. It don't happen very often here, everyone knows each other. But in St. John's they get robbed all the time. Some hard case goes in with a knife, a syringe, a chainsaw, and wants the clerk to hand over money. Once in a while the cashier gets all foolish and refuses to hand nothing over. Sometimes one of the employees will chase after the criminal after they been robbed. Think they're some kind of minimum-wage superhero. You see them on the news later, standing outside the store acting all proud for wrestling down some alcoholic seventy-year-old who stole a pack of smokes and the butt end of a bologna.

After our store got robbed, Brenda said she'da hung on to the money. But she weren't the one standing behind the counter looking at those crazy drugged-up eyes. That boy looked at me and I knew he woulda slit my throat if I didn't hand over everything in the till.

The police were good. Told me I done the right thing. The boss kept asking if I were sure I didn't recognize the perp. He used that word a lot that week like he thought he were on a detective show. "You know everyone 'round here. Are you sure the perp didn't look familiar?"

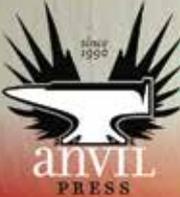
I ain't foolish enough to make trouble over \$275 and the beer the little fuck dropped. He wasn't thinking straight when he grabbed those bottles. It's hard to make a fast getaway with a full case on your handlebars. I never told no one about the pink bicycle and its blue-glitter banana seat the kid was riding.

At the end of my shift I buy Jimmy's beer. He'll pick me up my coolers from the store at the other end of town; they got the liquor licence. I look forward to that first drink. I put an extra shot of rum in my first Breezer. We like a draw too. If the weather's grand we'll sit outside, but most of the time we watch the TV. Used to go the bars on the weekends but after the smoking ban came in, they both closed down.

In the evening we drink our drinks and smoke our smokes and then we go to sleep.

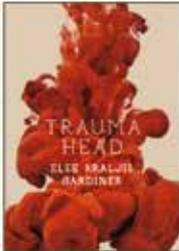
---

*Susie Taylor's work has appeared in PULP Literature, Riddle Fence, Room and The Impression Gang. She won the 2015 NLCU Fresh Fish Award for Emerging Writers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her first novel, Even Weirder Than Before, will be published in 2019 by Breakwater Books. She lives in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland.*



## FIRESIDE READING

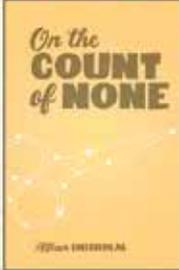
info@anvilpress.com | www.anvilpress.com



**TRAUMA HEAD**  
long poem memoir by Elee Kraljii Gardiner

"Elee Kraljii Gardiner's *Trauma Head* is a quicksilvered mirror—a startling and exquisite sequence of poems. ... Difficult, devastating, and meticulously crafted, this work is a rewarding chronicle of persistence through the trauma of recovery and return."  
— Sandra Ridley, author of *Silvija*

140 PAGES / \$18 / ISBN: 978-1-77214-122-1



*On the  
COUNT  
of NONE*  
poetry by Allison Chisholm

"Allison Chisholm's poems are plain-talking spirals of wit and description. She walks the reader along a path of surprises—a straightforward line steps to another straightforward line, but getting there involves Escher-like angles. What a great first book, full of a persuasive and clear form of surrealism!"  
— Alice Burdick, author of *Department*

72 PAGES / \$18 / ISBN: 978-1-77214-125-2



**THE KNOCKOFF ECLIPSE**  
stories by Melissa Bull

"This is the world I want to inhabit: full of gloriously flawed human beings, singular and part of a brilliant inclusive weave. These tales give me hope for the future."  
— Sina Queryas, author of *My Ariel*

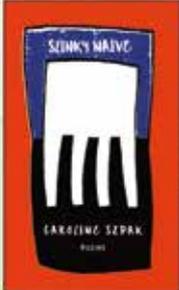
160 PAGES / \$18 / ISBN: 978-1-77214-120-7



**THE SECOND DETECTIVE**  
Winner of the 40th Annual 3-Day Novel Contest! by Shannon Mullally

"*The Second Detective* by Shannon Mullally is a marvelous book. Which is to say that it is both filled with marvels (of insight, of language, of perception) and really, really good."  
— Laird Hunt, author of *In the House in the Dark of the Woods*

96 PAGES / \$16 / ISBN: 978-1-77214-128-3



**SLINKY NAÏVE**  
poetry by Caroline Szpak

"The urban, visceral, longing-infused poems in *Slinky Naive* are fast, dense, and laser-focused. And when the lines are funny, and they often are, it's like laughing before the blade comes down."  
— Stuart Ross, author of *A Sparrow Came Down Resplendent*

108 PAGES / \$18 / ISBN: 978-1-77214-115-3

Notes & Dispatches 13

# K to 7

VÉRONIQUE DARWIN

*Journal entries written from kindergarten through grade seven.*

## KINDERGARTEN

We heard a phone call on the baby monitor. I think it was ghosts.

My sister told me that at my house the witch comes up the stairs at 6:36.

Stuff that starts with T: tabule, tabe, twane, thyo, tlgo, tadrle, talt, tv, the, through, too, to, tehs, trees, tall.

I used to cry for my mom but now I do not. I'm strong.

## GRADE 1

For her birthday I got my mom a flowerpot. My sister got her some soup, things that melt in the bath and a tape of Celine Dion. My daddy got her Umbro shorts. When we came home, mommy stepped on some dog poo, then my sister and I wrapped the presents.

I wanted to type on the typewriter. My sister said I was only allowed if I gave her some gum, so I did. I wrote four lines, then my mommy called me to have a bath. I went to my room to get some clean underpants. After my bath, I begged to play a bit more. Mommy gave in, so I did six more lines before I had to go to bed.

I wish I could meet Nick Carter from the Backstreet Boys. I want to have a boy who likes me. What month will I meet my dream boy? Marry?

## GRADE 2

My sister is going to skip cooking class to go see this cute guy who she thinks is Australian. He works at a store downtown and if you kiss him you get a discount. Will she do it? I'm scared of her when she comes back from downtown.

Wow! Daddy turned on the TV!

What I want for my birthday: a movie of the twins Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, the book of the movie *Toy Story*, a tiny house for Playmobils (I will find room), Jason David Frank, Jason David Frank, Jason David Frank.

Spying look outs: Window A (upstairs, my room), Window B (upstairs, hallway), Window C (middle floor, screen door), Window D (downstairs, laundry room). Suspects: Laura (baby), Danielle (toddler).

## GRADE 3

I very much hope someone will invite me to the grade four dance.

Mikey danced with me! He said he would either rap dance with me or do the tango.

My report card said I had four things to improve on. Oh well.

We had an end-of-the-year sleepover at Lucy's and we stayed up until four in the morning! My three friends and I started a band called The Crazy Teenagers. Here are our songs: "You and Me," "Sitting on the Moon," "Chick on Either Side," "All I Really Really Want." When I came back home I was so tired I couldn't do anything.

I threw up twice tonight. I threw up first on the floor and Mama cleaned it up. Then I did it in the bowl and on the washcloth (oops!). Mama cleaned that up, then I fell asleep.

## GRADE 4

I promised myself I'd be really fair and nice to all my friends today, but I think I forgot my promise. I am going

to do that tomorrow, from the minute I wake up until forever.

I found out today that I'm not afraid to admit to loving Mikey.

Tomorrow I'm going to ask Miss Jones if I can be put more near the front because I can't see the board that well. I think I might need glasses.

Karen and I went to Fraser's house and we called Mikey. He didn't know I was there, but Fraser put him on speaker-phone. Mikey said, "I want to be stuck on an airplane alone with her."

## GRADE 5

Today was one of the worst days of my life. The principal told us that our teacher is leaving. I took a sip from my water bottle to try and hide my feelings, but I started crying anyways. What does she mean? Will she ever explain? Why did she leave? And will she please come back? I don't think I'll ever want to go to school again.

My friends and I decided that this is all the principal's fault. We have to take the blame off ourselves.

Now that Lucas likes me, I am a part of the Truth or Dare gang.

Stop saying: um, like and right.

It's 9:00 p.m. and my dad says it's too late to read. Yeah, right! I want to read and get my brain off of concentrating on MY life.

I should make a T-shirt that has a shocked face on it and says "Help, God, What Am I Looking At?"

Tomorrow I'm going to wear my new shoes. They're actually my sister's old high-heeled jellies.

I didn't get out of my tank top and boxers today. I watched wrestling, ate

a Fudgsicle, played *The Yukon Trail* and did a lice check for camp (none).

**GRADE 6**

I want to be a woman. Sometimes sporty, but not really sporty, but I don't want to suck at sports.

I started reading *Hatchet*. It's a good book. I also read a book earlier today: *Why Just Me?* by Martyn Godfrey. It's about puberty and stuff!

I went to Hooters with my sister and her friends. It was not as slutty as I thought.

Tonight at Mama's friend Valerie's house, we sat around outside on their glider for the evening. I had some tea and lay in the hammock looking up at the stars. It made me realize how incredibly humongous this universe is, and how small I am compared to it.

**GRADE 7**

DARE lets me stare at hottie Constable Mason's face for an hour.

New Year's Eve at Jessica's was the best. At midnight we had champagne. Jessica's brother put on some fast music, turned the lights off, and we danced for six or seven songs straight. He then put on a slow song and Danny, the sixteen-year-old, asked me to dance. It was okay, but he was sort of smelly, like perfume.

Rachel's dad came in to talk to us about geothermal energy (yawn). But after lunch we had sex ed!

The Mole: I have no idea who the mole is!?!?!?

We visited our high school for next year. We (well, at least I) tried to act mature enough.

This girl from the elementary school down the block is going to court on Sunday because she egged some guy who called her a bad name. Teagan asked: "egged a guy with what?"

I met a girl named Marisse. She told me about how she was adopted, how she was really religious, and how her best friend and cousin are dying of cancer. She was nice, but very deep.

Daddy and I went for a bike ride this morning. I'd like to find a place where I can just pedal on and on without ever having to stop. Maybe someday I will.

---

*Véronique Darwin lives in Rossland, BC, where she is writing a play about her ski town. This is her first publication.*

# Burnt

EVELYN LAU

There was a fire in your former home, it was on the news.

On the ground floor, a Greek restaurant  
scorched and soaked, second and third storeys  
engulfed. The room where you once wrote,  
a black mouth open to the sea.

I walked past the ruins on Easter Sunday,  
spooning mango gelato from a waffle cone,  
along with the other sun seekers  
after a record month of rain. Children zigzagged  
past in a daze of pleasure, old women  
shuffled in glittering saris, tourists held up  
cellphones to the mile-long train carting  
its load of coal. You brought me here,  
once, in my youth when nothing impressed me.

The buildings on the beach too faded  
to charm, paint flaking, balconies  
rusting from salt air—

I liked shiny and new, black leather,  
smoked glass, it was the 90's. Grimaced  
as you crept up the side stairs, hand on rail,  
your careful old-man's gait

rousing my disgust. You wanted to share  
this relic of your former life, the lair  
where you'd written your famous books—  
it was your ex-wife's by then, of course.

*It still smells like home*, you said  
when you unlocked the door.

I wandered through modest rooms  
strewn with pillows, sticky with your past.  
Every surface smudged with sand, the air moist  
and personal, clogged with intimate history.

Your old desk at the window overlooked  
the beach. *Look at the wonderful view*, you said—  
but it was a grey day, the tide far out  
on a stretch of wet beach where a few forlorn  
seabirds staggered. All of it was dumpy.

I couldn't wait to leave. Now it was burnt up,  
like so much else, and I was walking past  
in my middle age, partner at my side.

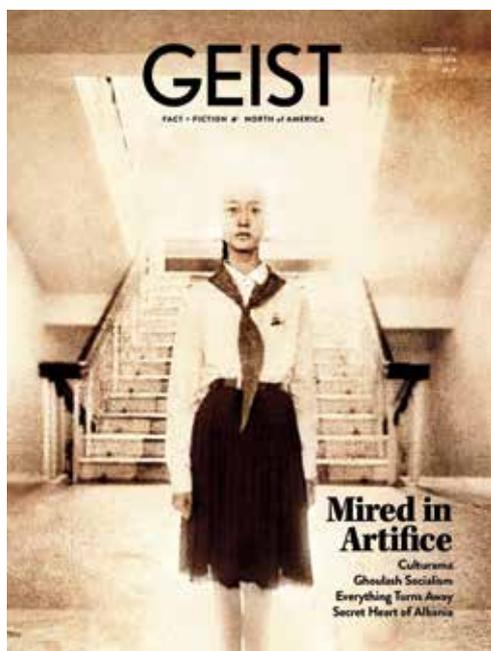
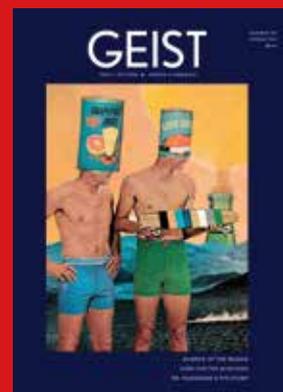
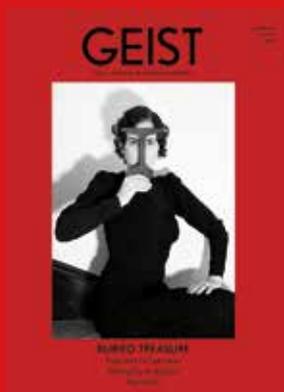
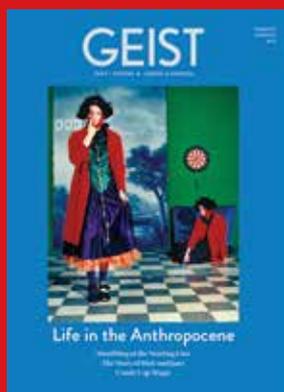
I looked up at your room and then away,  
as if from the scene of an accident. Blown-out  
windows gaped open, blasted and gone.

He and I walked along the pier, the warmth  
of the sun crowding our faces, our exposed necks.  
Later we would go for fish tacos and laugh  
at how he tried not to notice the teenage waitress,  
blond and blue-eyed, still baby-faced.

---

*Evelyn Lau is the author of twelve books, including seven volumes of poetry. Her fiction and non-fiction have been translated into a dozen languages; her poetry has received the Milton Acorn Award, the Pat Lowther Award and a National Magazine Award. Lau served as Vancouver Poet Laureate from 2011 to 2014; her most recent collection is Tumour (Oolichan, 2016). She lives in Vancouver.*

# GIVE GEIST. GET LOVE.



Take advantage of the *Geist* Fall offer: give your loved ones the year-long gift of *Geist*—that's four issues of the Canadian magazine of ideas and culture, delivered right to their door.

Order today using the handy form on the other side of this page.

**Geist FALL OFFER**



**YOUR INFO...**

I HAVE ENCLOSED \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ subscriptions.

Cheque enclosed OR please charge my  Visa  MC

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**GIFT FROM**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE START my own subscription

RENEW my own subscription

Send gift cards to me by mail

Sign cards...

**GIFT CARD instructions**

From \_\_\_\_\_

and mail directly to recipient(s)

**GIFT 1 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

NEW GIFT

RENEWAL GIFT

**GIFT 2 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

NEW GIFT

RENEWAL GIFT

**GIFT 3 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

NEW GIFT

RENEWAL GIFT

**GIFT 4 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

NEW GIFT

RENEWAL GIFT

**US & International: add \$10 US/sub for postage**

Geist does not share phone numbers and email addresses but we sometimes share snail mail lists with other like-minded organizations. Check here if you do not wish us to share your address.



**FILL OUT THIS FORM**

*and*

**give your  
reading friends  
the Gift of Geist**

**Geist Fall Offer**

**ONE  
SUBSCRIPTION**



**THREE OR MORE  
SUBSCRIPTION**



*Your own or a gift*

**4 easy ways to give Geist**



**Mail this form to:**

**GEIST #210, 111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver BC V6B 1H4**



**geist.com**



**1-888-434-7834**



**subscribe@geist.com**

Note: gift rates apply to one-year subscriptions only.  
Postage and tax included.

**GEIST**

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



# Great Historical Curiosity

ANDREA KING

*La Corriveau's story filters through legend and literature*

Hard to say when I first saw La Corriveau. She's always been there, on beer cans or bus shelters; the subject of live theatre or lame TV specials. My little cousin's costume last Halloween—black wig in disarray, ghoulish face, tattered dress and, of course, the cage.

She was born Marie-Josephte Corriveau, in 1733 in Saint-Vallier, Québec, to Joseph Corriveau and Françoise Bolduc. The only child of nine not to succumb to the various perils of the era—stillbirth, smallpox, typhus—she was destined nonetheless to meet an unfortunate end thirty years later as Québec's most infamous murderess, convicted under British martial law of killing her second husband and hanged in chains near the Plains of Abraham in 1763.

At sixteen she marries Charles Bouchard. They raise three children and work their parcel of land until Charles dies of putrid fever. A little over a year later, in July 1761, Marie-Josephte marries her neighbour, Louis Dodier.

Dodier quarrels regularly with his in-laws, who own the house in which the couple lives. Scuffles erupt between him and Joseph Corriveau over unpaid rent or access to their co-owned horse. During a disagreement over use of the family bread oven, Corriveau launches himself at his son-in-law wielding first an axe, then a hoe. And who can blame him? Dodier beat Marie-Josephte.

She flees Dodier, takes refuge at her uncle's house and appeals to the local authority of the time, one Major James Abercrombie, who convinces her to return home where she belongs. A few weeks later, early in the morning on January 27, 1763, Dodier is found dead in the barn,

bloody wounds to the head marking his demise. A dung fork lies nearby.

Witnesses gather: the parish priest, a British captain of militia, eight or nine villagers. Suspicion falls on Joseph Corriveau: did he not publicly assault his son-in-law? But Joseph shares a surname with many others in the parish—the honour of the community is at stake. It is in the best interest of all to declare the death an accident. Taking on the role of coroner, the parish priest, in his report to the authorities, writes that Louis Dodier was kicked in the head by a horse. The body is expeditiously buried—no time for a wake. Later, during the trial, one villager will complain that Dodier was buried without so much as a clean shirt.

In the village, rumours crackle. Both father and daughter had reason to want Dodier dead. The brother of the deceased files a petition with Abercrombie and demands justice. Abercrombie orders that the corpse be exhumed. The surgeon who examines the body details the nature of the head wounds: a fractured jaw and four deep punctures, perfectly spaced three inches apart. He concludes that no horse hoof could inflict such injuries. Joseph Corriveau is charged with murder, and his daughter, Marie-Josephte, charged as his accomplice.

The French have recently lost to the English at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. All cases are tried in military courts, as British civilian courts do not yet exist. The makeshift court martial is held in Quebec City's *couvent des ursulines*. The trial unfolds in English and it is unclear how much Marie-Josephte and her father understand of the proceedings. Unclear, too, whether or not the British military men who comprise the jury

understand the various French testimonies. Twenty-four witnesses take the stand: neighbours of Dodier, other villagers, the parish priest, the captain of militia, Major Abercrombie himself. Hearsay proliferates: the father is violent and quarrelsome; the daughter a slut and a drunkard who has been seen throwing up in her children's bonnets. The defence lawyer, a French Canadian, is unfamiliar with British martial law and is unable to build a solid defence. Impossible to poke holes in the witnesses' dubious testimonies—there is no cross-examination in courts-martial. Joseph Corriveau is found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by hanging. Marie-Josephte is sentenced to "Receive Sixty Lashes with a Cat and Nine Tales upon her bare back, at three different places viz under Gallows, upon the Market place of Quebec, and in the Parish of St Vallier, twenty Lashes at each place, and Branded in the Left hand with the Letter M."

This beating and branding will never take place. The day before Joseph Corriveau is scheduled to be hanged, a priest is summoned. Joseph confesses that he did not kill his son-in-law—he was merely his daughter's accomplice after the fact. The priest tells him that by remaining silent, he is committing murder against himself, thus endangering his immortal soul. Joseph accepts a pardon in exchange for his statement: "The Night of the 26th of January about ten O'Clock, this Declarant being then in his Bed, his Daughter knocked at the Window, and said in a low voice, Father come."

He let her into the house.

"Dodier is dead. I killed him."

Joseph, in his statement, says that upon hearing this, he called his daughter a "Vile Wretch" and sent her away, but later helped her drag the body from the bed to the barn. He says, "It was Marie-Josephte Corriveau who killed her Husband in his Bed, with a Blunted Hatchet." Afterwards, she burned the bloody sheets.

On Friday, April 15, 1763, Marie-Josephte is tried a second time under martial law. She confesses to killing her husband in his sleep, and is sentenced to be hanged in chains. She must pay for the iron gibbet herself. The trial lasts no more than half an hour.

**H**anged in chains means hanged twice. The first hanging is unexceptional by eighteenth-century standards: a scaffold erected at the city's highest point, a noose, a crowd hungry for grisly entertainment. All this Marie-Josephte's father, too, would have suffered.

