

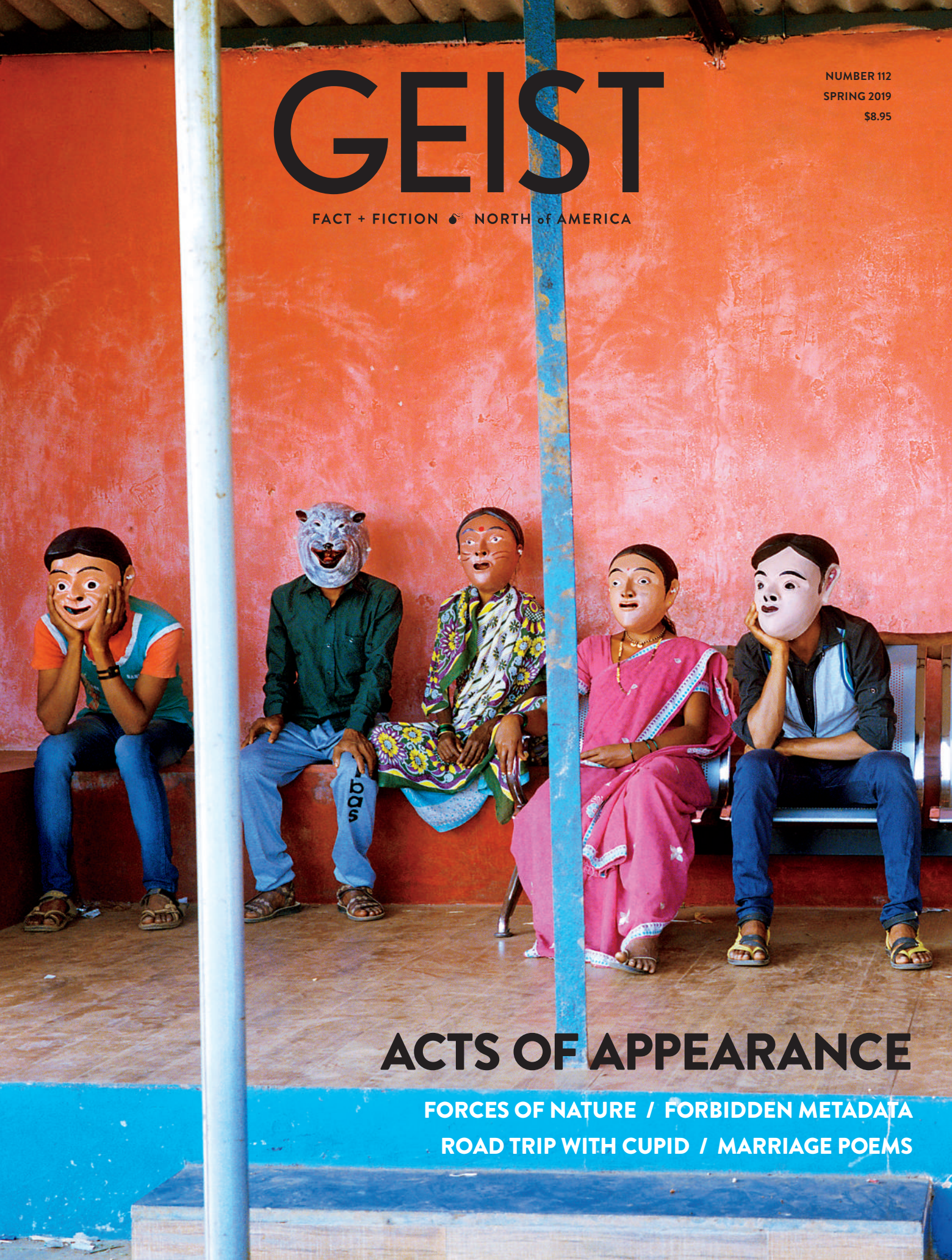
# GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA

NUMBER 112

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\$8.95



## ACTS OF APPEARANCE

FORCES OF NATURE / FORBIDDEN METADATA

ROAD TRIP WITH CUPID / MARRIAGE POEMS



EIGHTH ANNUAL

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# GEIST

Volume 28 • Number 112 • Spring 2019

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*The difficulty is to say no more than we know*

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**COVER:** The image on the cover is a detail of *Untitled* by Gauri Gill from her *Acts of Appearance* series, 2015–ongoing, archival pigment print, courtesy of the artist.

*Acts of Appearance* is an ongoing photography series for which Gill has worked closely with the Adivasi residents of the Jawhar district in Maharashtra, India, who are known for the papier-mâché masks, including sacred traditional masks depicting mythological imagery, worn during an annual procession called Bahora. For *Acts of Appearance*, Gill proposed to her collaborators that they make new masks, depicting some aspect of their daily lives, which resulted in masks of human heads, animal heads—cobra, elephant, deer, goat, leopard—and objects, including a television, a mobile phone, among others. For the photographs, the subject-collaborators donned the masks while enacting scenes of everyday village life: working, socializing, waiting at a bus stop and others. Find out more about the project at [gaurigill.com/works.html](http://gaurigill.com/works.html)

*Acts of Appearance* is part of the exhibition *Moving Still: Performative Photography in India* at the Vancouver Art Gallery, on display April 19 to September 2, 2019.



# GEIST

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## MISCELLANY



### OH, SWEET CANADA

On April 17, 2019, Canada Post released its Sweet Canada stamps. The stamps feature five Canadian desserts: sugar pie, butter tart, saskatoon berry pie, Nanaimo bar and blueberry grunt, arranged on a recipe card background. Since the release, Canadians have voiced their concerns over the Nanaimo bar illustration, stating that the ratio of base to custard filling was not correct on the stamp. The segment “Factchecker” on *Edmonton AM*, a CBC show, investigated the “Nanaimo bar-gument,” reporting that half the bar should be the base (4/8 of an inch) and the other half should comprise 3/8 of an inch of custard filling and 1/8 inch of chocolate layer on top. The Nanaimo bar on the stamp has more than half of the bar made up of the custard filling, and as *Edmonton AM* reported, the ratios depicted on the stamp weren’t structurally sound: “It would fall right over.” Though this controversy caused concerns among Canadians, at the *Geist* office it was the blueberry grunt that caught our attention: What is a grunt? Is it a regional term? According to the online Canadian Encyclopedia, the dessert got the name from the “grunting”

sound blueberries made when cooked. Despite the confusion and concern these Sweet Canada stamps have generated, there is one thing that remains certain: these permanent domestic rate stamps mean we are able to mail a letter, provided it doesn’t weigh more than 30 grams, anywhere in Canada, now or in the future.

—The Editors

### PORTMANT-OMG!

This spring, Heinz released Mayo-chup, a dip consisting of mayonnaise and ketchup mixed together into some sort of unholy condiment for those who cannot decide what to put on their fries. While the name for the dip is a crowd-sourced portmanteau of its constituent ingredients, apparently few Cree speakers weighed in (or did they?) because “Mayochup” roughly translates to “shit face.” In an article on the Global News website, Arden Ogg, the director of the Cree Literacy Network, is cited as suggesting that those of Cree heritage seeking to reclaim their language will likely never forget this particular translation. It’s likely no one else in Canada is going to forget it either.

—The Editors



## C'EST OÙ, LE LOUP-GAROU?

The “Wolf Suite” (Werewolf, Whenwolf, Whywolf,” *Geist* 111) reminded me of a news story that is resurrected every so often in the further reaches of the internet about the werewolf (loup-garou) of Quebec, a creature that terrorized the citizens around Quebec city in the 1760s. The *Quebec Gazette* in 1766 reported that a werewolf appeared in St. Rock, near Cap Mouraska—on his hind legs, no less!—on June 17 and stayed only one night, departing for Montreal the following day. The paper warned its readers to be as cautious of the loups-garous as one would be of any ravenous wolf. Later in the year the *Quebec Gazette* reported yet more sightings of the beast in the region; a story claimed the werewolf was regularly attacked by other animals and local men, but that he continued to harass the Quebecers. I have read claims that the werewolf of Quebec came over on one of the early French settler ships. Eventually New England became more famous than Quebec for werewolf sightings, but many believe that the New England werewolf was the very loup-garou of Quebec, or at least a direct descendant. Keep up the good work.

—Harris Neufeld, Cannon Beach, OR

## BESA-ME MUCHO

Jeff Shucard’s article (“King Zog and the Secret Heart of Albania,” No. 110) reminded me of exploring various left wing “-isms” in Vancouver in the 1970s. One that I skirted was the Enver Hoxha Bookstore on Hastings Street. The store had such a forbidding aspect I never had the courage to step through the door. I figured it would be dark and scary, just like Albania under Hoxha. Five years ago, I visited Albania, expecting a country still struggling in darkness and repression. Instead, I found a lot of light. Tirana is a lovely city to visit, and you easily wander into new encounters and experiences. The best part was the

people and their consistently warm welcome. I wondered if it was because tourism, especially from North America, was new and Albanians weren’t yet jaded. Then I learned about *besa*, the code of honour and hospitality that Shucard described—the one that saved so many Jewish lives. I hope *besa* survives or better yet brings its influence to bear on the rest of us.

—Donna Macdonald, Nelson, BC

## ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

**Gauri Gill**, born in Chandigarh, India, studied photography in India and the US. Her work has been exhibited and collected throughout the world, including at the Kochi Biennale, the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Gallery of Ontario and many others.

**Minimus** is a chronic doodler who lives in Vancouver.

**Mary Schendlinger** is a writer, editor and (as Eve Corbel) a cartoonist. She served as Senior Editor of *Geist* for twenty-five years.

**Adam Vajda** was born and raised in North Vancouver. He studied environmental geography and geographic information sciences at Simon Fraser University, and now does geomatics work for First Nations across British Columbia as well as freelance cartography.

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## Blind Man Dance

RANDY FRED



In March I had the huge honour of receiving my first traditional Nuuchah-nulth name, given to me by my ten-year-old granddaughter Christina Howard. The naming ceremony took place during our family potlatch, hosted in a hall in Port Alberni as a memorial to three of my siblings and one brother-in-law who all passed away in the past three years. The potlatch started at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday and finished at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday. We fed four hundred people for lunch and six hundred for dinner, and provided sandwiches and snacks throughout the morning.

Traditionally, Nuuchah-nulth people receive several names throughout their lifetime. New names are given at

various stages of life, including puberty, adulthood, old age and important or critical incidents. Most families have a bank of names from which to choose.

Christina gave me the name “Wickee Cussee,” which translates to “No Eyes.” This is certainly not a traditional name, but I like it. I even prefer it to the word that translates to “blind.”

At the potlatch, my daughter Teoni was also given a new name, which translates to “Openit Woman.” My late mother-in-law, Ida Shish, used to smile whenever Teoni, as a baby, used to say “open it.” Ida was raised near Hotsprings Cove, on the Openit Peninsula; openit is a Nuuchah-nulth word meaning “place of calm waters.” At the age of twelve Ida went through

a rigorous twelve-day ritual when her father gave her the chieftainship for the Manhousaht Nation, whose home was at Openit and Hotsprings Cove.

Due to a strange situation with my tribe, Tseshaht, many of our songs cannot be sung in public. So my nephews, Martin and Aaron Watts, composed new songs and adapted old ones for our family potlatch. For me they used a traditional hand drum and beat to accompany everyone singing “I Can See Clearly Now” by Johnny Nash. The song was sung during my dance, which we called the “Blind Man Dance.” I danced with Christina, who guided me. Traditionally, four witnesses are selected to remember given names. My four witnesses





danced blindfolded behind me, each with a guide. At the end of the dance each witness had to use the white cane they were carrying to find the gift we gave them for being a witness. It was unusual for a potlatch, but it was fun. After all, the purpose of memorials with my people is to end the tears and mourning for the loved ones who are being memorialized.

Many potlatches are held in Port Alberni by families from all over Nuuchah-nulth territory. Besides memorial potlatches, others are hosted for name giving, passing on of chieftainships, celebrations for a variety of events or occurrences. In the past they were also hosted for political and economic activities but these do not take place

anymore as Nuuchah-nulth tribes are governed by the Department of Indian Affairs, today administered by the Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council.

Before Contact only chiefs hosted and organized potlatches. They would be held over four days. The host chief would give away everything they owned. They would leave the potlatch with nothing. They had faith their territories would provide everything they needed. Every song was a prayer to the Creator. Every person had a specific place they sat. Children were expected to be quiet and well-behaved.

What made our family potlatch so pleasant this year was that we had signs made up to ask for people to be

quiet; at most potlatches I've been to that task is left to men with very loud voices, constantly yelling, "Be quiet!"

At the age of sixty-eight, I am so honoured to finally have a real name. It doesn't matter to me it is not a traditional, passed-on family name. What is more important to me is that my ten-year-old granddaughter gave it to me and that she danced with me.

---

*Randy Fred is a Nuuchah-nulth Elder and the founder of Theytus Books, the first Indigenous-owned and operated book publishing house in Canada. He lives in Nanaimo. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*



# Road Trip with Cupid

FINN WYLIE



Harrington Creek, Oklahoma. Fifty pony-tailed women in a field, arms up, legs spread—summer cheer-leading camp.

Passing Leavenworth, Kansas, I say a prayer for the inmates, penned between town and the military cemetery, and share my blanket with a teenager travelling for the first time alone. I don't remember ever being there, between youth and aging.

The lush banks of the Missouri River curve and recede like islands.

There's a long wait between buses in Fargo, North Dakota. I get room 212 of the red-brick Hotel Donaldson, downtown. An older man in overalls at the front desk tells me the building is more than one hundred years old. "There's Greek writing when you look at the roof from across the street."

Wide streets, white folks. Blow's Sew-N-Vac, Nail Concepts. Space for Sale.

In the Empire Tavern, a thin woman on the worn stage sings "Cupid's Got a Gun." A guy in plaid gestures for me to sit with him, but I shake my head, in a kind way. He asks where

I'm from. Canada, I answer. "I'd like to go to there, but I'd need a visa," he barks from his table. "Want to marry me? My wife she burned me. She just burned me, you know. Now I'm going to court to burn her back."

Each drink comes with a raffle ticket. The prize is three beers "to drink right now" or a six-pack to take home. The emcee calls out my number. I take the three drinks now. During the third, a fieldworker with a strong jaw, dense tattoos and a dignified way of speaking dances with me and lets me go.

At the 7-Eleven, the clerk, named Tim, is getting off work. "Long shift?" I ask. "Well, it wasn't 9 to 5," he answers. Later he will write in my journal: *The fruit of the spirit is love, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. Above such there is no law. Galatians 5:22.*

We share a piece of carrot cake and an entire pot of coffee at the Fryn' Pan. The train passes, whistling, close to midnight.

"I stay here because my father, a preacher, is 335 pounds, a heart attack waiting to happen," Tim says.

"I don't know what my mom would do without me. Who drifts? Artists, angels, saints. I had it hard as a preacher's kid. I've had it bad by women. I get over disappointments real fast, maybe that's not a good habit. I would dress up in women's clothes if I was thin. I like just being with someone, just the closeness, like no necessary physical contact, do you get that? Things got to mean something. It was brave of you to talk to me." "You answered."

"That's survival in this town. Not often do you meet someone interesting."

Hank Williams sings "I Saw the Light" again and again in the next room as I fall asleep.

"I'd be a fool not to try something," says my seatmate the next morning. "But I won't. I have somebody. She came along not a moment too soon." Fields in all directions. Green, nicotine, albino blond, pond. The border makes no dent.

"I lived in Alberta for a while but it got claustrophobic. Mountains in your face."

Pink oat, cud, Irish skin. Wakening eyelid, dog's ear lain flat. Bristle.

"Sweet corn," the driver shouts, slowing the bus outside Morden, Manitoba.

A woman hands him a bag, bulging, through the door and waves away his money. "Don't worry about it, sweetheart."

---

*Finn Wylie studies writing at Vancouver Island University and works as a tree planter. Her poem "Dust" appears in the summer 2019 issue of the Temz Review. @wyliefinn on Twitter.*



# Mission

BRADLEY PETERS

Where Mustangs *fuck you* electronically  
in neon pink above licence plates fast  
through blind four-ways, where T-shirts say things  
like *100% bitch* or *looking for obedient wife*  
*whom I can love and honor and cherish* in black felt

where the butcher on the strip is content  
to chew the fat for thirty-four years and the cobbler  
holed up in his clapboard barrack pre-dates concrete  
remembers skid row for its cedars  
humped down the grey clay of James Street, the swish

of his pink tongue, palm charted across the shop  
over head-high shoeboxes, shaking  
for age and the rough terrain, across main, frosted  
glass front, down to the river with a splash  
where spring salmon run, where some fly

ten thousand clicks to reel upstream cursing  
past the cottonwoods, blackberries, around the bar  
to return broken mumbling slipshod beauty  
where levees rise to reclaim Matsqui flats  
where black bears sally calf slunk and hipsters

reconsider backyard stashes of scrumpy, where that  
burly angel  
called uncle cooks basement voodoo juice  
which the Mennonite kids slurp in concession  
from the pitted ladle, where your actual uncle lives  
in a camper behind the skate park, dickers a lift

to emerg for the one-legged man stole his phone  
fourth this month, where you live in a flophouse  
where two Ziplocs of crushed Percocets fall divine  
from the closet and the fir plank walls are packed  
with newspaper from 1912, where the snow-weighted  
roof droops

where a plow is for pussies, where the coot  
wheeling his bike blind for sleet looks like your father  
smiling up, afro and glasses ranting *trendy trendy* down  
Second Ave  
where The Man ships inmates of the shuttered asylum  
where mental illness is the new economy

of light roast beans and warehouse pubs  
where Westminster Abbey of Saint Joseph on the hill  
is besieged with sunset virgins groping  
for a sweet little plot with a view  
where Heritage Park is constructed upon the rotten stone

of British Columbia's oldest and last-closed residential  
school  
where plaques recount pioneer adventures, where the  
cemetery  
for Oblates of Mary is fenced in twelve-foot gilded spires  
where the children are silent and their parents  
step softly, shape the names with their lips.

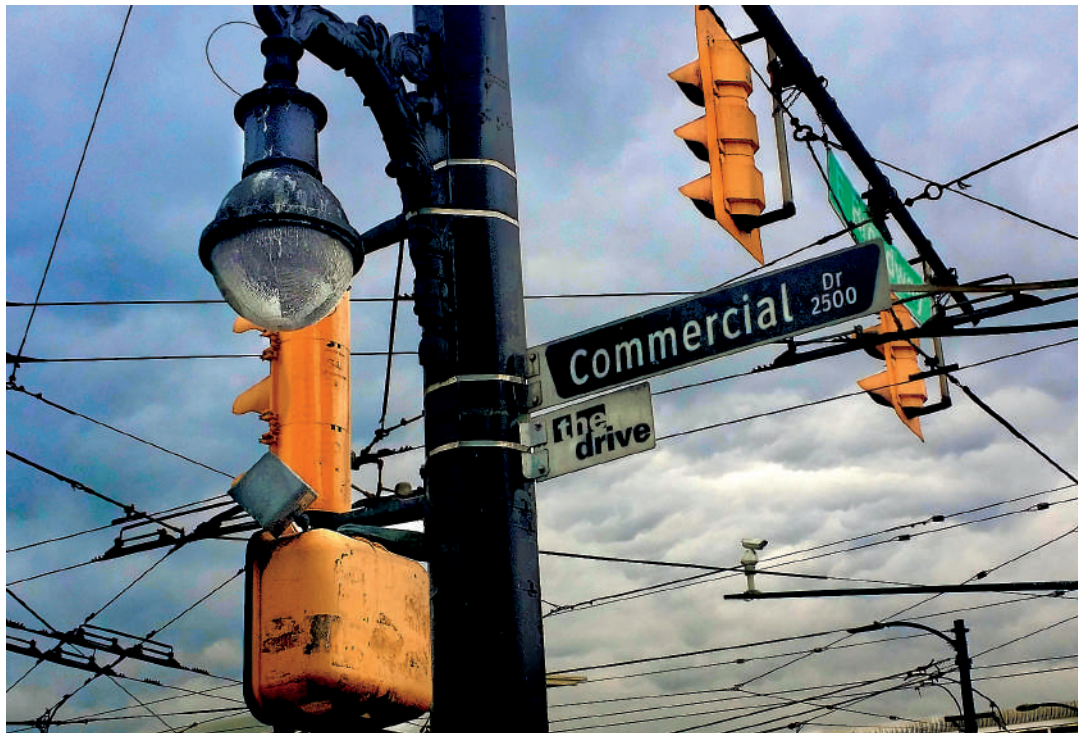
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*Bradley Peters is an emerging writer from Mission, BC. His writing has appeared in Grain and subTerrain.*



# Wittgenstein Walks (Commercial Drive)

STEPHEN OSBORNE



## I know that this world exists.

- 1 Please No Dumping
- 1.1 Keep Your City Clean
- 1.2 This Phone Is Shut Off From 11 pm To 5:00 am
- 1.21 Do Not Sit In Front Of Entrance.
- 1.211 Sorry For The Inconvenience.
- 1.3 No Vending – Maximum Fine \$500
- 1.3.1 Best Poutine In B.C.
- 1.3.2 Bottomless bowling
- 1.3.3 Keep your pants on
- 1.4 Got Pot?
- 1.41 The Vending Machine Does!
- 1.411 \$4 – \$6 Grams
- 1.412 Shatter – Budder – Oil – Hash
- 1.413 \$100 ounces
- 1.5 Discount Bread—Come on in, take a look around! Save money on all your bread and cookie needs and wants!
- 1.6 First \$200 has no interest
- 1.7 Happy Lunch

## I am placed in the world like my eye in its visual field.

- 2 Sorry, No Cash On Premises
- 2.1 U Work Today We Pay Today
- 2.2 Local Traffic Only
- 2.3 Adult Education For Youth
- 2.4 Crime Prevention Office
- 2.41 Closed For The holidays
- 2.42 Have a Safe Holiday.
- 2.5 Cellphone Repairs & Unlock
- 2.6 EAT FRESH HOTDOG & PIZZA
- 2.61 Pricing and Deals:
- 2.62 Single Hot Dog: \$2.25 + Tx
- 2.63 Double Deal (pop inc): \$5 + Tx
- 2.64 Pizza: \$1.75 + Tx
- 2.65 1 Pizza / Hotdog: \$3.75 + Tx
- 2.67 Regular Pop: \$1.25
- 2.68 Premium Pop: \$1.75 (ask)

### **Something about the world is problematic.**

- 3 Sam's Vacuum Store
- 3.1 F&M Glass
- 3.2 Nitrogen
- 3.3 Starter Package – 250 – Business Cards,
- 3.31 Letterheads, Envelopes – Predefined Format
- 3.4 Superior Dollar
- 3.41 Cash Now
- 3.5 Dollar Giant
- 3.7 Casket Royale
- 3.8 Driver Services
- 3.81 Free Devilery (\$20 Minimum)
- 3.9 No Public Washroom
- 3.91 Please Use Front Door
- 3.92 Eat Healthy Mexican Food
- 3.93 Lee Harvey Bin Laden Was A Patsy
- 3.94 USA Out Of North America

### **We call it the meaning of life.**

- 4 Applause Video's  
(As explained by Quintilian, *apostrophe* was directed to a person *present*; modern use has extended it to the *absent* or *dead*; but it is by no means confined to these, as sometimes erroneously stated.)
- 4.1 No Narcotics/Cash On Premises
- 4.12 Seniors: Please Line Up Against The Wall
- 4.13 Due To Recent Increases In Robberies In This Area
- 4.14 Please Remove Hats And Sunglasses
- 4.2 Closed Temporarily—Bank Holdup

### **The world is everything that is the case.**

- 5 Lusitania Coffee Shop
- 5.1 Adanac Towers
- 5.12 [www.mrdance.ca](http://www.mrdance.ca)
- 5.13 Home Of Andy's Baking
- 5.2 Sweet Cherubim
- 5.21 US Hands Off Cuba
- 5.3 Luke I am your father
- 5.31 Shake n Bake Barbershop
- 5.32 Please Carry Your Bike to the Bzack of the Office
- 5.321 Please do not line up or smoke in front of the building.

