

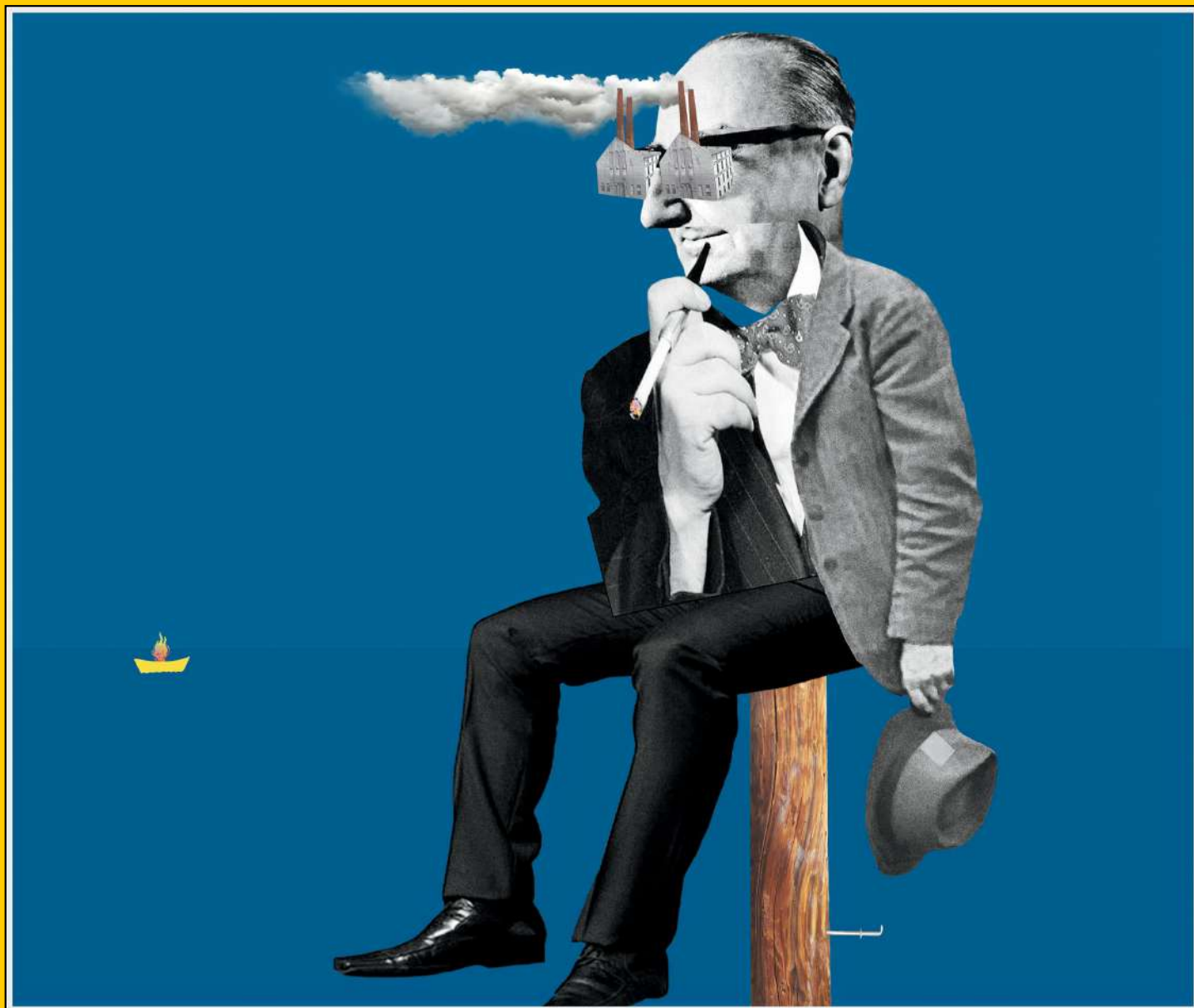
# GEIST

FACT + FICTION  NORTH of AMERICA

NUMBER 113

SUMMER 2019

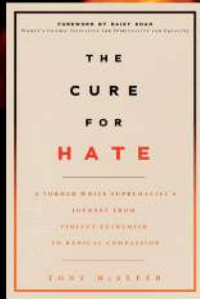
\$8.95



## UNDER THE BELL CURVE

Unbending Women / Biking Around with Ondjaki  
King of the Cthulucene / Casual Encounters

# WORDS ON FIRE



## THE CURE FOR HATE

*Tony McAleer*

A powerful and deeply personal book about the roots of racism, and what can be done to eradicate it in these troubled, tragic times.

*Fall 2019*



## REBENT SINNER

*Ivan Coyote*

The latest by award-winning storyteller Ivan Coyote, who takes on the patriarchy and the political with regard to trans experience.

*Fall 2019*

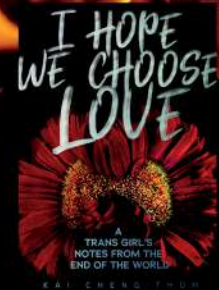


## THE BLUE ROAD

*Wayde Compton & April delaware Milne*

A beautiful YA graphic novel about the experience of migration, in which a young girl looks for a place to belong.

*Fall 2019*



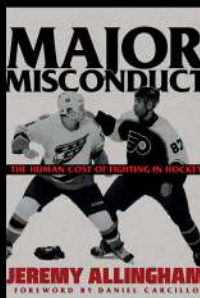
## I HOPE WE CHOOSE LOVE

*Kai Cheng Thom*

Provocative essays on culture, community, and personal politics by the acclaimed poet and essayist. "We are so damn lucky to have this book."

—Alicia Elliott

*Fall 2019*



## MAJOR MISCONDUCT

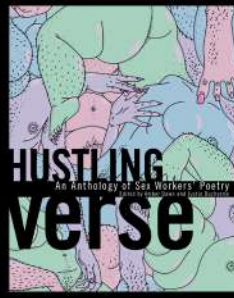
*Jeremy Allingham*

A sobering yet crucial analysis of fighting in hockey, and its devastating consequences.

"A compelling read from first word to last."

—Dr. Gabor Maté

*Fall 2019*



## HUSTLING VERSE

*Amber Dawn & Justin Ducharme, eds.*

A groundbreaking collection of sex workers' poetry from around the world. "A book about economies of care and cruelty, of wounding and warning and wonder."

—Daniel Heath Justice

*Fall 2019*



## 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



## 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

NEW AND RECENT BOOKS FROM



ARSENAL PULP PRESS

ARSENALPULP.COM



**STAY  
SHARP**

Subscribe to Geist

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

**GEIST**

FACT • FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA

PHOTO: JOHN PASKIEVICH

# GEIST

Volume 28 • Number 113 • Summer 2019

---

## FEATURES

---

### POSTCARD LIT

Barbara Black, Cameron Muir, David Wiseman

*Winners of the 15th Annual*

*Geist Literal Literary Postcard Story Contest*

33

### WHO GETS CALLED AN UNFIT MOTHER?

Miriam Libicki

*"We got a report about your child."*

38

### CASUAL ENCOUNTERS

Duncan Cairns-Brenner

*Adult classified photography*

46



# GEIST

Full of moose and wonder

---

## NOTES & DISPATCHES

Shyla Seller  
*Mummified*  
7

Hàn Fúsēn  
*Biking Around with Ondjaki*  
10

Kristen Den Hartog  
*The Two Lots*  
12

Scott Andrew Christensen  
*'n yer comin' wit me*  
13

Geoff Inverarity  
*The Woman Who Talks  
to Her Dog at the Beach*  
14

Michał Kozłowski  
*Road Trip Supreme*  
15

---

## FINDINGS

18

*Double exposure*  
*You Don't Know Your*  
*Dinghy From Your Punt*  
*Vanishing Canada*  
*ScanOps*



*Love Letters in the Sand*  
*You Jump, I Jump, Jack*  
*Atlantic tarot*  
*Return of the G'psgolox Pole*  
*Shimmery sightings*  
*For Al Purdy*

and more...

---

## COLUMNS

**WORDS ON FILM**  
*King of the Post-Anthropocene*  
Joseph Weiss  
50

**AFTERLIFE OF CULTURE**  
*Left Nationalists*  
Stephen Henighan  
52

**CITY OF WORDS**  
*Marilla*  
Alberto Manguel  
54

---

## DEPARTMENTS

**IN CAMERA**  
4

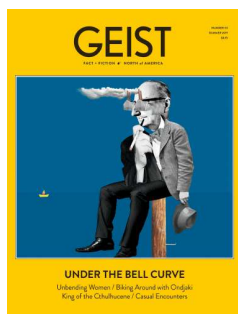
**MISCELLANY**  
6

**ENDNOTES**  
56

**OFF THE SHELF,  
NOTED ELSEWHERE**  
62

**PUZZLE**  
63

**CAUGHT MAPPING**  
64



**COVER:** The Hierophant  
by Rhonda Pelley. See more  
of Pelley's work on page 27.



### GROWTH AND DECAY

**O**n April 26, 1986, the reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor Plant near Pripyat, Ukraine, underwent a series of failures that resulted in the worst nuclear disaster in history. Deadly radioactive contamination spewed into the air, precipitating the evacuation of more than 100,000 citizens and the creation of a thirty-kilometre Exclusion Zone surrounding the plant.