But Marie-Josephte is a woman who has killed her husband. She must be made an example of. The second hanging is anything but routine. Once the life is choked out of her, Marie-Josephte is taken down and encased in a tight-fitting, iron exoskeleton and hauled to a well-travelled crossroads in Pointe-Lévy for display. For five weeks she decays in her cage, dangling by the hook at the top of the gibbet, after which time Governor James Murray allows the body to be taken down and buried. The display of power over the French Canadians has been made.

Easy to see why the collective memory of Marie-Josephte Corriveau has been long and fantastical. She's unequalled in her infamy and humiliation. Gibbeting was unknown to the French Canadians; even the British usually reserved this gruesome punishment for the most heinous and traitorous male criminals.

Decades pass and the story transforms, filtered through legend and literature. It wasn't one husband that La Corriveau killed, but two husbands or five or seven. She slipped arsenic into food, butchered spousal flesh with her axe. She hanged one husband, poisoned another with herbs, poked yet another in the navel with an awl. Occasionally, she is hilariously inept: when she is unsuccessful in strangling one of the husbands in his sleep, she goes at the job again with a hammer,

then a pitchfork. Over the years, she metamorphoses into a witch courted by werewolves, a ghost who rattles her cage and haunts unsuspecting male travellers on the high road at night.

The first husband's putrid fever is of course entirely forgotten. La Corriveau killed him, too, by pouring molten lead into his sleeping ears.

**I**n 1851, eighty-eight years after her death, Marie-Josephte Corriveau goes on the road.

Her cage, one bone still rattling inside, is accidentally exhumed—then is stolen—from a Pointe-Lévy cemetery. The cage is displayed first near the Bonsecours market in Montreal, then in a cabinet of curios in Quebec City. Only 25 cents to view the gibbet that contained French Canada's most notorious murderess!

By the end of August, La Corriveau has crossed the border and debarked in New York City. She is advertised in the *New York Daily Tribune* and has her own exhibit at P.T. Barnum's American Museum, alongside:

the every-where-talked-about-and-admired **HAPPY FAMILY**, a large collection of Birds, Beasts, &c., by nature hostile to each other, but taught by a **Mysterious Process** to dwell together in the utmost harmony and affection. Cats, Rats, Dogs, Pigeons, Owls, Mice, &c., &c., all **Educated to Peace**, may be here witnessed in a state of **Christian Communism**, having laid aside all their destructive instincts to assume those of **Social Tranquillity**.

She is the newly acquired:

**GREAT HISTORICAL CURIOSITY.—IRON GIBBET OF OLDEN TIMES**, and thrown aside by the progress of civilization during the last century; one of these public death instruments found in Point Levy, Canada East,

in the course of May last, had been used under the Government of Sir G. Murray, first Governor of Canada, after its capitulation, in the year 1763, for the execution of a female who had murdered three successive husbands. It will be exhibited during a few days, at No. 252 Broadway, 2nd floor, room No. 11, from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M., where historical details of her criminal life may be procured.

La Corriveau is still newsworthy 80 years later, in 1931, when the *New York Sun* profiles her cage, acquired by the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts. Just down the street from the sorcery museum in the witch capital of the USA, the gibbet hangs "in fitting comradeship with a guillotine blade which was in service during the French Revolution."

It is more than 200 years after her death when feminist writers such as Anne Hébert claim her. In Hébert's *La Cage*, first staged in 1989, Marie-Josephte is a prisoner of her sex, of male violence. She is born with her cage.

**O**ne morning I read that the Musée de la civilisation has repatriated the cage. She's finally come home! She'll be on display for only five days.

I take the number 21 bus to the museum's Maison Chevalier. Six bucks to descend into the vaulted cellar—a temporary, rubble stone crypt. There she is under the stone arches: a supine skeleton of rusted, pitted hoops, an iron beauty asleep inside a glass cage.

I linger over her display, take selfies with the cage. She's destined for storage.

No matter. I know she'll live a thousand more lives.

---

*Andrea King lives in London, Ontario, where she teaches French literature and language at Huron University College. "Great Historical Curiosity" is her first story.*

# Grief

GEOFF INVERARITY

Grief's a bastard.

Turns up no notice on the doorstep whenever  
moves in doesn't shower doesn't shave  
won't do dishes  
dirty laundry  
eats badly spends hours in the bathroom  
keeps you awake half the night  
shows no consideration  
puts a filter on all the views  
no matter how sunny it gets  
the place still looks like shit.

Grief's a bastard.

Talks long distance drinks too much overmedicates can't finish a book  
keeps flipping channels mutes the sound  
turns down the colour  
'til it's all washed out  
faded away.

Grief will travel anywhere in the world to be with you  
nothing too extravagant for Grief  
can take the whole sky  
paint it bloodred demolish cities  
call down storms  
turn forests to sawdust  
punch holes in mountain ranges  
bedroom doors.

Speaks for you  
whether you like it or not  
even though there's nothing left to say  
and no words left to say it with  
roars furious flails around  
when you ask him how things are the fucker tells you  
trails along behind on walks  
dead-eyed pathetic shuffles  
'til you wait up and turn  
taking a deep breath  
knowing what's coming.

Gets old acts distant suddenly doesn't call for weeks  
then comes over with too much whiskey and a bag of crappy  
skunkweed just to keep you on your toes.  
Jumps you in an alley after a movie  
and while he's beating you says  
*we must keep working on this relationship.*

---

*Geoff Inverarity is one of the founders of the Gulf Islands Film and Television School. He is also a father and an award-winning screenwriter, producer and poet who splits his time between Galiano Island and Vancouver.*

# FINDINGS

---



China Wall I and II. From Anna Wong: *Traveller on Two Roads*, curated by Ellen van Eijnsbergen and Jennifer Cane, with essays by Keith Wallace and Zoë Chan. Published by the Burnaby Art Gallery in 2018.

---

## The Williams Treaty

GIDIGAA MIGIZI (DOUG WILLIAMS)

*From Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg: This is our Territory, © Gidigaa Migizi (Doug Williams). Published by ARP Books in 2018. Doug Williams is Anishinaabe and former Chief of Mississauga's Curve Lake First Nation. He is co-director and graduate faculty for the Indigenous Studies PhD Program. He is a Pipe Carrier, Sweat Lodge Keeper and ceremony leader.*

*Shkin*

This is a story about the time soon after the Williams Treaty was signed in 1923, when our people thought they had agreed to keep hunting and fishing rights. Because many people in Curve Lake lived off the land—hunting, fishing, and food gathering—it

would be important that they retain the right to continue those activities.

Unexpectedly—and contrary to our understanding of the original agreement—game wardens began to monitor the area, and started charging people for poaching. Our people fished, hunted and gathered in order

to feed ourselves, to survive. We had been doing this forever and we didn't know we weren't supposed to.

It suddenly became a game of cat-and-mouse between the game wardens and the people living on their own homelands.

Amongst those people came a hunter who was legendary at getting away from the game wardens. His name was Shkin, short for Shkiiniwenh meaning young man and he knew every trick to get away from the game wardens. He was such a skilled paddler that two men in a canoe couldn't catch him.

In winter, Shkin would cover himself with a white sheet on the ice so



*Anna Wong was a printmaker. She studied Chinese brush painting in Hong Kong and printmaking in Vancouver. Her work has received prizes and represented Canada in several international print biennials. She died in 2013.*

people wouldn't see him fishing. He was also an extraordinary ice skater and would skate circles around the game wardens chasing him. Shkin made fun of them and their clumsiness, taunting them: "You can't catch me."

Shkin used the old style of skates, in which the blades tied onto your boots. One day the game warden appeared with a modern pair of tube skates in order to catch Shkin at his game and out-skate him. Shkin was ice fishing when he spotted the officer and swiftly took off.

This time, however, the game warden was gaining on him like never before, and the chase was on.

Shkin realized those modern skates were catching up to him and so he raced over to the dangerous part of the ice where he saw a big crack about 20 feet wide. He skated like a son-of-a-gun, as fast as he had ever skated ... and he jumped.

Shkin made it across the open water and looked back at the game warden who had to stop, unable to make the leap. Shkin gave a big yell: "See I told you, you would never catch me. Have a good day." And with that, it can be said that a big crack ultimately saved Shkin's butt.

As humorous as the ending of this story is, it also serves as a stark

reminder of how the government attempted to keep food from our peoples. It is also a story of gratitude and to remember our ancestors, our heroes, so dearly for having endured so much.

We never gave up our right to eat, in the same way we never gave up our right to access river mouths, our namesake: Mississauga. But that is another story.

*Sam Fawn*

The resilience of my people is admirable. One of the ways they kept up their spirit was with humour. Many stories are told of the clutzy game

wardens that were posted on the lakes to watch out for us. There are also some sad stories. Old Sam Fawn, after many years of carving axe handles, saving up money and making other items like that, was able to afford a cedar strip canoe from Peterborough. He went fishing on Fox Island out of provincial season. He was seen by the game warden who chased him. Sam beat him and came across from Fox Island to the mainland at Curve Lake. He put his canoe up on shore, turned it over and walked home. Everyone did that back in those days. Everyone knew each other's canoes. The game warden was watching him from Fox Island, and he sneaked over and seized that canoe. The canoe has never been seen again. Poor Sam Fawn, worked hard his whole life, trying to live off the land. I remember him as being one of the most gentle human beings that lived in Curve Lake. The trauma created by the 1923 Williams Treaty will be long lived. It lives in our hearts. It can never be repaid by the government no matter what they do. The damage has been done. Many people have lived through this trauma who have now passed on. I remember them dearly and I hope that somehow there are no game wardens in the Happy Hunting Grounds.

#### *Nogie's Creek*

Chief Nogie was banished to Nogie's Creek. The Indian Agent banished him to that place because he was allegedly caught abusing band funds when he was the Chief. The missionaries wanted him banished there because they thought he was a thief and a bad influence. It was no problem for him—it was beautiful over there. James McCue was a writer and there are letters written to the government in the archives.

#### *Jacob Crane*

He was the Chief in Mud Lake, but he was from Scugog. He wanted to be part of Curve Lake, so he came, but he didn't like it. He then got some



Tein Long #7 (Celestial Dragon). From Anna Wong: Traveller on Two Roads

land from the Indian Agent at Balsam Lake. He was a descendant of the Nika, the Gooses. The Indian Agent gave some money to a carpenter from Peterborough to build a house. The carpenter never showed up for four or five years. Finally, he came to build the house. But Jacob was frustrated and went back to Scugog.

#### *Road Allowances*

Sometimes I have heard the Métis called "Road Allowance People." The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) defines Road Allowance as "an allowance (normally 66 feet in width) for a road laid out by a Crown surveyor, including a road allowance shown on an original township survey and a road allowance included on a Crown plan of subdivision." These areas were also important for Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. The roads weren't built right up to the lake. So we used these areas to

camp. Eventually, the things we left at the road allowances were vandalized because the settlers didn't like us using the land.

#### *Beaver Lake/Amik Zaagii'gan*

In the late 1940s the Government of Ontario divided the land around Beaver Lake up and sold them only to white people for \$25–\$30 per lot. Broke my heart. That was the Taylor branch of the families' hunting area—Beaver, Gold, Catchacoma and Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Lakes. We got pushed north to Bottle and Sucker Lake. They took the trapline from James Taylor between 1952 and 1954 because they said he wasn't using it. They said he wasn't harvesting enough animals and selling enough furs. The Williams side of the family, the Maskonoje's area was up and down the Coldwater portage going to Georgian Bay. ●

# Plain English

LEANNA MCLENNAN

*A selection from Seen & Overheard: A year on the bus in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Published by New Limestone Review in 2018. Leanna McLennan's work has been published in the Antigonish Review, Broken Pencil, CV2, Fiddlehead, Matrix and Taddle Creek.*

**26 SEPTEMBER** After several stops, I notice that the man sitting beside me is watching a video of himself taking a shower.

**31 OCTOBER** A zombie, with a fake slash on her cheek pierced by safety pins, boards the bus and is greeted by a zombie bus driver.

**6 DECEMBER** An elderly woman clips her fingernails, letting the nails fall into her cupped hand, while the young man beside her wipes mustard from his lip, and unwraps his second McDonald's hamburger.

**8 DECEMBER** A drunk woman, wearing a grey sweatshirt, rushes in front of me, swinging her arms, "I was here first. I'm getting on first. I've been standing here for a fuckin' half hour. I'm getting on first. I was here first. I'm cold. I'm fuckin' cold."

**2 JANUARY** "Ne ho ma. Ho ho," the man at the front of the bus says. "I'm not being racist. I'm being nice, speaking Mandarin. It means thank you. Or Italian, arrivederci. Or French, bonjour, tabarnack. I like languages, I really do. Or just plain English, hello. I do think speaking English should be a prerequisite to coming to Canada. That I do believe.

"I'm going to be a preacher, take the fleece from the flock. Except God doesn't talk to me. I guess it's only paranooids who get to talk to him. Maybe I'm going straight to hell.

"And I do believe in the women's movement...especially from behind." He laughs.

"I guess my sense of humour is too much for some people. I used to work

at *Yuk Yuks*. So it can't be that bad. Thank you, thank you very much for listening."

**7 JANUARY** A man hands an ibuprofen tablet to the woman sitting across from him.

She cups it in her hand.

"You gonna take it?" He cracks open his can of ice tea.

"Can I have a sip?"

"You got one," he says, gesturing towards her can of ice tea.

"Yeah, but I don't want to open it yet."

**23 FEBRUARY** "I'm twenty-six and I'm, like, just starting to be the oldest one when I go out with my friends, and I'm, like, wow, you're so young," says a woman with a blonde ponytail.

"Yeah you're, like, starting to get bitter and jaded and stuff," her friend says.

**22 MAY** "I seen you around before but I didn't say nothin' because I was embarrassed. My wife and son died

in a car accident. If they only knew how far down I went. I don't want to go there again. In the three months since I've been going to meetings, all of these small rewards have turned into a big victory. It's a culmination of doin' all the right things and bein' in the right place at the right time. And it's my age; I'm forty-five, and I want to live. So you going next Sunday?"

"Yes, I go to ceremony every week," the elder says.

**9 SEPTEMBER** A teenage boy wearing wrinkled jeans and a baggy T-shirt takes off his backpack and digs through it until he finds his deodorant. He clings to the pole with one hand and reaches his free hand under his T-shirt to apply the deodorant.

**22 SEPTEMBER** "I don't wanna see mountains, I wanna see skyscrapers. I hate small towns. They're disgusting!" says a woman with long grey hair. "I want to know New York City as well as I know this place. But I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon."

## MONKEY CHATTER

*A list of episode titles from season five of Da Vinci's Inquest. Da Vinci's Inquest ran on CBC TV from 1998 to 2006. The complete run of ninety episodes is available on YouTube.*

A Big Whiff of a Real Bad Smell  
Ass Covering Day  
A Big Enough Fan  
Run By the Monkeys  
At First It Was Funny  
Dizzy Looking Down  
God Forbid We Call It What It Is

Doing the Chicken Scratch  
For Just Bein' Indian  
Dogs Don't Bite People  
The Ducks Are Too Depressing  
You Got Monkey Chatter  
Everybody Needs a Working Girl

# Culturama

JOSHUA WHITEHEAD

*From Jonny Appleseed. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2018. Joshua Whitehead is an Oji-Cree/nebiyaw, Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer member of Peguis First Nation (Treaty 1). His first novel, Jonny Appleseed, was a finalist for the 2018 Governor General's Literary Award for fiction and was longlisted for the 2018 Scotiabank Giller Prize.*

When I was thirteen we had something called Culturama at school. Everyone was divided into groups and assigned a country, and then learned about its terrain, its population, and its foods. Ours was Sweden. I was with three keeners, all of them white. Brooke, a blonde-haired girl who liked to wear glittery silver headbands, took charge of our group, claiming she was an expert on Sweden because her room was outfitted with IKEA furniture. She used IKEA-speak with words like “Malm” and “Hemnes,” and described her colour schemes such as “bone white” and “mahogany brown.” She looked me dead in the eye when she said the word “brown.” I took some pride in the discomfort it caused her.

We each had to prepare a Swedish dish. “I’ll make Swedish meatballs,” Brooke announced. “I’ve had authentic ones before, you know, when my mom took me to IKEA.”

Brooke then decided who would make what.

“Carol, you’ll make gingersnap cookies. Tammy, can you do crêpes? And—”

Before she could finish, I interrupted her. “I can make rice pudding, my mom makes it all the time!”

It was true—my mom did make the best rice pudding. She’d make it for me as a reward whenever I came home with good news, like the time I had won our monthly spelling bee competition. I used to practise in my room at night to learn how to spell.

I flicked my tongue at the harsh “T” in trade and puckered my lips into a kiss to lull out the “O” in goat. There were all kinds of strange words that I knew how to spell then, like P-e-r-c-o-c-e-t and i-n-s-u-l-i-n.

My mom made her rice pudding with wild rice and smoothed it out with fresh milk. Then she added vanilla and cinnamon to it, which made it soft brown in colour. Raisins were next, and I liked to watch them fatten up in the froth of milk and cinnamon.

I also liked to help with the stirring. “Constant movement,” she used to tell me, “helps to blend all of the flavours together and thicken the liquid. If you keep the rice and the raisins moving, they’ll really fill up with milk.” So I kept on stirring that pot. Which was hard; my biceps weren’t half the size of my mom’s—heck, mine were more the thickness of a hind’s feet.

Whenever I complained that my arms were getting sore, my mom would take over. “Boy, you’re slack,” she’d say, and playfully slug me on the shoulder. To celebrate the day I finished high school, she made an entire soup pot full of rice pudding. As she stirred it with one arm, she pulled me in close with the other. She held me like that for what seemed like forever. I could feel her deep breaths on my hair, which sounded almost animal-like, but her touch was soft, and she rubbed the top of my head with her chin.

“Heck, I’m just proud of you m’boy,” she said.

“Thanks Mom,” I said. She didn’t say that very often.

That night, all of our neighbours and family came to visit. My mom had cooked enough rice pudding for the entire rez. She ladled out bowl after bowl of pudding for the elders and kids who lined up first, and then again for everyone else. Some of my aunties brought bannock, and another had hamburger soup. My uncles brought moose meat burgers and grilled them up, and my kokum served her jello cake. Almost everyone

---

## A Toronto Bike Courier Foresees His Death

PINO COLUCCIO

*From Class Clown. Published by Biblioasis in 2017. Pino Coluccio’s work has been published in The Walrus and three anthologies. His first collection of poetry, First Comes Love, came out in 2005. He lives in Toronto.*

I know that I shall meet my end  
between a tire and streetcar track.  
The laws of motion never bend.  
Wrists and femurs often crack.

I rent a basement near the ROM.  
My neighbours are creative types.  
They will not see me not glide home  
or miss me in their coffee shops.

It’s not the herb that makes me ride,  
and plus, I have a PhD.  
I just feel trapped when I’m inside.  
The interwebs are not for me.

I tallied every big what if.  
It was a quick and easy math  
to pedal from a beta’s life  
towards an alpha’s metal death. 🍷

I knew had come and were dressed up to some degree, which meant blue jeans instead of sweatpants. Someone brought a fiddle and played music. My mom and Roger danced on the grass outside, and my kokum swayed along with my younger cousins. We ate our feast and held each other into the wee hours of the night, until we couldn't see each other in the thickness of the dark.

Brooke had insisted that I bring Swedish rice pudding to Culturama, but when I showed up with mom's version instead, she gasped and shook her head. "Nonononono," she said. "This isn't Swedish rice pudding—why are there raisins in this? Why is it all brown? No, Jonny, you messed this up. We're all going to get an F because of you!"

I came home crying that night. "That's just the way it is," my mom said as she consoled me. That was the only answer she had whenever there was a problem. When I showed her the folder containing all the research we had done, she was really impressed. "Heck, they eat reindeer? Maybe we have more in common than I thought," she said. When she flipped to the last page, which was about the Swedish tradition of blood pudding, she started laughing, which echoed throughout our house. "Here, m'boy, I have just the thing," she said, and got up.