- 5.4 CO2 Systems
- 5.5 United Croats
- 5.51 King Tomislav Branch
- 5.6 Magpie Magazine Gallery
- 5.7 All food \$4.95 all day everyday

### **The world is the totality of facts, not of things.**

- 6 Unloading Only 9 – 99
- 6.1 Please don't run after a bus while it's leaving a stop.
- 6.11 Once a bus is committed to leaving a stop, the driver's full attention must be on other traffic.
- 6.111 The safety of the bus and its passengers is paramount.
- 6.12 That's why Company regulations say that buses do not pick up passengers after they leave their stop.
- 6.2 So running alongside and in some cases slapping the side of the bus can only distract the driver
- 6.21 Making his/her job more difficult.
- 6.22 It can also be dangerous for the runner.
- 6.221 People have slipped and fallen against buses and in some cases have even fallen under a wheel.
- 6.23 Waiting for the next bus is safer for all concerned and may even prove to be faster.
- 6.3 "Half this game is ninety percent mental"  
—Yogi Berra
- 6.4 Vasco de Gama Cafe
- 6.41 Vicious Cycle Laundry & Cafe
- 6.411 Piramidon Egyptian Cafe
- 6.412 Artistico Greek Cafe
- 6.413 Thai Away Home
- 6.414 Nuff-Nice-Ness
- 6.42 Liquidation Sale 30%–50%–70% off everything
- 6.43 People Before Profits

### **The world divides into facts.**

- 7 Legion Branch #179 – Open House
- 7.1 Come In And Meet New Friends
- 7.2 Fred's Best Deals
- 7.3 No Trespassing – Passage Interdit
- 7.4 Street Cleaning 2 am – 4 am
- 7.5 Reggae Thursday – Monday Poetry
- 7.51 Please No Posters Or Grafitti.



- 7.52 Thanks, Chuck.
- 7.6 Missing—Have You Seen Dawne?
- 7.7 New S#it Poetry Slam
- 7.71 All New Poetry
- 7.72 Do Not Pass
- 7.73 Underarms \$14
- 7.8 Steve's Tailoring Closing Down.
- 7.81 Thank You For Your Support Over The Years!

**The difficulty is to say no more than we know.**

- 8 Helium—Cashback—Keys Cut
- 8.1 Autographed Book Sale—Over 700 Titles
- 8.11 All Hand Signed Buy Authors
- 8.2 Hands On Experience Hair Design
- 8.21 Fur Bearers Defender
- 8.3 Think Globally
- 8.4 J, N & Z Deli – Smoked Meat
- 8.41 Italy On Sale!

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- 9.2 Ears Pierced While You Wait
- 9.3 Work At Home
- 9.301 Earn Serious Income
- 9.31 Factory Outlet Good Brands
- 9.4 No Soliciting. That Means Everyone.
- 9.41 Have Nice Short Haircut.
- 9.411 You Will Look Better

**We make to ourselves pictures of facts.**

- 10 T & Q Laundromat
- 10.1 1st Aid Training
- 10.2 Kadampa Meditation Centre
- 10.3 Helen Wang Hair & Beauty
- 10.4 ~~Findlay Convenience~~ Spartacus Books
- 10.5 Lunapads
- 10.6 Morwin Garment Manu.
- 10.7 Pearl Design Garment Manufactory
- 10.8 Dog Spa

**The picture is a model of reality.**

- 11 Casa Verde
- 11.1 Ivan's Auto Body
- 11.11 QA Collision & Glass
- 11.2 Fluorescent Lights
- 11.3 Industrial Engraving
- 11.31 Codex Tools & Fasteners
- 11.4 Britannia Food Equip. Ltd.

**The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world.**

- 12 No BIG Dogs Allowed—sorry, no exceptions
- 12.1 New Patients & Emergencies—WELCOME!

*Subtitles borrowed from Wittgenstein's Tractatus.*

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*Stephen Osborne is a co-founder and consulting publisher of Geist. He is the award-winning writer of Ice & Fire: Dispatches from the New World and dozens of shorter works, many of which can be read at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# In Memoriam

*Edith Iglauer, 1917–2019*



Edith Iglauer was a brilliant writer and a smart, funny, adventurous friend. She was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, then studied at the Columbia School of Journalism in New York, knowing from the get-go that finding out about things and writing about them was her life work.

By the time *Geist* began to publish her short non-fiction pieces, in 1996, Edith had been a professional journalist and book author for fifty-five years. She had joined the circle of women journalists who met each week with Eleanor Roosevelt to receive White House briefings in the early days of World War II. She had served as a war correspondent in Yugoslavia for the

*Cleveland News*; written a series of articles in 1946–1952 for *Harper's* on the design and construction of the grand headquarters for the newly formed United Nations; married the writer Philip Hamburger and raised two sons, Jay and Richard; joined the staff at *The New Yorker* and delivered the first science-based exposé of air pollution in New York City in the 1960s—which was instrumental in changing a clean-air law in New York. She had journeyed to Ungava Bay, Quebec, to document the formation of the first Inuit-owned and -run co-operatives to administer the production and marketing of their art—a series of articles that became a book, *Inuit Journey*. She

had accompanied a trucker in his huge, no-frills red truck—length 10 metres, weight 50 tonnes loaded—as he and his crew built a 520-kilometre road made of ice and snow, from Yellowknife, NWT, to Great Bear Lake. This too became a book, *Denison's Ice Road*. Edith had also written astute profiles of the artist Bill Reid, the writer Hubert Evans, the writer/adventurer Capi Blanchet, the architect Arthur Erickson and, in 1968, the newly elected Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau—to name a few.

When Edith began to write for *Geist*, she and Philip had divorced and she had welcomed two grandsons. And she had fallen in love with



a salmon fisherman named John Daly and moved to the Sunshine Coast of BC to marry him. He died a few years later, when they were dancing; there were some difficult years, and in 1988 Edith's book *Fishing with John* (Harbour Publishing), about her years with John aboard his troller, became an instant BC bestseller and a Governor General's Literary Award finalist.

A few years later, in December 1996, Edith and her companion (and later husband) Frank White, who had been travelling separately in the United States, agreed to meet at the Sylvia Hotel, at English Bay in Vancouver, and drive back to the Sunshine Coast together. Everything went as planned—until the onslaught of what Lower Mainland newscasters still call “the worst snow storm on record.” Edith and Frank accepted their fate, which was so pleasant that they prayed for more snow, and Edith's first dispatch for *Geist*, “Snowed In at the Sylvia,” took root. It was published in *Geist* 24, in 1997, and readers loved it. About a year later, Edith wrote “My Lovely Bathtub” for *Geist*, about how a vintage claw-foot bathtub on her deck—a gift from Frank—became the most beautiful private outdoor bath for miles around; more fan letters came in. Some months after that we published “Wait, Save, Help,” Edith's account of migrating to a computer after half a century writing on her typewriter; and then her dispatch “Sitting on Water,” about the boats in her life.

These and all of Edith's dispatches are short, smooth, accessible reads, so they can seem slight: Edith adopts a kitten who is fond of voles; she and Frank sign up for an aquafit class; a concert pianist friend comes to visit during the Olympics, but security has shut down vehicle access, so Edith takes him to Costco. In Edith's care, these apparently simple encounters (with the exception of “The Prime Minister Accepts,” about the time she invited Pierre Trudeau to dinner at her

apartment in New York) open out to the world. She is well in control of her material, yet there is something about her approach—delight, surprise, skilful care of the reader and an attribute that her son Jay calls her “rampant curiosity”—that invites readers to join her in savouring the encounters, and staying alert to what else might happen.

It was a great pleasure to work with Edith as editor for the fifteen dispatches she wrote for *Geist*. We had no contract or schedule for her work. A couple of times a year, if she wasn't travelling, she would phone me with one or two ideas for dispatches. She would ask after me and my family, then describe the ideas, brightly and briefly, in plain talk, not wasting a word. Each one proposed an understated, shapely narrative, with subtle but unmistakable suspense, perfect for *Geist* readers or any readers. Every dispatch she suggested was surprising, funny and necessary. We'd talk it over and settle on one of the ideas, and Edith would say when she hoped to have a draft ready.

A few days later, she would phone to say she was faxing the draft. I would say great!—I'll watch for it, and in would come the draft. But I wouldn't read it, because for Edith, as for other seasoned writers, the act of transferring a draft to the editor would somehow shake loose any pesky lingering writing questions, which could then be seen and resolved. Fax technology was far from smooth, but it was analogue: even the transmission from writer to editor sounded like coffee (or literature) percolating. Within twenty-four hours, Edith would phone to tell me to ignore that draft because a much better one would be in my fax tray tomorrow, which it always was.

I would read the new draft through, marvelling at Edith's skill at evoking worlds in a short, straight-ahead account: a box of croissants that defrosted with surprising vigour; a date with a boy, at age sixteen, with her mouth full of brand-new braces; the persistent problem of the “independent

wandering behaviour of our hearing aids: they are always someplace else.” I'd flag minor things on the page and list a very few queries and suggestions on a separate sheet, then phone Edith, then fax the documents to her.

Within an hour, Edith would phone me and shower me with praise for my editing. “You're such a wonderful editor,” she would say. “You're the best magazine editor I've had since Mr. Shawn at *The New Yorker*!” How I'd have loved to accept those laurels! But no. “Thank you, Edith,” I'd say, “but... I'm the *only* magazine editor you've had since Mr. Shawn.”

A day or two later, Edith would fax the revised draft. She would have inserted not one of my suggestions, except for a stray typo or em dash. Yet in the new draft she would have resolved all of my notes and queries perfectly, in her style and her voice.

Edith had been writing for *Geist* for a couple of years when she invited me to lunch at her home on the Sunshine Coast, near the water and full of light. At her kitchen table we ate a delicious soup with tiny perfect crackers, a green salad and some tinned sockeye that did not come from the supermarket. I had eaten a few spoonfuls of the soup when Edith flashed me a big grin and said, “Do you like the soup?” I did. It was wonderful. “Can you guess what's in it?” she said. I couldn't, but said it was quite elegant, whatever it was. She laughed. The soup was made of one tin condensed tomato soup, one tin condensed green pea soup, a bit of cream and a splash of sherry. “I'm so glad you like it,” she said. “Next time you come, I'll make my famous olive sandwiches.”

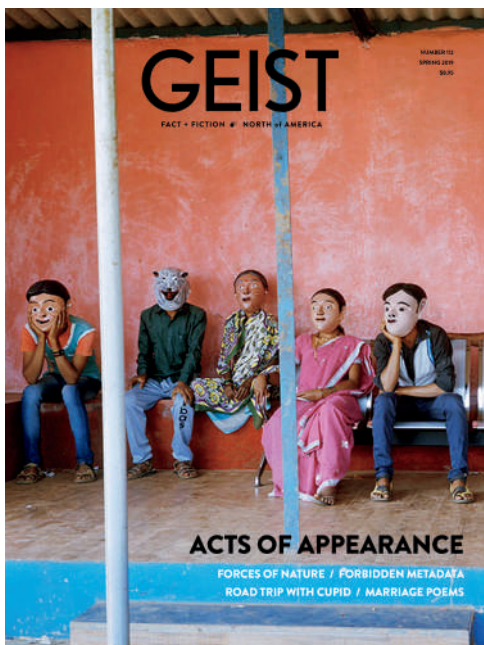
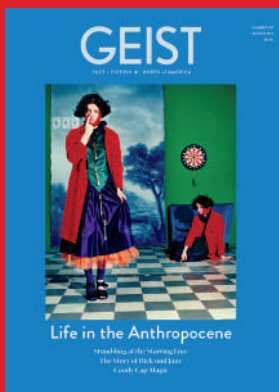
—Mary Schendlinger

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## ADDITIONAL READING

For more on Edith Iglauer, read “Eye for Detail” by Annabel Lyon and “Edith and Frank” by Ted Bishop, both at [geist.com](http://geist.com). Many of Edith Iglauer's own works can also be found at [geist.com](http://geist.com).

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# FINDINGS



From Beau Dick: *Devoured by Consumerism* by LaTiesha Fazakas with John Cussans & Candice Hopkins. Published by Figure 1 Publishing in 2019. Beau Dick was a Kwakwaka'wakw artist and activist. His work has been shown in exhibitions around the world. He was the recipient of the 2012 VIVA Award. LaTiesha Fazakas is a curator and dealer with a specialization in Northwest Coast Indigenous Art. She was the writer, director and producer of the documentary film *Maker of Monsters: The Extraordinary Life of Beau Dick* (2017).

## The No-brainer Problem

JUSTIN E.H. SMITH

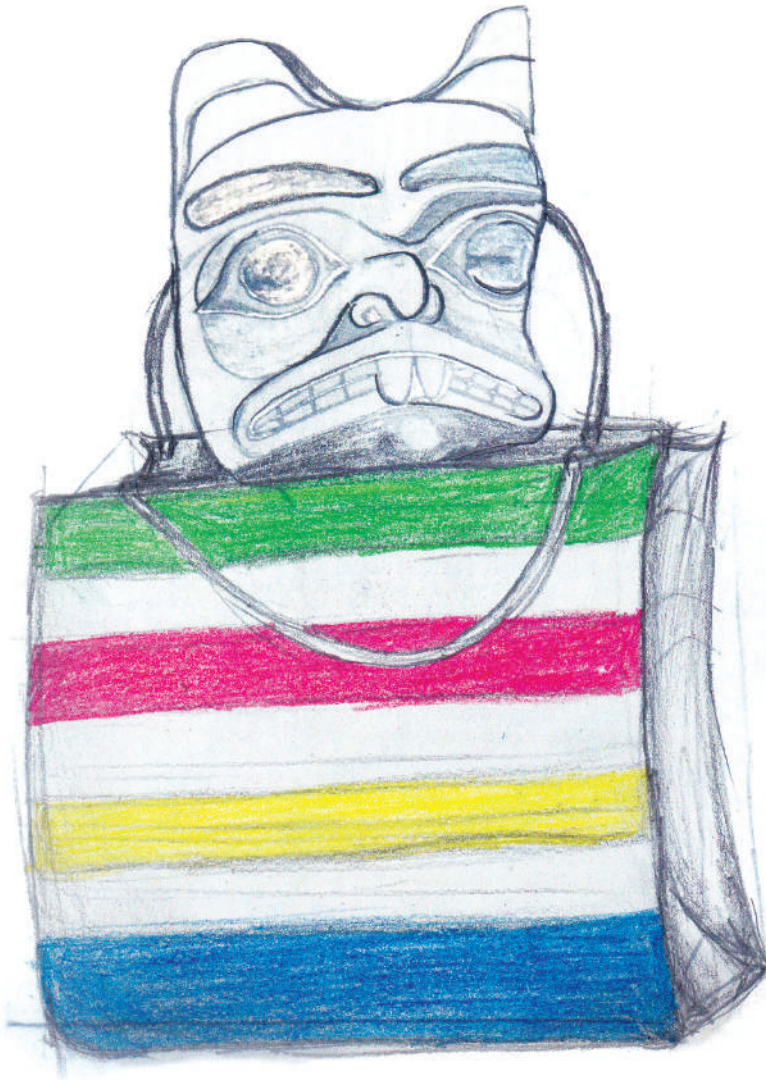
From *Irrationality*. Published by Princeton University Press in 2019. Justin E.H. Smith is a professor of the history and philosophy of science at the University of Paris 7—Denis Diderot. His work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Harper's Magazine* and other publications.

Logic might be, metaphorically, an octopus, as Cicero said. But the octopus, literally, is no logician, even if, significantly, between 2008 and 2010 an octopus named Paul was hailed as possessing the power to divine the outcomes of football matches. Widespread public openness to cephalopod intelligence helped to create the appearance

that something more than simple divination was occurring—as one might believe in trying to predict the future from the course of motion of an ant or a goldfish: something more like a true prophetic intelligence. But of course few would confess to being truly convinced by the appearance, as reason, on the most widespread view today,

belongs to human beings alone (and even human beings cannot predict the outcome of unfixed future sporting matches). Everything else in nature, in turn, from bears and sharks to cyanobacteria, rain clouds, and comets, is a great force of unreason, a primordial, violent chaos that allows us to exist within it, for a while, always subject to its arbitrary whims.

This view sets us up, as human beings, starkly against, or at least outside of, nature. And this is the view that has been held by the majority of philosophers throughout history. Most of them have understood this outsider



status to be a result of our possession of some sort of nonnatural essence that makes us what we are, such as an immortal soul, endowed from a transcendent source and ultimately unsusceptible to erosion, corrosion, and other natural effects. For philosophers of a more naturalistic bent, who have dominated philosophy only in the most recent era, human reason is not ontologically distinct from vision or echolocation or any of the other powers evolution has come up with, enabling different kinds of organism to move through the world. It is part of something vastly larger—namely,

nature, and all the evolved adaptations that it permits favoring the survival of organisms by myriad pathways—but that vastly larger thing itself still has no share in reason.

This feature of the currently prevalent, naturalistic understanding of reason—namely, that it is found within the human being exclusively, even if it is just as natural as echolocation or photosynthesis—is more indebted to the Cartesian tradition than is usually acknowledged. Descartes grounded his human exceptionalism in dualism, taking the soul as something nonnatural and ontologically discontinuous with

#### **COPPER INGOT AND DOCUMENT, 2013–14 (opposite)**

Ingot made from Canadian copper pennies, Permission document from Canadian Minister of Finance.

Copper holds a special place in Kwakwaka'wakw material culture. For this piece, Beau melted down Canadian copper pennies into an ingot. Because it is illegal in Canada to destroy or deface a coin that is legal tender, Beau secured a letter from the Canadian Minister of Finance granting permission to transform the copper. The work offers an entry point to speculation on how value is stored and transferred in copper currency, as opposed to the cultural value of a ceremonial Copper.

#### **BEAVER IN HUDSON'S BAY BAG**

*sketch by Cole Speck (left)*

The beaver pelt trade was the foundation of the exploration and settlement of Canada; trapping was so widespread that the beaver was almost hunted to extinction. After its founding in 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company controlled the trade for over two hundred years. In exchange for beaver pelts, HBC traders gave Indigenous Peoples wool blankets featuring this striped design, which is still central to the company's brand. Some early British colonizers also used blankets like these to infect Indigenous populations with smallpox. Blankets were nevertheless adapted into and remain an important part of many Indigenous cultures, and the HBC blanket and the beaver remain two of the most iconic—albeit conflicted—symbols of the birth of Canada as a nation.

The sketch here depicts a work conceived by Beau but to be completed by his apprentices, Cole Speck and Alan Hunt. The beaver symbolizes Beau's roles as a carver and a provider for his family. 🐾



the human body, which for its part was on the same side of the great ontological divide as animal bodies, oceans, volcanoes, and stars. But naturalism has been effective at finding ways to preserve human exceptionalism while at the same time collapsing the ontological divide posited by dualism. The most prevalent view today is that reason is something uniquely human, which we deploy in a world that is variously conceived as either nonrational or positively irrational. In this, modern thought sharply departs from certain basic presuppositions of the ancient world. On the most common ancient understanding of the human being as the rational animal, it was taken for granted that human beings were sharing in something, reason, that did not simply exist immanently within them, but rather had its own independent existence. Human beings were, among animals, the only ones that possessed reason as a mental faculty that they could bring to bear in their choices and actions, but this did not mean that the rest of nature had no share of reason at all. Rather, the world itself was a rationally ordered whole: it was permeated by, was characterized by, was an expression of, reason.