In the summer of 1994, the photographer David McMillan read an article in *Harper's* magazine by Alan Weisman about the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. He described to the essayist Claude Baillargeon for the book *Growth and Decay* how he became fascinated with the place—it piqued his teenage Cold War fears and reminded him of a dystopian novel he'd read as a youth, *On the Beach* by Nevil Shute, about the aftermath and fallout of a nuclear war. By October of that same year, McMillan gained access to the Exclusion

Zone. He spent five days during this first visit exploring the area, unrestricted apart from warnings not to linger in areas where high levels of radioactivity had been measured. During the course of his subsequent twenty-two visits (over the next twenty-five years), he has made pictures of abandoned military complexes, elementary schools, streets, theme parks, playgrounds and medical facilities, and observed the speed with which nature reclaimed areas that were once the domain of humans and their infrastructure. McMillan's photographs convey a powerful sense of the stark contrast between growth and decay, of the resilience of nature, and the eerie spectre of a post-human world.

David McMillan is a Scottish-born Canadian photographer. His work is held in public collections, including those at the National Gallery of Canada. *Growth and Decay*, was published by Steidl in 2019. —AnnMarie MacKinnon



# GEIST

PUBLISHED BY  
The Geist Foundation

PUBLISHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
AnnMarie MacKinnon

OPERATIONS MANAGER  
Jocelyn Kuang

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Michał Kozłowski

ADMINISTRATION  
*Interns:* Anson Ching, Evelyn Kuang,  
Sam Scott  
*Volunteers:* Patty Osborne,  
Jennesia Pedri

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

DESIGNER  
Eric Uhlich

PROOFREADER  
Helen Godolphin

ACCOUNTANT  
Mindy Abramowitz CGA, CPA

CIRCULATION  
Larry Wyatt

WEB ARCHITECTS  
Metro Publisher

DISTRIBUTION  
Magazines Canada

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS  
Barbara Zatyko

FIRST SUBSCRIBER  
Jane Springer

MOST VALUABLE PUZZLERS  
Jim Lowe & Brian Goth

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

SUPPORT THE GEIST FOUNDATION:  
[GEIST.COM/DONATE](http://GEIST.COM/DONATE)

[WWW.GEIST.COM](http://WWW.GEIST.COM)

Geist is published four times a year.

Contents copyright © 2019 The Geist Foundation. All rights reserved.

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

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

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

Submission guidelines are available at geist.com.

ISSN 1181-6554.

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

Publications Mail Agreement 40069678

Registration No. 07582

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

Geist is a member of Magazines Canada and the Magazine Association of BC. Indexed in the *Canadian Literary Periodicals Index* and available on Proquest.

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



PRINTED BY  
**Lowemartin**



Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

**Canada**

## MISCELLANY



### GEIST AT LARGE

**G**eist contributing editor and Francophile Michael Hayward recently paid homage to the great French writer Colette by leaving a copy of *Geist* 111 at her grave in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. Hayward told us: “The magazine seemed a suitable offering, some reading material for the afterlife. I thought that Colette might enjoy Ola Szczecinska’s “Symbiosis in Warsaw” (*Geist* No. 111), a memoir of the year she lived with her grandmother in Poland, since so much of Colette’s own writing draws on memories of her past.”

—*The editors*

### HOOKED

**A** friend at work told me about your magazine and dropped a copy off at my desk. I opened it to page 13, to a piece called “In Memoriam: Edith Iglauer, 1917–2019” (by Mary Schendlinger, No. 112) and started reading. I was mesmerized. What a wonderful piece. By the time I finished the last sentence, I was hooked and knew I had to get a subscription. I can’t wait to receive my first copy.

—*Sandra McTavish, Toronto*

*Thanks for your kind note and welcome to Geist, Sandra!* —*The editors*

### ROYAL TEA

**I** enjoyed reading Jocelyn Kuang’s piece (“27,000 Cups of Tea,” No. 105) about attending a Buckingham Palace garden party. After university and travel in Europe on a thirty-day Eurail train pass I found out that a citizen of a Commonwealth country could apply for a two-year working holiday visa for the United Kingdom. I stayed at a student hostel in Norfolk Square, near the Paddington train station and every Sunday went to Speaker’s Corner in Hyde Park to listen to the speeches. I also went to a Royal garden party and my experience was very similar to Jocelyn’s. I stood about two feet away from Her Majesty while she was being introduced to a couple and I heard her say it was a lovely day for a garden party.

—*Fred Burgess, Toronto*

### WRITE TO GEIST

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

The Editor, *Geist*  
letters@geist.com

*Snailmail:*  
#210 – 111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver BC V6B 1H4

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum.



## Mummified

SHYLA SELLER

*Uncovering a centuries old stench*



Last month I went to an archivist conference in Toronto, where my friend Jean recently moved to take a job as Conservator of Organic Materials at the Royal Ontario Museum. “I have my own lab,” she told me, “You can come see my mummy!”

I left the conference early one day and walked from the hotel through Queen’s Park, into the giant rotunda entrance of the ROM. Jean came through a side door to come get me. I signed in, passed through security, and ended up the twenty-fifth visitor of the day to the staff-only area.

Jean’s lab was around 350 square feet, a square room with windows that faced onto the length of green-space known as the Philosopher’s Walk on the University of Toronto campus. Against the walls of the lab

stood shelves that carried small artifacts on white trays covered by clear plastic, and supplies, including plastic and cotton sheets, sorbents, paints and labelled bottles of chemicals. There was a counter with a sink, an eye-washing station and a microscope next to a Plexiglas isolation workspace with a ventilation hood. Her desk was in the corner closest to the windows. It was covered with pieces of paper and various conservation books, including *Fungal Facts* and *Conservation of Leather and Related Materials*.

The centre of the room was filled with several tables and a couple of carts. On one table lay a mummified gazelle; on another lay paintings made of wire and wood, some felted wool dolls and shoes made from rabbit. And on the table closest to her

desk was a coffin-shaped object covered by an opaque plastic sheet.

Jean lifted the plastic sheet to reveal the mummy: a dark brown figure, about four feet tall, surprisingly well-preserved, and still very human looking. A frame surrounded the mummy, to keep the plastic suspended above it, and the body lay on a bubble-wrapped piece of plywood. The thing I noticed first was the smell: a bit like wet beef jerky, very strong. Jean told me that the two components of the smell of a mummy are cadaverine and putrescine, chemical compounds produced during the putrefaction of animal flesh, putrescine being the smell of rotting fish. “You never get used to it,” she said.

Some of the linens on the mummy were cut open and frayed. Jean pointed

to the mummy's spine, which was broken; the mummy isn't completely whole. "His name is Jutmosa," Jean said. "We used to call him Jeremy, until the museum's Egyptologist stepped in to give him a less ridiculous name."

Jean said that Jutmosa died sometime after 1320 BCE and before 320 BCE. He was brought over from an undetermined site in Egypt in 1910. ROM staff believe that Jutmosa's grave was robbed, and that the grave robbers smashed in his skull. He likely had jewels resting on the depressions where his eyes (now packed with linen) were and amulets resting like necklaces on his collarbones—all taken. Jean said that the coffin he was found in had been used previously for the burial of a woman named Ta-Khat, who died around 1320 BCE, so there was no contextual information about who Jutmosa was when he was first collected by the ROM. Egyptians often would reuse coffins; they would remove a mummy and leave it in a tomb, and use the coffin again for a newly mummified body.

Jean told me that apparently the ROM has a photograph from the 1920s of a museum technician posing with scissors, cutting some of the linen wraps off Jutmosa's body. In the 1920s and 1930s, mummy unveiling parties were popular museum events; you weren't considered a legitimate museum without an Egyptian mummy in your collection. Everyone wanted one. The demand was so great, Jean told me, that some enterprising dealers would dig up relatively young (800-or-so-year-old) Coptic Christian corpses naturally preserved in sand, wrap them in linens, and sell them to institutions as if they were real mummies from Ancient Egypt. Those corpses weren't embalmed, just naturally mummified, so they rotted very quickly.

Jean told me an apocryphal story about Dr. Augustus Granville, an Italian physician and writer, who led a mummy unveiling party for the

Royal Society of London in the mid-nineteenth century. For ambience, he lit several candles that he constructed using the wax he found in the coffin of the mummy, believing it was authentic Ancient Egyptian wax. "That candle," Jean said, "it was actually the mummy. Mummies melt!" She explained that human fats, flesh and collagen can



saponify and become a waxy, soapy liquid. When that happens, the original form of the mummy's corpse is only held up by ancient, encrusted linens. With bones inside.

I looked down at Jutmosa, at his eyelashes, the expression on his face, a laugh line more pronounced on one side of the face than the other, and the beautifully posed hands, fingernails intact. Jean said that she's not sure what will be under him if she ever gets him off that bubble wrap. Maybe only pools of mummy liquid. This image gave me a strange feeling in my stomach.

"Do you ever try to give them back?" I asked.

Jean said that there is no repatriation program for human remains from Ancient Egypt. Egypt has enough of their own mummies, and they don't need any back from anyone else. But displaying human remains has changed since the days of mummy unveiling parties; museums

are questioning the ethics of exhibiting people for other people to look at. It's difficult and fraught to get rid of an item once it is in your collection. So they remain with the institutions who collected them, and their staff care for them the best they can. "They deserve our respect and study and care," Jean said. "And mummies are still very popular with museumgoers. The kids especially love mummies, anything Ancient Egypt really."