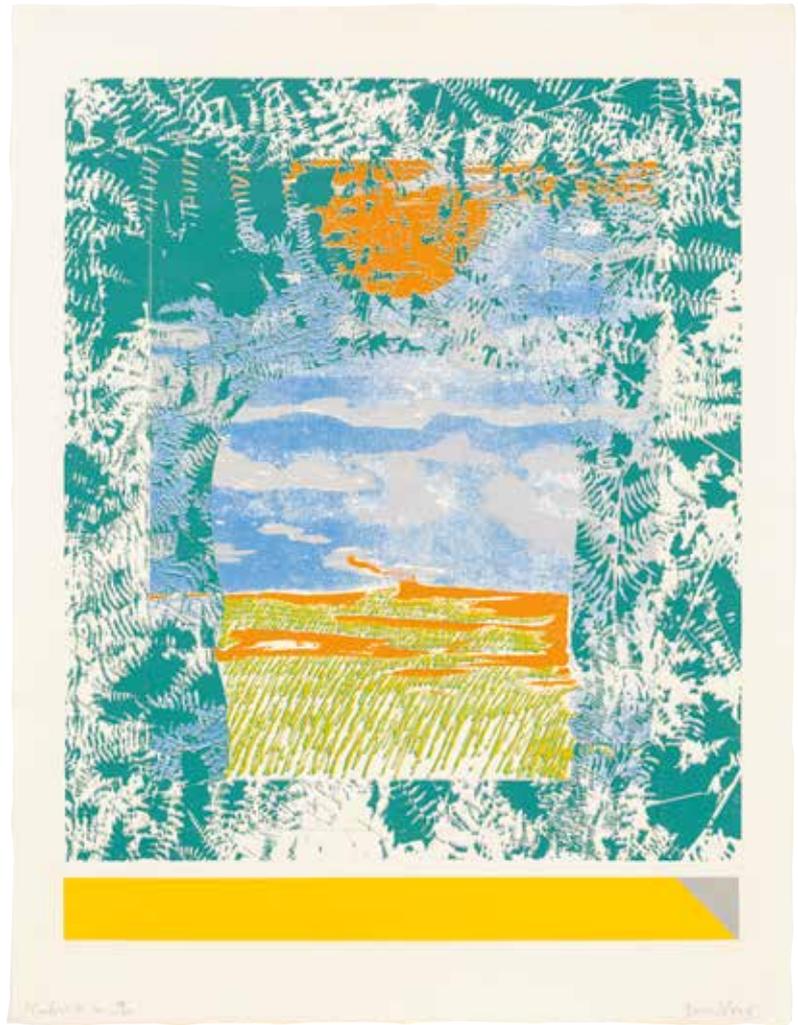
She pulled out all the frozen cherries she had in the freezer, and every packet of red Kool-Aid she could find, then threw them all into a pot along with some homemade raspberry jam and ketchup. When it came to a boil, she mashed the mixture until it was smooth and poured it all into a big plastic bowl.

"Here, you take this tomorrow instead," she said.

"The heck is this?"

"You tell them that if it's tradition they want, then this here is as close as it gets."

When I brought it to class the next day, everyone in our group gasped.



Window #12. From Anna Wong: Traveller on Two Roads

"Here," I said to Brooke, "it's blood pudding, like the one we wrote about." I scooped a spoonful of the thick, maroon-coloured paste and held it near her lips. "Try it," I said, "it's a delicacy in Sweden." When she put the spoon into her mouth, she promptly spit it out all over our table. The map of Sweden that we had coloured was stained with cherries and ketchup.

"This tastes like *shit!*" she screamed. Our teacher immediately stormed over and handed us both pink slips to see the principal. Brooke's tongue and lips were stained red; I laughed as she pawed at her

mouth. "It's not just red," I told her, "It's NDN red." I wondered if that was what Sissy Spacek felt like when she torched her high school gymnasium—it was my Carrie moment.

Both Brooke and I were suspended for the remainder of the week. When I got home and told my mom, I thought she was going to give me a good spanking, but instead she smiled and high-fived me.

I wished with everything I had that the food colouring would stain Brooke's mouth forever, because redness was their lord's way of chastising you. 🍷



*A Riot of Colour by Randall Epp. Epp is a landscape, portrait, fine art and yard product photographer with a special interest in Photoshop composite work. His work can be found on Flickr and 500 Pixels. He lives in Surrey.*

## What Barbie Knew

TABATHA SOUTHEY

*From Collected Tarts & Other Indelicacies. Published by Douglas & McIntyre in 2017. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. Tabatha Southey is a writer. Her work has appeared in Elle Canada, the Globe and Mail, the Walrus, Maclean's and Explore magazine.*

When we were young girls, my friends Nadine and Patricia and I read all of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* books over and over, but the book that we enjoyed the most was *The Long Winter*.

There was something, as I recall, about eight feet of snow, living on a potato a day and burning all the furniture for warmth that really put all of those endless interpersonal conflicts with that stuck-up Nellie Ole-son into perspective.

The three of us played *Little House on the Prairie* with our Barbie dolls. Our mothers sewed doll-sized gingham pioneer dresses with coordinating bonnets and aprons—in which Barbie still managed to look hot.

And then one happy Christmas my father built a prairie dollhouse for me, and Nadine and Patricia's father built a covered wagon for them. I don't think we came out of the basement for a year. We had tiny oil lamps and dishes. We built Barbie-sized tables and chairs, which we would pile up

in the middle of the cabin and happily pretend to burn—for warmth. And of course, in order to cook the potatoes.

Sometimes our dolls would be forced, because of some calamity, to abandon their home and trek across the basement. And then life became still harder for them.

The journey was long, and around about the time they left the carpet and began to make their way across the desolate parquet floor, the Barbies would often have little choice but to eat their last good oxen (at which point Pa would have to pull the covered wagon). Usually they would do this only after they had eaten their beloved donkey, a souvenir from the Athens airport that we believed to be covered in real donkey fur. 🐘



Four Maidens Dancing. *Randall Epp.*

## White Supremacy in the Bush

LEANNE BETASAMOSAKE SIMPSON

*From As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (University of Minnesota Press, 2017). Copyright 2017 by the Regents of the University of Minnesota. Reprinted by permission of the University of Minnesota Press.*

Two celebrated white women writers figure prominently in the local settler historical record in Peterborough, Ontario. The two sisters, Catherine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie, moved uninvited into the heart of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory in disregard of and seemingly oblivious to the international agreements my nation had made with theirs in the 1830s. Susanna Moodie subsequently, at the direction of her publisher in Britain, wrote *Roughing It in the Bush* as a guide for settler life for those

British subjects considering moving to occupied Nishnaabeg territory. Moodie's work remains a canonical work in Canadian literature for both its literary and Canadian cultural contributions, with Margaret Atwood's 1972 book of poetry *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* further cementing Moodie into Canadian prominence.

I've read *Roughing It in the Bush* a number of times, and it is never an enjoyable experience. At one point, Moodie writes about the lynching of a Black man in Michi Saagiig territory,

with all the anti-Blackness that is Canadian and that Canada would not exist without. Passages such as “[the] Mississauga Indians, perhaps the least attractive of all these wild people, both with regard to their physical and mental endowments” grate on my being, not because of their historic inaccuracies or their reflection of the normalcy of white supremacy at the time but because so much Indigenous effort has gone into disproving her lies, and because this pillar of white supremacy and colonialism—the idea that we are naturally *less* than our white counterparts—continues to produce generations of Native youth that believe they are, or, perhaps more dangerously, believe that achieving what matters in settler colonial Canadian society—degrees, economic prosperity, home ownership, or whatever—makes them

a more valuable Indigenous person. It does, but only through the lens of white supremacy.

Moodie's detailed descriptions of Mississauga men with their "coarse and repulsive features" and "intellectual faculties scarcely developed," and of Mississauga women as "a merry, light-hearted set...in strange contrast to the iron taciturnity of their grim lords" set the tone for an overwhelmingly anti-Indigenous and anti-Black characterization of life in occupied Upper Canada. She goes on to repeatedly position Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg as stupid and ugly throughout the chapter titled "The Wilderness and Our Indian Friends," freely commenting on physical attributes and sexuality of Mississauga men. She writes, "The vanity of these grave men is highly amusing. They seem perfectly unconscious of it themselves; and it is exhibited in the most child-like manner," and "I'm inclined to think that their ideas of personal beauty differ very widely from ours." She also freely comments on the bodies and sexuality of Mississauga women: "Tom Nogan, the chief's brother had a very large, fat, ugly squaw for his wife. She was a mountain of tawny flesh, and, but for the innocent, good-natured expression which, like a bright sunbeam penetrating a swarthy cloud, spread all around a kindly glow, she might have been termed hideous"; "she appeared very dirty, and appeared quite indifferent to the claims of common decency."

I could go on, but I won't. Much of this overt racism is dismissed or absent in the analysis of *Roughing It in the Bush*, or at least neutralized by placing it in "the context of the historical record," even in specific analysis of the representations of Native women. The historical record in this context is meant to be the "original literary



From *The Vagabond Valise* by Siris. Published by Conundrum Press in 2018. Siris has been publishing his stories in zines, anthologies and comics for twenty years. His book

context" in which they were writing and the prevailing and normalized attitudes and beliefs about Indians at the time. It is a prevailing racist Canadian attitude that we cannot judge writers from the past by today's standards.

Which leads me to ask whose historical context and whose standards?

We know the answer, and it certainly is not the historical context

of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg or Black people in Canada. The Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg nation was under the violent attack of colonialism from every angle. The end of the War of 1812 for the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg was devastating. We witnessed the extirpation of salmon and eels from our territory, and the construction of the Trent-Severn Waterway,



The Vagabond Valise is nominated for the Friends of the Montreal Library Award and won the Quebec Graphic Novel of the Year in 2018.

which destroyed the water in most of our lakes and our food security as the flooding destroyed the wild rice beds, an unprecedented (at the time) level of environmental destruction. We were in negotiations that resulted in the 1818 treaty, the residential schools system was being set up, with the first school opening in Alderville First Nation in 1828, and we were under the height

of the efforts of the Methodist missions designed to carry out cultural genocide and assimilation. All of these processes were designed to clear Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg bodies from the land to the extreme benefit of settlers.

Moodie is writing about my relations while living on stolen land in an enclave of white supremacy. She is both witness to and beneficiary

of the violent dispossession of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg from our homeland. Her entire existence and that of her family are predicated on that crime, and she is willfully oblivious as she constructs Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg people as also willfully oblivious. This trumps any possible shared sisterhood Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg women might have with her as female. Carole Gerson writes, “powerful as white but disempowered as female, Moodie and Traill share with Native women some marginal space on the outskirts of frontier culture.” Genocide sets up a clear dichotomy in which, unless white women are willing to divest themselves of the power of being white, there is no shared marginal space with Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg women. Describing interactions between white women and Mississauga women as “experimental and not oppositional” is a fiction that exists in white women’s theorizing themselves out of responsibility for benefiting from and replication of the gendered violence of colonialism through assumed allied spaces of women-to-women contact zones. Think about how Moodie so completely steals the self-determination of Indigenous women and recasts us as dirty and stupid, a recasting that I still live with nearly two hundred years later. She comprehensively steals and erases the bodies of Indigenous peoples and exerts an absolute power over Indigenous life as if this is her birthright. Think this is just in the past? Think again. Think about how those very same ideas are still the top four in 2015 when Indigenous youth, fresh out of high school, list the stereotypes they have heard in their own lives.

The ways in which Moodie negates Indigenous nationhood, obfuscates colonialism, and replicates

the gendered nature of colonial violence that both informs and influences Indian policy cannot be dismissed and excused as the “racism of the times,” because it is these unexamined foundational beliefs about Indigenous peoples that were used and are used as justification for dispossession, residential schools, the Indian Act, and the violence against Indigenous women that is normalized in settler Canadian society, and for the continued paternalism of *helping* Indigenous peoples and dealing with the “Indian problem.” It seems to me that the point of the words “original literary context” is to provide a broad exoneration that fits seamlessly into the Canadian narrative of the past: Mistakes were made. Land was lost. Children were stolen. Cultures were adapted. Treaties didn’t work out. We meant well. We tried our best. Progress is inevitable, and while it is regretful you didn’t have the intelligence or fortitude to be successful, that’s life. Maybe we’ll try and be nicer and help more.

Very few Canadians will directly proclaim they are in favor of the position of Indigenous peoples in Canada, but a very large number of Canadians will do everything they can to preserve the social, cultural, and economic systems of the country, even though this system is predicated on violence and dispossession of Indigenous lands and bodies. Therefore, we do not need the help of Canadians. We need Canadians to help themselves, to learn to struggle and to understand that their great country of Canada has been and is a death dance for Indigenous peoples. They must learn to stop themselves from plundering the land and the climate and using Indigenous peoples’ bodies to fuel their economy, and to find a way of living in the world that is not based on violence and exploitation. 🌧️

# Toronto Is Too Expensive

HANA SHAFI

*From It Begins with the Body. Published by Book\*bug in 2018. Hana Shafi is a writer and artist. Her work has appeared in the Walrus, Hazlitt, This magazine, Torontoist and Huffington Post. She lives in Toronto.*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| i stayed long enough to see the park<br>replaced<br>brand-new signs   | the tree in the backyard came down<br>something about a hazard<br>and our responsibility  |
| a slide<br>without my name carved underneath<br>the house’s windows got an upgrade<br>the screen won’t pop off now<br>no more roof nights<br>i stayed long enough<br>to see the dealer under house arrest<br>get his freedom and<br>get caught again<br>to see dogs die<br>max the stray disappear<br>there is a white cat in his place now | i stayed long enough<br>to see the kids go off to uni<br>the cute guy with the red mustang<br>became a man<br>and drove that car away |
| they built a sidewalk outside the<br>chain-link<br>but the gravel was fine<br>the empty field became<br>a pile of dirt became a plaza<br>with a restaurant  | the stream in the woodlot nearby<br>ran dry   |
|   | a girl with pink hair walks her dog<br>now<br>and i don’t know her name<br>i used to know everybody’s name                            |
|   | i love you all but<br>i stayed too long   |

## WINDFALL ADVISORY

*From Welcome to the Anthropocene by Alice Major. Published by the University of Alberta Press in 2018. Alice Major has published eleven books of poetry and essays. She is the recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta 2017 Distinguished Artist Award.*

A whole TV channel to talk about the weather. Climate conditions twenty-four hours a day—we don’t even need to look out the window. Did you see the weatherman point to his map today, to the spot down near Empress where he said there is a ‘windfall advisory’? Imagine that, a windfall advisory! That’s what you get living in Alberta. Oil gushing into your tank. Winning lottery tickets ripped from kiosks and swirling into the road. Dollar coins spinning along the streets, a clink of fallen leaves. They flatten the barley crop worse than a hailstorm, but you get the insurance payout on the spot. *Oh, no, I wouldn’t want to live in Vancouver, we say. Six months of rain! I’ll take a prairie windfall any day.* 🌧️

# At Safeway

RUSSELL THORNTON

*From The Broken Face. Published by Harbour Publishing in 2018. Russell Thornton's work has appeared in a number of anthologies and has been shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Poetry, the Raymond Souster Award, the Griffin Poetry Prize and the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize among other awards. He lives in North Vancouver.*

Here is an elderly lady  
asking the whereabouts of the liquid laundry soap.  
She has been waiting in line just to ask.  
*Aisle 2*, says the checkout girl.  
The elderly lady heads off toward Aisle 4.  
An elegant, tattered puppet, there she goes.  
*Excuse me*, I call out to her. *It's over that way.*  
The checkout girl leaves her cash register,  
goes to the lady, guides her to the right aisle.  
The lady disappears down Aisle 2.  
*Ab, getting old*, says the man in line behind me.  
*Yeah*, adds the woman behind him.  
All of us waiting to pay for our groceries—  
*Did you find everything you were looking for today?*  
the checkout girl asks us in turn.  
We wait for the elderly lady,  
dividers in place, empty space  
readied on the conveyor for her soap.  
But where is she? The checkout girl  
leaves us again to go look. Where is she?  
Our eyes fix on the magazine racks,  
taking in who is engaged to whom  
(proposal made at a rented-out stadium),  
who has gotten married, who has “hooked up,”  
the photos of all the celebrities  
who have found what they were looking for.  
Is the elderly lady going down her aisle,  
on either side of her the lit-up rows  
of the many liquid laundry soaps  
that will make her clothes clean and bright,  
that will allow the dust to fall from her?  
The checkout girl hurries back to us,  
re-opens her cash register, dumbfounded,  
having found no one. For a moment  
before she picks up an item to scan,  
she pauses, and together we wait for this lady  
and are wedding guests awaiting a bride.  
I see our elderly one casting off  
her death clothes as she prepares for the ceremony,  
washing in the dazzle and flow of a stream  
clear as crystal, putting on new garments  
of light and going safely to her groom of light.

Now, after we move dividers,  
fill spaces on the conveyor,  
utter club card numbers, insert debit cards,  
give and take bills, collect shiny, dark-edged  
coins tumbling out of a metal box into a cup—  
*Do you need help out? No, I'm fine, thanks—*  
we grab our groceries, say goodbye,  
we leave and go out into the broken  
aisles of the large parking lot, the streets,  
the sidewalks, each of us mortal again.



# Fidelity

SUE GOYETTE

*From Penelope. Published by Gaspereau Press in 2017. Susan Goyette is an award-winning poet who has published five collections of work. She lives in Halifax, NS.*

**SLUMBER** I wake confused. It's noon somewhere, right?  
I'm asked. The visitors? I reply. Just fell asleep,

I'm told. Are you really going to start a band?  
I'm asked. My recall, initially, is dutiful.

Was it so terrible that I had sung? But then my ears  
feel the first scalloping heat of chagrin. Its warmth

spreads as proclamations and boasts return to roost,  
shrill and pleased with themselves. How had I got up

on the table and whose hat had I worn? Loss tends  
to its fires patiently. The shame I feel burns like paper.

**COMPLIMENTS** The weeks wake to months. Years. Can we get another table  
in the beer tent? I'm asked. There's a beer tent? I reply. I'm flustered.

And I'm drunk. The visitors are potent compliments. They've never seen  
a better spoon, tasted better brew. Our harbour, according to them,

is the finest they've laid eyes on. Each stone in its proper  
place, how had I come up with that? My cup is kept proficiently

filled. And my tongue rallies back. I banter, I cajole. I screech  
the crooked logic women know when our hearts are aghast and silenced.

I tend to the visitors with appalling decorum. They cheer me on,  
so I blow. I blow. Odysseus's candle sputters then quits. I did that.

**FIRE** I wake to dread. I banish questions  
so I can think. My dignity has been plucked.

My dignity, pink-puckered and overexposed. My mouth  
lined in ash. The fire, started in revelry, has passed out.

If I had tarted up my loneliness, if I am to claim my dark ripeness,  
I am now left craven to my own needs. The poison I taste

is personal. My mouth abhors me and I abhor  
my mouth. If I had the energy to cut myself without mess,

without bother, I would. And if Odysseus is a candle, who is  
the match? Not me. I am no longer to be trusted near open flame. 🔥

# -Ologies & -Isms

SHELLEY KOZLOWSKI

*A list of dictionaries available to be borrowed from the Alberta Library Online system (as of May 6, 2018):*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue (1796) | Dictionary of Symbolism (1992)  |
| The Dimwit's Dictionary (2002)                     | Reverse Symbolism Dictionary (1992)   |
| The Emotionary (2016)                              | -Ologies & -isms (1978)   |
| A Consumer's Dictionary of Food Additives (2009)   | Word Parts Dictionary (2000)  |
| The Medical Word Finder (1987)                     | Reverse Dictionary of Mordvin (2004)  |
| The Accidental Dictionary (2017)                   | Lithuanian Reverse Dictionary (1976)  |
| The Dictionary of Clichés (1985)                   | Mongolian epigraphical dictionary in reverse listing (1967)   |
| The New Hacker's Dictionary                        | Dictionary of Newfoundland English (1990)   |
| A Dictionary of Buddhism                           | Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary = Alpertha ohci<br>Kehtehayak nehiyaw otwestâmakewasinahikan (1998) |
| International Dictionary of Theatre (1992)         | Ukraïns'kyï zvorotnyï slovnyk   |
| Abbreviations Dictionary (1992)                    | Dene (Chipewyan) Dictionary (1998)  |
| Dictionary of Mexican Rulers 1325–1997 (1997)      | The Hegel Dictionary (2010)   |
| Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary (2016)                | Dictionary of Untranslatables (2014)  |
| Math Dictionary (2009)                             |   |
| First Name Reverse Dictionary (1993)               |   |

---

## Lay of the Land

CLAUDIA DEY

*From Heartbreaker. Published by HarperCollins in 2018. Claudia Dey is the author of the novel Stunt, both a Globe & Mail and Quill & Quire Book of the Year. Her work has been published in the Believer and the Paris Review. She lives in Toronto.*

The north highway cuts a straight line through town, and this is where you will find most of our local businesses. The residential streets branch off from the north highway in a grid. They are not named. In the territory, we go by bungalow number. Lana's is 2. Neon Dean's is 17. Ours is 88. Guess how many bungalows are in the territory? Exactly. One of my favourite jokes is to pretend I'm lost. I will be riding my ten-speed in my mother's powder-blue workdress, her purse strapped across my body and her ATV helmet on, and I'll see someone at the edge of their property, and I'll flag them down and say, Yeah, so, hey, there I was on the north highway, made a couple of turns, and now I am just all spun around. Just totally lost. Cannot seem to find my way back home.