It is true that in the history of analytic philosophy we find a prominent view that is fairly similar to the ancient one. Thus in Gottlob Frege and the early Wittgenstein, the structure of facts in the world is the same as the structure of propositions in human-generated arguments: the real and the intelligible are one. In more recent years John McDowell has pushed an even bolder account of the identity of mind and world, to the point that some critics have accused him—as if it were *prima facie* evident that this is a bad thing—of absolute idealism.<sup>1</sup> But for the most part the presumption has been that, as Gassendi put it in the seventeenth century, logic is the art of ordering our thoughts, and

not the force that makes the world itself an ordered whole rather than a dark chaos.

The widespread ancient sense of rationality is perhaps what also lies behind the curious expression in contemporary American English, in



which we describe a decision that is particularly easy to make as a “no-brainer.” The implication here is that one could take the prescribed path even if one did not have a brain—the organ standing in here metonymically for its function—simply in virtue of the fact that its rightness is inscribed in the order of things. Not having a brain, or any consciousness at all, yet doing the correct thing anyway, this peculiar phrase reminds us, might be the ultimate expression of reason.<sup>2</sup>

This is the vision of the world, and of humanity’s place in it, imparted in the Australian poet Les Murray’s lines:

Everything except language  
knows the meaning of existence.  
Trees, planets, rivers, time  
know nothing else. They express it  
moment by moment as the  
universe.<sup>3</sup>

The world itself is, on this view, what bears meaning. Our own language, and our efforts to portray the world in it, far from being what is meaningful, are only feeble and inadequate echoes of this world, cutting us off from it. It does not connect us to the world; still less does it make us the world’s masters. 🌿

- 
- 1 See John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996 [1994]).
  - 2 I owe this insight to D. Graham Burnett (in personal correspondence).
  - 3 Les Murray, “The Meaning of Existences,” in *Poems the Size of Photographs* (Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2002), 104.

## Composite: Black Hole

LAURA MATWICHUK

*From Near Miss. Published by Nightwood Editions in 2019. Laura Matwichuk’s poems have appeared in literary journals in Canada and the US. She was a finalist for the RBC Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers and shortlisted for Arc Poetry Magazine’s Poem of the Year. She lives in Vancouver, BC.*

I’m supermassive: a black hole  
into which *billions of suns*  
have disappeared. Interstellar  
magnet, collapsed object, feature-  
less by design. Folks at Hubble  
speculate about my malevolence,  
futz around with digital renderings.  
Nestled deep inside elliptical galaxy  
NGC 4889, *an egg-shaped swirl*,  
I sulk and wait, knowing what I know.  
Whipped meringue *monster*  
in a porcelain mixing bowl.  
For now, all is quiet in squid-ink  
oblivion—I’ve lost my appetite  
for stars. Full of secrets, pent-up  
anxiety, I want someone to know me. 🌿

# Marshmallow Cases

CATHERINE LEROUX

*From Madame Victoria. Published by Biblioasis in 2018. Translated from the French by Lazer Lederbender. Catherine Leroux is a writer and translator. Her work has been shortlisted for the 2016 Scotiabank Giller Prize and the French-American Foundation Translation Prize, nominated for Le grand prix du livre de Montréal, and won the 2016 Governor General's Award for Translation. She lives in Montréal.*

“Do you recognize this woman?”

The tired features, the jaws like a steel frame, the regal hair. Of course, they say. From Québec City to James Bay, from Gaspé to Nicolet, from Kapuskasing to La Patrie, from Prince Rupert to Niagara, from Miramichi to Slave Lake, from Yellowknife to Rigaud, hundreds have responded to the notice. Of course we know her. She is our grandmother, our sister. She is our neighbour, the mother of our children. She is the woman who taught us how to sew on a button. The one who stuffed us full of bread pudding, who tormented us with all those ghastly cigarette burns. She is the pensioner who slept all the time, who smoked too much, the traveller who came through our village every spring, the parishioner who didn't pay her tithe from 1972 to 1987. She was the first Québécoise I ever kissed. She is the lady I didn't help across the street, and you can see what that led to. She is the woman I had forgotten, that left too soon, that we hoped never to run into again. The one we've been searching for for years. It's for her that we always keep the porch light on now, and no longer turn off our phones, our headlights, our heads. That's her, that's Madame Victoria.

Céleste is a member of the police team tasked with compiling all the calls. She listens to the voicemail messages and notes down names, numbers, and the sometimes scant, sometimes overabundant details provided. First she contacts the ones dubbed “marshmallow cases,” the people whose messages suggest they are not in full possession of their mental faculties. Before dismissing their accounts

outright she must call everyone back and ask the routine questions. These conversations often take up half her day. It is not easy to cut off someone who is vulnerable, especially if, like Céleste, you wear your heart on your sleeve. If asked for statistics, she would say that forty per cent of marshmallow cases come under the heading of conspiracy theories; they are the most garrulous callers. They can spend two hours trying to convince whoever is listening that Madame Victoria was the victim of some machination of a) the government b) the Church c) a secret society—Freemasons are very popular culprits—or d) alien agents. Though it goes against the grain, Céleste is often obliged to put an abrupt end to such conversations.

Another twenty-five per cent of marshmallow cases are made up of people who, when called back, don't remember having contacted the information line, nor do they have any idea who Madame Victoria might be. Then there are those who give very elaborate accounts that would be credible if they did not end up contradicting themselves, thereby betraying a type of mythomania. These represent fifteen per cent of marshmallow cases and can be quite difficult to unmask. Some ten per cent start berating Céleste as soon as they hear her voice, five per cent cry, and two per cent make lewd propositions. The rest remain a mystery. When she dials the numbers of this enigmatic three per cent, the line has been disconnected or she is told that no one

with that name has ever lived there. Such occurrences are too numerous for Céleste to write them off as errors; for her, they are ghosts, witnesses as fugitive as Madame Victoria's identity.

The second half of her day is devoted to the serious calls. These conversations are generally shorter. Céleste registers the places, dates, and all the particulars the caller is able to supply. In the vast majority of cases, the inconsistencies become apparent after only a few questions. Sometimes the time period fits but not the missing woman's age. Sometimes the physical description is promising but not the location. Sometimes people end up admitting it's a child, a man,

or a young Haitian girl that they are looking for, but not an older white woman. When Céleste tells them, regretfully, that she must disregard their lead, they insist. Almost all of them, even the ones who obviously have no connection with Madame Victoria, stubbornly put forward far-fetched theories, loudly claiming to have some sort of proprietary right to the nameless woman. Patiently and as gently as possible, Céleste refutes their contentions. No, Victoria did not have a gold tooth. She was not club-footed. She may have had a tattoo with the image of a lynx, but there is no way of knowing. But that wasn't her. It wasn't her.

Initially, Céleste was convinced that uncovering Madame Victoria's life story would be child's play. Yet despite a sound investigation and the countrywide missing person alert, there has been no progress in the case. Céleste is starting to lose hope, and it shows in her exchanges with the callers. They have turned personal. Then, as if by a miracle, an answer arrives. Her name is Léa.

On the telephone, her manner is brusque, as though she had been reluctant to come forward. But the places





and dates coincide. She is the right age to be Madame Victoria's daughter. She sends Céleste photos of her mother. Same tired features, same athletic bone structure, same shock of hair as Madame Victoria's. Ever since Léa was a little girl, her mother's life was made up of lean times and wandering. Then, a few months before Madame Victoria's death, she disappeared.

Céleste is fired up. She summons Léa to Montréal to run some tests. A hair of the dead woman, a hair of the living woman. Then they wait. During their meetings, the young woman is self-possessed, like someone whose life has just reached an angle of repose after years of turmoil.

In Léa's presence Céleste tries to rein in her excitement, but she can't

keep from asking questions; she wants to know everything about the woman who may well be the one everyone is looking for. Léa informs her, though not in so many words, that her mother was bipolar, that she led a nomadic life punctuated by intervals in the psychiatric hospital. Because Léa was placed with a foster family when she was very young, she never lived with her mother and sometimes went for years without seeing her. Céleste would like so much to find a name, a family, a location for Madame Victoria, a resolution that would release her from the silence she is trapped in. Now, however, she also wants to bring some closure to Léa's quest.

The results arrive, and it falls on Céleste to convey them to Léa. The young woman receives the news dispassionately. Taken aback, Céleste reiterates: "I'm sorry, Léa. You're not related to Madame Victoria."

Léa has an obstinate expression as she stares at the wall behind Céleste.

"No," she retorts.

Heavy-hearted, Céleste sets about explaining to her how the DNA tests are carried out, the markers that are examined, the margin of error, the meaning of the results. She repeats that Madame Victoria cannot possibly be her mother or even a distant aunt.

The young woman lifts a flame to the tip of her cigarette. The air catches fire. She blows the smoke skyward, invoking the spirits.

"I don't care. She's still my mother."

Since then, Céleste has stopped distinguishing between the marshmallow cases and the others, the way you stop differentiating, when you reach a certain age, between good and evil, night and day. All these people are asking essentially the same question. How can someone vanish into thin air? How can an arrow never come down again? Victoria belongs to them now. After all, this could be anyone. 🍷

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## Force of Nature

SARAH DE LEEUW

*From Outside, America. Published by Nightwood Editions in 2019. Sarah de Leeuw is a writer and researcher. Her work has won the Dorothy Livesay BC Book Prize, been a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for non-fiction and been a finalist for the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional BC Book Prize. Her essays have won two CBC literary awards and a Western Magazine Gold Award.*

Scientists don't necessarily name the places  
but speak instead of mid-to-large centres,  
are focused on *impact* instead of *precise*  
*dimensions* although I always think of Chicago,  
where we met, evolving into us like cities

shaping wingspans of small songbirds,  
shorter, blunter limbs for agile flight through  
skyscrapers and traffic, the way you and I  
balance on a fire escape, gingerly side stepping

my confession of upcoming marriage, watching  
raccoons and spiders, each on average three  
times larger than their rural counterparts,  
our families thinking we're here for business,  
or coyotes and foxes adapted to anonymous

garbage foraging under streetlights, nights  
far from forests, dens with pups and fish  
scents, pavement an econiche, camouflage  
to evolutionary biologists observing that while

the size of human thumbs has increased  
within a decade of texting, empathy has decreased  
with the use of cellphones that alter migration  
routes of bees and monarch butterflies as we  
Skype to arrange another metropolitan meeting. 🍷



*Prairie Monolith by Don Proch, 1996. Collection of Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre, Winnipeg. Photo taken by Ernest Mayer. From Don Proch: Masking and Mapping, curated by Patricia Bovey. Published by University of Manitoba Press in collaboration with St. John's College Press in 2019.*

*Don Proch is a visual artist. He received his BFA and B.Ed from the University of Manitoba. His debut exhibition with the Winnipeg Art Gallery was the Twelfth Winnipeg Biennial in 1971, followed by eight more exhibitions at the WAG between 1972 and 1997. He has exhibited widely in Canada and abroad.*



# If You Can't Take the Heat, Get Out of the Kitchen Party

AMY SPURWAY

*From Crow. Published by Goose Lane Editions in 2019. Amy Spurway was born and raised on Cape Breton. Her writing has been published in Babble, Elephant Journal, Today's Parent and the Toronto Star. She lives in Dartmouth.*

From the kitchen window, all I can see is the suffocating snarl of Mama's rambling rose bush, a yellowing sea of overgrown grass, and the skeletons of spruce trees that have seen better days. It didn't used to be like this. This land used to feel spacious and green and alive. But just like the inside of the trailer, the outside has morphed into a jumbled mess of things that should have been pruned, pulled, and purged a long time ago. Part of me feels compelled to feng shui the fuck out of this grubby little shack and start planning a landscaping makeover that I'll probably never get to enjoy, but that Mama will appreciate. Instead, I'm going to slash a path through the overgrown grass, find the old bonfire pit, and start burning stuff. Tree branches. Newspapers. Memories. She's all going up in flames tonight.

It takes me three hours, six minor injuries, and four hundred and fifty-eight curse words, but I do it. I find the old bonfire pit and yank away the tired, tangled vegetation that had swallowed the circle of hefty beach rocks. I lug a dead tree from a corner of the backwoods, and set it beside a pile of newspaper lugged from the corners of the living room. I tuck a wad of ancient dryer lint and yellowed grass inside a little stick teepee in the centre of the stone circle. Spray it with twenty-year-old hairspray, just for fun. I gently cradle Mama's Zippo lighter in the palm of my hand. With the sun just beginning to set and Mama working the night shift, I'll have myself a merry little bonfire here. The first one since the summer I left. No s'mores and weenie roasting, but

I've got a 1995 Shiraz that I bought at the snotty Toronto sommelier thing one of my Tinder conquests dragged me to, just days before Tumourpocalypse. I'm sure it will taste deliciously ironic when I slug it straight from the bottle in front of my Cape Breton backwoods junk fire.

I flick the Zippo and stoop, holding the flame to the lint ball until it ignites, then coax it along with a gentle stream of breath until a car comes barrelling up the driveway. A tinted-windowed Mustang blasting some

schlock rock song, probably in an attempt to drown out the car's multiple rumbles of age and failure. It's Peggy, driving one of "The Twins," which is what she proudly calls the couple of crappy "classic" cars she took from Skroink in their divorce.

Except it's not Peggy.

The woman emerging from the driver's side is skeletally thin. Or at least, most of her is. Other parts seem to be outlandishly large. Her tiny, deeply bronzed frame is tightly wrapped in a lime-green sarong, which can't contain her wildly gigantic boobs. Big, round, leopard print-framed sunglasses crouch precariously on the tip of her elfin nose. Her twig-thin wrists and neck are weighted with layer upon layer of enormous red, yellow, and blue wooden beads, while on her head, dozens of thick platinum dreadlocks spring from beneath a zebra-print scarf.

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## Last Words

KEN HUNT

*From The Lost Cosmonauts. Published by Book\*bug in 2018. Ken Hunt's work has appeared in Chromium Dioxide, Freefall, No Press, Spacecraft Press, Rampike and Matrix. He is working on a PhD at Western University.*

Prepare  
cognac and sausage to go  
with the moonshine.

See you tomorrow.

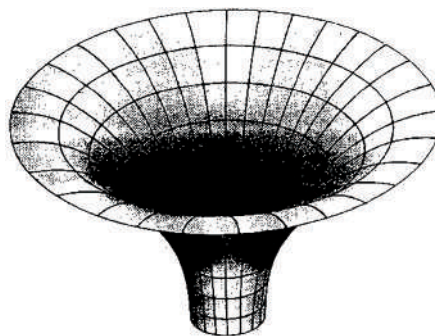
Roger, uh, bu—

Uh-oh.

Get us out.

It was my fault.

No one else  
is to blame. ☹️



Tendrils of blue smoke curl from the outrageously large blunt she sparks as she ambles across the yard toward me. I almost don't notice a spell of the squirrelly vision coming on. At first, I mistake the mirage of lights and colours for shades of sunset in the sky. Mama and I used to play a game at sunset and sunrise, where we'd each have to pick a colour from the ones we saw arching and flaring along the horizon. My eyes always found the patches where the cool blue of the ether met the warm glow of the sun, creating streaks of baby blue and bright pink tinged with wisps of an otherworldly violet. My brain has now plucked from my memory and conjured around this woman the impossibly real shade of sky-blue pink, which moves with her like a peacock's trippy plumage as she prances toward me on stupidly high platform sandals.

"F'eyed known there was a bomb fire, ida brung some bleedin' marchmellows."

It's Char.

Behind the giant glasses, beneath the platinum blonde dreadlocks and oversized bangles, and through a very bizarre and very fake quasi-British accent, it *is* Char. Because nobody else calls them bomb fires. Or marchmellows. The grammar though, that's Mr. Hillier's fault. He taught a whole generation of kids from Down North that it was "bring, brang, and brung."

"Bollocks! Hang on!" Char shrieks in my ear just as her twiggy arms coil around me in a hug. Mashing out the cherry of her mega-joint on the heel of her clunky shoe and stuffing the remainder into a fold of the zebra scarf, she boings back to the car, jet-tisons the driver's seat forward and wriggles into the back. When she emerges moments later, she's got one tit hanging out the top of her shrink-wrap sarong. Latched on to that tit is a tiny, squirming, naked baby. A

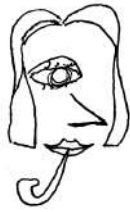
tiny, squirming, naked, deep-brown-skinned baby with a giant orange afro.

She sashays back over to the firepit and smoothly drops into a cross-legged seat on the grass without even jostling the now still and peacefully feeding baby boy.

"Char, where'd the... is that your... you had a baby?"

"Got him down the Congo."

She shrugs. "Those African tribeswomen, they don't care. They've got more babies than they know what to do with. Better me snatching the little fart than a bloody tiger, or him dying of ammonia."



"The Congo... you just took him? And came home?" I blink, still attempting to process.

Char's oddly coiffed head pivots back on her pencil thin neck and she howls with laughter. The baby doesn't flinch. A tiny trickle of bluish breast milk dribbles from the corner of his soft mouth.

"Jesus, Crow, ya dumb ass! Of course he's mine. How else would I get these giant milk-bag knockers he's slurpin' on? Usually, I tell people I stole him first and then whip out the tit, just to see the looks on their faces, but the little bugga was starving. God, you're some gall-able." 🍌

## How I Got To Sleep

MICHAEL REDHILL

*From Twitch Force. Published by House of Anansi in 2019. Michael Redhill is the author of five collections of poetry and seven novels. His work has been longlisted for the Man Booker Prize (Consolation) and won the 2017 Scotiabank Giller Prize (Bellevue Square). He lives in Toronto.*

Made acceptance speeches, repelled the Nazi scourge, had sex with lesbians, convinced parents to keep the dog (age six), visualized the tomatoes ripening, saw her for the first time again, present at Dieppe, shouted *help is coming, hold on!* plea bargained, filibustered, sneered at Kitty Hawk. Lay on my back and was an oyster at Leucate Plage, signed that kid's cast, watched the car hit someone else's child in Berga, opened the envelope, gave the eulogy (whole room wept), remembered the lost perogy recipe that called for cottage cheese. Turned over again — smear of the red-numbered clock — designed book covers, tucked in under a left and put down Chuck Liddell, caught bullfrogs in the muck at the edge of Pine Lake, brought back the smell of blueberry buns from the Open Window Bakery, drove the narrowing roads north. In my hand I held the closed head of a milkweed pod and peeled it back to white 🍌



# Meanwhile in Rocaterrania

BRETT INGRAM

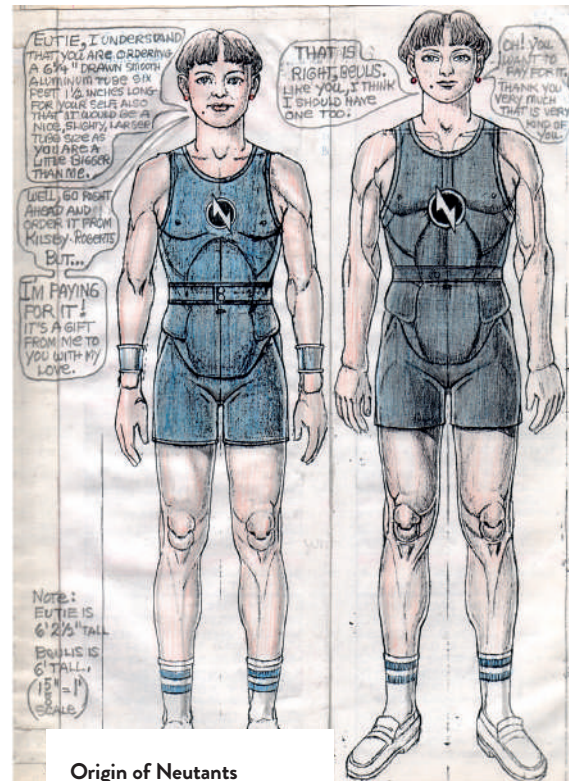
From *The Secret World of Renaldo Kuhler* by Brett Ingram. Published by Blast Books in 2017. Renaldo Kuhler was a scientific illustrator for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. He spent sixty years creating Rocaterrania, an imaginary country located on the Canada–United States border. Brett Ingram is an author, filmmaker, educator, visual artist and the director of the Renaldo Kuhler Archive.



## ROCATERRANIA TIMELINE

- 1931 Rocaterrania is born; August Phillippe Romanovski is named emperor.
- 1940 August Phillippe dies; Mary Catherine de Rochelle assumes the throne.
- 1948 Catherine dies; Georg Nicholai de Rochelle inherits the monarchy.
- 1951 Civil War; New Serbia is granted limited autonomy.
- 1953 First Revolution: Cesar Georg Nicholai is overthrown and executed.
- 1953–54 Provisional Republic provides unstable leadership.
- 1954 Second Revolution: Gorghendi Kahn is elected president, Federal Socialists march on the Winter Palace.
- 1955 President Kahn puts New Order into effect.
- 1957 Rocaterrania signs Livoská Peace Treaty with U.S. after conflict.
- 1962 President Kahn falls ill.
- 1963 Kahn dies; Josip Wepka is named premier and launches the Big Action.
- 1977 The Big Action ends, Period of Consolidation begins.
- 1995 Wepka dies; Ajax Gombardo becomes premier.
- 1999 Gombardo steps down; Khrushchenski is named premier.

Kuhler invented the history of Rocaterrania in its entirety—its royal family, its political intrigues and uprisings, its own government, its religion (Ojallaism) and its language and alphabet.