The thing that's really unusual about Jutmosa is that, unlike most mummies, he hasn't been X-rayed. Ionizing radiation, used for X-raying, kills DNA. This means that it is possible, though very unlikely, that Jean could get a viable DNA sample from Jutmosa's petrous pyramid, a part of the temporal bone behind the ear. Jean's colleague recently gathered a sample and sent it for analysis in the ROM's ancient DNA lab. Tests of ancient DNA, or aDNA tests, are long and labour intensive and require a lot of amplification. They are also easily tainted. If a cat had been in the tomb with this mummy, she explained, the results would probably just read cat, cat, cat.

Until about twenty years ago Jutmosa was on semi-permanent display in good climate-controlled conditions, in a positive pressure case with filtered light. Then he was put on this bubble-wrapped slab in temporary storage. There he stayed, until ending up here in Jean's lab. Whoever put him there probably never intended to leave him there for so long, but things happen, conservation work supporting exhibitions and loans and events can easily take priority over other collections-related activities. I think of some of the neglected collections at the archives where I work: there's never enough staff, never enough funding.

At this point Jean and I took a break and Jean checked her email. I thought about the last time Jean and I looked at human remains together,

on a trip we took in the early 2000s, when we visited the corpses of Mao and Lenin on either end of the Trans-Siberian Railway. After that trip we'd spent a lot of time reading about Lenin's embalmer, who consulted on other Communist embalming projects, possibly including the embalming of Mao. The bodies of Lenin and Mao are kept under glass, regularly treated with embalming liquid, and they are only exposed to brief periods of low light during viewing hours. You can't get close enough to really see the texture of the flesh, and you don't know what's under the clothing they wear. It struck me that the only dead bodies I'd seen in person were those of my grandmother, shortly after her death, Mao, Lenin and Jutmosa.

"This mummy," Jean said, "is right on the verge of being preservable." She said she plans to rewrap the cut linens, store Jutmosa as best as she can, in a non-acidic, dry

environment, and deal with any beetle infestations she may find lurking underneath him; mummies are particularly attractive to the dermestid beetle. She will put the pieces of the skull back together and try to prevent further damage to the body from acid hydrolysis and other deteriorations. She is hopeful that maybe they'll get some usable results from the aDNA lab and be able to learn a bit more about him.

Ideal storage for mummies like Jutmosa is in a bag made from polyethylene laminated with a siloxane layer, to keep out all oxygen and maintain a low relative humidity. But then, because such bags aren't perfectly clear, they make the mummy less accessible for research and study. What's the balance between accessibility and preservation? As an archivist, this question informs my job as well, as I work, not with human remains, thankfully, but with photographs, documents and

artifacts made and used by humans; there are enough ethical quandaries and preservation difficulties around the collecting of this documentary evidence of human activity. Like the items in the collection I care for, the artifacts in Jean's lab each have their own chemical composition, their own preservation requirements and scheduling demands, and their own stories.

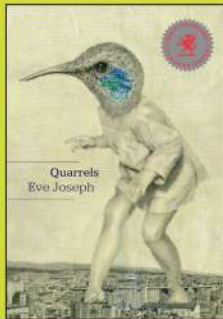
It was the end of the day and we began to pack up to take the subway to Jean's house. Her co-parent was making lasagne for dinner. I had a presentation to prepare for the next morning. Jean put the plastic over the mummy and the centuries-old smell was contained again.

---

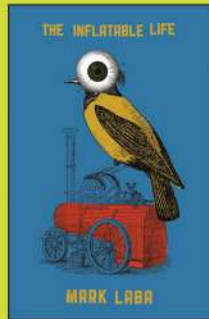
*Shyla Seller works as an archivist and editor in Vancouver, on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.*



# Poetry for everyone!



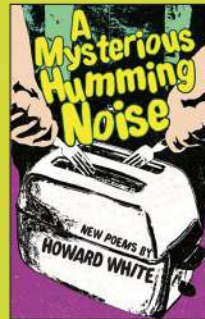
**QUARRELS**  
by Eve Joseph  
978-1-77214-119-1 | \$18  
WINNER OF THE  
2019 GRIFFIN POETRY  
PRIZE



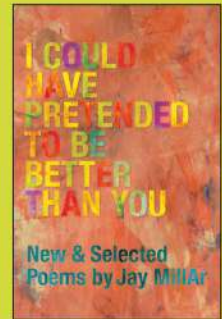
**THE INFLATABLE  
LIFE**  
by Mark Laba  
978-1-77214-142-9 | \$18



**MOTEL OF THE  
OPPOSABLE  
THUMBS**  
by Stuart Ross  
978-1-77214-126-9 | \$18



**A MYSTERIOUS  
HUMMING NOISE**  
by Howard White  
978-1-77214-141-2 | \$18

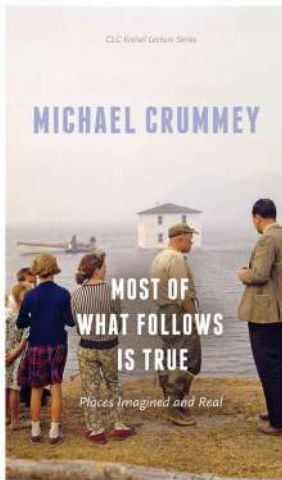


**I COULD HAVE  
PRETENDED  
TO BE BETTER  
THAN YOU**  
New & Selected Poems  
by Jay Millar  
978-1-77214-124-5 | \$20

.....  
[www.anvilpress.com](http://www.anvilpress.com) | [info@anvilpress.com](mailto:info@anvilpress.com)



UNIVERSITY  
of ALBERTA  
PRESS



Is there a limit to the liberties a writer can take with the real world?

## Most of What Follows is True

Places Imagined and Real

MICHAEL CRUMMEY

72 pages  
CLC Kreisel Lecture Series  
978-1-77212-457-6  
\$11.99 paper  
Canadian Literature /  
Fiction, Writing, and Place

ORDERS | 1-800-565-9523  
INFO | ccrooks@ualberta.ca  
uap.ualberta.ca

# Biking Around with Ondjaki

HÀN FÚSĒN

*Just decide what happens and worry about the rest later*

After his talk at the Vancouver Writers Festival last fall, the Angolan writer Ondjaki—considered one of the great writers of magical realism today—stepped offstage and joined the audience shuffling toward the exit.

I turned to Ondjaki and gave him a nod. He stuck out his hand to shake mine and said, “*Obrigado*, for being here.”

I thanked him for bringing up his grandmother, who was 103 years old, in the discussion on stage. He had remarked that in his childhood his grandmother loved to recount her past to him. Now that he was forty-two, he had joked, his back was starting to hurt from carrying the weight of her stories. “It reminded me of my own *nainai*,” I said. “She spun tales in idle air.”

The crowd stopped moving. Ondjaki and I were among a troop of silver-haired people. Nobody seemed to be in a hurry to leave.

“By the way,” Ondjaki said. “I’m Ndalú.”

I shook his hand a second time. I introduced myself with my English name. “So Ondjaki is your pen name?” I asked.

“You don’t have another name?” he said.

I explained that my other name, Hàn Fúsĕn, hampers introductions. The tones—the first, falling; the second, rising; the third, held high and flat—determine half the meaning. “English names are adopted easily here,” I said.

“Ndalú is not easy,” Ondjaki said. “But it will be easy for me to call you Hàn.”

At the door, Ondjaki put on red wool gloves. I told him he was lucky to be in Vancouver at this time—no rain, clear skies. It was forecasted to

last one more day. “That’s a rare treat for October,” I said.

“Wouldn’t you like to show me your city?” Ondjaki said. He had not yet ventured far from the festival site, Granville Island, an artisan shopping and entertainment district, jammed with colourful market stalls, artist studios, galleries, street performers, that one place that sells hammocks, and a ton of seagulls.

I was caught off guard. I hadn’t entertained the idea of wandering around town with a writer of magical realism. He could better spend his time with some of the prominent writers who had gathered in Vancouver for the festival. I imagined him sitting down for brunch with Esi Edugyan, laughing together at how his name is often mistaken for Ondaatje here, or roaming Gastown with Patrick deWitt in search of a Brooklynesque coffee shop, both fighting hangovers, uninterested in the red-brick storefronts.

But Ondjaki had no plans for the next day. So we made arrangements to meet around noon, plenty of time before his interview with Eleanor Wachtel for *Writers & Company* in the evening.

The air was crisp the next day, but I felt warm in the sun. Ondjaki and I were standing at a bike share station on the seawall of False Creek, looking across the water at the Vancouver skyline.

“I would like to ride towards the big ball,” Ondjaki said.

He was pointing to Science World, a shiny dome built for Expo 86 that now houses a science centre. I punched in the code to release a bike for him. I handed him the accompanying helmet. “It’s sort of mandatory,” I said.

“Rawi warned me about this at breakfast,” Ondjaki said.

“Rawi?” I said.

“Rawi,” he said. “Rawi and Madeleine. You must know Madeleine.”