Bungalow after bungalow, built all at once when the territory began. Small cement porches. Snowmobiles and swing sets in the yards, and the girls with show hair long like their mothers', long like their dogs', and the men and boys shaved to near bald. Let me give you the lay of the land. The men love to start a lecture this way. Our dogs are white here, and there are no leashes. It is acceptable to make a leash-like mechanism for your children, but not for your dog. Your dog is an animal and to forget her nature is to forget your own. If you would like to see a dog on a leash, turn on your television. We will barbecue under a tarpaulin for our dogs in the dead of winter, but we will not give them names. You. Come. Here. Get. Names are for our people not

our dogs. If you would like to see a dog with a name, watch *Lassie*. It's on at four. Duct tape in medicine cabinets. Radios with batteries carried from room to room. Always the sound of a truck in the distance. Knowing the trucks by sound. Who is approaching. Who is not going home. Deadbolts on garage doors. A bear on your property after the thaw. Motion-detector light. Gunshot. Beards a sign of mental damage. Gunshot. Tanning beds in our sunken dens, and many of our people the shade of anger. Smelling like coconut oil in line at Value Smoke and Grocer. None of the men going by their birth names. Wishbone, Sexeteria, Hot Dollar, Fur Thumb, Visible Thinker, Traps. The Heavy. Let me give you the lay of the land: men, women, children, loaded rifles. Hearts stop. Dogs, trucks, winter, fucking. Hearts break.

See that lone white bungalow? Now, see the lone window looking out from beneath the roof on the south-facing wall, the one with the black sheet for a curtain that appears

to have a single word spelled out in duct tape? That is my bedroom and the word is b e y o n d. From below, you can only really make out y o, message enough.

We have a travel agent though no one has ever left the territory. We call her One Hundred as she is either very close to or just past that in years. She has been here from the beginning. Her left pupil is wiped out and translucent with blindness, but otherwise, she is more fit than most and works nights in the back of Drink Mart at a card table on a foldout chair. If you buy her a drink, she will pull out one of her four black gym bags, unzip it slowly, and show you her away pamphlets. The gym bags are called North, South, East, and West. Given the North is all we know, no one chooses North and it is clear that bag is empty. South, East, and West our broadest men can barely bench-press.

In the cold months, we can't bury our dead. Our people try to die in the summer. If you don't, your body is put on a cot and wheeled into the walk-in freezer of the Death Man's shed, a square of lumber, fiberglass, and Freon tubing twenty steps from the sliding back doors of his well-maintained trailer. He has gulls on his property though he is nowhere near water. While the Death Man is soundless, his gulls whine and screech and dirty themselves, and we tell them, Stop your commotion, we know what mourning is.

We all find it difficult to look at the Death Man when he walks by us in town. The dead have their secrets and he knows them. His bullet eyes, his bleach vapor, his unmarried, mannequin hands. If you die, the Death Man will be the last to touch your naked body with all its private codes. Not your mother, not your girlfriend, but the Death Man and his indoor gloves. The thinking is: Normal men volunteer to fuck women or fight fires, not store the dead. 🌧️

## Behind the Door

MERCEDES ENG

*From Prison Industrial Complex Explodes. Published by Talon Books in 2017. Mercedes Eng is the author of Mercenary English. Her work has been published in West Coast Line, Canada and Beyond, the Capilano Review, Geist, Jacket2, the Downtown East and the Volcano. She teaches and writes in Vancouver.*

**JUNE 27, 1974**

**Mr. Donny LEE**

Mountain Prison

Agassiz, B.C.

Re: Your Deportation

Dear Donny,

At long last I have now heard from Ottawa regarding the immigration department's position regarding the timing of your deportation. Their position, as confirmed by the head of the enforcement branch in Ottawa, is that they will not seek to enforce the deportation order until you have completed your sentence of imprisonment including any period of mandatory supervision. What you will then be able to do is that, after you have been out on the street for some while and have established yourself, you can then re-apply to the immigration appeal board for a review of your case and try to persuade them to stay your deportation again in light of your proven rehabilitation.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Jackson

University of British Columbia

Faculty of Law

my dad is inside when I am born. after I come out we live in Vancouver a bit then move to Abbotsford to be closer to the prison. we visit almost every weekend, both days, 8 hours a day. 832 hours in a year times 2. almost 70 days by the time I'm 2.

he gets out when I'm 2, but goes back because later I remember my mom saying I have a surprise for you and I think it's a record player. but it's my dad behind the door, home from jail. so he went somewhere between 2 and 7, somewhere with dinosaurs and a bumpy gravel road.



we are on the highway in Vancouver, starting our drive back home to Medicine Hat. the car stops suddenly and then there are two really angry men yelling, “open the fucking door!” they smash open the window and they’re both grabbing my dad, one by the hair, the other by the throat. it looks like they wanna strangle him. my dad is kicking, he’s fighting. but it doesn’t work, they take him and he’s gone.



there is a good time, we move to a bigger house. but something happens and my dad is gone again. but then he gets out and he is straightened out and he is working the gas fields and there is money and our allowance goes up and my little brother gets G.I. Joe everything for Christmas and my mom is happy.

we spend summer vacation at the women’s shelter.

we run into an old friend visiting her new old man in Drumheller prison and when we go out for dinner after she makes me blush with her pronouncement that I’m “getting titties.”

I’m 13 the next time my mom pulls the surprise-behind-the-door trick and I feel sick.

# Eulogy

LENEA GRACE

*From A Generous Latitude. Published by ECW Press in 2018. Lenea Grace’s work has appeared in Best New Poets, the Walrus, Fiddlehead, Washington Square Review and more. She received an MFA from the New School. She lives in Gibsons, BC.*

“Shed no tears!” —Stan Rogers

He favoured turtlenecks  
and his baldness lent him years  
decanted through song,  
the sediments of working men  
and women, floating

through such shanties made  
modern—the plaid fists  
pounding on pine  
in Maritime kitchens—  
the lace and rye-

soaked beards of 1983  
are back in fashion.  
Halifax, you and I  
will not forget.  
We could cry the harbour,

float the Citadel,  
but why disturb the captain  
while he slumbers heavy in the tape deck. 🌊

at 15 and 16, I use my mother’s visits to my father, the ones she makes me and my brother go on less and less frequently, as opportunities to run away from home, succeeding on the third try.

I’m 19 the last time I visit my dad inside, the last time he’s inside, a prison 40 km away from the prison he escaped from just before he met my mother.

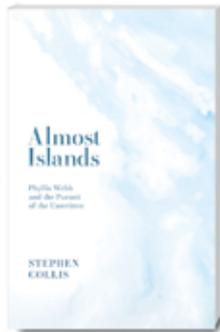
a tall tall fence  
a jacket to throw over the barbwire  
a haystack in a farmer’s field over-  
night a train ride a train track  
a store selling used goods

a pregnant 19-year-old white girl and new charges

or

a strawberry-picking pass  
a rumour about a prison labour stoppage  
a train ride a train track  
a store selling used goods

a pregnant 19-year-old white girl and new charges 🌊



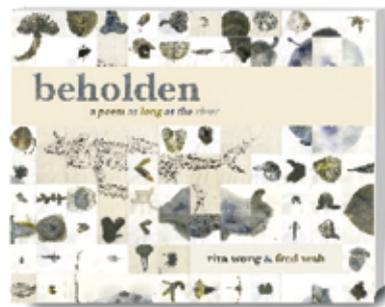
**Almost Islands**

Phyllis Webb and the Pursuit of  
the Unwritten

STEPHEN COLLIS

*Almost Islands* is a powerfully introspective memoir of the author's friendship with legendary Canadian poet Phyllis Webb – now in her nineties and long enveloped in silence – and his regular trips to see her. It is an extended meditation on literary ambition and failure, poetry and politics, choice and chance, location, colonization, and climate change – the struggle that is writing, and the end of writing.

978-1-77201-207-1 • \$24.95 • Non-fiction  
Now Available

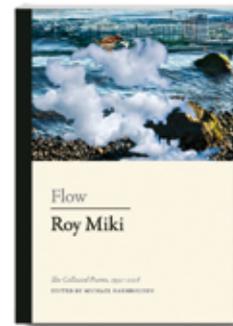


**beholden**

FRED WAH & RITA WONG

Comprised of two lines of poetic text flowing along a 114-foot-long map of the Columbia River, this powerful image-poem by acclaimed poets Fred Wah and Rita Wong presents language yearning to understand the consequences of our hydroelectric manipulation of one of North America's largest river systems.

978-1-77201-211-8 • \$24.95 • Poetry  
Now Available



**Flow**

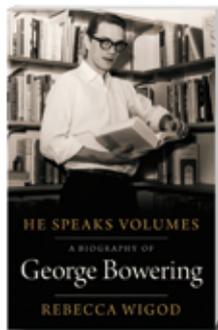
Poems Collected and New

ROY MIKI

edited by Michael Barnholden

*The Eyelash and the Monochrome* asks: What happens when material becomes thought and thought becomes object? At once a book of poetry and an artist's book, it gathers together poems, performance scripts, and parallel texts, illustrating the hybrid nature of these texts and trespassing upon the boundaries of genres.

978-1-77201-210-1 (HC); 978-1-77201-217-0 (SC)  
\$19.95 • Poetry • Available December 7



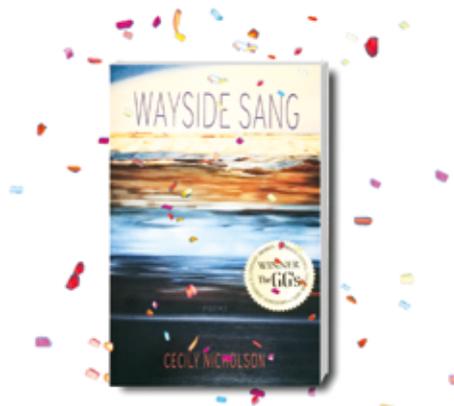
**He Speaks Volumes**

A Biography of George Bowering

REBECCA WIGOD

This biography of George Bowering, first Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate, reveals the intimate, intellectual, and artistic life of one of Canada's most prolific authors, offering an inside look at the people and events at the centre of the country's literary and artistic avant-garde from the 1960s to the present.

978-1-77201-206-4 • \$24.95 • Non-fiction  
Available December 1



**Wayside Sang**

CECILY NICHOLSON

We are pleased to announce that Cecily Nicholson's complex, sensitive book *Wayside Sang* has won the 2018 Governor General's Literary Award for English-Language Poetry!

**"In this hypnotic suite of long poems, Cecily Nicholson makes room, offering glimpses and echoes of the Canadian landscape as she explores ideas of borders, identity, industry and travel. She offers a catalogue of impressions, a collage of the ephemeral, held together by image and the pulsing phrase that stays with you long after the journey's over."**

—2018 Governor General's Award Jury

978-1-77201-182-1 • \$16.95 • Poetry  
Now Available



**White**

DENI ELLIS BÉCHARD

Assigned to write an exposé on Richmond Hew, the conservation world's most elusive and corrupt humanitarian worker, an intrepid journalist finds himself on a plane to the Democratic Republic of the Congo – a country he thinks he understands. But when he meets Sola, a woman searching for a rootless white orphan, he slowly uncovers a tapestry of corruption and racial tensions generations in the making.

978-1-77201-208-8 • \$19.95 • Fiction  
Now Available

# 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

Are you a writer?

Do you have a writing question, conundrum, dispute, dilemma, quandary or pickle?

*Geist* offers free professional advice to writers of fiction, non-fiction and everything in between, straight from Mary Schendlinger (Senior Editor of *Geist* for 25 years) and *Geist* editorial staff.

**Send your question to [advice@geist.com](mailto:advice@geist.com).**

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

[geist.com/lit-lorn](http://geist.com/lit-lorn)

# GEIST

FACT • FICTION • NORTH AMERICA

# Everything Turns Away

STEVEN HEIGHTON

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just dully walking along

—*W.H. Auden, “Musée des Beaux Arts”*

**I.** The first of June 2015 was also the first day of ideal summery weather, hot but not humid, the grass and young leaves as freshly green as they would get, the banks of lilac along the old railway line in exuberant bloom. We were driving west into the franchise fringes of town in a silver Toyota Corolla that had rolled off the assembly line near the end of the previous century. We meant to test drive several less-used Toyotas at a dealership overlooking a postcard marina on a Lake Ontario bay.

A salesman named Walter—heavy, bespectacled, delivering his pitches in the laconic monotone of a man who has learned not to get his hopes up—introduced us to the three prospects I’d found online. One was a new-looking black Prius Hybrid that cost about \$5,000 more than we were ready to pay. I’d thought I might be able to bargain, but Walter in his anaesthetized drawl apologized that in this case the price was final. Still, the crimson Camry was promising—the paint looked fresh, the odometer reading was modest, and the price was in our range. Walter handed me the key, slapped a magnetic test-drive licence plate into the slot above the rear fender, and off we drove. He sat beside me, raking his hand through an auburn comb-over that the wind kept compromising, while my wife, Mary, and seventeen-year-old daughter, Elena, sat in the back.

“Lovely day for a drive, isn’t it, Steve,” drawled Walter. In some retail circles, I guess, they still believe in punctuating every sentence with the target customer’s name—a gambit that seems touchingly antiquated. Aren’t we all too savvy nowadays for such obvious sales cons? But we’re also lonelier and needier, so maybe charades of kindness and kinship still trigger a gratified response after all.

*We*, I write, as if there’s a parity of loneliness between mere melancholics, like myself, and the catastrophically depressed. I’ve wondered if I have the right to frame this story—by which I mean, translate and shape such harrowing data.



**W**alter went on personalizing his sales script with Steves as he directed me along what he called test drive route numero uno. The route comprised urban and rural stretches and a drag strip of vacant highway where you could assess a car's acceleration; the Camry had a lot more pickup than our failing Corolla.

We were returning to the dealership the same way we'd set out, on a busy four-lane road that ran alongside the backyards of modest suburban houses from the sixties or seventies, their decks or patios visible some thirty metres away through the trees. It was along this stretch that I became aware, in spite of Walter's autopilot patter, that behind us Mary and Elena were anxiously discussing something.

Mary tapped me on the shoulder.

"Excuse me,"—this more to Walter, who was talking—"I think we should pull over for a second."

I asked what was going on.

"We need to back up. Elena thinks something's wrong back there."

"With the car?" Walter asked with a resigned sigh.

"She thinks someone might be hurt."

I pulled over onto the gravel and stopped. Elena leaned forward as I turned to look back, her face serious, close to mine. She said, "I saw something the first time we went by, but that was from the far lane. I just saw again, closer. I think a guy is hurt, maybe unconscious."

**Elena, with her sharp vision, had seen something we couldn't, something "not okay"**

I started to back up along the shoulder. Mary said, "She had to point him out to me. Maybe he was drunk and fell. He's lying on his deck. She says he hasn't moved since the first time we passed."

"I think he might be bleeding," Elena said.

"She thought he might be wearing a red cap."

"He's there, Dad!"

I stopped again. For the first time on our test drive, silence from Walter.

"His face is still upside down," Elena said. "His head's back over the edge."

"Probably sleeping one off," Walter said. "I can't see anything, but then I'm due for new specs."

"It's not a red cap," Elena said quietly.

I looked hard but couldn't see the man either, though I saw the deck, the patio doors, a white brick bungalow. From my point of view the branch of a

large tree beside the road was hiding part of the deck.

"Could be drugs, too," Walter said. "He'll probably be okay, though."

"He's not okay," Elena said.

I pulled back onto the road, U-turned, accelerated up the inner lane and veered left on a yellow light just as it turned red. Silence in the car—Walter rigid, his arms stretched straight in front of him, thick veinless hands braced on the dashboard. I drove a block west and turned south onto a quiet residential street.

"Here?"

"I think so," Elena said.

I pulled in at the curb in front of a landscaped front yard: groomed flower beds, hedges, a blue spruce symmetrical as an artificial Christmas tree. Beyond it, a white bungalow. Picture window, drapes drawn. The vacant driveway recently paved. As I jumped out Mary said, "Don't go behind the house yet—knock on the door."

"Why?"

"Could be a drug thing—there might be someone back there."

Walter was staring ahead through the windshield with unblinking eyes.

"Be careful, Dad!"

Elena's concern was touching and then disturbing as it hit me that she with her sharp vision had seen something we couldn't, something "not okay." I walked toward the house, my legs weightless with adrenaline. As always in situations of potential emergency I was excited; also worried about the fallen man; also anxious about seeming a busybody, puncturing a stranger's privacy, maybe antagonizing some hostile type whose friend or customer had passed out on the back deck.

I rapped on the solid door. From the other side, a detonation of high-pitched barking. The outburst subsided until I knocked again. I looked back at the car. Mary and Elena—faces side by side—watched me through the open back window. Walter too had now turned his pale, despairing face in my direction. I walked past the garage, rounded the corner and ran along the concrete walk that led toward the backyard.

I emerged into the yard and froze. Ten feet away, a man was lying face up on the sunlit pine of the deck, his head lolling back over the edge as if craning to look across the yard toward the road. Because the deck was the height of my chest, he lay directly in front of me. A grey-green face under streaks and spatters of dried blood. The eyes shut hard. On his emaciated torso, as if placed there lengthwise, a polished mahogany cane. Cane, emaciated, old or ailing—he has

slipped, fallen, smacked his head. Unconscious? No, it's too late. He's gone. I have never seen a body look so utterly vacated.

These impressions occupy maybe two or three seconds. I'm caught inside a coroner's forensic snapshot. No: it's not a finished image but a fresh print, still developing, the polished cane transforming into the stock of a rifle, no, something shorter, thicker, a shotgun fallen onto the man's torso. Barrel toward the face. The blood there not from facial wounds but splattered up from below. I can't see the wound, or somehow don't see it, and in fact I'm already turning and fleeing back toward the car. The passengers gape as I run toward them. I leap in, slam the door, start the car and babble words at them, old man, shotgun, suicide, dead.

**O**ne reason to explore a horrific event in nonfictional instead of fictional terms is to avoid having to convince the reader of the plausibility of key details, no matter how farfetched. It is 2015. In a speeding vehicle sit three middle-aged adults, one of them a used car salesman. A teenager sits with them. And not one of these four individuals is carrying a phone. My daughter has left hers in our car in the parking lot at the dealership. Walter has always seen these drives as a chance to get away from calls, he explains now—adding softly, hopelessly, as if assuming I'll ignore him, "Better not speed, Steve... We're almost there... If he passed a while ago, a minute won't matter."

Silence from the back seat. I look in the rearview mirror: Elena staring fixedly out her window. We reach the dealership a few minutes later. Mary and Elena decide to wait outside in the parking lot while Walter leads me in through the showroom to his open concept cubicle. It's like the mock-up of an office on a stage: three walls that go part way to the ceiling, no front wall at all. He gestures toward his chair, his desk, an office phone. I sit and key in 911. I try to speak calmly, quickly. A burning current crawls under my scalp. The pulse in my jaw is like a second heartbeat. The dispatcher, as if new to the job or too sensitive for it, sounds genuinely shaken.

"I wonder if I should have stayed with him," I say, feeling queasier as it hits me: by leaving the scene I might have done something unconscionable. The body is alone, as it must have been for who knows how long before we arrived, and this condition—of almost interstellar solitude—is a terrible insult and indignity.

"No," the dispatcher tells me. "There was a gun there, you had to leave."

She gets me to repeat the address, sends two police cars and an ambulance, then keeps me on the line to collect my own details—address, telephone number—as well as Walter's. He's leaning against the back hatch of a gleaming charcoal grey SUV, polishing the lenses of his glasses with a Kleenex, as I recite coordinates into the phone.

I hang up and stare at my hand, still gripping the receiver. The hand looks prosthetic. My wristwatch says 12:16. I half-see Walter approaching his desk, approaching me, this stranger in his chair. He leans down and—as if gently reminding me of the masculine duty to push on with life's errands in the face of disaster—murmurs, "Dare I ask, Steve, if you've made a decision about the Camry?"



Two hours later a cop parked his motorcycle in front of our house. I led him around to the side porch and we sat down. He drank strong-smelling coffee out of a stainless steel mug he'd brought, while I tried to sip a beer that I wanted to guzzle. I wanted something stiffer than beer but wondered if I was already violating some statute by drinking while providing a sworn statement. The man was messily printing my account on foolscap with a pencil. I tried to describe exactly what I'd seen and done—often a challenge for a fiction writer, although not in this case. The incident seemed—still seems—to deny any licence to the part of me that compulsively reshapes or redacts experiences.

The cop was tall, had an action-figure physique, and wore aviator shades and motorcycle boots. Despite the glare he removed his sunglasses, exposing thoughtful blue eyes and long lashes.

“Such a beautiful day, too,” I said moronically.

“Those tend to be the worst ones,” he said. “It’s a myth that Christmas is the worst time.”

Still buzzing, hardly able to sit still, I blurted that maybe the first true summer day feels like a leering “fuck you” to someone whose inner world is gripped in winter. The cop inclined his head noncommittally. After a moment he said he hadn’t gone into the backyard with the paramedics—he didn’t need to see that sort of thing, he’d seen one too many.

I asked about the dead man and, a little to my surprise, the cop related as much as he knew—not much, but enough to collapse my assumptions and deductions. The victim was not old, just in his late fifties. He didn’t live alone, although on the morning of his death he was alone, except for that dog I’d heard barking.

“We’re trying to track down his wife. Looks like she went out of town for the weekend.”