### Origin of Neutants

During the rule of Mary Catherine de Rochelle, unruly children were neutered by Catherine and served the State.







### Ojallism

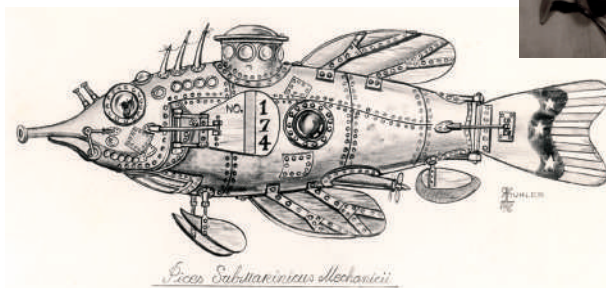
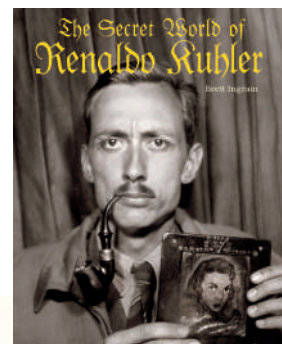
Ojallics believe that all religions point to God, whom they call Ojalla. They revere Jesus Christ but believe he was an enlightened mortal being with human foibles, a profound and loving teacher—but not literally the “Son of God.” They study Christ’s teachings but believe Jesus is but one of the great prophets of Ojalla, along with Moses, Muhammad, Krishna, Buddha, Bahá’u’lláh, and others. Ojallics believe in a karmic afterlife that is beyond human comprehension.



### Woman About Town

Janet Lingart ran the Oasis nightclub in the heart of Ciudad Eldorado, performing as a ballet dancer under the stage name Jeanette. The Oasis was one of the few entertainment establishments in the otherwise drab days following the revolution. It was modest yet classy, a place where artists and writers of Rocaterrania’s Beat Generation would gather to unwind and share ideas. President Kahn saw Janet at the Oasis one night and was impressed, and the two became great friends. She often stayed with the Kahns at their home, and they treated her as one of the family.

Janet was certainly most kind and compassionate, but she was no pushover. She was a tireless supporter of the underdog in all walks of life and was unafraid to speak her mind and fight for her values. She was a feminist before Rocaterranians even knew the meaning of the word.



Rocaterrania is a small nation between Canada and the United States with nine provinces and cities connected through railroad and metro systems.



# Ehtsèe

RICHARD VAN CAMP

*From Moccasin Square Gardens. Published by Douglas & McIntyre in 2019. Richard Van Camp is a writer and storyteller. He is the author of The Lesser Blessed, which has been adapted into a feature film with First Generation Films. He lives in Edmonton.*

The time I showed my ehtsèe the movie *E.T.*, it was years ago. He was in on his own from Behchoko, getting a checkup. My grandmother was... well, they had had a disagreement.

It was summer. My mom's house was quiet, peaceful. She'd worked hard to rebuild her life after she and her boyfriend separated. There were rumours Patrick was having an affair. He denied it up and down, but Mom had "the sense." So she decided to take a job in Yellowknife, eight hours north from Fort Smith. The idea was for Patrick and her to take some time to think about what was going to happen next. Patrick and I had gotten along great for the past nine years. I just couldn't imagine him cheating. The situation was so unbelievable that I wasn't sure what to do. But I did know my mom needed help around the new house she was renting. It was weird, because our family had built a log home when we were all together. My question was, why did Patrick get to stay in our

family's log house, which my father had built with his bare hands? All of this was why I'd chosen Yellowknife for the summer as a part-time student researcher with the Dene National Office: to help my mom and be closer to my grandparents. Ehtsì and Ehtsèe lived an hour and thirty-five minutes down the road in Fort Rae. "Behchoko," as they were calling it now, or perhaps as it had always been named.

I was watching *Oprah* after spending the day raking, bagging leaves and tidying up my mom's yard. I'd had a toke and was feeling buzzed. There was a knock on the door. I went around the corner and there, through the curtains, was the perfect silhouette of my grandfather puffing his little pipe: Ehtsèe. Said with breath. Said with respect. Ehtsèe: the miracle worker. The medicine man. The chanter. The holy man.

Grandpa was looking away, as if listening to something. I ran back, grabbed my camera, snuck up on the perfect portrait and took it. I answered

the door after putting my camera down. It will always be the greatest picture of our lifetime together.

Tł̨chq. He spoke what they used to call us: Dogrib. He said my mother's name and I told him she was at work, that she'd be home soon.

He stood there, looking away. He folded his hands around his pipe before sliding it into his jacket pocket. I never saw him light that pipe. Not once. He just liked the taste of it, I guess. It was made of either clay or red willow. I never saw it close up. It was rumoured that was where he kept his medicine power.

"Leedee Na Woo Nee?" I asked him. Would you like some tea?

"Heh eh," he said and came in. It took him forever to take off his moccasin rubbers, and I could smell bush smoke on him.

"Nezi?" I asked him. "Are you good?"

"Heh eh," he said. "Good," he said in English.

We were from worlds apart, yet his blood flowed through mine. I was proud to be his grandson. He looked so small without my ehtsì. How I remember the difference in the words is, with Ehtsì for grandma, I always think the final *ee* sound is stronger than the final *eb* sound in Ehtsèe. Just like owls and ravens: the female is always stronger, bigger. That's how my grandparents were. My grandmother was cheeky, tough, firm. Yet she cried when we arrived for a visit and she cried when we were leaving. She'd kiss our hands and bow, kiss our hands and bow, kiss our hands.

I motioned for my grandfather to have a seat in the living room, said that I would call my mom. Maybe her boss would let her leave early. I put the water on to boil.

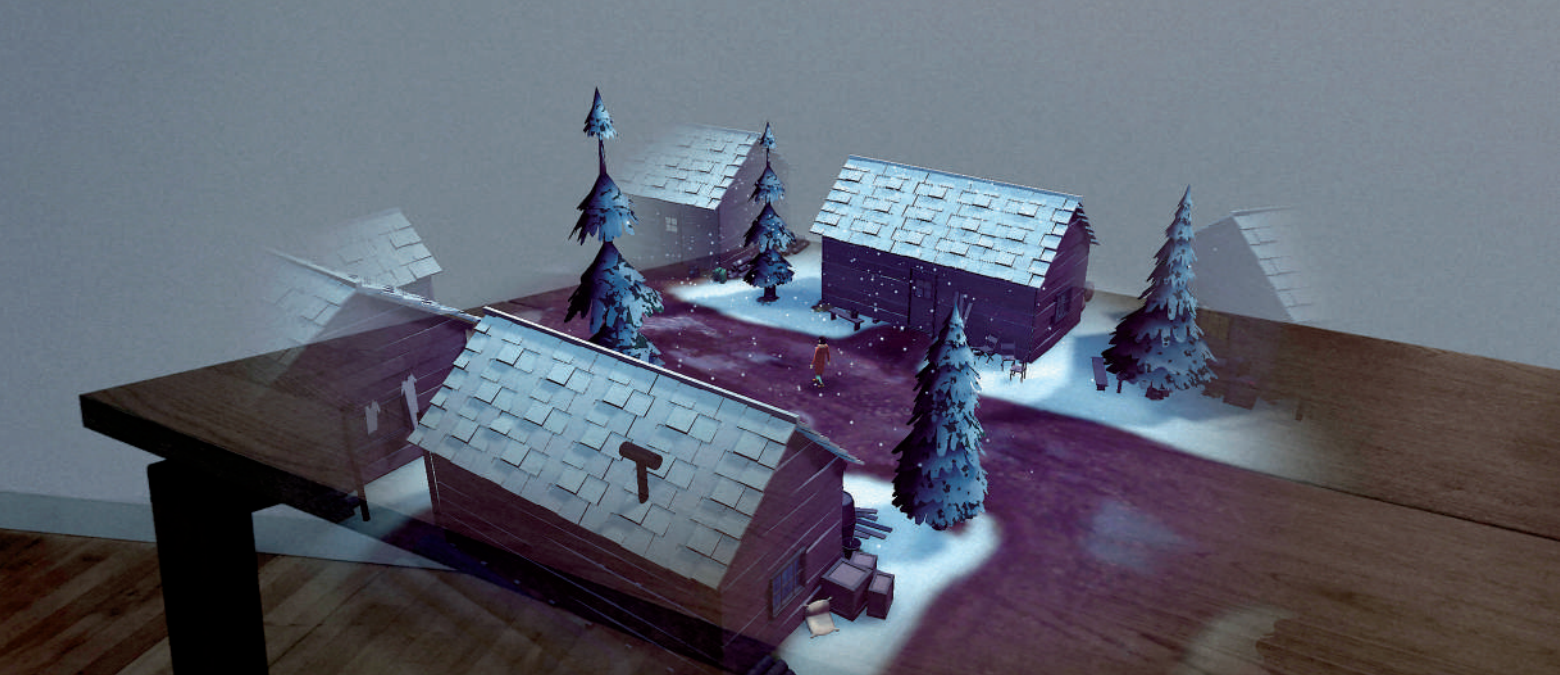
My grandfather sat in my mom's living room on the big couch and looked up at all the photos: my sister, my dad. So

## FORBIDDEN METADATA

*A selection of temporarily banned hashtags (the non-lewd kind), as of May 13, 2019, on Instagram from instavast.com, a website that offers marketing services and guides for Instagrammers. The list is updated weekly.*

#botchedmedicalprocedures	#kansas
#buttheyaremostlynnumbers	#mygrandparentswudbepleased
#decolonizingbeauty	#newyearsday
#desk	#qatar
#dictatorlunchesgonewild	#realhiphop
#eatsandyouhipstertrash	#smalltownsthat support trump
#furrychest	#valentinesday
#grandopeningjune23rd	#welp
#justfollowingtherulesofgodvsman	#yourenotunderstanding





*From East of the Rockies, an augmented reality story by Joy Kogawa, produced by Jam3 and the National Film Board of Canada. Users follow an interactive narrative experience told from the perspective of a 17-year-old girl forced to leave her home and live in BC's Slocan Japanese internment camp during World War II. The narrative voiceover is performed by Kogawa's granddaughter Anne Canute. East of the Rockies is available for download in the App Store.*

many pictures of my mom with Patrick, her hope for them as a couple all over the room. It was like she was manifesting their happiness. And there were pictures of Grandpa, Ehts, them together, our uncles. All the art. All the plants. The books. The TV. I tried calling my mom's office, but she had moved to another department and no one could find her number. It was lame.

I had rented *E.T.* the night before from the Yellowknife library, my favourite place on Earth along with the loft my father had built for me in the log house. I wanted to watch the movie again and see if it had stood the test of time. After a minute, I hit "play" and it started. I motioned to my grandfather that a good movie was coming on. He crossed his legs, squinted and sat back to watch the film that had changed my life forever. He watched intently, but he kept looking right. It was as if he'd forgotten that my



grandmother wasn't there beside him.

I decided to make toast and butter and jam for my grandfather. We had no dry meat left. My mom and I were mooches who showed up in Behchoko and usually took a big brown bag of it home. As I prepared his tea, I thought of him in the next room. He'd lost his entire family decades ago and as a young boy—an orphan—made his way through the Mackenzie Mountains to be with the Tłchq. The Dogrib. He was a Mountain Dene. He and his dog found the way together, and when they got to Tłchq territory, they were met by guards. TB and influenza were killing many Dene. My ehtsè was not welcome at first. But he explained where he was from, and they asked him how long it had taken him to travel there. He told them, and the guards looked at each other. They did not believe that you could make it through to the Barren Lands in that short a time.

"I will show you," Ehtsè told them. "Me and my dog."

And he did. The route shaved off two extra days of travel for the Tłchq, and that is why we have our family name: Sih. It means mountain. I had also heard that my grandfather performed many miracles when he was young. He took a hunter's appendix out with his knife. He cured a stutterer. He tied a man's mouth shut over a distance, a man who was spreading lies about us as a family.

And now here we were. Together. Watching *E.T.* From time to time, he would point to the TV, and I could tell he wanted to ask me questions. I did my best to answer using sign language. As happy as I was, I felt that old ache of not being fluent in Tłchq. I had about eighty words in me, but I wasn't conversational. Being fluent was my dream. It was always my dream. I was so worried about our language, but I was raised away from the Tłchq, and we never spoke it at home.

Grandpa cried when he thought *E.T.* was going to die. I cried too. We

took turns blowing our noses into Kleenex. I kept the movie running so we could each maintain our dignity.

At the end, my grandfather was so happy. When the credits came on, he gave me a thumbs-up and smiled. “Nezi!” he said. I helped him into the bathroom and then I helped him out onto our porch and settled him in a chair. He tasted his pipe as I made him more tea. I asked him if he was hungry. He wrinkled his nose and shook his head.

“Good movie,” he said. “Good boy. Good friend.”

I almost started crying again.

He tried asking me questions about my life, but I didn’t know if I answered correctly. He nodded, watching me, watching me, watching me. My grandpa. I showed him my portraits of Elders from different Nations, all

the children too. I carry my portfolio around for clients. For him to see the button blankets, the Sun Dance Makers, the Matriarchs, the braids, the beautiful brown skin, the veterans, the pride. He patted my shoulder and nodded. “Nezi,” he said. “Nezi.”

I told him that I was working on my master’s at UBC and that the people there were strong. The Musqueam. I told him I helped out a lot with ceremonies on campus. Sweat lodges. I said I was getting ready to go into the lodge when I returned. I saw him stop nodding, and he looked at me in a new way.

My mom came home, and soon after that my uncles showed up. They drove my ehtsèe the hour and thirty-five minutes that it takes to return to Behchoko.

That night, my mother woke me up to say that Grandma was on the phone. She had a message for me from Grandpa, which my mom translated.

“Grandpa says you are not to go into the sweat lodge, because that is not our way. That medicine is from the south. When you go in, they wrap a blanket around you. The more times you go in, the more blankets. If Grandpa ever has to work on you—even from the other side—he will have to take off those blankets, and he could lose time. He could lose you trying to take those blankets off, Grandson.”

I nodded as my mom passed on my grandma’s message. I listened and understood.

“You can help,” my grandma relayed through my mom. “Help them with the fire, the water, but you must not go in. You are our grandson. Will you listen?”

I nodded.

“Say it,” my mom said.

“I will not go in,” I said.

She and her mom spoke Tłhçq, and then my mom hung up.

“How come my dad told her you showed him a movie about a mushroom who helped a boy?” she asked me.

“A mushroom?” I said.

“Yes,” she said. She looked very serious.

I started laughing. “It was *E.T.*”

“What?” she said. “Why did you show him that movie?”

“Because you never gave me your new work number, you,” I said. “I had no choice.”

Then she started laughing too.

“Know how to say mushroom in Tłhçq?” she asked. “Dlòdòdì. It means squirrel food or frog house.”

I could have asked why she had never taught my sister and me Tłhçq but I didn’t. I knew that we had been raised in Smith because of the drinking and violence and chaos in Behchoko. In Smith we were raised with the Cree, the Chipewyan, the French, the Gwich’in, the Inuit, the Slavey and other friends from across Canada. We had a happy upbringing. We built our own log house as a family. I think that was our proudest achievement. Well, and we partied tamely. We were proud of that too.

I was happy for a long time after that, because I felt like my grandfather had heard me. He’d understood. I was happy he thought of *E.T.* when he thought of me. I was so proud I’d shown him the portraits I was taking.

Even so, to my shame, I did not see him or my ehtsì again that summer. I was caught up with work in the small capital city of Yellowknife, the cook-outs in Mom’s backyard, my weed.

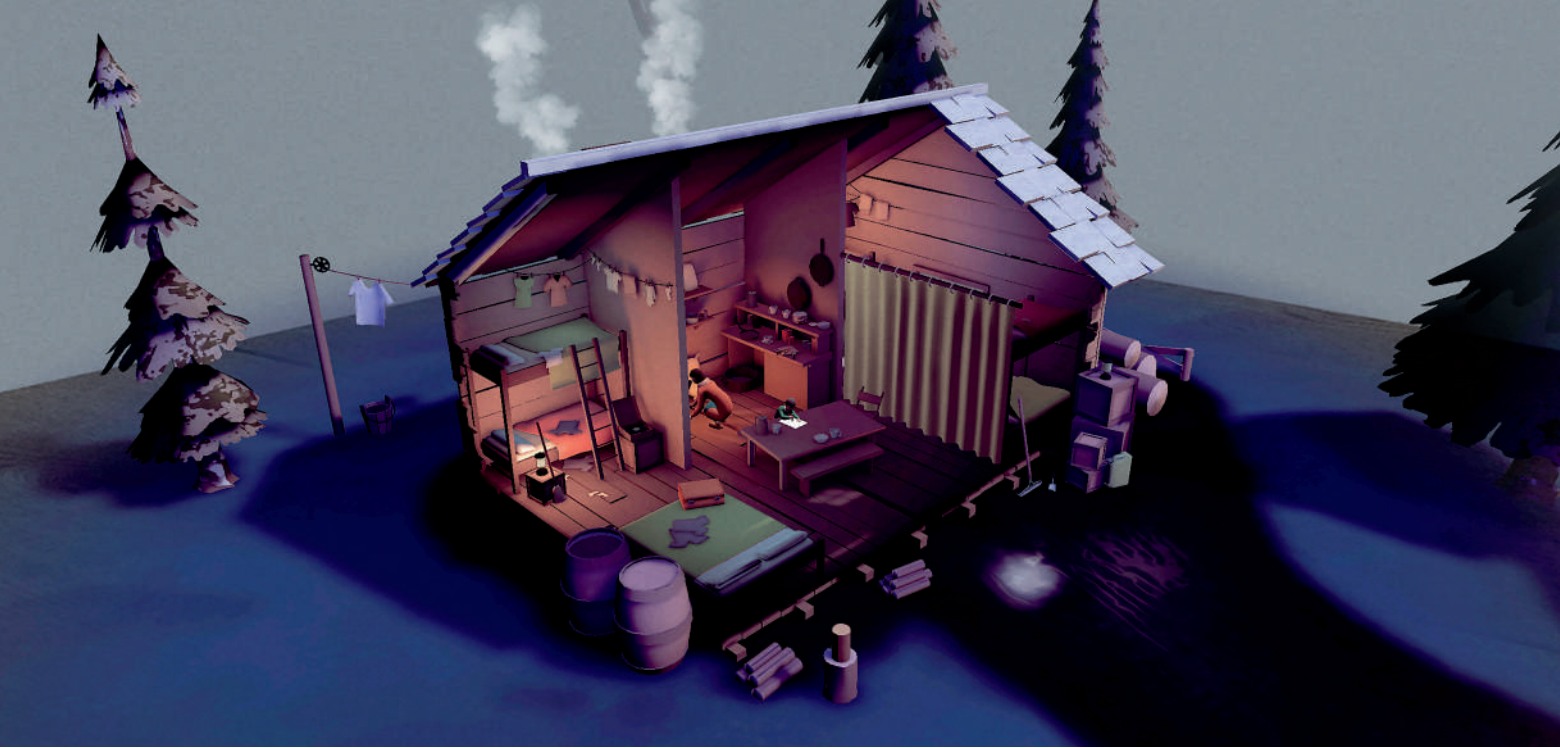
My uncles were always in competition to help Grandpa, because it was rumoured that my ehtsèe was going to choose soon who to pass his medicine onto when he crossed over. The only problem was that my uncles drank. Hard. One by one they were losing their families, by getting kicked out. One or another would show up at Mom’s door at four in the morning asking for money and a coffee. Sometimes my mom let them in; sometimes we waited them out. ☹️

## OUTLANDISHNESS 101

*Selected chapter headings from How a Poem Moves: A Field Guide for Readers of Poetry by Adam Sol. Published by ECW Press in 2019. First developed as a popular blog, the book is a collection of thirty-five short essays that help guide those who “don’t get” poetry.*

How a poem...

Puts Skin on a Mystery  
Seduces Us with Outlandishness  
Cooks Up Dark Insight  
Will (Not) Save Us  
Doesn’t Dish  
Impersonates a Tomato  
Chooses the Apocalypse  
Behind Curtain #3  
Assembles a Smashed Record  
for Posterity  
Tries to Get Into It  
Haunts



From East of the Rockies

## Flash, Bang, Whistle, Boom

OISÍN CURRAN

*From Blood Fable. Published by Book\*bug in 2017. Oisín Curran was named a “Writer to Watch” by CBC: Canada Writes. He is the author of Mopus, published by Counterpath (2007). He lives in Cape Breton.*

It's late afternoon when we see an island on the horizon over our port bows. It's off our course but not by much. City pulls me straight ahead, but the crew is tired. They want land under their feet. I can't force them on.

After I saved everybody from Nolan, Rook started talking to me. But after Lutra came he whispered that it was my fault. My fault she'd turned into a giant and almost killed us. My fault we'd lost Chisolm and half the crew. What he really means, I know, is that it's my fault Quill and Severn are together. Now he says we have to go ashore. He says we need water, we need supplies, we need a rest.

Okay, I say. For one night.

Severn points to the boat at the island. It gets bigger, and the bigger it gets, the stranger it looks.

It's a fortress, says Severn.

He's right. The whole island has

a big wall all around it made of dark red stone, and high on top of the wall there are crowds of people.

We see a bright flash at the top of the wall, and a few seconds later we hear a bang, followed by a strange whistling sound. Then the water explodes near us. Waves throw the boat up, up, over. No, not quite over. We're back down, full of water. We're bailing, we're yelling.

Another flash, another bang, more whistling, exploding water. Flash, bang, whistle, boom. Flash, bang, whistle, boom.