I realized he was referring to the authors Rawi Hage and Madeleine Thien. I joked that I *do* know Madeleine. I come face to face with her each time I cross Broadway on Main Street. I explained that there’s a photo of her on a lamppost there, part of a public library project that highlights local authors. The first time I saw the photo the notion of immortality had come to mind, but then I continued up the block to buy parsley and canned herring. Ondjaki dropped his helmet into the basket on the front of the bike. He pushed off the kickstand, wobbled a little, and pedalled toward Science World. He swerved right and continued for another six blocks up a slope in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant. Ondjaki docked his bike at another bike share station. He took off his gloves and winter coat. He still had on a sweater and a thick scarf. He wiped down his forehead.

We walked through the neighbourhood and Ondjaki asked about my nainai.

I told him she was the first historian I knew. But she could fill the room with just conjecture. My dad says that she put together my grandpa’s life better than he could’ve lived it.

The previous evening, Ondjaki had mentioned that he used to share a room with his grandma—not because there was nowhere else to sleep, but because they enjoyed each other’s stories. “It was the same for me,” I said. “Nainai would keep me up too. She’d turn off the lights, bid good night, and then keep talking.”

When we reached the intersection where Kingsway merges with Main Street and 7th Avenue, I suggested we go for a bite at Budgie’s Burritos, a vegetarian neighbourhood favourite.

We ordered two twelve-inch

burritos, each stuffed with tofu, refried beans, shredded cabbage, rice, salsa verde and guacamole. Ondjaki added two beers to the order. “But please, can you ensure they’re cold?” he said to the woman at the till. He was still sweating.

She raised a pierced eyebrow. “They’re from the fridge,” she said.

“But how cold will they be,” he said, “like touching ice?”

She passed him one.

Ondjaki frowned as he felt the bottle. He passed it back and said, “Fine, give us the coldest two.”

As we ate our burritos I told Ondjaki that at the event the previous night I had overheard a woman talking about his novel *Transparent City*. Everyone in her book club, she had said, was confounded by the part when the main character begins to float like a kite and his family has to tie him to a flower bed, so he doesn’t float off while they attend his son’s funeral.

Ondjaki dipped the last of his burrito into the ancho chili sauce. “In ‘my’ city, Luanda,” he explained, “stories take place at wedding parties, in front of hawkers, along stairwells, on the evening news, during job interviews, when you arrive late, and when you require a beer. Things will always take place,” he said. “Just decide what happened. Worry about the rest later.”

It was six now, still an hour before Ondjaki was expected at sound check for the recording with Eleanor Wachtel. “There’s still time for a couple of mojitos,” he said.

We left Budgie’s Burritos and began to stroll up Main Street. As we passed by a bus stop, I told him how I found his prose in *Transparent City*—which uses unorthodox punctuation—difficult to read at first. “But then I got in a groove,” I said. “I guess it’s the same with reading poetry.”

Upon hearing the word poetry, a hulk of a man came up to my side, said, “To hell with your poetry!” Then

he pushed my bike and me off the sidewalk. I fell right onto Main Street, a busy road. The oncoming traffic was stopped at the red light.

I should’ve felt strange or rage or some kind of rush, but I didn’t. I just got up and guided my bike back onto the sidewalk.

“My friend, Hân,” Ondjaki said, “did that just happen?”

The other people at the bus stop avoided looking at us. The guy who shoved me resumed his stance by the garbage bin, thick arms crossed in front of a barrel chest.

“I think it did happen,” I said. “But I suppose it wasn’t hate-based.”

In the evening, after the interview, Ondjaki invited me to join him at the Granville Island Hotel.

“There’s a party every night for the writers,” he said.

“I’ll be spotted as soon as I enter,” I said. “I don’t have a lanyard.”

“You’ve read my book,” Ondjaki said. “It’s not about that. You know enough on how to crash a party. It doesn’t matter that we’re not in Luanda.”

“But I haven’t written anything yet,” I said.

“Then you should practise how to hold someone’s attention,” Ondjaki said, “especially if you know they could look for a lanyard.”

An older woman with violet hair strode up to us with a box of half-eaten french fries and said, “What are we still dicking around here for? Weed just became legal today. Let’s go to that party and light one already!”

“Hey, hey, just like that!” Ondjaki said. Then he mouthed to me, “Is she a writer?”

---

*Hân Fúsên works in municipal public engagement and interns at Geist. He studied political science and human geography at the University of British Columbia. He lives in Vancouver. Read his piece “Till Talk” on [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# The Two Lots

KRISTEN DEN HARTOG

*Unlocking the family portrait*



For nine years, my sister and I rooted through archives, old newspapers and photograph albums to research and write *The Cowkeeper's Wish*, a memoir about our working-class family's path from the slums of Victorian London to 1930s Canada.

The photograph shown here captures my great-grandmother Emily Ingram and her children, posing with her husband's parents, Charles and Polly Cartwright, in a suburb of London, England, in 1907. Emily's husband George is not in the photo because he's already sailed off to Canada, and is preparing for the arrival of Emily, Little Emily and Little George, and the unborn child Emily is carrying at that point, a boy they'll name John.

Though she looks perfectly respectable here, with her hair arranged in the popular Gibson Girl style and her

baby clad in ruffles on her lap, Emily has only recently been caught stealing from her uncle. She'd been hired to clean his house, and he'd noticed money missing from a locked box in his bedroom. He told the police, who planted marked coins in the box and returned the key to the pocket of a coat, where the uncle always kept it. Emily fell for the trap. A police officer followed her through the streets and arrested her on board a tram, then brought her back to her uncle's house, where she admitted her crime and pulled the coins from her stocking. "Don't prosecute me, Steve," the *Kentish Independent* newspaper quoted. "I have only had the two lots. I took [it] because I was going to have a little one, and had not money."

The story was unknown in our modern-day family until my sister and

I went digging in the *British Newspaper Archive*, searching out ancestors' names. My mother was shocked by the discovery. Emily's transgression clashed with the grandmother she remembered: a morally superior woman who wore her Sunday best—shoes and all—to the beach. We'd always known Emily was estranged from her own parents, and we'd assumed it was because she got pregnant before she was married. But now a different reason presented itself. What happened in the wider family after she'd been caught? What did George say?

If Emily had been shunned by her own parents, whether for the pregnancy or the theft, she seems to have been embraced by George's. The photograph suggests a warmth and familiarity between Polly and Charles and their daughter-in-law, and though no one can say for certain now, Charles looks like a kind man; he wears a gentle expression. Polly, for her part, may have come to empathy through her own personal trials.

Four years before this photograph was taken, their son Jack, then seventeen, had been struck by a train. Jack was George's younger brother, and he had mental and physical difficulties. He was diagnosed with a tumour of the cerebellum. In a letter to Polly the doctor stated that Jack's case was one of an "incurable nature" and "any suggestion as to his earning his own living is an impracticable one." But Jack did earn money pushing a barrow through the neighbourhood streets, hawking shrimps and sweets and oranges. He was working the day he stepped onto the tracks. According to the *Erith Times*, he was "found lying in the permanent way, with one leg broken, head badly shattered, and brain protruding." The driver later said he hadn't seen or

felt anything “even as small as a cat.” A witness at the inquest said he’d spoken to Jack earlier that day and that the normally cheerful, whistling boy had been crying. Jack told him he’d been sick the night before and that “Mother paid me for it.” The witness said that Jack had complained of being beaten on other occasions, and that sometimes he’d talked about drowning himself.

When the coroner asked Polly if she’d ever beaten the boy she answered no, and though she admitted she’d been annoyed with him for vomiting on the bed the night before, she claimed there’d been no harsh words between them the next morning before Jack left with his barrow. She added her dismay that a rumour had been travelling through the neighbourhood, suggesting she’d not been feeding Jack properly, but the coroner reassured her: “The well-nourished state of the body proves the lack of foundation for any such statement.” In the end the coroner’s verdict was suicide while suffering temporary mental derangement.

After the inquest, Polly told a reporter that she was convinced that Jack’s death had been an accident, and that his tumour had caused him to be unsteady. He was eccentric, she said, but also “perfectly harmless... and an exceptionally good lad.” She claimed she’d been “overawed” by the inquest, and that she’d failed to represent herself and Jack correctly. She knew he wouldn’t have walked onto the tracks on purpose—on the very morning of the accident he’d arranged to dig a garden for a neighbour, and with the money that would bring he planned to buy an incubator and hatch chickens and build a family fortune. That was Polly’s version, anyway—or at least it was the newspaper’s version of Polly’s version. But what was Jack’s? Had Polly beaten him? Had he wanted to die?

In the photograph Emily and Polly wear guarded half-smiles and don’t-mess-with-me expressions, though that may be just me, pressing what I’ve

## ’n yer comin’ wit me

(searching for a nova scotia cottage)

SCOTT ANDREW CHRISTENSEN

how could  
hank snow  
befriend elvis?  
when he said *brooklyn*  
presley thought *borough*,  
frets still warm  
amid polite inquiry,  
perspiration and smoke.

followed by the invitation  
to visit seabirds  
cradling rainbow buoys  
and buffering  
borderless trees,  
he knew  
their common chorus—  
an appalachia of birds—  
often sang  
with homesick voices.

*have ya been ev’ryweir?  
the king asking,  
a’freyed his guitar  
might become lonely  
in the undercarriage  
of the lanky greyhound  
so far from nashville,  
i gotta long way ta go,  
hank yodelling back,  
'n yer comin' wit me.*

---

*Scott Andrew Christensen published his first poetry collection, the boundaries of return, in 2014, and continues to work on both long and short fiction.*

---

learned into this image of people I never actually knew. I imagine Polly and Charles knew they would not see Emily and their grandchildren again once they left for Canada, and that their son George was already lost to them, since that was the reality of immigration in those days, unless you were among the privileged.