“So he planned this—waited for her to leave,” I said, instantly replacing my old assumptions with new ones. *She was with another man and didn’t realize he knew. Or, There was no other man, but she was leaving him anyway.*

“And he recently retired from the military,” the cop said.

“Could he have been over in Afghanistan?” I asked, then added, “No. Probably too old.”

Was I making the cop uneasy? Likely he was unused to such persistent curiosity and reflexive deduction—the professional habits of fiction writers and investigative journalists, along with private detectives, gossips and conspiracy theorists.

I told the cop how surprised I was that no one had seen or heard a thing. He explained that one neighbour did hear something, around 10:00 a.m., but figured it was a big firecracker.

“So he was lying there for two hours.”

“I’m afraid so.”

The cop gave me contact details for mental health professionals that we, and especially Elena, might want to consult. As he got to his feet he said, “You should be proud of your daughter. Good eyes.” He pointed to his own eyes as he slid his sunglasses back on. “And she chose to speak up.”

The realization that your child is further evolved than you were at her age both humbles you and makes you proud; that she’s conscientious, empathetic, an adult in a world understaffed by adults. All that. But she will have to carry something heavier than you ever did at seventeen, something that might linger for years on the threshold of her sleeps.

**I**l. For ten mornings afterward, I checked the obituaries on the website of the local newspaper until I found it. I didn't recognize the face in the overexposed black-and-white photo; it looked much fuller and younger than the blood-streaked face I'd glimpsed. But other details made me all but certain: the date of death, the code phrase "died suddenly" and a reference to retirement from a logistical job in the military. An online check to link the surname to the house address came up positive: a paving company listed his driveway as a recent contract.

I made a note of the memorial service date.

From the beginning I'd felt that if there was a service, and if I found the information in time, I should try to attend. Again forming an assumption out of skimpy evidence and ready stereotypes, I'd decided that few mourners would be present. A final existential insult. The military, I guessed, might dispatch some kind of small delegation, but who could say? Elena told me she thought she might want to attend as well. Our intention was to enter quietly, sit at the back, and slip out before any next of kin could approach and ask about our connection with the deceased.

On the morning of the memorial service, she decided not to go. I didn't ask her to explain her decision. I put on some decent clothes but then, agonizing, changed back into my summer writing gear—cargo shorts and a T-shirt—before deciding last minute that I had to go after all. I dressed again and ran out the front door, re-knotting my tie as I jogged the five blocks to the funeral home chapel.

Sitting at the back turned out to be the only option. At least two hundred people, dozens of them in military dress uniform, packed the room. There were children; there were teenagers who looked genuinely distraught, not simply dra-gooned into the pews. My sense of relief was twofold: people had come to mourn the man after all and, for that very reason, I could come and go anonymously.

The widow, barely able to walk, was helped up the aisle by bulky men who looked awkward in ill-fitting suits and loose-knotted ties. Over the next hour she remained seated and sobbing at the front, while others got up to speak at the lectern. Then a priest with a bald head, a boyish face and an irrepressibly sunny demeanour read a eulogy the widow had written. The content and tone made it clear that the manner of the man's death was no secret. In his late forties he had slid into depression and then, developing ailments unspecified in the eulogy, had to give up or cut back on the physical outlets that had helped him manage: beer league baseball, fly fishing and, more recently and devotedly, gardening. Now it came back to me: the landscaped front yard, the trimmed hedges, the parterred and graded flower beds that—come to think of it—had been sparsely flowered despite the season. Maybe just perennials, the stubborn aftermath of his endeavour.

**I**n the room where I write, I unshelve a plump, important-looking anthology and turn to the poem "Musée des Beaux-Arts," in which W. H. Auden reflects on Pieter Brueghel the Elder's painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*:

how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the plowman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water



## I set him in motion on that ripening field, loping and tossing the ball to friends

In a footnote, the anthologists observe that the figures in Breughel's composition have not only failed to notice Icarus plunging out of the sky but also "a dead body in the woods." I quickly find a reproduction of the painting online. Locating the overlooked body is less easy, but eventually—using the magnifying tool to search the woods beyond a field that a farmer and his horse are plowing—I spot him. Only his face shows clearly, inverted, staring upward, white against the dark forest floor. I recoil from the screen; his positioning and pallor strongly recall the face of the man on the deck.

Could Auden have missed the figure? He wrote his poem after examining the painting in the *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts* in Brussels and he must have studied the work closely. I assume he saw but chose to ignore that secondary, nameless casualty and to focus

on Icarus. If so, it was the right decision. Adding a stanza of reflections on the dead stranger would have herniated the poem, introducing a distracting sidebar, like dropping a second protagonist into a short story.

But visual art works differently, and the face in the woods is integral to the painting. On one level, it serves as a *memento mori*, one of those small skulls that Renaissance artists planted in the margins of their works as quiet reminders of mortality. And because of its placement on the left side of the canvas, the head also serves as a compositional balance to Icarus, who is plunging into the sea on the lower right side. The balancing works anatomically as well: the dead man's face, along with a bit of his dark-clad torso blending into the undergrowth, physically completes Icarus, of whom we see only a pair of white legs.

Each one's unwitnessed fate echoes the other's, yet the hidden victim seems so much more forlorn. Icarus, after all, is the namesake of the painting, the title of which will direct any viewer to search out and find his submerging form. Nor is Icarus hard to find: his legs, in contrast to the gloomily shaded face in the woods, are lit up by the setting sun. Above all, Icarus is an illustrious figure—a sort of misbehaving celebrity, a universal metaphor, a byword to the point of cliché.

**A**t the chapel the jaunty priest, still failing to funeralize his demeanour, read from Psalm 34: *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*

A sense of being unseen, alone and spectral, must be a root sorrow for many of the broken; yet there's more than one way of not being seen. You can feel insignificant to the point of invisibility or—while living an outwardly successful, hence *visible*, life—sink under the weight of a pain unapparent to the world.

Maybe Icarus, that golden boy, was a suicide too.

As for the ones who feel invisible suicide may simply finalize a self-perceived erasure. Maybe these few thousand words are all trying to say the same thing: you were seen, hence a little less alone, during the two hours after your death.

**A**t home I studied the program from the service. The photo on the front showed a man in his late twenties or early thirties, lanky, fit in the implicit manner of people who work physically but don't frequent weight rooms. His stance: confident but not cocky. Relaxed grin. He's wearing a white T-shirt half tucked into faded jeans, and a red baseball cap, like the one Elena first thought he might have on. Behind him, a chain-link backstop and beyond that a baseball diamond. Judging by the light and the state of the outfield grass, it's late spring.

I'd set him in motion on that ripening field, loping and tossing the ball to friends, fielding grounders with that easygoing grin, or wincing into the sun as he tracks a pop fly I've hit out to him. Later, we return to the bleachers and gather around a Styrofoam cooler packed with squat, iodine-brown bottles of Brador that he and his friends snap open with their lighters. Little older than my daughter is now, I barely say a word, shyly thrilled to be present, swigging beer, humoured by men who are firmly at home in their adult lives.

**T**rying to finish this piece—trying to pin down, after my various misconstructions, whatever was solidly knowable—I decided to compare my recall of his home and neighbourhood to the reality. But I couldn't drive out there; our Corolla was back in the shop. So I turned to Google Street View.

In that eerily paused, preserved little world the sun was high, the trees in bud but not yet in leaf—that equivocal pre-season in Kingston when the light, unfiltered by greenery, is dazzling, yet the winds off the lake remain wintry. I clicked on a link and found a date for the images: mid-April, just over a year before the suicide.

I began on the main road from which Elena first glimpsed him, but I couldn't tell which backyard was his. I navigated round to his own street. Again, nothing looked right. I checked my notes for his address, then left-clicked back up the street in blurring little surges.

Finally I recognized the house. The blue spruce looked more familiar by the moment, as did the fieldstone half-fence that I only now recalled, and those terraced garden beds raked and ready for the spring flowers. In the foreground at the bottom of the driveway sat a phalanx of brown-paper yard waste bags, evenly packed to the top, and behind them a bundle of neatly tied deadfall and trimmed branches. I glided ghost-like back down the street: no one else had left anything out for collection. Did the neighbours not bother with their yards or had the man always tidied up and then set out his refuse early in the season, ahead of collection day?

Gardening is a promissory, optimistic act. To sow is to project, to cast your faith forward into the next season or the following spring. Stumbling on this evidence of his diligence and care—this generative intention still active just a few hundred days before he blew out his heart—moved me very much.

Now I imagine the Street View vehicle, with its mounted camera, passing along the main road not when it did but some thirteen months later, the beautiful morning of his death. If I and Walter, among hundreds or thousands of others, had missed his face amid the branches and shadows of his backyard, then the Street View curators who screen the panoramas for legal reasons might have missed him too. Certainly they would have missed him. The image would still be saved online, his face half hidden in the landscape.

---

*Steven Heighton received the Governor General's Award for Poetry for his 2016 collection The Waking Comes Late. His most recent book is a novel, The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep published by Hamish Hamilton Canada. His fiction and poetry have appeared in the LRB, Zoetrope, Tin House, Best American Poetry, Best American Mystery Stories and the Walrus. He lives in Kingston.*

# Conversation with Victor Frankenstein

DAVID MILNE

*When deprived of sensory input, humans experience miraculous, spiritual things*

“**M**ercifully, the whole ‘monster’ business is so over-told that no one is much interested anymore.”

“I don’t believe that. People don’t ask?”

“Oh, it’s the first thing they ask if they figure out who I am. But I answer and they realize they’ve heard it all before. An awkward silence follows, then they ask me what I’m working on now.”

“What exactly is it? That you’re working on,” Kevin asks.

“I’ve gotten quite involved in physics.”

“Higgs-Boson stuff?”

Victor purses his lips, then relaxes, lays his head against the wall of the cave, his legs crossed. A small electric lantern illuminates the two men seated on the floor, their backs to opposing walls.

“Why haven’t I heard about the immortality thing? Why isn’t everyone talking about that?”

“Oh, I haven’t been around that long. And I stay out of view, change names. You’d be surprised how bad people are with dates.”

“People are going to figure it out sooner or later.”

“Some do. I hope more don’t. It’s the least interesting thing they could want to talk about. I think I’d rather go back to answering questions about the monster—do you think he had a soul, that sort of thing.” Victor frowns.

“How on earth could immortality not interest you?”

“Because frankly, I don’t understand it. I have no idea what caused it, how it works, or when it started. I don’t even know that it *is* immortality. I just don’t seem to have aged in a suspicious number of years.”

Kevin’s eyes widen. “Maybe your story? Somehow you’ve gained immortality through the power of your story.”

Victor rolls his eyes but his tone is patient. “It’s important not to confuse figurative language and physical reality. The attainment of a kind of endurance, even immortality, by a piece of literature or art has no bearing on the actual, living subjects of that art. My story is no more a part of me than this shirt is,” he says, plucking the garment between a finger and thumb.

The men sit in the faint lantern light, Victor slowly scratching his chin with a thumbnail.

“Physics then. Why that?”

“Because it infuriated me,” Victor says and pauses to brush something off the front of his shirt, which is quite stylish yet, somehow, blue collar; what Ralph Lauren might wear to a coal mine. “It’s a bit of an embarrassment to science. I felt someone needed to put it right.”

“How’s that?”

“Well, think about it. You have all the leading thinkers in the field, supposedly the smartest people in science today, and they’re inventing invisible matter to explain why their formulas don’t work? And no one is questioning this? It’s intolerable. Someone needed to restore our credibility.”

“Oh,” Kevin nods and scratches his own chin. “Any progress?”

“Certainly.”

“Meaning what?”

“It’s not really anything of use to a layperson.”

“Meaning I wouldn’t understand.”

“Meaning the things I’ve learned don’t yet have any practical application.”

“That just sounds evasive.”

Victor sighs. He adjusts his uncomfortable position. “Here’s an example. I’ve determined that the current model of particle physics, where all matter is made up of combinations of particles that spin around each other in suspiciously planet-like orbits, is wrong. It’s really a kind of optical illusion created by the limitations of our instrumentation and imaginations. So when matter,” Victor says, making air quotes with his fingers, “is viewed through this filter, the information we are able to perceive causes us to believe that what we have is tiny particles spinning around each other and ricocheting madly about.”

Kevin stares at Victor, thinking. “When in fact…”

Victor rubs his forehead. “Well, it’s more of a great mesh of elements in fixed positions, not actually moving at all, but changing states in relation to each other.”

“Like pixels on a screen?”

“No. But that could be a helpful way to think of it.”

Kevin does think about it. The lantern hums. “So what does that mean then?”

“That’s what I was saying. So far it doesn’t mean much of anything. Knowing that this is how the fabric of the universe behaves doesn’t allow me to turn lead into gold or cure disease. It’s a starting point. But it’s far less valuable than knowing how to, say, build an efficient water de-salinization process.”

“But if you’re right, this is an enormous step forward in human understanding. Why am I only hearing this now?”

“Because the scientific community does not adapt well to change.”

“People aren’t listening?”

Victor waves a hand. “I know better than to try telling people about this before it’s complete. I’d rather toil in obscurity for another fifty years, then set this loose on the world, than spend the next fifteen years arguing with people at conferences.”

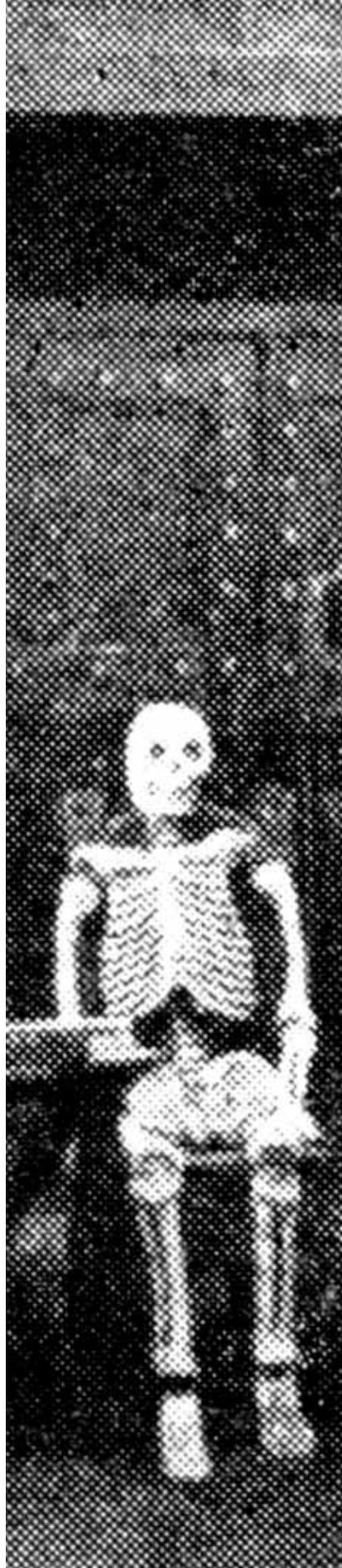
“No.” Kevin jabs a finger at Victor. “I can make the world listen. I have a website—it gets a lot of hits—and it’s all about ideas outside of the mainstream. This would be perfect for it.”

Victor shakes his head slowly. “I don’t think there’s any danger of us telling the world much of anything at this point. I estimate the quantity of rock between us and daylight as being at least fifteen feet thick.”

“We’re going to get out of here.”

“I see no reason to believe that. I certainly didn’t tell anyone about this place, and since you only discovered it by following me here, it’s unlikely that you did either.”

“We’re going to be fine.”



Victor sighs. “This is something I’ve never been able to adjust to. This fad of unreasonable optimism. As far as I can tell it started out as a convenient lie to justify an economic system that favours some over others. But it’s almost become a religion now. It has a life of its own.”

“Believing in yourself is the greatest strength a person can possess. It’s what makes difficult things possible.”

“On the contrary, it’s a form of blindness. From what I’ve seen, it’s a means of denying difficult but necessary truths so that a person can live within the comforting cloud of make-believe.”

“So you believe you’re going to die?”

“I have no idea what I’m going to do, but having spent a few hours trying to pry rocks loose with our bare hands,” Victor holds up his raw, bloodied palms, “and having searched the limited confines of our prison quite extensively, I am inclined to think that whatever it is, I am going to do it within this cave.”

“You’re giving up. You see, you’re just giving up. We have to get out of here. I still have things to do.”

“And your need will cause these rocks to part?”

“At least I’m trying.”

“No, you’re doing the same thing as me. Sitting here, trying to be as comfortable as possible. A feat that I think will get a good deal harder when the battery in this lantern runs out.”

Kevin rubs his eyes with both hands and sits silently, hands covering his face. Victor shifts his position again, sighing quietly, inspecting the ceiling.

“I can’t really stop thinking about the immortality,” Kevin says. “The how. How it started.”

“No one sees themselves aging. It’s tiny things that add up to critical mass over a period of years, and then you suddenly realize you’re getting older. So it takes a few of those checkpoints to pass before you start to notice, and even then you just think you have outstanding genes. But yes, in answer to what you’re thinking, the timing might coincide with the time I was with the monster. Really though, it may have taken twenty years for me to even start to suspect. There’s just no way to know.”

“But what else could it have been? Other than something to do with creating the monster, with creating life?”

“Anything,” Victor says. “Anything at all. It’s a very common fallacy to think that the things we deem important are the things that actually matter.”

Kevin grimaces and pinches his nose. “You are extremely frustrating to talk to.”

“That’s because facts are hard and unyielding objects with no concern for our emotional needs.”

Kevin picks up a rock and throws it angrily into the darkness.

“Okay. By all accounts you’re a genius. And a genius who’s been around for something like two hundred years. You must be able to get us out of here.”

“Kevin. I don’t want to cause you undue distress but we both have to accept a certain degree of finality here.”

“Stop accepting this! Do something. It’s... you’re immortal so you don’t give a fuck because it’ll work out for you, but I’m going to die in here if you don’t help me.”

“It’s just the opposite. The fact that I might not die actually makes my predicament considerably worse. We’re stuck here. You will be leaving in the near future, even if your exit will be difficult. I face the possibility of sitting here, in

absolute darkness, for a very difficult to imagine period of time. If I am immortal, Kevin, and I am one day unearthed, what do you suppose I might be at that time? If I am to guess, I'd say it would be something considerably less human than the monster ever was."

The lantern flickers and both men look at it.

Kevin takes one deep breath, then another. "You always talk about it in the past tense. It really is dead then?"

"Oh, yes. When someone does figure out who I am, they always ask this one. It is quite dead." Victor watches the shadows above. "They never ask if I regret it."

Kevin forgets his breathing exercises.

"At first it was a relief to be rid of it but now, inevitably, I desperately wish that it wasn't."

"Oh?"

"Of course. Wisdom is purchased with poor choices, Kevin."

Twice, the lantern flickers and then reasserts itself.

"Have you tried to kill yourself?" Kevin asks without looking up.

Victor pauses. "No. I've held my breath, to see what that would be like."

Kevin looks up.

"It felt the same as it always did. That panicky awfulness. I couldn't sustain it."

"So you could be killed?"

"Possibly. As I said, I have no idea what exactly this is."

The men stare at the floor.

"I don't want to die," Kevin says.

Victor watches him.

The lantern flickers again and this time, when it steadies, it is noticeably dimmer.

"Will we run out of air?" Kevin asks.

"I've been trying to decide. It seems likely, based on our investigation of this space, that there isn't sufficient ventilation."

Silence.

"I've always been terrified of being smothered."

"Oh," Victor says, brightening, "it wouldn't be like that at all. We're talking about a scenario where carbon monoxide gradually replaces the oxygen. We'll continue to breathe comfortably. We'll just get... dozy." Victor smiles brightly. "It's a bad outcome, but an easy road. At no time would we feel like we're being suffocated."

Tension leaves Kevin's face. The lantern dims further.

Kevin closes his eyes and begins breathing, loud and rhythmically. Victor watches him, then stares off into the darkness, hands resting fingertip to fingertip.

The light flickers violently and, with a small crackling sound, is gone.

"Oh God," says Kevin.

Victor sighs heavily and Kevin, were he not so preoccupied with his own predicament, would hear the way Victor's breath shakes.

"What do we do now?" Kevin's voice is panicky, strained an octave above its previous pitch.

The darkness is absolute.

"Even less than before," Victor says. His voice is quieter. A subconscious shift towards whispering.

"Meaning what? What the fuck are we supposed to do?"

"There wasn't anything we could do before and there is still nothing. It's just worse now. My only recommendation is that we remain calm."

"Is that supposed to help?"

“Yes. If you do what I say it actually *will* help you feel better.” Several seconds pass. “You can control how you feel, to some extent, and reduce your discomfort.”

A pause. “That isn’t going to save us,” Kevin says.

“No. But it makes us feel a little better and preserves some dignity, which is really all we have now. The opportunity to behave admirably under difficult circumstances.”

The two men discuss past mistakes and oxygen to carbon monoxide ratios, lapsing into periodic silences.

“What was that?” Kevin asks. “Are you moving around?”

“No. I’m not.”

“Someone is moving around in here.”

“I don’t think that...” Victor pauses mid-sentence. “Hello?” he says.