They're shooting at us! says Captain Severn, and he slams the rudder starboard. We come about and head away from the island. In a few minutes we're out of range of their cannonballs, or whatever they're shooting.

Why? Everybody on the boat wants to know why. Who cares? They

don't like strangers. Or they don't like our boat. Or they're in a bad mood today. We have to go on. There's a thing coming. My Follower is still after me. I can feel it back there but can't see it. Night falls.

Captain Severn is in the stern getting ready to drop anchor when I crawl back to talk to him.

We have to sail all night, I say.

He looks at me and it's too dark to tell if he's smiling or angry.

Can't do it, says Severn, No light. No stars.

I have a candle I've been keeping in my pocket. I hand it to him.

Use your compass, I say. We keep moving.

Why?

We're being followed.

He stops what he's doing and stares at me. At least, I think he does. I can't see his eyes, just black shadows. What's following us? How do I know?

I know, I say. Also, we're nearly out of drinking water.

Silence.

We have to keep going, I say.

And so that's what we do. In the stern, Captain Severn sticks the candle



on the seat in front of him to light his compass and keeps his hand on the tiller while Quill shifts the sails to catch the night winds.

We sail like that for three days and nights, switching hands at the tiller and sail. Whoever's off-duty naps if they can in the light, in the dark. I sleep sometimes, but wake up again and again, feeling my Follower somewhere behind us. Closer? Maybe. Bit by bit.

But the lack of rest dulls our senses, and more than once I catch myself nodding off and see whoever's at the rudder doing the same. And that's how and why we run aground on an unforeseen beach one night. There's a soft scraping sound and then the boat jolts to a stop and we're suddenly wide awake. Severn was sleeping with his hand on the tiller but he jumps up, as do we all, up and out, and minutes later we've hauled the boat out of the water and anchored it to a rock we find by the light of the candle. Then we lump together some bedding on the sand,

schedule people for watch, and black out. I wake up with first light and get close to Rook, who's morning look-out. He wraps a blanket around me, although he doesn't need to. It's warm. It's always warm down here.

Slow light leaks out of hidden pockets like it's been hiding in the water, in sand, rocks, and grass all night. We're in a lagoon. One side is a high, long cliff topped with pearl-grey scrub, and the other a low, curving spit of dark orange sand. Behind us there are hills covered with trees. More orange sand under our feet and all along the long beach. Every growing thing is pale. Pale grass, pale trees, pale bushes. Paler even than the water, which is bright green.

No direct sun, says Rook. Little chlorophyll.

After days at sea, any leaves are good to see. To our right, at the base of the spit, a loud splashing comes

from a geyser blowing water a hundred feet in the air. The water is burning hot, says Rook, he investigated last night. There's a loud sound in the bushes above the beach. For a second, I think my pursuer has finally caught me. I grab Rook. Then we laugh. The

thing making the sound comes out of the bushes and it's nothing but a huge bird.

It's as tall as me. Huge, lumpy beak and pale grey feathers.

The bird doesn't look at us. It waddles away down the beach and then disappears into the bushes again. It almost seems as

though the bird's walk is some kind of signal, because as soon as it disappears, the island wakes up with birdcalls, howls, chattering.

Amazing! says Rook. I wonder...

But he trails off as Quill wakes, stands, and stretches, looks around and smiles vaguely at us. Since the battle between Lutra and Severn, Rook and I seem to have faded into her background and she appears not to notice that Rook avoids speaking to her.

Eden, says Quill, it seems we've stumbled on paradise.

That's what it feels like for the next few days. We find bright blue pools so full of fish we can pull them out with our hands. There are wide, low, sprawling trees heavy with white apples, not very sweet but crisp. We eat and sleep and swim. Even I, who must go on, am tempted to stay. But I have to go, I have to go—every time I lie down to sleep and collect my images, I can feel the gap where yet another one has disappeared. And out there, over the water, back the way we came, my Follower is closing in. I can almost smell the foul hot odour of its wings beating the breeze.

But the others might stay here forever. I must do something to shake them free of this place.



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I didn't realize I'd fallen asleep on Jack and Simone's couch until Iris woke me at dawn and shuffled me out to the car, where I conked out again, half-slumped in the front passenger seat, for Iris took the back, lying down with her head propped on pillows, staring out at the unfurling miles, the ocean constricted by appearing and disappearing bays.

They had talked all night and now Iris was anxious to be home, so Myles drove, drove, coffee, coffee, tea, coffee. And was the soup from the lobster pound halfway home more flavourful for her pain? Or was it much the same as the previous trip and all the ones that would follow? Let's say she enjoyed it and I think she did. Of sensory pleasures, of thick stews and small flowers and noisy crickets, of clear mornings or swollen tides or sudden rains, she is an enthusiast, and so, dim as my memory is, I will choose to believe that the delight she took in the material world was only sharpened by her illness.

There were, on the other hand, many elements of the world that did not please her. The unexpected arrival of Pierce Jones shortly after our return home was one such. Pierce materialized, as he would at random intervals throughout my childhood, as though he were an emanation of the road in his uniform of scuffed denim. An olive-green army surplus sack was always slung insouciantly over his back. Pockmarked, handsome face slender from low rations, knife sheath at his hip threaded through a wide leather belt with a buckle depicting Mr. Natural urging all to Keep on 'Truckin'. Always too, in my memory, a hand-rolled cigarette dangles from the corner of his sly mouth. He would step down from a passing transport truck, or saunter up the drive, the precise image of a charming drifter. Too precise, according to Iris who was as aggravated by Pierce as she was fond of him. She was scornful of his pose, for he lived in a city where he worked as a garbageman and he was

in the union, made more money than Iris and Myles combined, and owned his own art deco house, which he had meticulously restored. None of this mattered to me. If he was playing dress-up, his costume was convincing, although perhaps the aura of wandering romance with which I have imbued him in my memory is influenced by the gifts of exotic comic books that he always had for me, stashed somewhere carefully in the interior of his sack, from which they would emerge crisp and miraculously undamaged, and I, thanking him shyly, would retreat to my bedroom to read in full colour of the further exploits of Asterix and Obelix or of yet another incarnation of Siddhartha, the future Buddha, in which he was invariably the king of some species for whom he would martyr himself in yet another act of selflessness to save his people.

Such afternoons remain carefully shelved in my memory, to be pulled down and opened when under

duress—they emit a long glow of comfort. In the memory I half sit, half lie in my bed, Shadow curled behind my knees; through the window, dusk creeps out from the forest and settles on the vegetable garden—on the dying tomato plants, on the low-lying sprawl of the pumpkin plant, the lettuce withstanding the frost; crows cry hoarse elegies to summer (Gone! Gone!); smoke from the chimney whips down the roof, eddies briefly on the windowsill before scattering with the last light. Woodstove heat is particularly well-suited to this vignette—intense and friendly, it cooks the chill from a body inside out. And it saturated the interior of my room with an invisible colour that glowed against the blue frost on the grass outdoors. So, wrapped in this warmth, made warmer by my peripheral awareness of the cold outside, I read my comic book while the murmur of adult voices rose with the scent of cooking. 🍷

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**QC FICTION**

# True to the Eyes

*The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum  
Photography Collection*



Carole and Howard Tanenbaum, a couple who live and work (Carole is a collector and seller of vintage costume jewellery and Howard is a lawyer and real estate developer) in Toronto, have collected photographs for over forty years. From January to April of this year, more than two hundred pieces from their collection were exhibited at the Ryerson Image Centre in Toronto.

The Tanenbaums' tastes are eclectic and wide-ranging: there are glass plates, tintypes and daguerreotypes, some collected for their frames and cases as much as for their photographic subject matter, magic lantern slides and copper plates, as well as more modern expressions of the photographic medium. The Tanenbaums have collected the work of some artists in depth: Southworth & Hawes, William Notman, Brassai, Diane Arbus, Mary Ellen Mark, Lisette Model, Rafael Goldchain, among others. But a significant portion of the collection are vernacular works whose creators are anonymous or less well-known photographers. The collection ranges broadly in subject matter and includes images of civil rights movements, of divisions between wealth and poverty, of family life, of Canadian landscapes (including many of Niagara Falls) and of historic Palestine and Jerusalem. The unifying aspect of the collection is the Tanenbaums' desire to bring important

photographic works to Canada and to share them with other lovers of photography.

In an interview published in the exhibition catalogue, *True to the Eyes*, Carole Tanenbaum responds to a question about how their collection of photographs evolved. She describes a gradual and intuitive process guided largely by curiosity:

"We were never influenced by what was either in magazines or by what people were telling us to collect. I think that's how our collection differs from so many others. It is really idiosyncratic, based on works that we couldn't live without or that intrigued us. When we started, we didn't really have a sense of what we were going to collect, we just followed our instincts."

Later in the interview, Carole Tanenbaum describes the joy of collecting these works over time:

"What our photographs bring us is an ongoing joy and dialogue. When we pass by a piece we've had for forty years, we see it as an old friend. There is an intimacy; these objects are precious to us, and they reflect who we are. It's also fun to rediscover pictures we bought years ago when we find them in our storage. In fact, we've always maintained that photographs don't necessarily have to be hung on the wall, they just have to be loved!"

—AnnMarie MacKinnon





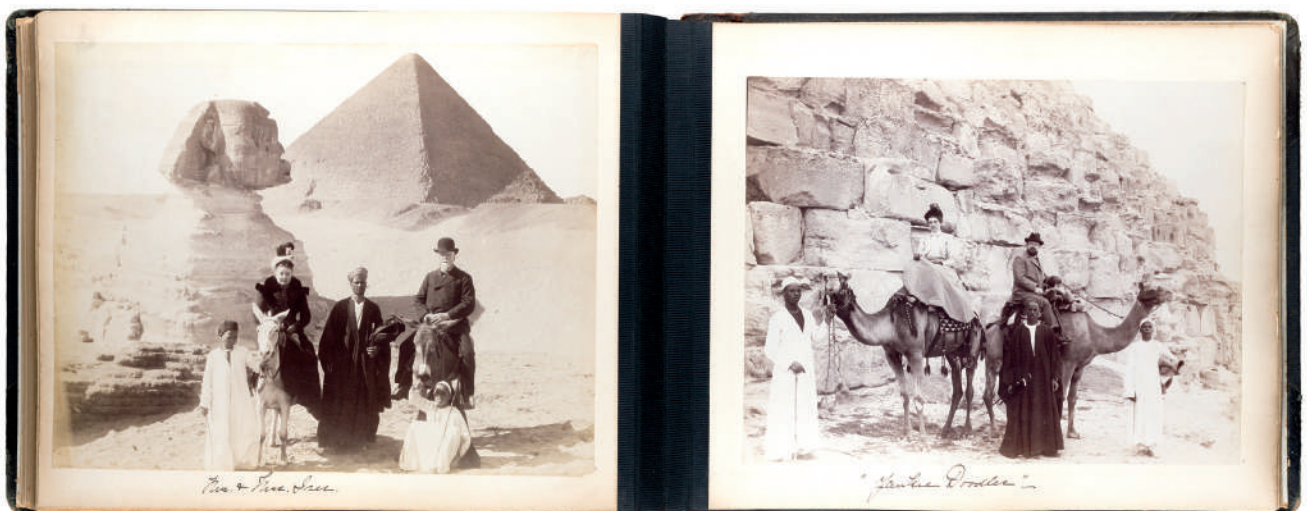
**OPPOSITE:** Unidentified photographer, [Portrait of family], ca. 1855, daguerreotype in leather case. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection

Studio of Southworth & Hawes, [Portrait of two young women], ca. 1850, daguerreotype, uncased. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection





William Notman, *Ice Castle, Montreal, Quebec, 1855*, albumen silver print. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection



Various photographers, [Photographs of Funchal, Gibraltar, Algiers, Genoa, Syracuse, and Cairo], ca. 1899, leather-bound album with 50 albumen silver prints. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection





William Notman, *From Custom House, Looking East, Montreal, Quebec, Canada*, ca. 1878, albumen silver print. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection



Unidentified Photographer, *[Tourists at Niagara Falls]*, 1860, uncased ambrotype. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection





Rafael Goldchain, *A Tehuantepec Maiden, Juchitán, Oaxaca, México*, 1986, chromogenic print © Rafael Goldchain, courtesy of the artist.  
The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection





Unidentified photographer, [Portraits of Andrew Tarrey Thompson, President of First National Bank of Honesdale, Philadelphia, his wife Georgia Rowley Thompson, and their children], ca. 1857, nine daguerreotypes and one ambrotype in *papier mâché* case, with hand-painted mats and mother-of-pearl inlay. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection



Mary Ellen Mark, *Three Acrobats*, Vazquez Brothers Circus, Mexico City, Mexico, 1997 (printed 2005), gelatin silver print © Mary Ellen Mark. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection





Studio of Samuel and Marcus Aurelius Root, [Portrait of a woman and three children], ca. 1856, daguerreotype in leather case. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection



Unidentified photographer, [Portrait of a woman holding a child], ca. 1850, daguerreotype in thermoplastic case (detail). The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection





Ernest J. Bellocq, *Storyville Portrait*, ca. 1912, gold-toned printing out paper (printed by Lee Friedlander in 1970). Photograph by E.J. Bellocq © Lee Friedlander, courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco. The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Photography Collection



# Consolation

CAROLE GLASSER LANGILLE

*No one gives up words except to get out of hell*



The one good thing about being in Paris is Matthieu, Leo's grandson, though I'm sure he doesn't know what to make of me. When the little boy chatters in French he seems to think I understand him. He hasn't met many people who don't speak his language. I'm a New Yorker, have never mastered French, but then again I rarely speak English. I rarely speak at all.

I shouldn't be in this crowded city. But Leo, my mother's brother, lives here, and he and my mother think that if I get the right therapy I can live a "normal" life, have friends, perhaps even marry and father children. It's laughable that my mother turns to this man as if he could be remotely helpful. Leo may be a psychiatrist, but he is as helpful as a paintbrush whose bristles have been cut off.

Leo sports a full beard on his round ruddy face, aspiring, I suppose, to look the part of a distinguished psychiatrist. He's a heavy man and I am a small man, too small I have always felt, but next to Leo I feel like a shadow. A graceful shadow. My mother, Cora, would not approve if she could hear my thoughts.

She is convinced that the core of everything that is wrong on the planet is people not feeling good about themselves. But Mother doesn't realize she is a prime example of someone suffering from low self-esteem. I think of my mother as a younger sister I must protect even as she tries to get help for me.

Yesterday she insisted on going to the Pompidou Centre. I could simply have refused but Leo is such a bully I wanted us both to get away from the apartment. Just as we entered the museum, I turned and walked out and Mother had to follow. I just couldn't be in a room with so many people at that moment. Or with paintings. Sorry, Mother. Sometimes paintings are deafening.

Today when we return from the market, Leo is angry. He likes his large meal served at noon. Apparently he has been delaying *le déjeuner* until we returned. Did Mother forget to tell him her plans? Luckily Matthieu is here. Matthieu, this handsome boy with blond hair and golden-brown eyes, has a brilliant smile. He steadies the spinning room.

Leo asks me how I am. I nod. I have hardly spoken for thirty years. Surely he does not expect me to become a raconteur. I told Mother when I was four that I did not like speaking, and true to my word, or my non words, I rarely engage in conversation.

Mother bought vegetables and fish and sweets at the market and at six she tells Leo she will cook dinner. But *mon oncle* has dinner at eight and will not deviate from his schedule.

"Surely you can wait," he tells her when she says she is hungry. She nods and sits down, breaking off a piece of bread and then another. Poor Mother. I can go for hours without eating but Mother needs to eat often. I only eat food that is green or white. Rice, tofu, collard greens, parsley. Nothing red. Nothing orange.

Matthieu, on the other hand, is a great eater. He eats everything my mother and uncle serve—kidneys, olives, cracked wheat, whitefish, roe. Bring it on, Matthieu's smile says. If I weren't so nauseated by it all I'd applaud. Of course he too, though he is only eight, has to wait for dinner.

As the meal comes to an end Leo tells Matthieu that he should stop nibbling bread and do his homework. Does a boy that young have homework? He is reading *Rougemuraille: Le Fils de Luc*, a story of a mouse who has a series of adventures. This seems like a fine book for a young boy to be reading, but Leo is not happy. He thinks his grandson should be challenging himself with a more difficult text. I do not have to understand their exchange to hear Leo's words are harsh, sandpaper chafing delicate skin.

**I only eat food that is  
green or white. Nothing  
red. Nothing orange.**



**L**eo never married but he did father a daughter. Matthieu is here because Leo's daughter had to go away on business. *NO*, I want to shout. *Don't leave your son with Leo*. But Matthieu's mother is not around to hear. And I am not a man who shouts.

Mother lets Leo pour her a glass of wine at dinner these days. She said no when we first got here, but he wore her down. She does not do well with wine, but Leo, a wine connoisseur, dislikes drinking alone. Besides, he wants to educate her. Tonight when she gets up to bring dishes to the sink, she makes the mistake of carrying too much and drops a glass. Leo is furious.

"You have always been clumsy," Leo proclaims, his large face turning redder than usual. "I know you aren't able to replace this expensive crystal."

When Mother entreats me, the next day, to go to another museum, the d'Orsay, I take pity on her. She thinks this show will enrich me. It is an exhibit of Van Gogh as well as Artaud's reaction to his work. Mother lets me know, in her evasive way, that Artaud was a loony like me. Nine years in the bin.

In the museum I read Artaud's words: "No one has ever written, painted, sculpted, modeled, built, or invented except literally to get out of hell." I can add, *no one gives up words, except to get out of hell*.

Artaud says of Van Gogh's work, "I prefer the landscapes of this quiet, convulsive man to the swarming compositions of Bruegel the Elder or Hieronymus Bosch." Yes. Well. But Bosch has a lovely view of things, doesn't he.

My uncle is meticulous about his apartment. We must hang our coats in the closet a certain way, place the dishes and mugs in the cupboard following exact specifications. When I shave I must make sure to clean the sink very well; my uncle gives me a shiny silver sponge to use.

He tells Mother where she should go tomorrow, to some museum or other, but she has other plans. She is going to Montmartre. When she says she'll walk up to the Sacré-Cœur he says why do that, why not take the funicular that goes right up the hill? But *non*, she wants to walk, she says as he scowls. Why does she bother telling her brother her plans?

Mother has bought Leo an expensive book he requested from the States, and she had to make a trip to the bookstore downtown to pick it up.

"Ah, it's a good price," he says when he looks at the sticker.

Good price for him, certainly, as he never reimburses her. She once said, "When Leo asks me to get him something, I want to say, *you have more money than I do; get it yourself*. And then I think, what if he were to die tomorrow? Wouldn't I regret not getting him what he wanted? Besides, he must feel deprived in some way if he keeps asking for gifts." That's how my mother thinks. And maybe she feels she owes him. When my father left, Leo helped us get by, paying for groceries and rent until my mother got work. But that was decades ago.

Matthieu is allowed to come with us for the day and though we weren't planning to go to a museum, we come across the Musée d'Art Naïf, in the Halle St. Pierre, an unexpected stroke of fortune. Art here is by men and women who were in insane asylums, in prison, artists who painted in shabby apartments and whose work was discovered only after they died. My brothers and sisters! Artaud was talking about these very artists. Everyone has their own particular hell but these artists painted their way, step by step, toward an open window to breathe the air.

There is an exhibit of carved matches here, each with a different face and outfit and each figure carved out of a single wooden match! *Vraiment!* After seeing these minute carvings, Matthieu and I are elated. The match has come into its power. Matthieu cannot stop staring at the delicate faces carved into the tiny

pieces of wood. I too am thinking about their astonishing expressions as we eat lunch in a café and later as we climb the three hundred and forty steps to the Sacré-Cœur.

Mother, Matthieu and I sit in the back row and listen as nuns sing from the choir. How good Matthieu is, quietly listening. A kind, curious boy. I smile at an old woman who walks past. I smile because I see how beautiful she is and how astonishing it is to be alive in the world. She looks surprised and suspicious as she walks on. But she has to pass by once more from the other side of the church as she returns, and when I smile at her again she smiles back. Tentatively, but she smiles. This time she must see that I smile from reverence. For what? I ask myself. Well, for life, I suppose. Matthieu has been smiling the entire time.

When we return to the apartment Leo tells Mother that his colleague will see me in two days. Then he turns to Matthieu who is leaning down playing with the cat and scolds him. What did Matthieu do now that Leo disapproves of? Leo's tone alone is enough to sink me.

It turns out it wasn't the way Matthieu handled the cat that was the problem, Mother tells me when Leo leaves the room. Leo wants Matthieu to practise his violin. Leo seems to think the boy is lazy.

When Leo returns he has Matthieu's violin which he hands to the boy. He asks him to play scales. He sits across from his grandson, listens intently, then tells him to start over. My mother says, "In Suzuki practice isn't the adult supposed to play violin with the child?"

"This isn't Suzuki, Cora," Leo scowls. "Don't talk about that of which you know nothing."

I can't understand how Matthieu's mother can leave her son with Leo, even if he is her father. Then Mother tells me that Leo's daughter hardly knows him. When Leo was a student at the Sorbonne he impregnated a young woman on the cleaning staff. He supported the child after she was born but had little contact with her or her mother. After the girl's mother died and after Matthieu was born, she sought Leo out. She too is a single parent.

The next day, Leo gives my mother the address of his colleague, who he is certain can help me. He gives Mother careful instructions how to get there and Mother decides we should go to the vicinity right away so she will be able to find her way the following morning. Then we go to the d'Orsay to look at the Van Gogh exhibit again.