In July 1907, Emily, Little George and Little Emily boarded the *Parisian* and set sail for Canada. A story remains that Emily went on deck one blustery day to breathe some fresh air—she was pregnant with John by then, and nauseous. The wind whipped around her so furiously that Little Emily was nearly torn from her arms and blown into the sea. Emily hung on, and Little George clung to her skirts. When they arrived at the train station in London, Ontario, George was there to meet them and had hired a carriage and two white horses—for luck, he said, but the luck wouldn’t hold; Little

Emily died of pneumonia two weeks after their arrival.

In their own small way, Emily and George prospered in Canada. George found work at McCormick’s biscuit and candy factory, washing windows and tinkering with machinery, bringing home broken biscuits for the children, who numbered eight in the end. Their fourth child was my grandfather, Bill, long dead now. I’m sure he would have been stunned to learn of his mother’s theft, and his uncle’s possible suicide. It’s strange to think of all I know about his parents that he never knew.

---

*Kristen den Hartog is a novelist who lives in Toronto. With her sister Tracy Kasaboski, she has co-authored two books that weave social history with family history. The Occupied Garden follows their father’s family in the Netherlands during World War II, and The Cowkeeper’s Wish traces their mother’s line from England to Canada. They blog at [thecowkeeperswish.com](http://thecowkeeperswish.com).*

# The Woman Who Talks to Her Dog at the Beach

GEOFF INVERARITY

The Woman Who Talks to Her Dog at the Beach favours the Socratic method:

“Where’s your stick?”

“What do you think is going to happen if you keep chewing on that stick?”

“Would you like a treat?”

“Are you ready to go home now?”

Simple stuff.

(Answers: “The stick is behind me.

Soon it will be all gone.

Yes, always a treat.

No, home, never.”)

But in private, later, the tricky existential questions fly:

“Who’s a Good Dog?”

“Are you a Good Dog?”

“Who’s a Good Dog, then?”

The dog wrestles with the questions.

“I have done whatsoever you have asked of me.

I sat when you required it, stayed, despite my heart being wrenched with every step you took away from me.

I confess, alone in exile I have often howled despairing questions of my own:

‘Will I never see you again?’

‘Are you ever coming home?’

‘Why have you forsaken me?’

“I have dropped what you wanted dropped;

searched out and picked up

what was apparently lost—

all the sticks you could not find,

the balls you could not see.

I have rolled over and plunged myself again and again into the rime-cold ocean at your behest.

“Yet still you ask the same question:

‘Who is a Good Dog?’

“There are other questions.

Clearly, yes, of course

I would like to go for a walk, and it would be most agreeable

a privilege and an honour

to carry the squeaky toy with me in my mouth.

But am I a Good Dog?

Do you know the answer?

Because I would appreciate some clarity.

“Who, on this shoreline,

is a Good Dog?

Are there better dogs than I am?

Please, I hope to have an answer,

before my coat mats

my legs stiffen,

my breath reeks,

and I am finally ready

to go home at last.”

The Woman Who Talks to Her Dog at the Beach launches her questions into the air.

Life is complicated, and lonely.

There is heartbreak in the future.

People are difficult,

there is great comfort in companionship, in the simple love of dogs.

---

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



# Road Trip Supreme

MICHAŁ KOZŁOWSKI

*On the scent of Ameryka*

— I —

S and I are planning to drive from Vancouver to San Francisco when my Polish cousin calls to say that she will be visiting North America. She wants to join us and go shopping in San Francisco, at an outlet mall. We agree that she will fly down and that we will spend a few days in San Francisco, go to the outlet mall and then drive back to Vancouver together. My cousin and I have seen each other only three times in the last twenty years.

At the San Francisco Airport arrivals I ask my cousin how her flight was.

*Masakra*, she replies.

This translates as massacre, a popular term in Poland to express disappointment.

We leave the airport. S pulls the car onto the eight-lane highway that goes through the centre of San Francisco, connecting Silicon Valley with the suburbs. We edge along in gridlock for hours.

*Masakra*, my cousin says from the back seat.

Then, out of nowhere, clouds roll in and torrential rains pound down onto the car. The voice on the radio says that the Bay Area has been hit by an atmospheric river, a type of weather event during which the volume of moisture in the air and the horizontal movement of the rain, on account of strong winds, resemble the flow of a river.

Wind buffets the car, the wipers barely keep up with the amount of water streaming down the windshield.

*Tragedia*, my cousin says.

— II —

The following afternoon—sunny, warm—at the corner of Haight and Ashbury I tell my cousin in Polish that this was where the hippies gathered in

the 1960s: drugs, the flower children, Janis Joplin.

My cousin is in her forties and works for a clothing distributor, but I can never get her to tell me exactly what it is she does.



Of course, my cousin says, Janis Joplin. I like Janis Joplin.

A few hours later, at City Lights Bookstore, I tell her that this was where the famous Beat poets hung out and there, across the lane, was where they drank.

My cousin nods politely.

That's fine, she says, but maybe after this we can go to the Apple store.

— III —

I order espressos at the Caffe Trieste in the North Beach neighbourhood. According to Google this was the first Italian espresso joint on the West Coast, and the Beats hung out here too, and later Francis Ford Coppola wrote most of the screenplay for *The Godfather*, on a typewriter at one of the tables.

Very strong, my cousin says as she sips her espresso.

— IV —

At the Apple store my cousin looks up the products in the Apple store on the Apple website on her iPhone. At least a dozen employees walk around the store. My cousin wants to purchase a watch strap for an Apple watch. An employee walks over, asks if we need help. I look at my cousin, but she continues to scroll through her phone.

My cousin leads the way to a table where the Apple watch straps are displayed.

Is this this? she says to me in Polish. In one hand she holds a watch strap and in the other she holds her phone, displaying an image of a watch strap.

They look similar, I say.

You think I don't know that, she says.

Okay, okay, I say, it looks like the same thing. That looks like a photo of that.

I think you're right, she says.

But then she puts the watch strap back.

Let's go, she says in English now.

— V —

On the patio of a vegan taco shop in the Mission District—a traditionally Hispanic neighbourhood increasingly taken over by hipsters—my cousin asks me in Polish to ask the waiter how many millilitres of wine are in the happy hour wine portion. Her English is good, but she rarely speaks it.

When the waiter arrives I ask him how many millilitres of wine are in the happy hour wine. He looks at me. I'll find out, he says. Then he walks off.

What's that? my cousin asks in Polish, pointing to the word *tempeh* on the menu.

Something like tofu, I say in Polish. Fake meat?

What about that? she says, and points at the word heirloom.

Kind of like old, I say, like inherited. She shrugs.

The waiter returns. Six ounces, he says to me.

Before I can translate, my cousin says to me in Polish, Okay, order one for me.

She will have one, I say.

Then my cousin says to me in Polish, Ask him if there is cilantro on the nachos.

I ask the waiter. He says there is cilantro in the pico de gallo and cilantro is also used for garnish, but they could withhold the garnish. I tell my cousin.

I tell the waiter to bring the nachos without the cilantro garnish.

Just beyond the patio, three men are bent over a suitcase on the sidewalk. One man's pants keep sliding down, his white rump glowing in the afternoon sun. A group of about forty elementary school children marches by with signs that read, I'm Going to College.

After the happy hour wine and nachos, we walk around the neighbourhood looking for a bar where my cousin might wait tomorrow evening while S and I go to a concert.

A married woman alone in a bar, my cousin says, what would people back home think?

Finally, we see one that looks promising: crowded enough, but not packed; many big windows; friendly atmosphere. My cousin points to a table inside and says, There, I will sit there tomorrow and wait for you until you come to get me after the concert.

## — VI —

In Dolores Park a guy in his twenties zooms over on his skateboard and says hi.

Hello, I say.

You people are friendly, he says, you must not be from around here. I say hello to people and the first thing they do is clutch their purses. The thing about San Francisco is that you

can't even talk to people anymore. I love my friends here, but people in this town are not friendly, you know? I'm a very social person. I used to love this town. I lived here for fifteen years. Then I moved to Santa Cruz, like I met a woman from Santa Cruz and then I moved there and then I got a dog. Then then she broke it off.



I stayed anyway because the rent was cheaper and my dog loves the beach in Santa Cruz.

He turns around and points into a crowd of people and dogs. That's my dog over there, he says.

Back in Poland, my cousin says in English, I run a dog rescue foundation.

That's dope, the guy says.

We rescue many dogs, she says, from people who keep dogs chained in their yards or in cages. People are sick. How can you keep a dog in a cage? Last month I drove one thousand kilometres in one day to rescue two dogs.

Then my cousin turns to me and tells me in Polish that she would like a picture with this guy. She hands me her phone.

She would like a picture with you, I say to the guy.

After the picture taking, the guy invites us for a drink at a bar in the neighbourhood that evening.

We'll see you there, I say.

## — VII —

On the night of the concert my cousin says that she will stay behind in our hotel. She no longer wants to wait for us in the bar.

There's a new documentary about molestation in the Catholic Church in Poland that I want to watch, she says. It's very long, two and a half hours.

## — VIII —

We take the 101 highway out of San Francisco.