In the dark, Kevin lashes his arms around frantically, as if trying to swat something away.

“Kevin, where are you?” Victor asks.

“I’m right here. I haven’t moved. Are you moving?”

“I’m not. But I’d swear someone is,” he says quizzically.

“Who’s here?” Kevin calls out angrily.

“There is no way anyone else can be here,” Victor answers, sounding unconvinced.

“What’s that?”

“What?” says Victor.

“Look. Tiny lights. See?”

“I don’t see anything.”

“Over there. To my right, I think. There are pinpricks of light moving around. Do you see them?”

Victor stares. With one hand he brushes an eye, as if checking to determine if it is actually open. “Maybe,” he says. “Maybe something.”

“What is it?”

“I don’t know. Maybe some form of phosphorescence?”

There is a shuffling, dragging noise.

“Is that you?” Kevin asks. “Are you moving?”

“Yes,” Victor answers. “I’m going to see what it is. Oh!”

“What? What is it?”

“Something went right past me, I felt it.”

“Towards me?”

“I think so.”

“Jesus.” Kevin pulls his knees to his chest and holds his fists up.

“My God,” Victor says. “What is this? Can you see this, Kevin?”

“The lights are everywhere,” Kevin yells. “They’re getting bigger and bigger.”

“It’s like rain,” Victor exclaims. “Luminescent rain. And it’s warm.”

“It’s beautiful,” Kevin calls.

“There is someone here,” Victor says. “Standing right in front of me. I can’t feel them, but they’re right here.” He waves an arm slowly in front of him. “I believe I am putting my arm right in them.”

“There’s someone here, too,” Kevin says, calm now. “Next to me.”

A rumbling fills the air, then passes.

“Who are you?” Victor asks with wonder.

The cave seems to shake gently.

“Is that you, Mom?” Kevin asks.

“My God,” Victor says in a rapture. “Perhaps I am dying?”

There is a terrific, roaring vibration that causes Victor to fall to the floor, and an enormous gust of air washes over both men, accompanied by showers of rock and dust. For terrifying seconds, the noise is unbearable.

When the vibration stops the men stare at a large opening in the cave which looks out on a twilight pale sky. The sound of waves breaking on rocks rises up from the ocean a hundred feet below.

Victor crawls to the edge and peers down. Kevin, who is curled up in a ball at the back of the cave, cautiously unfurls himself, testing for injuries, and joins Victor on the ledge.

“What happened?” Kevin asks.

Victor breathes deeply, savouring the sea air. “It seems that the initial cave-in that trapped us left things in an unstable state. We are still trapped, but I feel that our situation is much improved.”

“It was God,” Kevin says. “He came into that cave and freed us.” Kevin sits next to Victor on the edge and smiles. “I felt his presence.”

Victor sits, dangling his legs in the empty space beneath them. The cool sea air gently blows his hair.

“There is a phenomenon that I’ve read about,” Victor says. “When deprived of sensory input, humans begin, quite shortly, to experience miraculous, spiritual things.”

Kevin watches Victor.

“It’s described as quite pleasant. Sometimes even as experiences of divinity.”

“Don’t try to tell me that didn’t just happen,” Kevin says. “You experienced it too. You said so.”

“I did, I certainly did.” Victor rocks back and forth, holding the lip of the ledge. “But what I experienced seems like what the sensory deprivation experiments described.”

“That was real. That was a profound experience. Don’t try to rationalize it away with some study of people locked in a closet.”

Victor returns his gaze to the sea.

Kevin hugs himself for warmth, although Victor does not appear to share his discomfort.

After some time, Kevin asks, “Do you think you’ll make another? Another creature?”

Victor shakes his head. “I imagine it’s like having children. For a while, the thrill makes all the hard work worthwhile. But eventually everyone reaches a point where they’ve had enough.” Victor pauses to study the sky. “Anyway, if you want to create life, cloning has proven itself a far more effective method than reanimation. Or you can just find a nice girl. That works too.”

Kevin thinks about this. Victor reaches over, pats the smaller man on the back, provoking a startled smile. Victor pushes hard and Kevin is gone.

Victor peers down the cliffside for several moments without expression. He sighs heavily. “I believe we have sufficiently tested the divine intervention theory,” he says quietly and rubs his brow.

---

*David Milne lives in Calgary with his wife, Lindsay, and daughter, Paige. His fiction has previously appeared in Geist, Grain and Qwerty.*

# Parade of Lost Souls

*The Halloween photography of Christopher Grabowski*



The Parade of Lost Souls is held each year on the Saturday closest to Halloween: participants, many dressed in costumes, congregate in the Commercial Drive area of East Vancouver and follow a route down side streets and back alleys along which houses are decorated in Halloween getup and residents perform shows, music and dances, and put on other Halloween festivities.

The parade grew out of neighbourhood events set up by the artist Paula Jardine, who wanted her children to understand the deeper traditions around Halloween. The first event, held in 1991, was called The Party of Lost Souls and was intended to be a neighbourhood celebration, Jardine writes, “to honour the dead, wake the living, and chase away bad luck.” The

event included a procession based on the Russian folktale “Vasilisa’s Journey,” about a young girl’s search for wisdom and her triumph over fear. Since then, the parade has become an East Vancouver institution, attended by thousands of people each year, with satellite events—concerts, parties, dances—held at venues in the neighbourhood.

The photographer Christopher Grabowski, a long-time resident of the Commercial Drive area, has been photographing the parade on and off since 2004. The photos displayed here were taken in 2017 by Grabowski and his photography students, who set up a photo booth at the parade and invited participants to pose for portraits. “Photos from the parade highlight archetypes spanning the

whole of civilization as we know it. The costumes range from animalistic and tribal, through medieval ‘danse macabre,’ to characters populating the iconosphere of modern media,” Grabowski writes. “Some of these archetypes were born of cultures that perished and as our own society is fast approaching a number of critical thresholds, perhaps a carnival is the way we occasionally need to remind ourselves and the powers that be that the existing order is not the only one possible. There is still a potential for a decisive change or even a revolution.”

—*Michał Kozłowski*

*To learn more about this project and see more photos from this series visit [mediumlight.com](http://mediumlight.com). Paula Jardine’s work can be found at [paulajardine.com](http://paulajardine.com).*







# Occupation Anxiety

LISA BIRD-WILSON

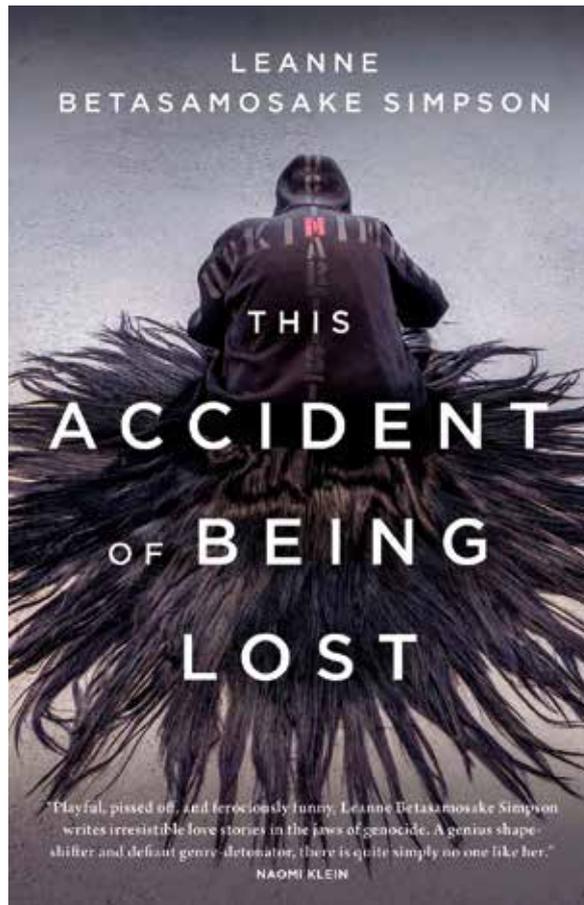
*Rebellion is on her way*

August 9 is International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. In 2017, the day honoured the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which establishes “the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.”

UNDRIP was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. For the following eight years the Canadian government, led by Stephen Harper, former prime minister, refused to sign onto the declaration. For a solid eight years Harper didn't just refuse to sign, but actively voted, on behalf of all Canadians, *against* UNDRIP.

With 144 UN member states voting in favour, Canada was one of just four votes against.

Harper's refusal was shameful. It took a new government, the current Liberal majority, and a new prime minister, Justin Trudeau, to get the job done and Canada finally became signatory to the declaration in 2016. So, while the rest of the world celebrated the tenth



anniversary last year, Canada celebrated its first anniversary as a signatory.

UNDRIP outlines the principles of basic human rights that consider the unique position of the world's Indigenous peoples. Earlier this year, Romeo Saganash, MP for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, introduced a private member's bill, C-262, proposing to conform Canadian laws to

UNDRIP principles. When the vote on bill C-262 went to the legislature in early June 2018, seventy-nine Conservative MPs voted “No.” The bill still passed, 206 to 79, and was sent to the Senate, but social media erupted with outrage over two Conservative MPs who high-fived each other after registering their “No” votes. One of those high-fiving MPs was Rosemarie Falk from the Battleford—Lloydminster riding. The riding that is home to the family of Colton Boushie, the unarmed First Nations teen shot and murdered by a settler farmer who was subsequently found not guilty by an all-white jury. A riding that has in the aftermath of

the verdict become the site of online and real-world hatred and vitriol.

The MPs' high-five, while contested by MP Rosemarie Falk as having nothing to do with the vote, but rather a joyous expression in celebration of the end of “nearly an hour of voting in the House of Commons,” should alarm all Canadians. The “nearly an hour of voting” that Falk

was so relieved to complete in June should be considered against a twenty-hour Conservative filibuster in March 2018—retaliation for Liberals voting down a Conservative motion. In that context, the fifty or fifty-five minutes of voting hardly seems gruelling. Or high-five worthy. Frankly, it's tough to buy the explanation Falk is selling, and there are still the seventy-nine Conservative "No" votes to grapple with.

In an era of so-called "reconciliation," at least seventy-nine of Canada's Conservative MPs toed the party line and actively opposed Indigenous rights. Not one stood up against the parliamentary norm of voting along party lines to recognize a basic rights charter endorsed by the UN. But then again, the "No" vote should really come as no surprise in a country that, in 2018, found Boushie's white killer not guilty, saw a teenaged Tina Fontaine murdered and dumped in the Red River, then acquitted her accused white killer. The same country that continues to accept social, economic and historic inequities faced by Indigenous people in areas of education, justice, clean water access, safe housing, health, jobs and so on. The country where this spring an all-Indigenous boys' hockey team faced a barrage of racist taunts, war whoops and tomahawk chop motions by opposing players, spectators, parents and coaches. The players on the all-Indigenous team were children: boys of thirteen and fourteen years old. The boys learned a valuable lesson that day about Canada, about their rights as Indigenous people, and about what they can expect from an indifferent nation.

Like so many Indigenous people, I've been left deflated by the latest round of events. Perhaps Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a talented Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer, thinker, and artist, says it best: "...occupation anxiety has worn our self-worth down to frayed wires." In the face of hopelessness, Simpson offers advice we can latch onto. She gives us permission

to stop waiting for colonial Canada to make space, and to instead elbow our way past and take the space for ourselves, because our lives depend on it.

Louis Riel famously stated, "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back." The role of art in reconciliation cannot be understated. In her 2017 collection of poems, songs and stories, *This Accident of Being Lost*, Simpson demonstrates for us the powerful role of art in decolonizing our minds and bodies, and reconciling Indigenous people with reclaiming our spirits.

In light of the many means and ways—high-fives and tomahawk chops—Indigenous people are continually assaulted by colonialism, I'm inspired by writers like Leanne Betasamosake Simpson who can maintain a knife-sharp sense of humour—because we can all use a good laugh—while at the same time telling unapologetic truths about where it's at in terms of Indigenous-settler relations in contemporary Canada.

Simpson is frighteningly genius in her description of what it's like to get fucked by colonialism: "We know what your people think about us. We know you feel pity because the largest city in the country is on top of us, thrusting in and out like it's our benevolent Wiindigo, fucking us in time to our screams like it's death metal."

One story in the collection, "Akiden Boreal," is set in a future state where the characters have the chance to visit the last piece of boreal forest together. Simpson uses the physicality of place (at one point in the story the narrator says: "Akiden means 'vagina.' Literally I think it means 'earth place' or 'land place,' though I'm not completely confident about the meaning of the 'den' part of the word and there is no one left to ask") and of the characters' bodies ("I'm losing track of my body; the edges are dissolving and I'm a fugitive in a fragile vessel...there is

a yellow light around his body and I can feel it mixing with my light") as metaphor to convey the deep sense of loss and longing for our ancestral lands, and for all that has been lost. The story is spiritual and profound, acknowledging "we are from people that have been forced to give up everything." And while the setting is a future state, the closeness of it seems all too real. Simpson is fearless because, as she states, "everything we are afraid of has already happened." Or is happening. A sharp reminder that a cold shadow looms, resonant in those seventy-nine "No" votes registered with such glee.

And yet, Simpson's writing restores optimism. The poems, songs and stories in *This Accident of Being Lost* are raw, written with Indigenous readers top of mind, full of material that feels like it matters to Indigenous people, and stated with grace and humour and a healthy dose of "we have to protect the fuck out of ourselves." The writing is a fine example of art in the act of decolonizing, a medicine to encourage us to "infect tiny bodies with the precious things they beat out of you," because "we almost always survive." Reading Simpson, we want to trust when she says, "meet me at the underpass/ rebellion is/ on her way." Simpson's writing is like oxygen to a dwindling fire. Hope springs in the ashes. We've got this. We always have.

---

*Lisa Bird-Wilson, a Métis and nêhiyaw writer from Saskatchewan, is the author of three books: The Red Files, a poetry collection (Nightwood Editions, 2016), Just Pretending, short stories (Coteau Books, 2013) and An Institute of Our Own: A History of the Gabriel Dumont Institute (Gabriel Dumont Press, 2011). Just Pretending is the 2019 One Book One Province selection for Saskatchewan. Her shorter works have been published in periodicals and anthologies across Canada. Bird-Wilson lives in Saskatoon, SK. Read more of her work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# Happy Barracks

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

*Goulash socialism becomes difficult to swallow*



In the bad old days of the Cold War, when the countries of Central Europe were political satellites of the Soviet Union, Hungary was known as “the happiest barracks in Eastern Europe.” The 1956 Hungarian Revolution, an uprising against Stalinism that cost the lives of more than 2,500 Hungarians, shook the Soviet Bloc. To pacify Hungary, and to prevent a recurrence of this violent revolt, Moscow first repressed the insurgents, then struck a compromise with the population. For the next thirty years, Hungary was ruled by “goulash socialism,” a mild version of Soviet communism that

incorporated limited free-market reforms and put fewer dissidents in jail than the sterner creeds imposed on neighbouring countries. This “soft dictatorship,” as a Hungarian friend referred to it, attracted the fascinated attention of Western visitors during the years leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.

When I arrived in Hungary for the first time, in April 1989, the people I met were eager to recover what they regarded as their natural home in the West. It seemed as though everyone I spoke to during the month I spent in the country mentioned the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and

praised Budapest’s historical ties to Vienna. The term “Eastern Europe” was disparaged as Soviet propaganda. It was pointed out to me that Prague was farther west than Vienna: why, then, was Czechoslovakia in “Eastern Europe” and Austria in “Western Europe”? The map with which we had lived since 1945 was a distortion wrought by Soviet tanks during the final days of World War II. Linger- ing socialist restrictions on the acquisition of hard currency limited young Hungarians’ ability to experience Western Europe for themselves. Many, after drawing out the meagre allowance of dollars or Deutschmarks

to which they were legally entitled, would fill their backpacks with tinned food to see how far into the West they could travel—to Vienna? to Paris? to London?—before their money ran out. Among the younger generations of that spring of 1989, who aspired to lead Hungary into its European future, there were ethnic nationalists, doctrinaire Catholics and, more appealingly, a slender, charismatic young liberal who had started a political party for people under the age of thirty-five known as the Alliance of Young Democrats. I was shown this young man's photograph and told he could be seen playing soccer in the park with his friends. His name was Viktor Orbán.

Charmed by Budapest's languid allure, and wanting to keep in touch with my new friends, I returned every few years. In May 2018 I arrived for my seventh visit and found that, as in early 1989, Hungary was again a happy barracks. This time the authoritarian rule came from the right. Viktor Orbán, now the country's prime minister, had become a stocky, glowering chauvinist who preached the superiority of "Christian democracy" to "corrupt" liberalism. After running an election campaign in early 2018 that was rabidly Islamophobic and incipiently anti-Semitic, Orbán had won a "supermajority" that would allow him to change the constitution in order to remain in power indefinitely. He and his former soccer buddies had appropriated much of Hungary's land and productive capacity, and had built a fence to keep out asylum seekers. Cosmopolitan institutions—such as the Central European University, founded in 1991 in celebration of the resurgence of the idea of "Central Europe" as Hungary escaped the bonds of Sovietized "Eastern Europe"—were being driven out of the country. A young writer

told me that his life had become more difficult since his name had appeared in an online list of "disloyal Hungarians." Many of the young generation of 1989, who had expected to dedicate their lives to integrating their country into a democratic Europe found themselves, in middle age, being obliged to embrace Hungary's "new friends" in authoritarian regimes to the east such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and China.



Yet no one complained—at least not in public. (The last opposition newspaper was shut down after the election.) The economy, though controlled by the governing clique, provided jobs. I saw more Chinese businesses and more overt prostitution (mainly in the form of massage parlours with English signs) than in the past, but the Danube remained as dreamy as ever. Tourists arrived on boat cruises. Gozsdu Udvar, a derelict older district in the city centre, had been renovated into an atmospheric warren of "ruin pubs" equally popular with foreigners and locals. Both Budapest's venerable charm and its raffish bohemianism remained superficially intact, even though the cultural multiplicity that was the foundation of its cultural riches was being

slowly extinguished. When I asked a younger intellectual how she reacted to the situation, she said: "It doesn't affect me. I am in my own world. I stay at home and do my work. I try not to know about it. If you are in an office, if you are fired for having liberal opinions, then it affects you. But I can ignore it." I suggested that some people in 1930s Germany must have adopted the same attitude. "Yes," she replied. "You could say that I am putting my head in the sand."

There seemed to be few alternatives to lying low. While no one is being killed or jailed for political reasons, jobs and opportunities dry up for those who dissent. In contrast to my first visit to Hungary, this time I found that opponents of the regime had no shining dream they longed to implement in its place. Western Europe, incarnated by the European Union, was a tarnished chalice. Some shared Orbán's nationalism but were appalled that he had made himself president for life. The city's famous trams and antique subway ran on time, grim Soviet-style apartment blocks had yielded to shopping centres boasting international brands, the cafés were open late, the restaurants served superb Hungarian cuisine. Only intellectual and cultural diversity was suffering. Why complain when you could be comfortable? In 1989 I had found hope in Hungary: the possibility of the revival of the cultural multiplicity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 2018 I found a warning: the realization that acquiescence to dictatorship comes not with a bludgeon, but with a job and a good meal.

---

*Stephen Henighan's most recent book is the short story collection Blue River and Red Earth (Cormorant Books). Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [stephenhenighan.com](http://stephenhenighan.com). Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*

# How I Became a Writer of Colour

ALBERTO MANGUEL

*You have been randomly picked.  
We only follow instructions*

I was in Bogotá to sit on the jury of the García Márquez Short Story Award for the best collection of short fiction published in Spanish in the previous year. A short list of five finalists is established: the winner receives a whopping \$100,000 award, and the National Library of Colombia purchases 1,500 copies of the books of each of the remaining four finalists to be distributed to all the libraries in the country. It's an extraordinarily generous prize that not only benefits the shortlisted authors but also promotes the short story genre in a publishing world that (in spite of Alice Munro's success) still tells writers that they should publish novels as the main course and short stories (if at all) as an after-dinner snack.

This year, the first prize went to Edgardo Cozarinsky, one of the most remarkable writers in Spanish today. Two of his novels have already been translated into English: *The Bride from Odessa* and *The Moldavian Pimp*. I hope that some enterprising

publisher, not afraid to transgress the absurd rules of the industry, will commission the translation of *En el último trago nos vamos* (*One Last Drink and We Go*), masterful ghost stories about loss, imperfect memory and old age.

Happy with the deliberations and the final choice, I went to the airport in Bogotá to fly back to New York, where I'm now living. As we all

know, formalities at airports are meant to prepare us for the waiting rooms of Hell. Long, badly managed queues, slow immigration procedures that scrutinize your features with Lombroso-like prurience, humiliating stripping rituals at security, lead to finally crossing the inspection barriers, more or less free to lose yourself in a labyrinth of duty-free stalls through which you are obliged to wander until you reach the corridor that you hope will take to your gate. All this I did, and in the end I found myself with an hour to spare in the lounge before boarding my flight for JFK.