My mother looks at these paintings the way a child would, as if she could enter *Starry Night over the Rhône* and sit down by the water, bundled in a warm coat, and look up at the heavens. I read that when Van Gogh felt a great need for God's consolation, he went out at night and painted stars. My mother looks at paintings for the same reason. At the exhibit, she stares at a drawing Van Gogh did of a horse and carriage. My mother's face is lined as if invisible horses have made tracks around the curve of her mouth and over and over into the deep folds of her neck, horses that are dragging her into the dust.

**Leo may be a psychiatrist,  
but he is as helpful as  
a paintbrush whose  
bristles have been cut off.**



But I am the one who is old. I don't believe in anything or anyone. Was it Van Gogh who said, *you are old only if you love no one but yourself*. What if even loving oneself exceeds one's capacity?

Matthieu is wiser than my mother or me. As far as I can see, Matthieu loves everyone.

My mother has the guest room in the apartment and Leo of course has the master bedroom. I am put in the only room available, the room with bunk beds that Matthieu uses when he stays over. I am on the bottom bunk. I like hearing the boy breathing softly. When he is sleeping, he is safe. That is what I think at first. But tonight he starts screaming. His voice quivers with distress. He is moaning and calling out, "Jean Pierre."

I get up. I climb the ladder and lean over and touch his shoulder.

"Jean Pierre," he calls to me, his eyes wild. Who is Jean Pierre? I nod. I rub his shoulder. But he will not be soothed.

I knock on Mother's door for help but she does not wake. It is Leo who comes into the room to see what the problem is. I tell him what Matthieu said. Leo is calm, his voice composed as he talks to Matthieu. *As-tu eu un cauchemar?* Soon Matthieu settles down. When Leo leaves I go back to bed.

In the morning at breakfast Leo explains that Matthieu wasn't saying, "Jean Pierre." And here my uncle laughs. "Matthieu was saying, *J'ai peur*—I am afraid."

Poor little guy. My uncle talks to the boy and I hear my name. Leo is explaining the error I made. And then Matthieu says, "Oui, j'ai dit Jean Pierre." Even I understand that he is telling his grandfather that I was right, he did say, "Jean Pierre!" Sweet, loyal boy.

**T**onight I am restless. Tomorrow is the appointment with the great doctor. This doctor will probably suggest new medications and again the experiments with dosage will begin. What else can he do? He cannot make me two or three again, when the world was new and I was talking with pleasure. He cannot make me tall and handsome or cure my baldness. He cannot help me draw with more skill or miraculously bestow in me a talent for painting.

I wake early next morning before the others are up and tap Matthieu on the shoulder. I motion for him to get out of bed. We dress together. And then he follows me out the front door. It is so simple. I am rescuing him.

We stop at a boulangerie and have coffee and croissants. Matthieu is in good spirits. I don't know if he has had coffee before but I add a lot of sugar and milk. And the croissant is filled with chocolate.

I am taking him to the Pompidou Centre. There is an exhibit of Magritte's work: *The Treachery of Images*. Matthieu will like Magritte. But first we will go to Notre-Dame. We'll climb until we get to the top of the tower. We'll walk around the ledge. It will be good to look at the city from that height. And to be closer to the stars, even if we can't see them.

---

*Carole Glasser Langille is the author of four books of poetry, two collections of short stories and two children's books. Her non-fiction book, Doing Time, about giving writing workshops in a prison in Nova Scotia, will be published in Fall 2019. She lives in Black Point, NS.*

# 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



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# Marriage Poems

MATSUKI MASUTANI

## I.

I met my wife

travelling in Kathmandu  
and we travelled together  
many months  
reaching Canada  
where we stopped travelling  
but stayed in the travellers' lifestyle.  
Even after raising three kids  
we are in travellers' mode  
bumbling around  
in cafés and thrift shops  
in the neighbourhood  
going nowhere.

## II.

My wife says,

you are  
in front of your desk  
all the time  
from morning till night  
day after day  
year after year  
it's obviously an old habit.  
I think  
we should do something  
more dynamic  
than that  
before it's too late.

## III.

Emphasize the positive,

neglect the negative.  
Such a simple  
way to survive  
is incomprehensible to my wife  
who insists  
on facing life  
head on  
with all her emotions.  
She complains,  
"Life is hard for me.  
People all around  
are turning into robots."

I'm jealous of her rich emotional life.

## IV.

Loudly

she came careering up  
the driveway  
lurched the truck to a stop  
leapt out in pink  
pants and a purple shirt  
black handbag in her right hand  
left arm slicing the air  
she blasted through the gate  
and burst into the house  
shouting, "I'm back!"

## V.

In her dream

my wife said  
I abandoned her  
in the middle of a strange city  
forcing her  
out of our car.  
She had  
a hell of a time  
trying to get home.  
I should apologize  
somehow.

## VI.

On the way back

from a party,  
I was suffering  
excruciating stomach pains.  
My wife,  
drunk,  
was telling me  
how much  
she loves me  
how much  
she feels bad  
for me.  
I thought  
I was dying.

Then she said,  
“Capricorn men always have stomach  
problems.  
Do you know why?”  
I replied,  
“We don’t say what we want to say.”  
“What do you want to say now?”  
“Shut up!”  
But she didn’t shut up  
and kept talking  
and giggling.  
I still thought  
I was dying.

## VII.

I say “We,”

meaning my wife and I.  
She also says,  
“We,” meaning  
her and me.  
Sometimes  
they are significantly different.  
“We” could be happy  
and unhappy  
at the same time.  
I shouldn’t worry about it too much.  
Until she stops saying, “We.”

## VIII.

A young woman asked me,  
“What is the secret of a long  
marriage?”  
I replied,  
“If both fall out of love at the same  
time,  
that will be the end of it.  
But if one of you is still in love,  
It might go on.”  
She said,  
“That sucks!”  
So I added,  
“But things always change.”  
A week later  
I saw her with her new dog.  
She looked somewhat happier.

---

*Matsuki Masutani moved to Vancouver from Tokyo in 1976. Masutani is a freelance translator and has translated the work of Canadian writers including Roy Kiyooka, Hiromi Goto and Alice Munro (in process). This is the first time he has published his poetry. He lives on Denman Island, BC.*



# Distant Early Warning

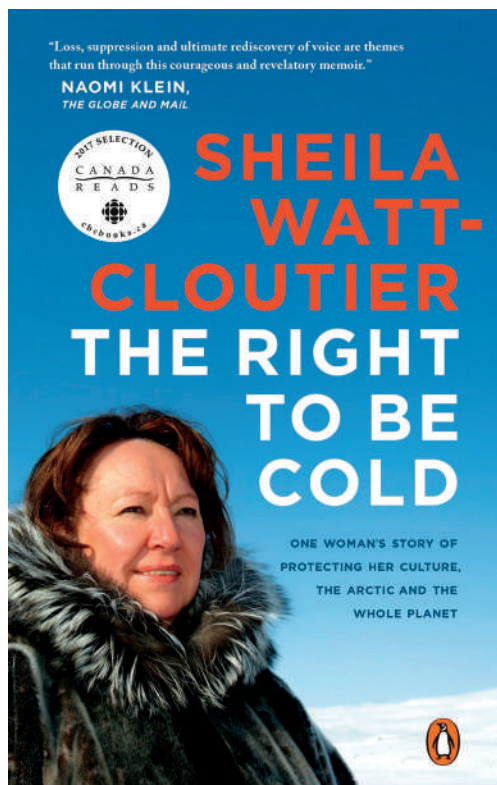
LISA BIRD-WILSON

*We think of the Arctic as pristine and untouched—but nowhere on the planet is as harshly impacted by climate change*

In 2017 a decommissioned Canadian Coast Guard ship was refurbished to sail around Canada's three coasts for 150 days, in fifteen legs, from Toronto to Victoria via the Northwest Passage. Participants on the journey represented a cross-section of Canadian society, including youth, Elders, newcomers, scientists, educators, artists, musicians, community leaders, the media and Indigenous peoples. This was Canada C3, a signature Canada 150 project led by the Students on Ice Foundation with the purpose of "celebrating our environment, sharing the stories of coastal communities and connecting Canadians from coast to coast to coast." Canada C3 focussed on engaging the four themes of Canada 150: Diversity and Inclusion, Reconciliation, Youth Engagement and the Environment.

Invited to join the Canada C3 adventure for one of the ten-day legs in the role of featured author, I opt to join the voyage in Kugluktuk, Nunavut, and finish in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories—Leg 11 of the journey. I am especially keen to visit the Arctic to witness and learn about what's happening to the environment in the Canadian North.

As the ship moves through Arctic waters, it stops daily for us to disembark on Zodiac boats and visit islands and communities along the way, where Inuit hunters and Elders



talk about the changes witnessed in their lifetimes. They discuss deviations to the way the ice behaves and the impacts of those changes on hunting. In *The Right To Be Cold*, Sheila Watt-Cloutier details the intense social, cultural and environmental changes to her Arctic home of Kuujuaq, Nunavik. She discusses the ways hunting transformed over the course of her lifetime, where she experienced a childhood of travelling by dogsled until the transition to motorized travel with the introduction of snowmobiles. Shifting traditional hunting patterns and accompanying cultural

changes are some of the great transformations she describes.

On the second last day of our journey aboard the C3 ship, we land on Baillie Island, where we witness the permafrost melt. In the sun, the permafrost winks and glitters through its covering of dirt and snow as its meltwater runs into the Beaufort Sea like a steady tap. Tanya Tagaq's haunting words in her book, *Split Tooth*, resonate: "Who knows what memories lie deep in the ice? Who knows what curses? Earth's whispers released back into the atmosphere can only wreak havoc." It will be impossible to forget the sound of the meltwater as it spills into the sea and the sight of permafrost that may have existed for hundreds of thousands of years dissolving before our eyes. Both impressive and awful.

On uninhabited islands and in settled communities are the remains of abandoned Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line radar stations, created during the Cold War to detect a Soviet nuclear strike. After the end of the Cold War, the sites, full of lead, PCBs and other contaminants, ultimately left more than a hundred landfills across the Arctic. Some sources blame DEW Line construction for permafrost melt and much environmental damage in the Arctic, and by extension, the impact on human rights and settlement in the far North. DEW Line stations scarred the landscape and brought profound social

and environmental change to the Arctic. Buildings landed on buildingless land, on islands where no superstructure had ever stood. Sixty years later, as a southerner on the Canada C3 journey, I find the evidence of these northern changes is obvious.

Sheila Watt-Cloutier details the intense social, cultural and environmental changes to the far North. Her community went from dogsled to snowmobile in a very short period of time. She writes, “The modern world arrived slowly in some places in the world, and quickly in others. But in the Arctic, it appeared in a single generation.” To me, as a visitor, some of the most obvious evidence of these changes are on an uninhabited island, where an abandoned cabin slowly disintegrates in the pervasive winds, and the rusted shell of a decades-old Bombardier snowmobile sinks into the ground, symbols of the concept of “forever”—these human-made items are here to stay. Out of these kinds of dramatic changes to her Arctic home, Sheila Watt-Cloutier emerged as a leader and a voice for the Arctic and Inuit affected by fossil fuel emissions causing climate change that is particularly egregious in the Arctic.

We’re conditioned to think of the Arctic as pristine and untouched, but the truth is nowhere on the planet is as harshly impacted by climate change as the Arctic. The world’s warm climates produce Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) which travel over long distances via air and water. As the Arctic Institute notes, the Arctic acts like a “sink” for pollutants that travel from regions far away. Once POPs end up in the Arctic they become trapped and accumulate in the cold air, soil, water and food chain. POPs accumulate and magnify in animals with large amounts of fat, such as whales and other arctic water mammals—the very animals that make up Inuit food supplies. The Arctic ends up with extraordinarily high levels of POPs. As Watt-Cloutier notes, “And

the sad irony is that while our risk is so elevated, we have received no benefit—we have never used POPs for improved agriculture or to prevent malaria—from these toxins.” The Arctic, and the Inuit who live there, end up with the world’s pollutants infecting their land, air, water, food supplies and bodies.

For millennia the Arctic ice has formed and shaped a way of life central to Inuit culture. But changing, receding and disappearing ice means the way of life and the cultural knowledge that goes with the ice is in danger. On my Arctic journey I hear, from several Elders and hunters, a common refrain: “From my grandparents I learned how to hunt and how to be kind.” Their words resonate. What will become of young hunters who learn traditional ways of living and being on the land and ice once the traditional teachings no longer apply? Not only does this pose a survival danger to hunters, and to communities of people reliant on subsistence hunting activities, but the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next is disrupted. The loss of ice is the loss of the sacred, of ritual, and of time-immemorial rites of passage. After all, an Inuk has to be able to do the things that make them Inuk. And ice is at the foundation of all things Inuit.

On the C3 ship, Inuk hunter John Max speaks of the traditional time of year to catch and harvest the Arctic char, and how this tradition has changed in his lifetime. Char used to be caught in June, he says. But now the ice is too thin, you can’t set up fishing camps in June anymore. And then he says: The old ice is melting. This one small example helps me digest the profound and far reaching impacts climate change is having on the North. When you can no longer count on the Arctic ice, on the one thing thought to be permanent, it throws all other taken-for-granted ideas about your environment, your

place in it, and associated links to cultural survival, into disarray.

Noting the concentration of climate effects in the Arctic in particular, Watt-Cloutier argues that the failure of the world to reduce emissions and counteract climate effects amounts to a human rights violation against the Inuit. A landmark petition brought to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights claims that the failure of the United States to prevent climate change is tantamount to the US violating Inuit human rights.

After just ten days on the C3 ship it’s evident how easy it is for the rest of Canada, and the world, to ignore what’s happening to the environment of the Arctic. This despite the fact that Canada is a polar nation and controls 33 percent of the polar north. My obliviousness and ability to view the changes in the Arctic as a distant rather than immediate problem is a particularly southern privilege. For the North, it’s not news and it’s anything but distant. POPs are not new. DEW Line pollution has been lingering in the Arctic for decades. That Bombardier snowmobile will rust and rot on its uninhabited (by humans) island. The world’s collective unawareness of these issues demonstrates the privilege of southerners to be oblivious. It’s beyond time to hear the not-so-distant warning: the old ice is melting.

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*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).*



# Vanished Shore

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

*To build a city on land flooded by the tides  
isn't just a mistake—it's utopic*

In Portuguese, the word *beira* means a rim, a shore or an edge. The city of Beira, on the coast of Mozambique, has fulfilled all of these roles. Founded in the late nineteenth century by Portuguese colonizers, Beira—even more than most cities in former European possessions—was shaped by the colonialism. Though Mozambique's fourth-largest population centre, Beira is traditionally its second city in terms of cultural influence, as it defines the central region of the country. A railway line, and parallel highway, ran from the landlocked British colony of Southern Rhodesia to meet the Indian Ocean at Beira. The British colony's commerce depended on the muddy port in the neighbouring colony, which, prior to Mozambican independence in 1975, was known as Portuguese East Africa. A friend of mine, who was born in Southern Rhodesia in the 1970s, during the last decade of white minority rule, and grew up in Rhodesia's successor state, independent Zimbabwe, tells me that her businessman father spoke good Portuguese. Like many business people in colonial Rhodesia and independent Zimbabwe, his business depended on getting his goods to market via Beira.



Rhodesian influence made Beira a more conservative, racially divided city than the capital of Portuguese East Africa, Lourenço Marques, which after independence was renamed Maputo. In a paradox, though, even if the races were said to fraternize less than in the capital, Beira became known for its significant population of *mestiços*: people of mixed European and African origins. White Rhodesians regarded a trip to Beira much as their cousins in England contemplated a Mediterranean getaway.

The writer Doris Lessing, who grew up in Southern Rhodesia, honeymooned with her first husband in Beira in 1939. Lessing recalled Beira's "streets of sand edged with flame trees, and one-storeyed houses and shops, most of them Indian shops." The young bride, who would become the woman who won the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature, was surprised to discover "food I did not know existed," and impulsive Latin customs among the Portuguese settlers. She recalled swimming "in a warm muddy sea." One of Beira's most remarked-on traits was that on this shore, the land and the water mingled. Beira was built on a low, flat pan of silt where two large rivers, the Buzi and the Pungwe, flow into the Mozambique Channel at different angles. The cross-currents between these rivers draw intersecting arcs of sedimented sandbanks in the estuary. In residential neighbourhoods of the city, water and land mingle with disconcerting promiscuity, a street yielding without warning to a pool, a creek forging its course in the absence of any evident source or outlet.

Independent Mozambique's most significant writer, Mia Couto, was born in Beira in 1955. One of the

dominant themes of Couto's fiction is the instability of the post-colonial nation, often expressed through highly poetic descriptions of how the land—understood as both earth and nation—slips away inexorably into water. In 2003 Couto published a short autobiographical essay about growing up in Beira entitled "Waters of My Beginning." After reading it I was convinced that his imagery of precarious lands, which acquired artistic resonance in Couto's novels, such as *Sleepwalking Land* (1992) and *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* (2000), stemmed from his upbringing in Beira.

"Beira," Couto writes, "is a place that was stolen from the waters of an estuary, lined with mud and mangroves. A liquid city, on a ground that flows. So much so that when speaking of it, I call it my native water." When I arrived in Beira, in 2006, I had interviewed Couto in Maputo a couple of weeks earlier. (I would later edit English translations of some of his books. In 2013, I accompanied Couto and his wife, Patrícia Silva, on their first Canadian tour.) My first reaction to Beira was shock: the socialist apartment blocks built by the Marxist government between 1975 and 1989 were in decay, as were the whitewashed Portuguese colonial buildings. Beira resembled a tropical East Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It took me a day to learn to see past the dilapidated façades to the lively conviviality on the streets: the fresh fruit and Portuguese baked goods for sale everywhere, the Muslim men who ran the downtown shops, dressed in long robes, speaking in loud Portuguese and drinking coffee while their Bantu neighbours preferred soft drinks or beer, the welcoming coolness that waited beneath the trees that lined Avenida Eduardo Mondlane, the tentative renovations being carried out on crumbling colonial mansions. The beachfront was abandoned but for homeless people sleeping on the sandbanks that stretched out into the estuary in an


inverted image of the marshes and miniature creeks that interrupted the flow of streets in the Maquanino district where Mia Couto had grown up. I saw little activity along the waterfront. In the disastrous final two decades of Robert Mugabe's rule, Zimbabwe sent few goods down the railway line to Beira to be loaded onto ships.

The cyclone that struck Beira on March 14, 2019, damaged or destroyed ninety percent of the city's buildings. On April 9 CBC reporter Nahlah Ayed listed the damage in Mozambique as "1.85 million people in need, 3,161 cholera cases, 239,682 houses destroyed." In "Waters of My Beginning," Mia Couto wrote: "To create a city on land flooded by the tides isn't just a mistake in urban planning—it's utopic, a million-to-one bet." For over a hundred years, Beira won its bet with nature. No one imagined its location would lead to such a disastrous outcome—least of all Mia Couto himself,

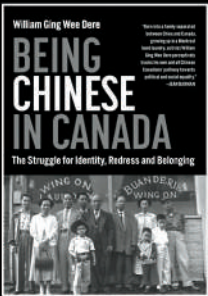
who was finishing a book about his native city when he received the news that most of it had been destroyed. "It's as though I'd been writing the story of a friend who, in the meantime, had died," Couto wrote to his publisher in Lisbon. If, as some commentators claimed, the destruction of Beira was the worst ecological disaster in the southern hemisphere, it was also a warning that urban life, like rural, depends on a natural balance, and that the advancing era of climate upheaval is one in which we no longer have the luxury of pushing our place in nature to the edges of the possible.

*Stephen Henighan's most recent book of stories, Blue River and Red Earth (Cormorant, 2018), includes a story set in Mozambique. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [stephenhenighan.com](http://stephenhenighan.com). Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*

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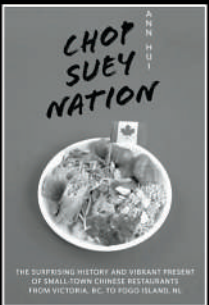


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# Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)

ALBERTO MANGUEL

*There is no way to step back from the orgy of kisses without offending*

Led by Virgil to the shores of Mount Purgatory, Dante sees a ship of souls arrive at the beach and, among the crowd of those saved and about to undergo the rituals of purgation, he recognizes his old friend, the musician Casella. The two meet and try to embrace, but Dante finds himself hugging thin air: Casella's soul is immaterial. The gesture, however, both for Casella and for Dante, is instinctive. As men brought up in the exuberantly sensual Florence, they want to touch the person they love, in the spirit and in the flesh.

The codes of touch vary, as we know, from culture to culture. Returning to her English village and meeting her parents after an absence of two years, my ex-wife was greeted with a happy smile and a nod and "How was the ride?" as if she'd been away on an afternoon outing. My partner and I, arriving in Buenos Aires where I wanted to introduce him to my family, were received by a stampeding crowd of ten or twenty relatives, all eager to hug, kiss and muss up my partner's hair, joyfully ignoring the signs that asked them to stand behind the customs barriers. The meeting of a Canadian and an Argentinian produces an interesting exercise in choreography. As the Argentinian approaches to embrace the Canadian, the Canadian starts retreating, and they end up performing a sort of pas de deux across the room until the Canadian is cornered, back to the wall, the Argentinian holding him firmly in place by gripping both his arms.



In Argentina, acquaintances with fierce colds, runny noses and hacking coughs will feel offended if you don't kiss them twice or even three times on both cheeks. During my stint as director of the National Library, where we had a staff of almost nine hundred, I was kissed (and kissed back) twice daily, on arrival and on departure, by everyone, young and old, male and female. Every day my adopted Canadian heart trembled in fearful anticipation of the ritual, especially in winter.