This is the turnoff for the outlet mall, I tell my cousin an hour later.

She is asleep, and we keep driving along the 101.

## — IX —

In Crescent City, population 6,300 (of whom 2,200 are inmates at the super-max prison on the outskirts of town), 350 miles north of San Francisco, we pull into the Taco Bell parking lot. It is evening, the town cast in the golden rays of the setting sun; few cars on the roads; the sidewalks empty, save for a barefooted man in his twenties swinging a black staff through the air in quick, short arcs.

Inside the Taco Bell seven staff in Taco Bell uniforms and visors hustle in the kitchen. There is one other customer inside.

Welcome to Taco Bell, says the man behind the counter. His torso is thick with muscles, his eyes bulge.

How can I help you? he says.

I smile. My cousin reads the menu, mounted high behind the counter.

She asks in Polish if I see taco salad on the menu.

I do not see taco salad on the menu but, I say, I could easily inquire.

Not to worry, she says. Can you tell me what that means? she says, pointing at the menu.

Locos tacos, I say to her, locos is Spanish for...

I search for the Polish word.

Psychologically ill, I say in Polish.

She looks at me.

There is another word floating around in my mind, one that I think means crazy, but in Polish is closer to deranged. *Wzruszony*, I say, but I can tell by my cousin's reaction that this is not the right word. Then I realize that *wzruszony* means touched, affected.

I look at the man behind the counter. His face is frozen in a smile.

Crazy, I say in English to her.

Crazy, okay, my cousin says in English.

Okay, what about that? she says in Polish, pointing at another area of the menu.

I look at the other items: XXL Grilled Stuft Burrito, Burrito Supreme, Crunchwrap Supreme, Double Decker Taco Supreme.

I tell my cousin that the menu is untranslatable.

No concern, she says in Polish.

What about that, she says, in the picture, what are those?

She is referring to images of burritos, but none of them have captions.

I'm sorry, I say to her in Polish, I don't know what those are.

That's okay, she says in Polish, just order me the one on the left.

She will have one of those on the left, I say to the man behind the counter.

One Burrito Supreme, the man says.

He turns his eyes toward us.

That's all, I tell him.

All right, he says, that'll be \$3.61.

My cousin digs out a wad of cash from her purse. She counts off four one-dollar bills and places them on the counter. Then she jams the rest back into her purse. The man behind the counter returns her change and hands her a receipt. He points to a string of digits. He says, this is your order number.

Then the man says, My name is Chadwick, Taco Bell is conducting

customer service surveys on their website, and you could win \$500 by going to tellthebell.com and filling in a survey about my awesome customer service. There's a code on the receipt that you punch in.

He looks at us. I translate to my cousin what Chadwick said. She smiles at him. I smile too. My cousin says in Polish, Tell him we will fill out the survey. I tell him that we will fill out the survey.

One of the other staff, a pale young man with wispy facial hair, approaches the counter and calls out the order number. He places a paper bag on the counter.



— X —

My friend would kill to set foot on American soil, my cousin says.

We are walking through the Woodburn Premium Outlet mall, the largest tax-free shopping outlet in the Western United States, just south of Portland. My cousin is texting with the friend.

Why? I ask.

Because, it's America, my cousin says.

But why? I ask.

It's the feeling, she says, the scent.

The patrons of the Woodburn Premium Outlet mall all seem to be tourists. We encounter groups of teens

speaking other Germanic languages and well-dressed Chinese families.

After three hours my cousin emerges with many bags of goods in each hand: Tommy Hilfiger, Coach, Nike, Under Armour, others.

Don't look at me like that, she says, do you know how much money I saved here?

— XI —

In Portland we walk around downtown looking for the Apple store. The map on the iPhone says that the Apple store is just two blocks away. But when we round the corner where the store is supposed to be, there is only siding, covering the entire multi-storey building. The writing on the siding says that the store is closed for renovations, but that everything is available at apple.com.

*Masakra*, my cousin says.

How about the Nike store? I say to my cousin.

Fine, she says.

The Nike store has two floors, many displays of shoes and racks of athletic wear. Attractive staff people in tights and sneakers mill about.

My cousin wanders over to the shoe display. She picks a white running shoe off the shelf and then looks down at her phone, then back up at the shoe. She places the shoe back onto the shelf and then picks up another similar looking shoe and holds it up. She carries on this way, looking at her phone and at the shoes.

Finally she says, *Tragedia*.

She leads the way out into the street.

A few blocks over, hundreds of people are gathered in a public square. Many of them hold up signs that read, My Vagina My Rights. Someone makes a speech over a loudspeaker; the crowd cheers.

---

*Michał Kozłowski is the associate editor of Geist. He was born in Krakow, Poland, and has lived in Ottawa, Winnipeg and now Vancouver. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

# FINDINGS

---



*Photos from Found Slides, a visual study that combines found slides taken from 1954 to 1993 to create double exposures that explore the amateur photographer's narrative threads. Anna Kasko holds a BFA in photography from Emily Carr University. Her work has been*

---

## You Don't Know Your Dinghy from Your Punt

MICHAEL CRUMMEY

*From Most of What Follows Is True: Places Imagined and Real. Published by University of Alberta Press and Canadian Literature Centre in 2019. Michael Crumme is a writer and poet. His work has won the Canadian Authors Association Award for Fiction and the Commonwealth Prize (Canada and Caribbean Region), has been short-listed for the International IMPAC Dublin Award and has been a finalist for the Governor General's Award in 2014. He lives in St. John's.*

I should acknowledge at this point that there is an argument to be made that a writer's only responsibility is to tell a compelling, convincing story. That fiction operates on a plane that, while it may look and feel something like reality, is actually

separate from the world of facts and history, and is not beholden to either of these concepts. Some would argue that a story is like the rain: it falls where it falls and is constrained by no rules beyond the gravity of a writer's skill. Its only job is to hold a reader's

attention. Bringing in issues of fact or history or authenticity are beside the point.

I should acknowledge that, although my own approach has always been very different, I once believed this was a perfectly reasonable view for other writers to hold. And I can pinpoint exactly the moment I was forced, against my own inclinations, to revise my belief in this matter.

It was at a literary festival reception somewhere in the United States almost twenty years ago. I was talking to a festival-goer who had no idea who I was, which is generally my experience of literary events in the US. I mentioned I was from Newfoundland and was expecting the usual blank



exhibited and published across Canada, and is held in private collections in Canada and internationally. She was longlisted for the 2019 New Generation Photography Award. She lives in Vancouver.

stare, but her face lit up. “Oh,” she said, “I know all about Newfoundland.”

“You do?” I said, and I’m sure my face registered my surprise.

“Yes, absolutely,” she insisted. “I just read *The Bird Artist*. Do you know it?”

“I do know it,” I told her. “And I hate to break it to you, but you know nothing about Newfoundland.”

Before I go any further, I feel the need to quote Kurt Vonnegut here. He once said, “Any reviewer who expresses rage and loathing for a novel is preposterous. He or she is like a person who has put on full armour and attacked a hot fudge sundae.”<sup>6</sup> Wise words that should give any critic or Kreisel lecturer pause. But the sorry fact of the matter, my

friends, is that I am about to strap on a suit of armour and take a medieval swing at a hot fudge sundae. So, I invite you to take what follows with Vonnegut’s words in mind.

*The Bird Artist* is a novel by the American writer Howard Norman, published in 1994. It was well-reviewed when it appeared and was nominated for the National Book Award in the US. I started the book years ago but wasn’t able to finish it, put off by the glaring inaccuracies it contained. I went back to it for the purposes of this lecture, hoping I had misremembered it somehow, that over the intervening years I had exaggerated the degree to which the book misrepresents Newfoundland. As it turns out, the opposite was true.

Ostensibly, the book is set in Witless Bay, a small outpost on the Avalon Peninsula, shortly before the First World War. I say *ostensibly* because, beyond using Newfoundland place names, the world of *The Bird Artist* bears absolutely no resemblance—I am not overstating this—literally zero resemblance to the Newfoundland of the early 20th century. Every aspect of its life and culture, from the smallest details to the most central truths of the place, are misrepresented or adulterated or deleted.

The narrator is Fabian Vas, a young man who has found an escape from the oppression of his parents’ unhappy marriage in drawing the seabirds on the coast. And our troubles with the

novel begin with him. On page three, he tells us “I discovered my gift for drawing and painting birds early on. I should better say that someone had filled the margins of my third-form primer with...sketches.”<sup>7</sup> Let’s leave aside the fact that the likelihood anyone in Witless Bay had a “third-form primer” in 1912 is close to nil. It’s Fabian’s voice here that rings completely false. “I should better say?” Yes, Fabian. You really should.

His mother, upon discovering her son’s sketches, remarks that it is

“awfully nice to learn something so unmistakable about one’s offspring.”<sup>8</sup> I am trying to imagine a situation in which any Newfoundlander, at any time in history, would refer to their own youngster as “one’s offspring.” Everyone in the novel speaks in a mid-century, mid-Atlantic accent, despite the fact that language and speech is one of the most distinctive aspects of Newfoundland culture. Norman offers a nod to that fact when the family travels to Nova Scotia and a local tells them that they speak “God’s English,

with some evidence of Newfie in it.”<sup>9</sup> I don’t know what the Nova Scotian was hearing, but let’s just say the evidence isn’t discernible in the text. When someone says, “I neither champion nor repudiate my life thus far,”<sup>10</sup> or “She kindly said she’d pick it up for me;”<sup>11</sup> or “Darling, can you buy a fish for supper;”<sup>12</sup> it doesn’t exactly scream “Newfie.” (As a side note, no one seems to know exactly how that derogatory term for Newfoundlanders originated, but it wasn’t in common usage before the 1930s at the earliest.)