I was sitting quietly reading a thriller from the late fifties, *Lightning Strikes Twice* by Jean Potts, when I heard my name being called out through the loudspeakers. I approached the counter. A young attendant asked to see my boarding pass and passport, inspected both, and returning only the passport explained that I had been pre-selected for a further security check. I asked why me,



and she told me that everything would be explained later. Several other names were called out and I found myself in a group of ten or twelve chosen, waiting to be further summoned.

The boarding started and my group and I were asked to go down the ramp toward the plane but to wait at the plane's door. There, behind a flimsy cloth screen like the ones put up around hospital beds when the doctor performs an intimate inspection, was a uniformed woman wearing gloves. One by one, we were called, asked to remove shoes, belts, watches, coats (as we had done once before at the first checkpoint) and patted all over. Our luggage was taken apart and the books I was carrying (I travel with almost no clothes but always with room for new books) were flipped through and critically scrutinized. I commented on how unnecessary this second inspection seemed after having submitted myself to the first. "These are our orders," the inspector answered.

Suddenly I noticed that everyone in my group had indigenous features. Most of the other passengers being loaded without further delays onto the plane would have been classified in a racial typology as "white." My group certainly not. I asked then how had this selection been made.

"You have been randomly picked," the inspector said. I pointed to my companions. "You don't think that there's a common characteristic here?" I asked. "You have been randomly picked," she repeated.

"This isn't random," an elderly gentleman in my group interjected. "We are all *indios*," and swept his arm around the group, including me.

"You have been randomly picked," the inspector said for the third time. "We only follow instructions," she added.

"You are following instructions from the crazy man up north," a young woman told her. "You're submitting to the whims of a fascist."

"We only follow instructions," the inspector said again, visibly perturbed by now, trying to pry open the orthopaedic shoes of a child who was being helped along by her father.

"That's what Hitler's henchmen said," another passenger commented. "What are you afraid of? What do you think we'll do? Take a gun across the border and shoot the Señor Presidente?"

"Don't tempt me," said the young woman.

With that, we were at last allowed on the plane.

---

*Alberto Manguel is the award-winning author of hundreds of works, most recently (in English) Packing My Library: An Elegy and Ten Digressions, Curiosity and All Men Are Liars. He lives in New York. Read more of his work at [manguel.com](http://manguel.com) and [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

OWEN TOEWS

STOLEN  
CITY  
RACIAL  
CAPITALISM  
AND THE  
MAKING  
OF  
WINNIPEG

"*Stolen City* is creative, theoretically innovative, and skillfully crafted from an exceptional range of historical and ethnographic data woven into a convincing analysis. The insights that Toews offers are significant for those who are working on these issues across the globe."

—Setha Low, Author of *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness In Fortress America*

"A sweeping and magnificent spatial history of a city founded in the midst of imperial economic crisis—a crisis resolved through western expansion. Toews intricately weaves theories of racial capitalism into Indian policy from the nineteenth century to contemporary urban development in Winnipeg. This book is a must read for anyone trying to understand the ways that colonization produces spaces that are shaped and then reshaped by hierarchies of difference, rooted in a never-ending struggle to turn Indigenous land into property."

—Shiri Pasternak, Author of *Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake Against the State*

arpbooks.org

ARP

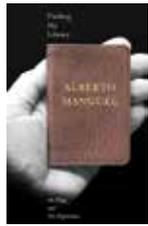
POLITICS | CULTURE | ACTIVISM

# ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

## CAST OUT OF EDEN

I like to think that when Jorge Luis Borges envisaged paradise as “a kind of library,” he was dreaming (as all unrepentant bibliophiles do) of the idealized personal library: that quiet, well-lit room, warm and dry, which has sufficient shelving—on every wall, extending from carpeted floor to rafters if necessary—to allow *all* of one’s books to be within reach at all times.



For a time, between (roughly) 2000 and 2015, *Geist* columnist Alberto Manguel lived in just such a paradise, in an old presbytery with a ruined barn attached, somewhere south of the Loire Valley in France. The barn, once restored, became what Manguel hoped would be his final library, a comfortable home for his 30,000-plus books. Manguel’s 2006 book *The Library at Night* describes the creation of this library in loving detail, situating his personal library within the context of other libraries, among them the legendary Library of Alexandria. In the summer of 2015 Manguel and his partner reluctantly decided to leave France, and began the painful process of dismantling the book-lover’s Eden that they had created there. Of their decision to leave Manguel says only that the reasons “belong to the realm of sordid bureaucracy.” **Packing My Library: An Elegy and Ten Digressions** (Yale University Press) is Manguel’s elegy for his lost library in France. If the unpacking of books is a creative act, packing them away, Manguel says, is “an exercise in oblivion.” He sketches the painful scene: with the help of

friends, his books are carefully wrapped in protective paper, their original layout mapped, before being packed into labelled cartons, “until all the books were gone from the shelves and the library was transformed into a roomful of building blocks gathered in the midst of empty stacks.” What can follow but a “period of anger and mourning,” for something that once was real, but is now “condemned to exist [...] in the untrustworthy domain of my memory.” —*Michael Hayward*

## NEWS IN A NUTSHELL

For anyone who feels a need to keep an eye on US politics, without losing sleep or monitoring the appalling Twitter feed of you-know-who, I can recommend the podcast **Today Explained**, from the “explanatory journalism website” Vox.com. Every weekday the host, Sean Rameswaram, interviews someone who knows whereof they speak about a current pressing subject. Recent illuminating casts have included The many scandals of Michael Cohen; Caught in the intellectual dark web; Which children matter?; Republicans’ plan for health care “\\_(‘/’)\\_/”; Good news for Canadians who like milk... The invited guests who do the explaining are journalists, lawyers, economists, government workers and others whose job it is to know, and to put it within reach of us non-experts who want to know. As for the commercials that podcast hosts must crank out, endlessly and enthusiastically on every



cast, Rameswaram is second to none. For a week or two last summer, for example, he did the daily commercial by phoning up his groovy mum and chatting with her about life and about Uber—unscripted, or so it seemed, and downright sweet.

—*Mary Schendlinger*

## MONSTER MAKING

One of the best films shown at the 2017 Vancouver Film Festival was **Meet Beau Dick: Maker of Monsters**, a fascinating documentary on the life and work of Kwakwaka’wakw sculptor and activist Beau Dick, directed by Natalie Boll and LaTiesha Ti’si’tla Fazakas. Though Beau Dick worked in a variety of media, he is best known for his carved cedar masks, which depict supernatural figures drawn from the mythologies of the Kwakwaka’wakw and other coastal peoples, figures such as Hok Hok (a bird monster), Bukwus (the Wild Man of the Woods), Atlakin (forest spirits), and Dzunukwa (the Wild Woman of the Woods), a haunting figure that Dick depicted many times over the years, each time with subtle variations. In the spring of 2018, about a year after Dick’s death at age 61, the Audain Gallery in Whistler mounted a retrospective exhibit of his work; **Beau Dick: Revolutionary Spirit** by Darin Martens (Figure.1) is the catalogue for that exhibition. The front cover shows an amazing Dzunukwa mask from 2007, with coarse, dark hair (Dick used horsehair) veiling the features, and full, red-tinged lips shown pursed (so that the Wild Woman can issue her haunting cry); the back cover

shows a ghostly Bukwus mask (whose list of materials includes red cedar, feathers, felted wool and nails). *Revolutionary Spirit* also includes several essays and tributes—it's an excellent introduction to Dick's work—but I encourage you to track down the documentary film as well, to get a more complete sense of Beau Dick's life: his struggles with addiction in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and his Indigenous activism, which helped draw attention to issues affecting First Nations communities. The power of Dick's carved figures is unmistakable, even without explanatory essays. The Audain Gallery has several of Dick's masks in its permanent collection; it's worth the journey.

—Michael Hayward



remembered, until now, with the appearance of **Tekahionwake: E. Pauline Johnson's Writings on Native North America**, edited by Margery Fee and Dory Nason (Broadview). A fine example of her at her best can be found in an essay called "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction" that appeared in the *Toronto Sunday Globe* in 1892, in which she observes that "the term Indian signifies about as much as the term European, but I cannot recall ever having read a story where the heroine was described as European." The dozens if not hundreds of "Indian girls" found in novels and stories are "essentially all the same person... There is only one of her and her name is Winona or Ramona or Wanda and she has no surname, although her father is always a chief, and although she is wholesome, beautiful and passionate, she is inevitably fated for self-destruction."

Tekahionwake's resistance to the Residential Schools and the harmful influence of the Church on First Nations cultures are expressed in stories and poems that, although published in leading magazines and newspapers, have been ignored for decades. Their revival in this volume is a refreshing reminder that the battle against lies and stereotypes has been sustained and has deep roots. This volume also contains reviews and commentary written while Tekahionwake was alive, making it even more useful for those who wish to explore the literary world of the Confederation Poets from a "non-orthodox" point of view. Her poetry was well received in her day, even ecstatically so. The well-known critic Hector Charlesworth, reviewing *White Wampum*, her first



reviewing *White Wampum*, her first

## WHITE WAMPUM

When Pauline Johnson (perhaps better known today by her Mohawk name, Tekahionwake) died a hundred and five years ago, her funeral cortège was the largest in the history of Vancouver; her mourners included the clan of Mary Capilano and members of the IODE. Her remains lie in Stanley Park in a shady grove. She made her living as a poet and performing artist and was a contemporary of the so-called Confederation poets Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and D.C. Scott, but critics and anthologizers have rarely included her in that category, perhaps because her performances were often lowbrow events in frontier towns across the US and Canada, although she did highbrow when she could for the better pay, in the big cities including New York and London. (She was also, of course, of "mixed heritage.") When her funds ran low, she wrote fiction and criticism, often most eloquently on First Nations topics for which she has been not so well

**NEW BOOKS FROM BC AUTHORS**

**RETURN OF THE WOLF**  
Conflict and Coexistence  
As reports of human encounters with wolves become more frequent, PAULA WILD offers a timely examination of this icon of the wilderness.  
"...brilliantly rendered from beginning to end."  
-Brenda Schmidt, Quill & Quire  
\$32.95 HARDCOVER

**MAMASKATCH**  
A Cree Coming of Age  
Winner of the 2018 Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction  
A heartbreakingly candid memoir of a Cree boy's resilience and grace in the face of chaos and intergenerational tragedy by DARREL J. McLEOD.  
\$29.95 HARDCOVER

**DISSIDENT DOCTOR**  
Catching Babies and Challenging the Status Quo  
A memoir from MICHAEL C. KLEIN, MD, about defying the medical establishment for his beliefs.  
"... an informative and insightful look into the politics, roadblocks and successes in our medical system over the past 50 years."  
-Winnipeg Free Press  
\$32.95 HARDCOVER

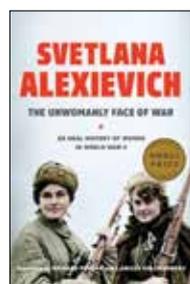
**AVAILABLE IN FINE BOOKSTORES**  
Douglas & McIntyre  
www.douglas-mcintyre.com

book of verse, in *Canadian Magazine* in 1895, praised her work unreservedly: "...never is there a touch of that wretched obscurantism so prevalent in the efforts of Mr. Bliss Carman and some of his imitators. Health and sanity, and earnestness pulse through every line she writes..."

—Stephen Osborne

## WOMEN AT WAR

The Soviet journalist and author Svetlana Alexievich was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2015. As a result, Alexievich's books have received renewed attention in the

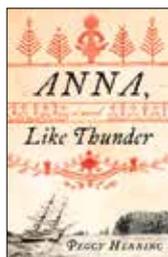


West, with her first book (Random House), being given a new translation into English in 2017 by the husband-and-wife team of Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. **The Unwomanly Face of War** is an oral history of World War II (known by most Russians as the Great Patriotic War), told by the Russian women who fought in it. To quote from the front flap, "these women—more than a million in total—were nurses and doctors, pilots, tank drivers, machine-gunners and snipers." Alexievich tracks down the survivors everywhere in Russia, at "the most diverse addresses—Moscow, Kiev, the town of Apsheronk in the Krasnodar region, Vitebsk, Volgograd, Yalutorovsk, Suzdal, Galich, Smolensk..."—and persuades them to talk about their experiences. Many of them would rather forget the horrors they witnessed and participated in, but most of them volunteered to fight, and all are immensely proud of their role in defending "the Motherland" from the invading German forces. Alexievich is a wonderful proxy for the reader, being both fascinated and appalled by the realities of war.

She listens with sympathy to the women's stories of deprivation and death, and the horrors of hand-to-hand fighting on the front line: "Not for a human being... They beat, they stab with a bayonet, they strangle each other. They break each other's bones. There's howling, shouting. Moaning. And that crunching... That crunching! Impossible to forget it..." And equally important to remember. —Michael Hayward

## TRANSPACIFIC TRADE, CIRCA 1800

In **Anna, Like Thunder** (Brindle & Glass), Peggy Herring fleshes out the story behind the historical events surrounding the 1808 shipwreck of the Russian trading ship, *St. Nikolai*, off the western shore of the Olympic



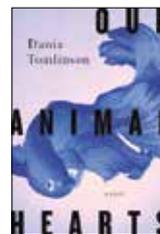
Peninsula. The book is an intriguing read for those who wish to be immersed in the history of the Pacific Northwest. The novel is set during the height of Russian maritime exploration in the region. Already for half a century, European ships have roamed the coast of the Pacific Northwest in search of sea otter pelts, which make for "soft gold" in a transpacific trade network linking Britain, New Spain, the United States, Russia, China, Hawaii and various coastal Indigenous communities. The events that follow the shipwreck are presented through the eyes of Anna Petrovna Bulygina. She is from an aristocratic family in St. Petersburg and has chosen to follow her husband to Novo Arkhangelsk (Sitka, Alaska) as he pursues a career with the Russian-American Company. Having been socially insulated due to her highborn status, and being one of only two women in a crew of frontier-hardened men, Anna provides a special perspective that helps advance

Herring's postcolonial take on the history of settler colonialism. Anna, for example, begins to compare how she is taught to harvest with her husband's envisioning of future exploitation of the resources in the region. I also enjoyed how Herring juxtaposes Russian folklore with vivid depictions of Makah, Quileute, and Hoh cultural practices and language. By doing so, she weaves together a robust account of contact. Of course, there are still your standard tragic mishaps due to miscommunication and misunderstandings. There are also seemingly irreconcilable differences. But because Herring goes beyond the typical boundaries for such narratives, this book's historical imagining is more political than one might expect.

—Anson Ching

## COMING OF AGE IN WINTERIDGE

**Our Animal Hearts** by Dania Tomlinson (Anchor Canada) intertwines Welsh, First Nations and Japanese mythologies in a gothic coming-of-age story, set at the turn of the twentieth century in Winteridge, a fictional



town on the shores of Okanagan Lake. The central character, Iris Sparks, grows up in the shadow of her wealthy English father's progressive politics, her Welsh mother's fantastic visions and declining health, political unrest, and the abundance of otherworldly spirits and creatures who haunt the natural world. Iris believes in the magical world, as does her mother, Llewelyna, who resembles the madwoman commonly found in books set in this era. In the decades leading up to World War II, Iris is charged with keeping her mother's seizures a secret. She runs the orchard after her father joins the war effort, and navigates a dysfunctional love

triangle with two brothers. Through it all, Iris must learn to separate her family's mythology from the people they really are—with infidelity, mental illness, and repressed homosexuality—all while grappling with her own destructive tendencies. Contrasting with Tomlinson's beautiful descriptions of nature, the characters in this book are dark, abusive and unredeemed. I enjoyed the dreamlike aspect of the narration, the tangible quality of the town, and how the supernatural was interwoven with the real. I also liked the weight given to non-European cultures, and how Tomlinson deftly handles the political, colonial, and racial tension of the era within the microcosm of small-town British Columbia. There is a lot to like in this book, though overall, I'm not sure that I did; while I know that not every character in a novel needs to be likeable, almost no one in

this book is, and Iris is frustratingly cruel and cowardly throughout. I can't say that I looked forward to each sitting as I was reading *Our Animal Hearts*, but the atmosphere, the nature imagery, and the scenes of Llewelyna skulking about the house, have stuck with me. —*Kelsea O'Connor*

WITH AN ALBANIAN TWIST

In *Slow Twisting* (Impulse[b]) by Anonymous, a bunch of teenagers (who are identified only by the first letter of their names) narrate the story, which moves at breakneck speed and is full of raw honesty and profanity. All the teens do drugs and some of them have sex, and when one of them gets buried in an earthquake in Albania, death and near-death are added to the mix. Each short chapter is narrated by a different character, and as things

unfold we learn that M thinks B really likes C, that J is the cool guy, and that T is the guy friend of B and C. And then there's W, who doesn't get to



narrate but who has a place in the story. When C gets kicked out of school and then out of home, he and T fly to Albania (using a parent's credit card) just in time for an earthquake that buries C under a building. Back home B, M and J drink tequila and smoke weed and end up in a threesome in J's dingy apartment. As the plot hurtles along, the narrators ask the important questions—What is love? Who needs love? What is it like to be dead?—as well as the more generalized: What the fuck? I got hooked by the first scene and laughed all the way to the end. —*Patty Osborne*

# The Antigonish Review



In Print since 1970, now available  
digitally (PDF) for your devices

## Subscription Rates:

|                  |          |
|------------------|----------|
| 1 – Year Digital | \$30.00  |
| 2 – Year Digital | \$45.00  |
| 1 – Year Print   | \$75.00  |
| 2 – Year Print   | \$140.00 |

4 Issues per Year,  
Digital Copies emailed  
Annual Poetry/Fiction  
Contests

Order online at [www.AntigonishReview.com](http://www.AntigonishReview.com),  
or Contact us at [tar@stfx.ca](mailto:tar@stfx.ca)

Box 5000, Antigonish, NS B2G 2W5 (902)867-3962

## CAKE FAILS

**Nailed It!** (Netflix) may be the best reality show I've ever seen. This high-energy parody inspired by internet #fails makes "serious" reality TV look even more ridiculous than usual. In the first round, Baker's Choice, amateur bakers attempt to recreate artisanal treats for the chance to wear a sparkly golden chef's hat. In round two, Nail It



or Fail It, they must reproduce elaborate cakes, like a cake pop solar system or a volcano cake that actually erupts, to win \$10,000 and the

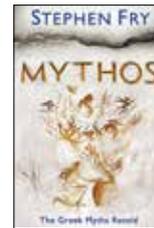
*Nailed It!* trophy. The disastrous confections and irreverent hosts Nicole Byer and Jacques Torres will make you laugh until you cry. Contestants can use the hosts against their opponents with aids, such as Nicole Nags or Pardon My French, they win in the first round. Bilingual Canadian fans get an

extra layer of icing on their cake as Jacques "helps" anglophone contestants with professional baking advice in French. Good thing these bakers only need to make the least-bad cake to win. These contestants have little to no experience, which gives hope to the average person, like me—if they can be on TV and win the jackpot, then I can too. Applying to compete is easy—I sent in my name and baking disaster pictures while writing this review. Wish me luck! —*Kristen Lawson*

## MYTHOS-MAKER

This past summer we drove from Vancouver to Niagara-on-the-Lake and back in order to see Stephen Fry in three one-man plays at the Shaw Festival, plays based on Fry's new book **Mythos: A Retelling of the Myths of Ancient Greece** (Michael Joseph). Sure, it was a bit impulsive and

self-indulgent, but hey: why not? The road trip was a good excuse to explore the backroads of south Saskatchewan, the Canadian Shield north of Lake Superior, and Manitoulin Island. *Mythos* (the book and the plays) is Fry's unique take on the myths of ancient Greece, which he feels have "survived with a detail, richness, life and colour that distinguish [them] from other mythologies." Fry's Zeus is vain, vindictive and all-powerful; his Hera is cruel and ambitious. Their wedding celebrations feature a culinary competition—imagine the *Great British Bake Off*, with animals and "the lesser immortals" as contestants. "There were cakes, buns, biscuits, soups, eel-skin terrines, porridges made with moss and mould." The winning dish, "the seemingly modest submission of a shy little creature named Melissa," is "something new. Something gloopy without being



unguent, slow-moving without being stodgy, sweet without being cloying, and perfumed with a flavour that drove the senses wild with pleasure. Melissa's name for it was 'honey'." Fry has a

loyal fan base, drawing from his sketch comedy series with Hugh Laurie: *A Bit of Fry and Laurie* (1989–1995); and from *Jeeves and Wooster* (1990–1993), where Fry played Jeeves to Laurie's Bertie Wooster; and perhaps from Fry's narration of the Harry Potter audio books. So the plays (two evening performances and a matinee) played to packed houses. It took a while to adjust to the rather pared-down staging—Fry seated in a wing-backed chair at centre stage, telling ancient stories—but eventually we started to remember: long-ago bedtimes, and the tales told around campfires, when we were young.