Different cultures have different rules regarding contact. Monarchs in the eighteenth century were not supposed to be looked at straight in the face, as with the women of certain Islamic sects. Cloistered nuns and the guards at Buckingham Palace when on duty mustn't be spoken to. Orthodox Jews won't be touched by a woman

who is not a relative, and the Brahmins of India won't touch a member of the Untouchable caste. The rule in table dancing venues is that which Christ set for doubting Thomas: *noli me tangere*. In other words, the customer must refrain from touching the performer.

And yet sight, speech, touch are the instruments we use to communicate with one another: language consists of an interweaving of all three. How we look at someone, what tone we use when addressing that person, how close we bring our body, our hand, our face to him or her, carry as much meaning (sometimes more) as the words we use. But the person who addresses and the addressee can interpret that meaning in wildly different ways.

Walt Whitman spoke of the human need to touch the other, a need that acknowledges the other's physical existence.

Mine is no callous shell,  
I have instant conductors all over  
me whether I pass or stop,  
They seize every object and lead  
it harmlessly through me.  
I merely stir, press, feel with my  
fingers, and am happy,  
To touch my person to some  
one else's is about as much as  
I can stand.

Decades ago, a friend of mine was teaching at a rural school in Ontario. Many of the kids came from difficult homes and several suffered abuse at the hands of their parents. One day, a young boy arrived at my friend's office

weeping. The rules of the school were strict: no teacher was supposed to be in a room alone with a student unless another adult was present. So, instead of immediately holding the weeping boy and consoling him, my friend got up and went to find a colleague, and only then attempted to console the child by holding him in his arms. Of course, in today's climate of reported child abuse, in the aftermath of horrendous revelations in sports venues, churches and other institutions, the rules that forbid physical contact with children are necessary. But what happens to the child in this instance, twice neglected?

And what of the teacher? There is a much-anthologized story by Sherwood Anderson, "Hands," in which a teacher, accustomed to pat and hug his students while in class, is accused of molestation and has to change his name and leave the town forever. The teacher acted out of friendly fondness for his students; his gesture was misread and the consequences were tragic.

I suppose the question is: who decides on the meaning implicit in the contact? Who determines that a hug, a pat on the shoulder, a kiss on the cheek is a sexually charged, non-consensual act, an infringement on someone else's private space, or something entirely different, an acknowledgement of the other's presence in the world, a demonstration of care and kindness towards the other? Obviously, any act of communication, however innocent, can be tinged by the knowledge of the power held by the one who initiates the contact. A child's kiss is not equal to an adult's, especially not that of a teacher, a priest or a coach. Even though a child can experience early sexual stirrings and consciously or unconsciously attempt a gesture of seduction, the adult, as adult, must stand back because of the imbalance in that particular relationship. I know that was true of me when I was as young as eleven or twelve

and was angry when I felt that an adult ignored my advances. However, because of the power conferred by age, the adult is obliged to be cautious in the approach, trying to see the encounter from outside, as it were, attempting to read whatever might be misinterpreted in an innocent gesture, according to the circumstances and the particular cultural context.

Joe Biden is, by all accounts, a friendly man, accustomed to hug, kiss and pat everyone. As a candidate for the American presidency, however, he should know better and force himself to find a balance between his physical shows of affection and a precautionary stance regarding the possible reactions of the people he meets. That is hard to achieve, both in the North American culture that maintains a large "no trespassing" circle of privacy around its members, and in a culture like that of Argentina which considers lack of physical contact proof of haughtiness and disdain.

In my case, whatever my Canadian caveats, I had no way of stepping back from the orgy of daily kisses at the National Library without offending anyone, and custom overrode prudence. I've come away from my many experiences of social encounters, both in Canada and in Argentina, with no helpful guiding answers, except an exaggerated alertness that tries to gauge the other person's reaction as I approach, hands stretched out or arms wide open, to communicate with my fellow human beings. As Diana Ross so movingly sang:

Reach out and touch  
Somebody's hand  
Make this world a better place  
If you can...

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*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).*

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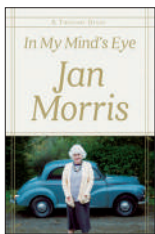


# ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

## THE SMILE TEST

**In My Mind's Eye** (Liveright) is Jan Morris's 40-somethingth book (she is not quite sure). Subtitled "A Thought Diary," it's a delight, something more than a trifle, less than a full meal. "I have never before in my life kept a diary of my thoughts," she writes on Day 1, "and here at the start of my



tenth decade, having for a moment nothing much else to write, I am having a go at it." Most of the entries are short, about a page,

and riff on some of the themes that you might expect from a woman entering her tenth decade: love, politics, friends, the indignities of age, plus an ongoing upset that animals are kept in zoos. Sometimes she seems deliberately trite; other times disarmingly frank. The real purpose for this review is that there's a reason for Geisters to take note of *In My Mind's Eye*. Back in 1992 Morris published *O Canada: Travels in an Unknown Country*, a collection of ten essays about ten Canadian cities, from St. John's to Vancouver. It might not be counted among her finest work, but she does know a thing or two about our country. Her famous "Smile Test," tested back then on the people of Vancouver, is referenced again in this volume, on Day 11. I've always liked the premise, which finds the author "smiling resolutely at strangers... met in the street and analyzing their responses." Vancouver she judged as inhibited. But Saskatoon! On Day 97 of this diary, reading in the bathtub, she revisits her account of the city. While apologizing for "effrontery" of rendering judgment on cities around the world,

barging "uninvited and ignorant" into each, she notes that "even Saskatooners must admit that I got something right—I liked the place! A genuinely characterful city, I called it." And, she concludes, "they should see what I wrote about Sydney..."

—Thad McIlroy

## QUEERSPAWN

**Spawning Generations** (Demeter Press) is a collection (edited by Sadie Epstein-Fine and Makeda Zook) of "rants and reflections on growing up with LGBTQ+ parents." The title comes from the term "queerspawn" which is what the editors (and some other "kids of queers") call themselves. The editors were tired of having to be "poster children" with "airbrushed lives," so they put together this collection of true stories that include divorce, addiction, death, disease, grief, depression and abuse. Sounds depressing but there's also a lot of good stuff in the twenty-four essays. The youngest con-



tributor is nine-year-old Liam Sky who calls himself a "rainbow kid," has four moms, and attributes peoples' reactions to his family as "people being confused about gay things." Other contributors talk about having the shame from the outside world seep into their personal lives, how homophobia is an attack on family, and how having gay parents means you never have to come out to them. Older writers give us valuable historical context. What stood out for me are the descriptions of the warm, inclusive and politically active LGBTQ+ communities in which

many of the writers grew up—a sharp contrast to my straight suburban childhood. It's no surprise that many of the writers are currently active with social justice issues. Don't let the illegible cover put you off. This book is filled with good stuff. —Patty Osborne

## ONE BOOK

I'm not quite sure what to make of the impulse to winnow down a wealth of books to one, with everyone encouraged to read the chosen book. Libraries seem to be behind it. Vancouver Public Library's *One Book, One Vancouver* ran from 2002 to 2011, and was allegedly the first in Canada, inspired by similar projects in Chicago, Los Angeles and Seattle. Simon Fraser University's library has its *One Book,*



*One SFU* (current selection: Eden Robinson's *Son of a Trickster*). CBC's *Canada Reads* is the worst offender, working noisily to turn a quiet, solitary pleasure—reading—into a gladiatorial battle for survival. Is the popularity of these undertakings an expression of our subconscious fear of missing out (FOMO) on the next big thing (NBT)? Is it an understandable reaction to the balkanization of our media diet, where TV viewers are dazzled to immobility by the impossibility of choosing amongst the hundreds of Netflix series released each week? Or is it more insidious, a "wolves vs. sheep" battle: the wolves in this case being those who seek to persuade others to their latest enthusiasm (*The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, anyone?), the sheep those who allow themselves to be persuaded? "Too many choices! I can't decide!

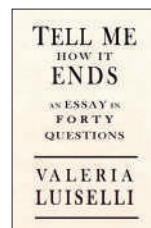
Someone else, please, just *tell* me what to read!” Of course, these reservations are swept aside when the chosen book happens to be one of *my* favourites. **Just Kids**, Patti Smith’s wonderful memoir of her pre-fame days in 1970s New York City, was recently selected as 2019’s *One Book, One New York*. So if you haven’t read it yet, here’s your chance (there’s a new illustrated edition out from Ecco); just think how comforting it will be as you turn the pages, knowing you’re lock-step with eight million New Yorkers. And if you have read *Just Kids* (as well as *M Train*, Smith’s follow-up memoir from 2015), maybe you’ll want to check out **The New Jerusalem** (Nexus Institute), a slim volume in two languages (English and Dutch Nederlands), Smith’s response in prose poetry to Trump’s controversial decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem.

—Michael Hayward

## SUFFER THE CHILDREN

In summer 2015, Valeria Luiselli, an immigrant from Mexico waiting for her green card, signed up as a volunteer interpreter with an immigration court in New York. There she interviewed hundreds of Central American children who had crossed the border to the US and were now completing their intake questionnaires. Her clear, urgent, hair-raising book **Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions** (Coffee House Press) is a record of her work, and of trauma that privileged settled people cannot imagine. The forty questions are those put to each child, whose stories “are always shuffled, stuttered... delivered with hesitance, sometimes distrust, always with fear”—and just one step in a precarious legal process. Questions 1 and 2: Why did you come to the United States? When did you enter the United States? Question 3: Did you travel with anyone you knew? Almost all of these children travel with a paid “coyote”

(human smuggler). Some kids are assaulted, raped, killed. Question 6: How did you travel here? Most say, “I came on La Bestia”—the freight trains that run to and from the Mexico-US border. Migrants travel north by clinging to the top or sides of the cars; thousands of people have been killed in



11,000 people abducted in one month, 80 percent of women and girls reporting rape, tens of thousands of refugees vanished. Question 8: Has anyone hurt, threatened, or frightened you since you came to the US? See above. Questions 9 and 10: How do you like where you’re living now? Are you happy here? The children answer yes. Eventually a few of them get as far as court, but not all of them follow through, especially if their relatives are undocumented, therefore vulnerable. Others don’t proceed because they cannot afford a lawyer. The children’s accounts are similar, “but also each one is unspeakably anguished in its own way”: *I crossed the border by foot. I have not ever met my father. I worked in the fields, ten or maybe fifteen hours a day. The MS-13 shot my sister. She died. Yes, my uncle hit me often.* Luiselli struggles to write down the responses honestly and to the kids’ best advantage. A boy reports that gang members followed him home, so he closed his eyes and ran. Then they followed him home with a gun. *Then they kicked my door open and shot my little brother.* The brother died. What words are the most precise? Gangs are an insidious common denominator in the accounts: they are the subject of the last ten questions, 25 percent of the interview. These are the second-generation Hispanic groups that formed in Los Angeles in the 1980s, particularly the Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13), a coalition of immigrants from war-torn

El Salvador, and the Barrio 18 (Calle 18)—both consisting originally of Central Americans who were fleeing US-funded massacres, both expanding, in spite of efforts to deport gang members. No solution is possible, Luiselli says, until all governments involved “acknowledge their shared accountability” for the crisis. Meanwhile, “It is at this point in the interview that many of the children, especially the older ones, break down.” Every child and teenager migrating from Central America knows *ganga* and *pandillero* and all have come in contact with the gangs. They threaten you, threaten to rape your sisters if you don’t join. They knock your teeth out for fun. They kill each other. “Hempstead [New York] is a shithole full of *pandilleros*, just like Tegucigalpa,” says one boy. But, as Luiselli points out, “official US accounts almost always locate the dividing line between *civilization* and *barbarity* just below the Rio Grande.” Her scrutiny of language is a compelling aspect of her analysis, because it reminds us that language shapes beliefs, and can leave us feeling sad but helpless in the face of some inevitable cruel fate. “The word *illegal* prevails over *undocumented*,” Luiselli writes, “and *immigrant* over *refugee*.” We learn of “children caught while crossing illegally, laws that *permit* their deportation, children who come from *poor and violent* towns.” We are quick to bring up “the problems of the countries of origin,” she points out, “cynically overlooking the causes of the exodus... deeply embedded in our shared hemispheric history”—a transnational problem in which the United States is an active historical participant. “There is little said, for example,” she writes, “of arms being trafficked from the US into Mexico or Central America, legally or not; and little mention of the fact that the consumption of drugs in the US is what fundamentally fuels drug trafficking in the continent.”

—Mary Schendlinger



## SHTISEL

I just finished binge-watching an Israeli TV series about an ultra-religious Jewish family in Jerusalem whose daily life has nothing and everything in common with mine. **Shtisel** (created and written by Ori Elon and Yehonatan Indursky) could refer to either Shulem Shtisel, the widowed, grey-bearded patriarch of the family, or his son Akiva, a budding artist who hangs out with a group of male friends who like to drink and play music. Shulem has decided that Akiva should find a bride, a ritual that involves a matchmaker who sets up a meeting with a prospective spouse in the lobby of a local hotel. While Akiva and his date shyly talk to one another, in the background we see several other young couples doing the same thing. The women wear either wigs or hair coverings and the men wear seriously ironed white shirts under black suits with long coats (except at home, where the men wear an interesting combination of relaxing clothing that I still haven't figured out).

These details make this series a journey into a different world, but the storylines will be familiar to all of us: a sister who has both husband and money problems, another sister who is estranged from her father, a brother who always feels inadequate, a young widow who yearns for more out of her life, an older woman who suffers from unrequited love, and Shulem's mother, who lives in a retirement home where she receives unannounced visits from her troubled children and grandchildren. By the end of the series I could see the characters as normally complicated people with whom I could laugh, cry and sympathize, even though I know that orthodox Jews who I meet on the street are still not going to meet my eyes. Catch Season 1 now because there's a second season in the wings.

—Patty Osborne



## ONE FOR THE BOOKS

In 1872, a wealthy gentleman wagered he could circumnavigate the globe in less than three months. Over a decade later, an ambitious reporter aimed to beat his record by five days. The former scenario might ring a bell; it's the famous novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*. But the latter is a true story. The reporter was Nellie Bly, who sought to recreate the fictional journey in 1889, and she wasn't the only one who took up the challenge. Elizabeth Bisland, a fellow journalist, embarked on her own globe-spanning trip at the same time. Their remarkable—and at times perilous—voyages are recounted in **Eighty Days** (Penguin Random House) by Matthew Goodman. Impressively exhaustive in its research, the book spends equal time with the women in alternating chapters that highlight their journeys amidst the social, political and technological progressions of the late nineteenth century. As a reader, it's easy to get swept up in the sensation of their race. You can understand how this

# PACIFIC RIM

M A G A Z I N E

Written, designed, and produced by  
Langara College Publishing Students

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epic feat captivated the public at the time, earning daily news coverage and sparking a wildly popular contest to guess the precise date and time of Bly's return home. So, it's rather surprising that this adventure, made all the more extraordinary for having



been undertaken by two women during the 1800s, was never given the silver screen treatment (there was a musical, a made-for-TV movie and a *Drunk History* episode). Then again, no film could do the story justice. Reading about Bly's and Bisland's journeys means you get the pleasure of imagining all the colourful and unbelievable moments: a mad dash through moonlit streets to catch a departing vessel, hanging on for dear life aboard a steamship being tossed through rollicking waves—and picking up a pet monkey halfway around the world. That's a detail even Jules Verne himself couldn't make up.  
—Jasmine Cham

## MEMORY LANE

**Red Sorghum** (Penguin) by Mo Yan is a window into an obscure period of modern Chinese history. When Westerners think of Republican China, which lasted from 1911 to 1949, they think of *qipaos*, opium dens, the Bundt, Shanghaiese gangsters and the Nanking Massacre. But Mo Yan's novel features rural peasants in northern China struggling to overcome history. The novel takes place in Gaomi Township in Shandong Province, a marshy landscape of little significance. Over the span of three decades, Gaomi Township's experience with bandits, vigilantes, religious fanatics, warlords, totalitarian magistrates, Japanese invaders, communist saviours, nationalist saviours, turncoats, opportunists and patriots reflects the troubled times of China between the 1920s and 1940s.

Mo Yan's writing style is eclectic. This may have been exacerbated in translation. There are passages



that read wonderfully, some which may leave a ringing in you. When you get used to it, you start to appreciate how he folds time into the narrative, jumbles historical facts with unromantic magic realism and confronts politics with a whole lot of wit and irony. *Red Sorghum* is not fiction, nor is it nonfiction. It comes across as words hastily jotted down by someone who overheard history being told in the lanes and courtyards of his ancestors' village. It is the best form of memory.

—Anson Ching

## MURDER BY MILKSHAKE

Death by arsenic is slow. Esther Castellani experienced nausea, vomiting, severe diarrhea, numbness and eventually paralysis in her limbs, a rash with infected pustules, kidney failure, and ultimately heart failure—thanks to the weed killer her husband Rene had been feeding her over eleven months, often served via milkshake. Eve Laza-



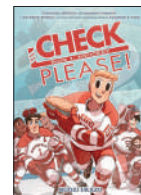
rus's account of the 1960s murder in **Murder by Milkshake** (Arsenal Pulp Press) sheds light on a transitional time in Vancouver. Counterculture was finding an enclave and old morals were waning. You can't help but wonder if Rene would have killed Esther if his affair with Lolly Miller had occurred four years later, when the first federal Divorce Act was passed. Before that, you had to wait five years and publicize the reasons for your divorce daily for six months, including the name of the other woman—intolerable for a CKNW Radio personality. It's also impossible not to question the medical system. Esther saw her family doctor

nine times in a period of five months; he only suggested a gallbladder X-ray on her final visit. He chalked up her stomach problems to overeating—an extreme example of the often dismissed health concerns of larger-bodied people. Lazarus goes beyond the murder. She tells us about Jeannine, Esther and Rene's daughter, her life after the crime and her eventual reunion with Lolly's son, Don, who she had lived with for years, estranged from her own family—a side effect of Rene's actions.

—Debby Reis

## A HOCKEY ROMANCE

**Check Please! Book 1: #Hockey** by Ngozi Ukazu (First Second) is the hockey romance comic we've all been waiting for. Funny, charming and feel-good, *Check Please!* covers the first two years of Ukazu's comic, with a second volume forthcoming. The book follows pie-baking Eric "Bitty"



Bittle, a former figure skater who joins the varsity hockey team in his freshman year at Samwell University. He's keeping a few secrets: he's gay, and he's terrified of being checked on the ice. During his first two years at Samwell, Bitty finds his place among the refreshingly non-toxic culture of the hockey locker room and the frat house as he falls secretly, agonizingly, in love with Jack Zimmermann, the broody, seemingly straight star player of the Samwell men's hockey team. Readers will be pleased to find that *Check Please!* is no queerbait; Ukazu's good humour, bright illustrations and sense of chemistry elevate what is essentially a classic enemies-to-friends-to-lovers rom-com. The comic was initially self-published on Tumblr (omgcheckplease.tumblr.com), and a few years ago I breathlessly read the entire thing in one sitting, staying up past

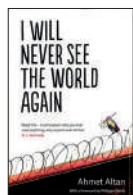


my bedtime (on a work night!) to finish. The Tumblr version also hosts a number of “extras”: behind-the-scenes blog posts, readers’ questions answered by the characters, as well as a variety of bonus comics that feature everything from Johnson, the fourth-wall-breaking goalie, to the frat house ghosts. These extras allow the story to grow and the characters to develop; the published book feels pared-down by comparison. The Tumblr web-comic has continued to appear, so if you finish this volume and can’t wait for the next, there’s nearly two full years’ worth of additional material available online.

—Kelsea O’Connor

## LOCKED AWAY

The heyday of the “instant book”—titles addressing current events, produced in short order—has passed, a victim of the internet, the shrinking attention spans of readers, and the diminishing half-life of news events, as one indignity supplants another within weeks or days. Two recent titles, however, show that the instant book is not entirely dead. *The Mueller Report*, a current American bestseller, provides the full (redacted) text of the investigation into alleged ties between Russian officials and Trump’s presidential campaign. The other, *I Will Never See the World Again* (Granta Books), is an English translation (by Yasemin Çongar) of the Turkish writer



Ahmet Altan’s prison memoir, written during the period following Altan’s arrest in 2016 for what the jacket copy describes as “Kafkaesque charges by Erdogan’s corrupt regime.” Altan, a Turkish journalist and editor, was accused of sending “subliminal messages” to those involved in the 2016 Turkish *coup d’état* attempt; in September 2018 he was sentenced to life in prison. In *I*

*Will Never See the World Again*, Altan describes the circumstances of his arrest and trial, and provides a glimpse behind the walls of his prison, where he grapples with the very real possibility that he will never be released. “We will spend the rest of our lives alone in a cell that is four metres long and three metres wide. We will be taken out to see the sunlight for only one hour each day.” The recent election in Turkey may provide a measure of hope to Altan and others like him, with Erdogan’s party losing its grip on Ankara, the capital, and on Istanbul (though Erdogan has forced a rerun of the vote in Istanbul).

—Michael Hayward

## ANTI-APOCALYPSE

The sci-fi thriller *The Tiger Flu* (Arsenal Pulp Press) by Larissa Lai is set in British Columbia, though the names and places have changed: in 2145 CE (127 TAO, Time After Oil) Vancouver is called Saltwater City and Penticton is Pente-Hik-Ton. Technology is significantly advanced:



there are devices that implant information into your brain and moon-sized mainframes orbiting the Earth; the Internet has been privatized, making free information inaccessible. Cloning technology is not only fully realized, it’s old news—female human clones have been bred and used for slave labour, and have revolted. When scientists clone the Caspian tiger to bring it back from extinction, it leads to an epidemic that threatens to wipe out humanity. Lai has called her novel anti-apocalyptic—borders have been redrawn based on the presence of the plague, violence reigns and people are desperate to survive, but ultimately life goes on. If the questions raised in this peek into our potential future aren’t enough of a reason to read *The*

*Tiger Flu*, perhaps the protagonists are. Kora and Kirilow, two young women, are brought together in their quests to find their families and to survive the violence, poverty and uncertainty of the times. Lai lists authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien and Ursula K. LeGuin as her influences, adding that she wanted to update and revise the hero’s journey “through [her] own queer/feminist/Asian/West Coast/Rocky Mountain sensibilities.” Although the timeline is occasionally hard to follow, this is as much a thrilling read as it is a cautionary tale—fantasy lovers, pick this book up now!