**Joe Kelly, Town Clock Keeper**

*It actually is something beating inside this building, keeping it alive ...*

The bell strikes eleven and the tower reverberates. Joe winds the bell, then the movement: sixty-four turns of the crank each. He is breathing quickly, smiling. “We worry so much about tomorrow, but we should just live in today,” he says. “Today is precious.”



**Michael Fritsch, Fritsch Fragrances**

*It’s the cheapest stuff I sell ... It’s probably my best seller, too ...*

He says his customers now are “few and far between” and that most of them come in “because they can’t find what they want somewhere else”, but their perseverance is not surprising to him. He has seen what a particular perfume can mean to someone. “Women come in, and their mother, or their aunt, or their grandmother used to wear a fragrance, and they pick it up for her,” he says. “Scent is a great memory.”



**Manfred Aulich, Typewriter Mechanic**

*I will sell this machine ... Somebody’s going to get lucky and get a really, really nice typewriter ...*

Manfred is also one of the last people around who services mechanical cheque writers and he can order new typewriters, which are still being manufactured. “I can’t believe I’m still doing typewriters,” he says. “Everything is for a time in life, right? And typewriters had their time, and they still have some time left.”

*From Overtime: Portraits of a Vanishing Canada by Karl Kessler and Sunshine Chen. Published by Porcupine’s Quill in 2018. Karl Kessler is a researcher and writer in the heritage field. He and his wife have coordinated the annual architecture and heritage event Doors Open Waterloo Region since 2003. He lives in Waterloo, Ontario. Sunshine Chen works in planning, development and design. He started Storybuilders Inc., a company that uses photographs, video and audio to tell stories of people, places and organizations across Canada.*

In Norman's Newfoundland there are "villages" rather than outposts. People row dinghies instead of rodneys or punts or dories. The main characters—born-and-bred Newfoundlanders, I remind you—have names like Alaric, Romeo, Botho, Boas, and Odeon. There is no shortage of unusual and exotic names in Newfoundland, and I have gone out of my way to make use of them in my own writing. But these names are German, Italian, Dutch, Hebrew and Greek in origin, groups that had no real presence in Newfoundland at the time. The chance of all of them being represented in a single outpost is zero.

There is talk of someone shooting at racoons, though there are no racoons in Newfoundland. There are orchards and potluck meals and store-bought bottles of milk, there is fresh lemon for tea, there is a market where local fishermen *buy fish* for their own supper. There is a sanatorium in the little outpost of Garnish. There is a statue of Marconi in St. John's. And my personal favourite: Fabian's father was born and raised in Buchans—my hometown! Doing some elementary math, that would mean he was likely born there somewhere between 1870 and 1880, which would be quite a trick since Buchans did not exist before the late 1920s when the mine opened.

Everyone in Norman's Witless Bay attends the local Anglican church, which is odd when you consider the fact that Witless Bay sits on what is known as the Irish Loop. The first official Newfoundland census was conducted in 1836 at which time Witless Bay had a population of 542, of whom 540 were Roman Catholic. The population has fluctuated in the years since, but that ratio has remained fairly constant. There has never been a place of worship in Witless Bay other than the Roman Catholic church. But there is no mention of Catholics in the novel. Even Moravians from the neighbouring outpost of Renew's have a walk-on part at a funeral, but the Catholics

don't get a sniff. (It probably won't surprise you to hear there are no Moravians in Renew's, which in reality is also a Catholic community. The Moravians are a German sect with a significant history in Labrador, but they've never had a presence on the island. The author appears to have added them in this instance—he writes that their religion had "travelled down from Labrador"<sup>13</sup>—for "colour.")

Even with something as basic and obvious as the food people eat, *The Bird Artist* swings and misses. And swings and misses. These people have freshly baked scones for breakfast, for Chrissakes. I had never heard of scones before I moved to Ontario in my twenties. They drink coffee when they get up in the morning and in the afternoon and at night. Coffee, Fabian tells us, "was what you came into out of the cold."<sup>14</sup> No, you fecken well did not. Tea is what Newfoundlanders drank. In the winter they might occasionally have cocoa. Coffee was almost as rare as scones in those days.

At one point the Vas family sits to a supper of sea bass with lettuce and tomatoes from Fabian's mother's garden. No such supper was ever eaten in Newfoundland at the turn of the 20th century, or any other time. It is true that every household in Newfoundland had its own garden, but the only things hardy enough to thrive in that climate and to last in storage through the winter are root vegetables. So the lettuce and tomatoes are possible though unlikely, at best. But it's that sea bass that really sticks in my craw.

People eat a lot of sea bass in this book. It's the only fish Newfoundlanders can stomach, to judge by *The Bird Artist*. The codfish—the heart of Newfoundland's economy and diet, the sole reason for European settlement in the first place—gets about as much acknowledgement as the Catholics of Witless Bay. It's mentioned in passing in a reference to "codfish trappers," but Norman gives more attention to the "lobstermen...tuna and sea

bass fishermen out in the before-dawn or evening hours..."<sup>15</sup> He appears in this instance, as he seems to in many others in this book, to be thinking of New England. There are tuna in Newfoundland waters, but to the best of my knowledge there was no commercial tuna fishery before the 1950s. There has *never* been a sea bass fishery for the simple reason that there are no sea bass in Newfoundland waters. I've never seen or tasted one. No one I know has ever heard of it being caught or served here.

Lobster also plays an odd role in the book. To be fair (and to my own surprise when I looked into this) there was a lobster fishery and canning business beginning in the 1870s, though it was concentrated on the south and west coasts. And it was so marginal an undertaking as to be almost invisible compared to the cod fishery, which employed the vast majority of people and fed them all. More to the point, lobster was not a part of the local diet except in dire circumstances.

This is a story so common in Newfoundland that it's become a cliché: only the poorest and most desperate families ate lobster because shellfish are bottom feeders. And they often hid the shameful evidence of their desperation by burying the shells. But in Norman's 1912 Witless Bay there is a "chowder restaurant" called Spivey's where the signature dish is—you guessed it—lobster. The local fisherfolk spend most of their "free time" at Spivey's. It was "especially popular," Fabian tells us "on 'Family Night' as it came to be known, which was Sunday."<sup>16</sup> The chef personally delivers the lobster dish to his customers, calling out "Presentation!" and holding the tray above his head as he moves through the tables. Then, with a flourish, reveals the crustacean lying under a cloth napkin. "Sometimes," Fabian tells us, "this drew applause" from the patrons.<sup>17</sup>

Again I say: Not fecken likely.

For most of the last four hundred years, outpost Newfoundland

operated on the truck system in which a local merchant gave supplies and equipment to fishermen on credit with the stipulation they sell their season's catch to the merchant. The merchant set the prices for the supplies given out in the spring and for the fish taken in the fall. In good years, a fisherman could expect to do slightly better than breaking even. It was not unheard of for people to spend their entire lives in debt. The work of surviving in these communities—for men, women and children—was unrelenting. It was a subsistence economy in which there was no real surplus, in which cash money rarely figured. Which is why those gardens of root vegetables were so important. The potatoes, carrots, cabbage and turnip were stored in root cellars and eaten through the winters. Without that store, people literally would have starved.

There were no restaurants where fishermen and their families paid for

and were served lobster under cloth napkins. There were no General Stores where people popped in to buy bottled milk. Women did not use, as Fabian's mother does, skin creams from France. In those days, people made clothing and curtains out of burlap sacks so as not to waste the material. In the poorest parts of Newfoundland, many youngsters went without shoes. But Fabian's mother, a fisherman's wife, "would spend a ritual half hour standing in front of her closet, riffling through [her] dresses, greatly amused."<sup>18</sup>

Fabian's mother may be amused by the sartorial decadence at her fingertips. I, on the other hand, am not. 🐾

#### Notes

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 6. The Telegraph, "Kurt Vonnegut: Best Quotes" 23 September 2014. | 11. Ibid, 49.  |
| 7. Howard Norman, The Bird Artist, 3.                             | 12. Ibid, 78.  |
| 8. Ibid, 4.   | 13. Ibid, 111. |
| 9. Ibid, 174.   | 14. Ibid, 19.  |
| 10. Ibid, 49.   | 15. Ibid, 27.  |
|   | 16. Ibid, 57.  |
|   | 17. Ibid, 59.  |
|   | 18. Ibid, 50.  |

and the pine tree in the backyard where she ran to bury the putty discs she had made. She had knelt under its branches then, and the ground was so cool. Christine remembered how it felt, how the needles poked through the thin cotton of her nightdress and stuck to the smooth skin on the tops of her feet and pricked her fingers as she dug in the earth. There was a pine tree in the neighbour's yard too, only the fence separated the two trees. Remembering that moment, it was as if her whole life of seven years had become a life of a hundred years and she felt old and young, and alone and part of her family, as if she were looking at her mother washing the floors through a window. Of course, she thought, this must be what heaven is like. She saw that between the two big yellow words Pine-Sol was a tiny pine tree. Pine-Sol. Pine trees were all around her it seemed, but she wasn't afraid and didn't want to get away. The bottle of Pine-Sol. Heaven could be this simple thing, Christine thought, the scent of the water her mother used to wash floors.