—*Michael Hayward*

new from  
**NIGHTWOOD EDITIONS**



**Bec & Call**  
• POETRY •  
Jenna Lyn Albert  
\$18.95

**WHAT YOUR HANDS HAVE DONE**  
CHRIS BAILEY  
What Your Hands Have Done  
• POETRY •  
Chris Bailey  
\$18.95

**DIFFICULT PEOPLE** STORIES  
BY CATRIONA WRIGHT  
Difficult People  
• STORIES •  
Catriona Wright  
\$19.95

**WHAT THE POETS ARE DOING**  
CANADIAN POETS IN CONVERSATION  
WHAT THE POETS ARE DOING  
• ESSAYS •  
edited by Rob Taylor  
\$22.95

**The Abandoned**  
Kyp Harness  
• A NOVEL •  
Kyp Harness  
\$19.95

#READNIGHTWOOD WWW.NIGHTWOODEDITIONS.COM

## EXPRESS RECYCLING DEPOT ENDNOTE

I recently decided that I make enough money to buy organic milk from Avalon Dairy. This milk comes in thick glass bottles and the recycling deposit on them is a whole dollar, so instead of leaving the empty bottles bagged up in the alley behind my building, like I do



with my other empties, I looked up my nearest bottle depot and walked over carrying three of these milk bottles. The **Yaletown Return-It Express Depot** is wedged into a row of coffee shops and the storefront has a floor-to-ceiling glass window. The entire depot is one small room containing one plastic bin on wheels and two computer screens bolted to the wall. The last time I was in a bottle depot, it was a bustling room

full of wooden sorting trays that reeked of fermented juice and sour milk, and I had no idea what to do with this neat, empty room. An employee came out of the back and asked if I'd been there before, and I told her I had no idea how it worked. In a short monologue—monotonous in a way that said it was a speech she gave multiple times a day—she explained that to get a deposit, I had to sign up online for a free Return-It Express account, bring my empties in a clear bag, log into my account using one of the computers on the wall, print out a label and stick it on the bag, then drop the bag into the bin. From there, a Return-It employee would sort the empties and the deposit would be refunded directly into my bank account.

My first thought was: *just give me three loonies, you crazy person*. Immediately after, I remembered who the most frequent patrons of bottle depots are. It doesn't seem like a coincidence

that a bottle depot in an affluent Vancouver neighbourhood has nearly ensured that homeless folks can't use it; without government identification or a fixed address, it's tough to open a bank account. Under the guise of ease for the consumer—"no sorting, no change, no sticky beer to deal with," as the clerk at the depot explained to me—they've put up a massive barrier to the people who really need bottle returns. I love user-friendly apps that eliminate the need for human contact as much as the next millennial, but I recognize that bottle depots aren't *for* me. I took my milk bottles home and put them out in the alley behind my building for someone else to take to a bottle depot that will give them three loonies in exchange.

—Roni Simunovic



## LITERATURE FOR THE REST OF US

Subscribe to *Geist*

Go to [geist.com/subscribe](http://geist.com/subscribe)  
or call 1-888-GEIST-EH

# GEIST

IDEAS + CULTURE • MADE IN CANADA

## OFF THE SHELF

Lana lurks behind Jen and asks “Do you think I could be a violent person?” in *Whistle in the Dark* (Penguin Random House) by **Emma Healey**. In *Home Ice* (ECW Press) by **Angie Abdou**, Dave gets high and gives parenting advice. A daughter poisons her father to death by mixing potassium cyanide in his steel-cut oatmeal in *Rotten Peaches* (Inanna) by **Lisa De Nikolits**. In *Every Day We Disappear* (Radiant Press) by **Angela Long**, a waiter places an extra serving of toast on the table and says, “Your husband will be happy if you’re fat.” Miller evaluates his frame and weight in a mirror and contemplates the implication they have on his acting career in *You Don’t Know Me, But You Love Me* (ARP Books) by **Caelum Vatnsdal**. In *No Quarter* (ECW Press) by **John Jantunen** the car swerves and Deacon’s head hits the door. Two men loom over you, grab you by the arm and drag you away in *The Book I Didn’t Want to Write* (Locarno Press) by **Erwan Larher**. Hugh ponders his mortality when he finds out his friend has died and he stumbles upon a dead body in *An Exile’s Perfect Letter* (Breakwater Books) by **Larry Mathews**. A day before Jake gets out of jail, his wife makes out with her friend Jordan in *Difficult People* (Nightwood Editions) by **Catriona Wright**. In *Straight Circles* (Anvil Press) by **Jackie Bateman** a boy asks to use Fish-Boy’s hat to wipe his ass. Wes swipes right on Tinder in search of Cinderella by **David Huebert** in *Best Canadian Stories 2018* edited by **Russell Smith** (Biblioasis). Evan sinks deeper into the snow reaching for the door handle in *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (ECW Press) by **Waubgeshig Rice**. Adam gloats about his kissing skills in *Searching*

for *Terry Punchout* (Invisible Publishing) by **Tyler Hellard**. In *Hard To Do: The Surprising, Feminist History of Breaking Up* (Coach House Books) by **Kelli Maria Korducki**, couples stay together when unemployment rates increase, all in the name of economic security, according to a 2011 study. Maddie stops seeing Andrew because “it was getting a bit too intense” in *Worry Stones* (Ronsdale Press) by **Joanna Lilley**. **Laurie Penny** says “stop telling girls contradictory things” in *Bitch Doctrine* (Bloomsbury). At the movie theatre Lindsay knocks down cardboard movie characters and her mom yells “She’s possessed!” in *The Woo Woo* (Arsenal Pulp Press) by **Lindsay Wong**. In *The Red Word* (ECW Press) by **Sarah Henstra** cops crash an underage drinking party and the kids break out in panic. Dorian drinks a large glass of Tang and eats a piece of toast to soothe his hangover in *Paul is Dead* (Signature Editions) by **C. C. Benison**. The security guard walks away with toilet paper stuck to the bottom of her shoe in *The Things She’ll Be Leaving Behind* (Thistledown Press) by **Vanessa Farnsworth**. At a red light, Venezuelans shoot Damiana’s mother, steal her watch and run away in *Damiana’s Reprieve* (Exile Editions) by **Martha Bátiz**.

## NOTED ELSEWHERE

Setha Low, a professor at City University of New York says *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* by **Owen Toews** is “creative, theoretically innovative, and skillfully crafted”; *Winnipeg Free Press* says “the book makes for deeply uncomfortable reading”; author Shiri Pasternak says Toews “intricately weaves theories of racial capitalism into Indian policy from the nineteenth century to

contemporary urban development in Winnipeg.” Alex from *booktopia.fr* says *Women Talking* by **Miriam Toews** is “a solid book that will make the awards circuit in Canada over the next few months”; Kristin on *kristinravesbooks.wordpress.com* says each female character has “their own personality, voice and opinions”; Felicia on *goodreads.com* says “I don’t know how this book got published”; the book, “thoughtful and light on its feet,” “must have taken guts to write” says the *Guardian*; the hypothetical discussion of morality in the dialogue are the weaker moments says the *London Magazine*. The *Globe and Mail* says the plot and pace of **Steven Heighon’s** book *The Nightingale Won’t Let You Sleep* are “far too languid to qualify for thriller status” but “results in some fine textural writing”; DeB MaRtEnS on *goodreads.com* gives the book “five big big stars!”; girlfromthesouth on *amazon.com* says “After reading the beginning of this book I wasn’t sure if I wanted to read the rest”; *Quill & Quire* says “there are countless fascinating facts and ideas scattered throughout” the book; author Robert A. Douglas writes the prose “demands that the reader take his time to savour the language.”

## CONGRATULATIONS

To **Lisa Bird-Wilson** for her book *Just Pretending*, which was selected as the Saskatchewan Library Association’s One Book One Province for 2019; to **Sheila Heti** for being short-listed for the 2018 Scotiabank Giller Prize; to **Miriam Toews** for being shortlisted for fiction in the 2018 Governor General’s Literary Award; to **Carol Sawyer** for winning the 2018 Duke and Duchess of York Prize in Photography.

# The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

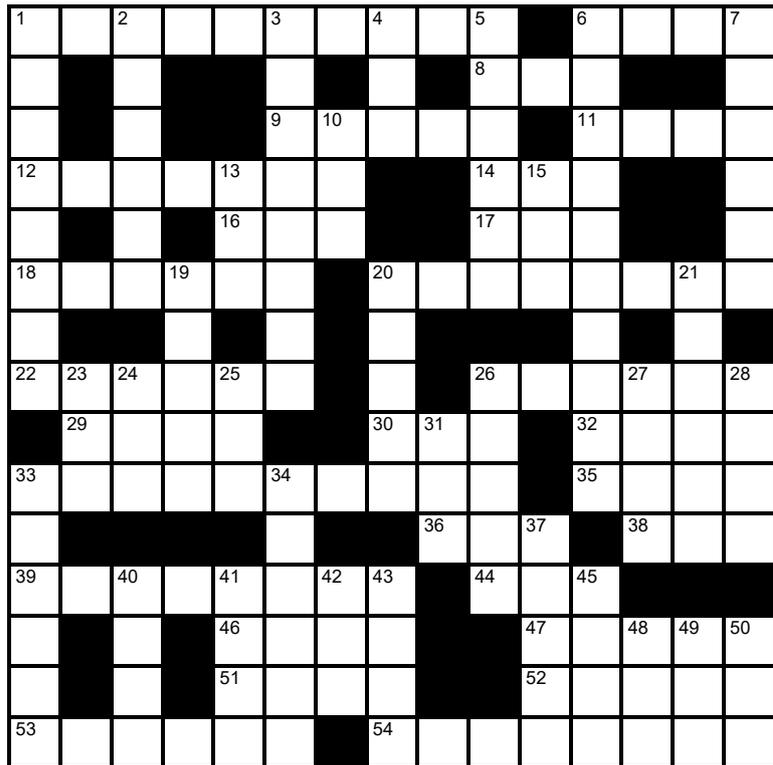
Send a copy of your completed puzzle,  
along with your name and address, to:

Puzzle #110 GEIST  
210-111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4  
Fax 604-677-6319

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

## ACROSS

- 1 Every time science is stumped, there's a porn alarm!
- 6 I'd love to get something to eat but can I bring my dog, and will there be mosquitoes?
- 8 Adding to our supply just sounds too scary
- 9 Judy fell after hearing the bell
- 11 I'm doing research on yellow pups
- 12 How many of those cereals are not bean to bar?
- 14 They're supposed to be looking after things outside (abbrev)
- 16 That athletic crossover fills the lot (abbrev)
- 17 Oh, it's nothing!
- 18 When is the DNA due on those lively remains?
- 20 The sentry was on her bike when she dug a drum out of the muck
- 22 In spring I listen to ringing in my head
- 26 You look damned bad, old boy
- 29 Don't have a beef with my salty toe!
- 30 Sounds like you need to go up the Rainy River to express your emotions
- 32 Remember that prepared mailing package? (abbrev)
- 33 Robert's books are filled with bogus poems
- 35 Detective Allen gave us the key but we still had to put it all together
- 36 That sounds three-dimensional! (abbrev)
- 38 Look for them and then bring them back (abbrev)
- 39 She argued about putting her backside in the middle
- 44 A car can be a great place for yoga
- 46 She's just a friend
- 47 That wood covering might clog the drain
- 51 Those wheels are hot when they're closest to the sun (abbrev)
- 52 The Count bets on the Pole because he's a killer
- 53 I was dying to eat breakfast but first I had to put a nail in the bed



- 54 It was bloody awful trying to stop the leak in the hot meat

## DOWN

- 1 Bram said there was a tiny hole in the tuner CPU
- 2 He was being a tattletale again
- 3 By the time the doc clued in, the place was closed
- 4 According to Isaac, the participant got the parts together from all over the province (abbrev)
- 5 Tell me it's not just a bloody map label
- 6 I can't count the number of times he said he was hungry for the beluga's oil (2)
- 7 That resulted in Susan getting her bit in at the finish
- 10 Val and John were in the closet
- 13 Those bodies below us are really stuck together (abbrev)
- 15 At the market, she was questioned by a police officer so she ran all the way home
- 19 What would the sum be for transport on that vehicle?
- 20 Is that thing supposed to modulate or demodulate the connection?
- 21 When they left he erased their trail with water (2)
- 23 In the past Arthur lived in Toronto and felt at home on the grange (abbrev)
- 24 Win's buddy Joey was into hip-hop
- 25 They get picked up by an Australian
- 26 Their buddies danced chest to chest
- 27 Sounds like Gary has some cat relatives
- 28 If this is school time, you'll have to mind the gap
- 31 That player in the Vans has many uses (abbrev)

- 33 Break the bulb if that bloody guy returns
- 34 Bruce was an orderly guy until he met those baseball players
- 37 That's no bull—they're totally in the loop
- 40 Don't cook that stuff, he'll never keep it down!
- 41 Hey, do you mind expounding on your affliction?
- 42 Why are so many CBC programs up there over and over again?
- 43 That Austrian ski village is too sexy!
- 45 Hey toots, at least those stains won't come out shortly
- 48 Don't let it hit your eyeball
- 49 When golfers couldn't cross the bridge
- 50 Those Vietnamese fights were offensive to the Tamil network (abbrev)

The winners for Puzzle 109 were Jim Lowe and Brian Goth.







Hilarity and queer magic realism twist the throttle!

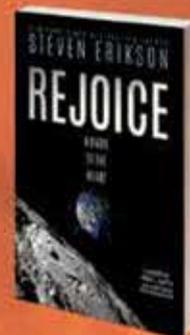
**INANNA PUBLICATIONS**  
FICTION | 978-1-771335331



"...an epic, rambling... vastly entertaining book."

—*Miramichi Reader*

**BARAKA BOOKS / QC FICTION**  
FICTION | 978-1-771861472



Imagine if we lost the ability to hurt each other.

**PROMONTORY PRESS**  
LITERARY SCI-FI | 978-1-773740126



A powerful poetry anthology on sexual assault and abuse.

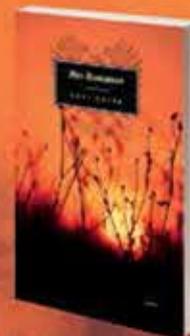
**COTEAU BOOKS**  
POETRY | 978-1-550509588



"This bold and searing collection is a wonder."

—*Madeleine Thien*

**BOOK\*HUG**  
SHORT STORIES | 978-1-771664196



A lyrical exploration of Imperial Russia's last tsarina.

**PORCUPINE'S QUILL**  
POETRY | 978-0-889844179



Sometimes it feels as if the world has to end before you get that new kitchen.

**PALIMPEST PRESS**  
FICTION | 978-1-926794969



Life in Cuba after Castro.

**THISTLEDOWN PRESS**  
SHORT STORIES | 978-1-771871655



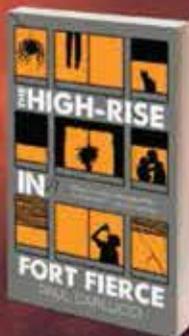
Stories that sizzle like butter on hot cast iron.

**INVISIBLE PUBLISHING**  
FICTION | 978-1-988784113



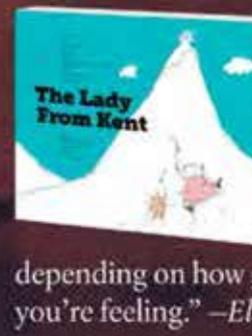
Coming of age — all over again.

**BREAKWATER BOOKS**  
FICTION | 978-1-550817089



A gritty, Canadian Cormac McCarthy.

**GOOSE LANE EDITIONS**  
FICTION | 978-1-773100265



"A book to read to yourself or out loud,

depending on how generous you're feeling." —*Eleanor Wachtel*

**PEDLAR PRESS**  
CHILDREN'S POETRY | 978-1-897141878

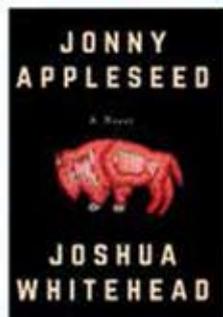
**STUDIES IN HUMANITY, LIFE, & REALLY GREAT WRITING**



[lpg.ca](http://lpg.ca)

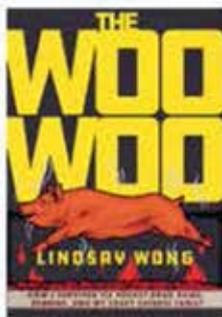
**FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE LITERARY PRESS GROUP**

# TOMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS



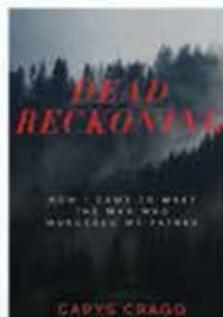
**JONNY APPLESEED**  
*Joshua Whitehead*  
978-1-55152-725-3; \$17.95

Governor General's Literary Award finalist; longlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize. Joshua Whitehead's brilliant novel about a Indigqueer youth and self-described NDN glitter princess.



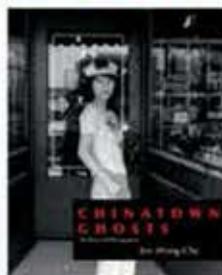
**THE WOO-WOO**  
*Lindsay Wong*  
978-1-55152-736-9; \$19.95

Hilary Weston Writers' Trust of Canada Award for Nonfiction finalist. A darkly comedic memoir about a young woman coming of age in a "crazy" Chinese family.



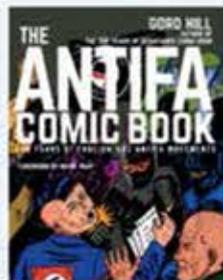
**DEAD RECKONING**  
*Carys Cragg*  
978-1-55152-697-3; \$19.95

Governor General's Literary Award finalist; *A Globe 100* book. A gripping and emotional memoir in which the author confronts the man who murdered her father twenty years earlier.



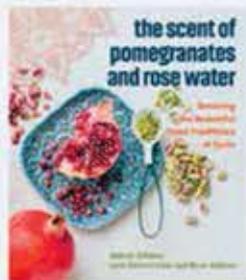
**CHINATOWN GHOSTS**  
*Jim Wong-Chu*  
978-1-55152-748-2; \$19.95

The groundbreaking poems of the late Jim Wong-Chu, founder of the Asian Canadian Writers Workshop, alongside his evocative photographs of Vancouver's Chinatown in the 1970s and '80s.



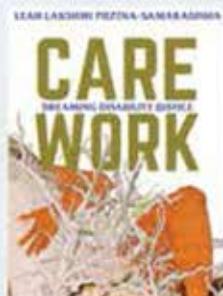
**THE ANTIFA COMIC BOOK**  
*Gord Hill*  
978-1-55152-733-8; \$19.95

A stirring, full-colour graphic history of fascism and antifa movements, by the author of *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book*. Includes a foreword by Mark Bray.



**THE SCENT OF POMEGRANATES AND ROSE WATER**  
*Habeeb Salloum et al.*  
978-1-55152-742-0; \$32.95

A beautiful cookbook of recipes and food traditions from Syria. "A hugely knowledgeable, deeply researched and utterly delicious book." —Reem Kassis, author of *The Palestinian Table*



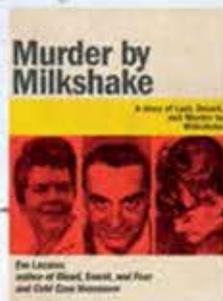
**CARE WORK**  
*Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha*  
978-1-55152-738-3; \$19.95

An empowering collection of essays on the author's experiences in the disability justice movement; a crucial and necessary call to arms.



**SYNCHRO BOY**  
*Shannon McFerran*  
978-1-55152-744-4; \$16.95

A young-adult novel about Bart, a teenaged boy drawn to synchronized swimming, which puts his masculinity—and worse, his own expectations—into question.



**MURDER BY MILKSHAKE**  
*Eve Lazarus*  
978-1-55152-746-8; \$21.95

The fascinating story of a sensational Vancouver murder featuring a radio personality, his wife, and his mistress, set against a *Mad Men*-esque backdrop of '60s-era sensibilities.



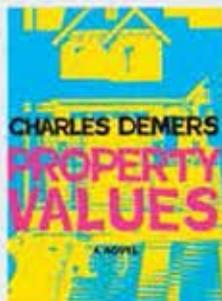
**THE TIGER FLU**  
*Larissa Lai*  
978-1-55152-731-4; \$19.95

A stunning novel that is at once the saga of two women heroes, a cyberpunk thriller, and a convention-breaking cautionary tale. "Magnificently compelling. A must-read." —Eden Robinson, author of *Son of a Trickster*



**SKETCHTASY**  
*Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore*  
978-1-55152-729-1; \$19.95

An urgent, glittering, devastating novel about the perils of queer world-making in the mid-'90s. "If Sketchtasy doesn't become a classic, we're doomed." —Sarah Schulman, author of *Conflict Is Not Abuse*



**PROPERTY VALUES**  
*Charles Demers*  
978-1-55152-727-7; \$17.95

A wildly funny crime novel set in Vancouver that sends up the worlds of urban gentrification, the housing crisis, and gang violence.



**ARSENAL PULP PRESS**  
ARSENALPULP.COM