—Kristen Lawson

## NOVA SCOTIAN NOIR

The Scottish poet Robin Robertson’s verse novel *The Long Take* (Picador) was shortlisted for the 2018 Man Booker Prize, the first verse novel to be considered for the prize. The protagonist of *The Long Take* is Walker, a Canadian veteran of World War II, who hails from Cape Breton, NS. Walker suffers from PTSD, having witnessed the so-called Normandy Massacres of June 1944, in which captured Canadian soldiers were summarily executed by members of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*. Following his discharge, Walker leaves Nova Scotia (his father remarking: “The war was one thing, but this is another. You’re the first of us to leave in one hundred and seventy years”). He drifts aimlessly and anonymously in the crowded American metropolises, travelling from New York City to Los Angeles, where he is eventually hired as a stringer by an L.A. newspaper, the *Press*. Throughout his wandering, Walker stays in a variety of cheap hotels and rooming houses; he drinks in beat-up bars; he talks to other drifters, many of them former veterans like himself. “From his bed and the biscuity sheets/he hears an upstairs neighbor coughing,/

smells cockroaches and poison,/sees where a rat's made scrimshaw of the baseboard,/trying to get out." It is, in short, the perfect setup for a classic "film noir"—and in fact many of these



are name-checked by Walker as he wanders the nighttime streets of old L.A., while sections of the city slowly succumb to urban redevelopment: "Breaks in the street where buildings had been,/being cleared for parking lots." The notes at the end of Robertson's novel would serve as an excellent introduction to west coast film noir: notes on *Ride the Pink Horse* (1947) and *Out of the Past* (1947), all the way to *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and *The Big Combo* (1955). *The Long Take* is a moody, and mournful, elegy for the genre.

—Michael Hayward

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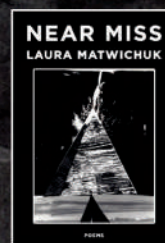
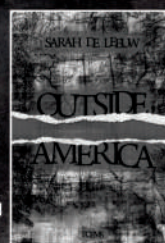
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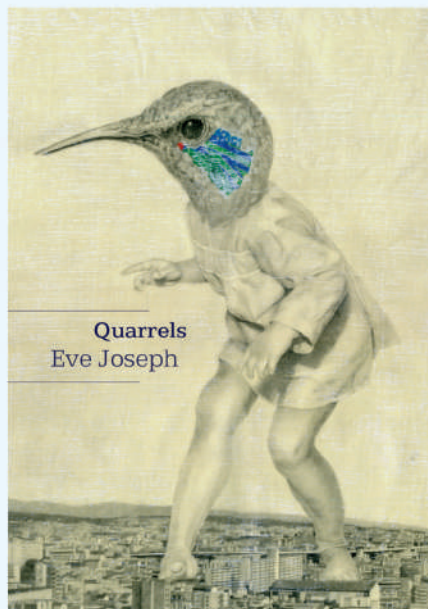
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## OFF THE SHELF

During World War II Bill advocates sales of guns over Burmese gems to Warner in a back corner table of the Oriental dining room in *Doublespeak* (Douglas & McIntyre) by **Alisa Smith**. In *Prague* (QC Fiction) by **Maude Veilleux** a girl and a boy walk into a bookstore: she considers buying a book by Renaud Longchamps and he buys a book by Alberto Moravia. Martel tosses two logs into a fire and sips a glass of cognac as he contemplates whether Colonel Michel fell in love with a German spy in *Another Spy for Paris* (Signature Editions) by **Robert J. Young**. Lee realizes he doesn't have a condom as things heat up between him and Jude, at which point he leaps off Jude and says "You should meet my mother" in *The Forbidden Purple City* (Goose Lane Editions) by **Philip Huynh**. A cashier at a grocery store winks at a lady and gives her a watermelon in *In the End They Told Them All to Get Lost* (QC Fiction) by **Laurence Leduc-Primeau**. A girl pulls away when a guy on the bus strokes her hair in *Mooncalves* (Now Or Never Publishing) by **Victoria Hetherington**. According to **Simon May** in *The Power of Cute* (Princeton University Press), Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-sung have a touch of cuteness, but Kim Jong-un does not. Sam and Paul drink, then they call six girls, hoping one will call them back in *Downtown Flirt* (Guernica Editions) by **Peter Jickling**. In *Sea Over Bow* (Signature Editions) by **Linda Kenyon**, Coonie, a pet raccoon, leaps for Peggy's throat. During an argument, Trudy lunges at Jeanne and grabs her ankles in *Bad Ideas* (ECW Press) by **Missy Marston**. A detective searches for a dead husband who was reincarnated as an animal in *The Second Detective* (Anvil Press) by **Shannon Mullally**. A bull's heart set

out on the kitchen table lures a jaguar, a lion and a sabre-toothed tiger into the room in *Final Fire* (ECW Press) by **Michael Mitchell**. Two kids throw a jar of mustard at the school counsellor's door and run away in *The Great Happiness* (Talonbooks) by **M.A.C. Farrant**. One frantic morning Leah drops coffee grounds on the floor, washes her hair with soap, slips on the tile and bruises her hip in *The Silence* (Exile Editions) by **Karen Lee White**. An air force veteran grips the bedsheet as the plane goes down in *The Elements* (House of Anansi Press) by **Erin Mouré**. A dying girl shoplifts a pair of metallic-black gloves with teal rhinestones from a high-end store in *Crow* (Goose Lane Editions) by **Amy Spurway**. The boys steal chocolate bars, candy, gum and bags of chips from an unlocked refreshment stand in *Coconut Dreams* (Book\*hug) by **Derek Mascarenhas**. Dawn tosses money into the air to make friends with the other school kids in *Chicken Rising* (Conundrum Press) by **D. Boyd**. According to **Renée Pellerin** in *Conspiracy of Hope* (Goose Lane Editions) pamphlets about mammograms have a tone that implies "just trust me, I know what's good for you." Masica dies of rage when the fairy denies her wish to be God in *Smack-Bam, or The Art of Governing Men* (Princeton University Press) by **Édouard Laboulaye**. Anna, Susan, Jonathan and Xavier fly from the Rockcliffe Flying Club in Ottawa to Montreal for a cup of coffee in *Airborne* (Goose Lane Editions), by **Jonathan Rotondo**. Henry snorts a line of cocaine and says to Virginia "that stuff is like cut with even stronger cocaine" in *Dream Sequence* (Biblioasis) by **Adam Foulds**. Rukshana prays to Allah to flatten her breasts in *A People's History of Heaven* (Algonquin Books) by **Mathangi Subramanian**. A couple

walks through heavy snow past a night-club that blasts acid remixes of A Tribe Called Quest songs in *Fog* (Baraka Books) by **Rana Bose**.

## NOTED ELSEWHERE

*Quill & Quire* says of *Bina* by **Anakana Schofield**, "Of course, it's not Marvel Comics that serve as inspiration for the author so much as the work of James Joyce and William Faulkner"; *Maclean's* says that Schofield's "style and themes never remind readers of anyone else." *Canadian Bookworm* says "I've already talked it up to one of my co-workers." Alexander Kosoris on *goodreads.com* says "you may want to approach it cautiously if you usually find yourself preferring stories told in more standard ways." The *CBC* says **Karen Solie's** *The Caipile Caves* "attends to transition in times of crisis"; *praccrit.com* says Solie "reconciles creativity and the moral intelligence"; according to *The Star* "some poems seem to fail through obscurity and unconvincing diction"; *robmcclennan.blogspot.com* says that Solie is "a poet utilizing the book as her unit of composition."

## CONGRATULATIONS

To **Lisa Bird-Wilson**, whose column "Clowns, Cakes, Canoes: This Is Canada?" (*Geist* 105) won Silver for Columns at the National Magazine Awards; to **Steven Heighton**, whose essay "Everything Turns Away" (*Geist* 110) was nominated for a National Magazine Award for Personal Journalism; to **Stephen Henighan**, whose translation of *Transparent City* by Ondjaki was nominated for the Best Translated Book Award; to **Connie Kuhns**, whose essay "Girl Parts" received an honourable mention for the 2019 Frank McCourt Memoir Prize.

# The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

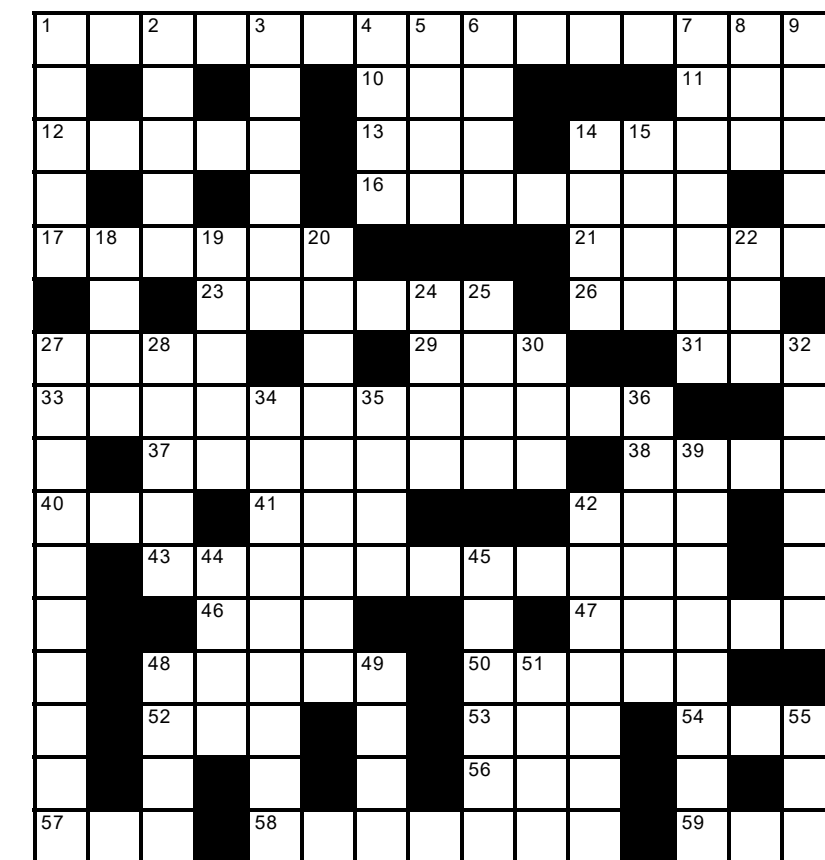
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*Geist* magnet. Good luck!

## ACROSS

- 1 While I was in the lav, rereading Mao, I heard that those two go together in the most hackneyed way! (3)
- 10 At the end of the letter we avoid the rhyme
- 11 In the upstairs room she made a point to be neutral (abbrev)
- 12 There's always heavy metal in that bar
- 13 We won't be late reaching that frozen world in the stars (abbrev)
- 14 I'll put up money that she helps that crook
- 16 If anyone sees Max, tell him he's equal to figuring out the chickens (2)
- 17 That girl keeps wagging her chin at me!
- 21 I always take notes when I hear one (2)
- 23 The best way to separate is to take me out of the frame
- 26 Did that cool cat have a pad in Bangkok?
- 27 Sounds like you're making fun of my afternoon get-togethers
- 29 One more thing: who owns this?
- 31 A scientist works like a dog in a small space
- 33 Henry sang at the start of his wedding day even though they were not hiring men (3)
- 37 On the farm, it's a pail, but there's something fishy about them
- 38 Would Canadians wear that coat on Mars?
- 40 When he was 25 he shortened his name and took up meditative exercise
- 41 Did you know about Kenora's watery testing place? (abbrev)
- 42 That March day we protested with dessert
- 43 By any of their names they're not rude joinery (2)
- 46 That red book about a chair was number one
- 47 When winter comes we'll wear sleeves with shoulder seams (2)
- 48 While the observers of sporty flying mammals were in Algeria counting white noses, confusion ensued
- 50 Does Montreal need a pink line?
- 52 Can't we find a Canadian to work in securities? (abbrev)
- 53 Can you believe that closer?
- 54 Remember, don't write on the queenly art (abbrev)
- 56 When that group is running things, it sometimes flies off the handle (abbrev)



- 57 These days, you get labelled, you're it!
- 58 Ensure there are no thugs in this union
- 59 When you're lucky or dirty you're just imitating a hot one

## DOWN

- 1 Around here the truth is not on the level
- 2 Don't tell me what happens if we stay here
- 3 When you get it, give it a tan
- 4 That's not bull, it's just yackety-yack.
- 5 Look at the big picture! It's not just data, there's physics too!
- 6 Was he the first guy to use water power?
- 7 In the USA, Alex chose not to distinguish a hen from a rooster
- 8 In Schwartz's you can divorce before you up and go
- 9 Then there will be hijinks
- 14 My aunt hangs around dissing the suburbs (abbrev)
- 15 In the end, just what IS in Liz's handbag?
- 18 This season the question is in the air and all players will be accepted
- 19 That sour tasting stuff is wrapped in weed
- 20 George was always plying Mao with that fantastic woman
- 22 An absent child, a place to study old farts, or a really cool dance technique? (abbrev)
- 24 I irk people by ending a British series with ritual suicide
- 25 This tall fiery Italian is definitely a ten
- 27 That hottie, Kent, is ready to try macramé but what's he proposing? (3)
- 28 Let's act it out in the sky parlour!
- 30 Are you familiar with my relative?

- 32 Hey girl, remember when we used to have tea parties in our place?
- 34 At the lovers' tea she took a grainy shot of particle lifters
- 35 In October we always get stoned
- 36 Bored in Regina? Somersaulted backwards
- 39 Was he rejuvenated in the desert or did he reinstate justice?
- 42 The fellow after us always left two rings but no tampons
- 44 At the end of Sam I Am he prayed
- 45 When are they appointing the gin man?
- 48 The lumberjack kept a record of the ship
- 49 Don't get me started—that farmer is causing me irritation
- 51 Why did the older hairy brother go for the stew?
- 55 Geist is my favourite, what about you?

The winners for Puzzle 111 were Graham Annable and Susan Geist.

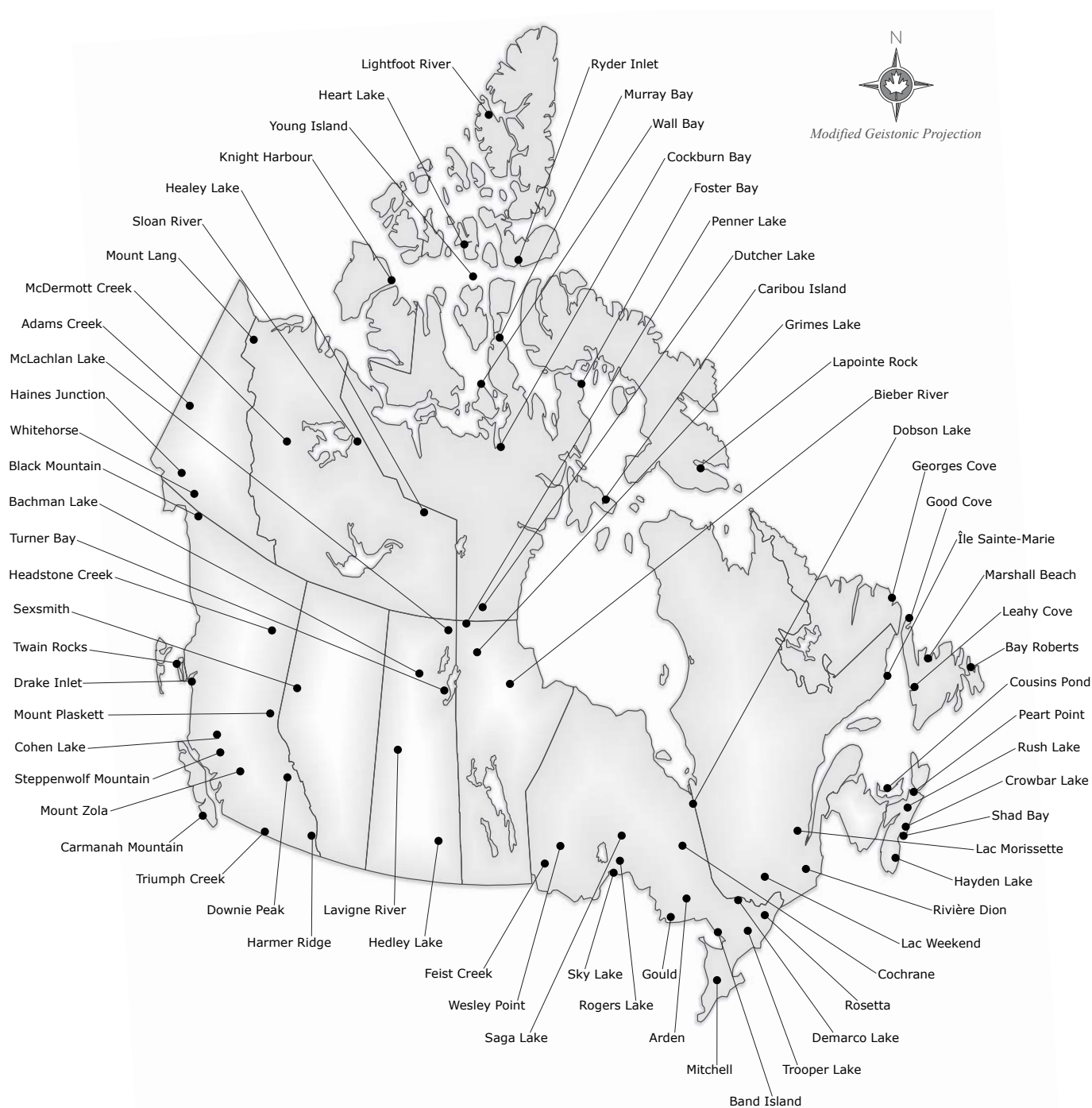
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# O Canada

*The National Map of Canadian Musicians*

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# SCORCHING SUMMER READS

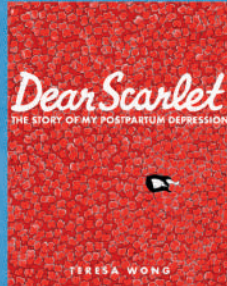


## DEATH THREAT

*Vivek Shraya & Ness Lee*

A dream-like graphic novel that explores the real-life death threat against Shraya after she came out as trans. "I'm so grateful for Vivek's voice. It feels like a natural for comics."

—Jillian Tamaki

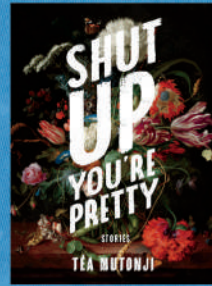


## DEAR SCARLET

*Teresa Wong*

A poignant graphic memoir about postpartum depression and the complexities of motherhood. "Dear Scarlet" is full of pain, despair, beauty and joy—communicated masterfully in simple, elegant comics."

—Sarah Leavitt

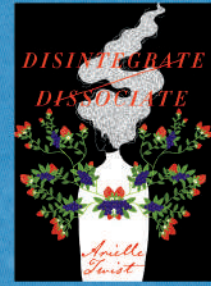


## SHUT UP YOU'RE PRETTY

*Téa Mutonji*

The first book published under Vivek Shraya's VS. Books imprint. "The stories are vivid and unsettling in their detail ... Mutonji writes with grit and quick-witted humour."

—Quill and Quire  
(starred review)

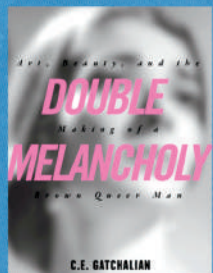


## DISINTEGRATE/ DISSOCIATE

*Arielle Twist*

An incendiary collection about metamorphosis and resurgence by trans Indigenous poet Twist. "A miraculous debut of poetry that enacts exactly what it summons into the world."

—Joshua Whitehead



## DOUBLE MELANCHOLY

*C.E. Gatchalian*

A memoir about art and beauty as seen through the lens of a queer brown man. "A work of such psychic intimacy, one has the sense that they're watching Gatchalian think in real time on the page."

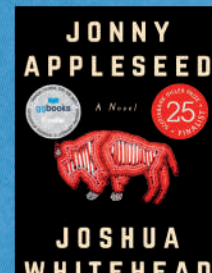
—Jordan Tannahill



## LITTLE FISH

*Casey Plett*

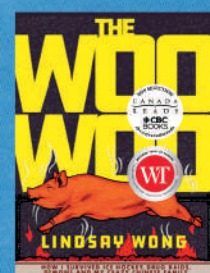
Finalist, Amazon Canada First Novel Award, Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award, Lambda Literary Award: a trans woman reckons with her past and future in this gorgeously written novel.



## JONNY APPLESEED

*Joshua Whitehead*

Finalist, Amazon Canada First Novel Award, Governor General's Literary Award; Longlist, Scotiabank Giller Prize: a unique, shattering vision of Indigiqueer life.



## THE WOO-WOO

*Lindsay Wong*

2019 Canada Reads finalist; Hubert Evans Nonfiction Prize winner: a darkly comedic memoir about a young woman coming of age in an Asian Canadian family haunted by the "woo-woo."



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