Then the news came on the radio.

*The small community of Shell Lake, Saskatchewan is in shock this morning ...*

Christine's mother rushed to the radio and turned up the volume.

— What's wrong Mom?

— SHHH!

*... as RCMP investigate the deaths of nine people. The victims, all members of the same family, were discovered at their home this morning by a neighbour. RCMP are treating these deaths as homicides. Shell Lake is 50 miles west of Prince Albert. We will bring you more details about this tragedy as they become available.*

Christine's mother ran to the phone.

— What's wrong, Mom?

— I'm phoning Gramma.

— Long distance? Christine was shocked. Her mother didn't call long distance, especially during the day when she said it was so expensive. Christine's mother dialed quickly,

## Heaven's Scent

WENDY MCGRATH

*From Broke City. Published by NeWest Press in 2019. Wendy McGrath is the author of the Santa Rosa Trilogy, of which Broke City is the final book. She lives in Edmonton on Treaty 6 territory.*

The house smelled the way it did when the Christmas tree was in the living room. When it was in the corner and still. Frozen with no decorations or lights. It was as if Christmastime had made a mistake and come to the house in the afternoon, in summer when it was hotter inside the house than it was outside. That summer morning, when the house was still cool, Christine's mother had poured the pine-tree-smelling liquid into a silver bucket half-full of hot water. Christine had seen the bottle under the sink and now she could read the label: Pine-Sol.

Pine-Sol was gold and beautiful and when her mother had raised

the bottle to screw the cap back on the sun shone through the glass and cast a golden beam of light from the window to the kitchen floor she was about to wash. This must be what heaven looks like, Christine thought. The smell of pine trees, gold shining on the green and grey tiles in the kitchen and the music playing. That song about golden silence was playing on the radio and Christine thought she might already be in heaven, but maybe no one had told her yet. It was as if pine trees were all around her: the smell of the trees at Elk Island Park on that day she had learned to swim and even her father had come along,



receiver to her ear, cigarette sticking up like an antenna. Christine watched their own phone number in the circle at the centre of the dial.

Her mother had written the numbers in blue ink and each one was a character. The fours were like sails on boats and the twos were like swans on the water. Her mother's finger would pierce the small metal circle inside the bigger metal circle, go half-way round the dial and return. Again. Again.

— What's wrong, Mom? Do you know those people, Mom? Who are those people, Mom? Does Gramma know them? Christine thought about what they'd said on the news: "... *the victims, all members of the same family ...*"

— Is it Gramma?

— No. No, I don't know who it is.

— I'm scared, Mom.

— There's nothing to be scared about.

Christine didn't believe her.

Her mother had washed all the floors in the house. The green and grey kitchen tiles, the shiny wood floors in the living room and the bedrooms and tiny white square tiles in the bathroom. Christine stood in the middle of the living room floor watching her mother crawl with her scrub rag from room to room. She had a burning cigarette between her lips. The wood felt sticky and hot on Christine's bare feet. She stepped back and watched as her footprints disappeared on the floor's surface. She could remember something like this from before. When? She remembered small diamond shapes on the side of a man's socks and how his own footprints followed him from the living room to the kitchen. Was it a dream? Where was her mother in this dream? Christine thought she remembered being in the living room in the little pink house. Her mother had told her to stay there and be quiet. She was afraid to move. She couldn't move. She heard her mother

and this man in the kitchen talking, whispering. She didn't move and didn't speak until the man left. Don't move. Don't talk.

— Mom, if I showed you a picture of a pine tree would you know what I was talking about, what I mean?

Her mother stopped scrubbing the floor, and still on her hands and knees, turned her head toward her daughter. Christine saw a tiny bead of water trickle down the side of her mother's face as her mouth tightened around her cigarette. She took a drag from it, held it between two wet fingers and flicked the ash into the metal ashtray beside her knee.

— Don't talk nonsense.

— No, Mom, if there weren't words, how would we talk to each other? Would we just draw each other pictures or something?

— I s'pose.

Her mother wiped the sweat from the side of her face with the inside of her wrist, bent to keep the burning end of the cigarette away from her hair.

— But, Mom, if there were no words how would we tell each other what the pictures would mean?

Her mother motioned with a flick of her head.

— Go, go find something to do, I want to get the house cleaned up. I hate coming back to a dirty house.

Her mother made her way to the bathroom, taking the bucket and the bottle of Pine-Sol with her. She set the bottle down beside the toilet and emptied the bucket in the bowl. The toilet gurgled and sputtered like it was flushing itself with no help from anyone else. Christine watched quietly and her mother set down the bucket, sprinkled Comet around the toilet bowl and scrubbed it with a rag made from one of Christine's father's old, worn-out work shirts. The shirt was green and black plaid. Christine remembered thinking that when her Dad had worn that shirt the pattern

was like roads going over and under each other. Roads going to Saskatchewan and back to Edmonton were the only long highway roads she knew. Christine and her family had made that trip so many times ... they would go again as soon as her father got home from work. He was taking time off and it was summer, his busiest house-building time Christine was told, so this must be a special trip.

Christine had left her mother be for a time and now quietly watched her from the bathroom door waiting as her mother squeezed out the rag over the toilet bowl. Christine thought it looked as if she was really trying to hurt something. Her mother stopped and looked up. Christine thought her head looked like an egg in an egg cup.

— Mom, see that picture of a pine tree? If I just showed you the picture would you know what I meant? Christine asked.

— No, I don't know what you mean.

— If I didn't say anything, if I just pointed to the pine tree on that bottle, would you know what I was talking about?

— I honestly don't know what you're talking about half the time. You think about things too much. It's just a bottle of Pine-Sol.

Her mother poured some of the golden liquid into the bucket and the pinging sound and the smell made Christine taste metal. Intense pine, the half-filled bucket, the water. In that moment, she was lifted up and, with her eyes closed, she hovered over the pine tree in the backyard. She could see herself and her mother talking, having a conversation about ... she knew there was something she wanted to share with her mother, something she had to ask her but couldn't find the right words. Her mother started scrubbing again.

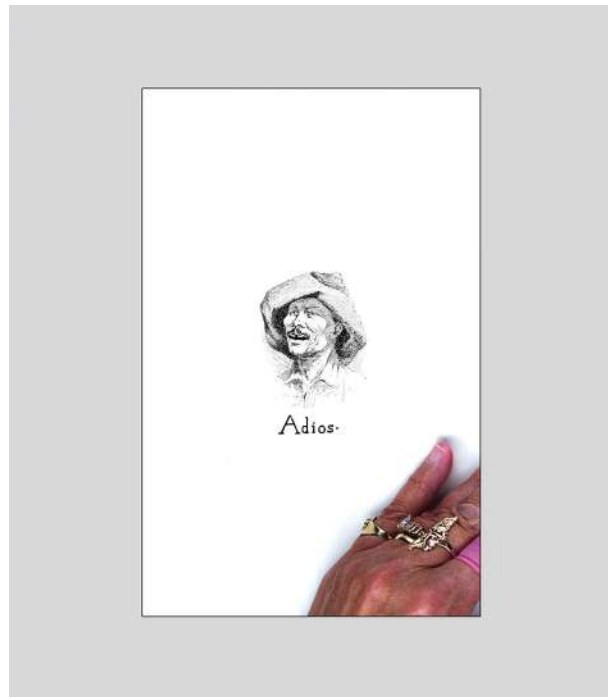
But hadn't she already washed this floor? 🌲

*Photos from ScanOps, an ongoing project by Andrew Norman Wilson, started in 2012. Wilson collects images of mistakes—image distortions or the hands of Google workers slipping into view—in Google Books as a means of highlighting the hidden labour behind the project. Though the pace of the scanning effort has slowed in recent years, an estimated 25 million books have been scanned by Google employees.*

ScanOps gets its name from Google's book-scanning operations, which has its own facility, isolated from other departments at the Googleplex, the corporate headquarters of Google in Mountain View, California. Norman conceived the idea of ScanOps while working at the Googleplex, where he noticed that ScanOps employees—often people of colour who wore yellow badges—were not granted access to the same privileges as other Google employees.

ScanOps appeared in the Something More than Nothing exhibition this summer at The Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford, BC. Andrew Norman Wilson lives in Brooklyn and at [andrewnormanwilson.com](http://andrewnormanwilson.com).

*Images courtesy of the artist.*



Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail – 230, from the series ScanOps, 2012-ongoing

## Love Letters in the Sand

CARY FAGAN

*From The Student. Published by Freeband Books in 2019. Cary Fagan is the author of six novels and three short story collections, as well as many award-winning books for children. His work has been a finalist for the Rogers Trust Fiction Prize and longlisted for the Giller Prize. He lives in Toronto.*

The cottage bedroom had plywood walls and a small window. It was too hot in the afternoon and began to smell of tar. Miriam stripped off her bathing suit and threw on a sundress and spent a minute at the bathroom mirror. In the kitchen her mother was trying to get the oven lit. "I told that thief Klonsky to get it fixed. He won't put in a penny."

"It's already a furnace in here. You're not going to heat the place up even more?"

"At six o'clock you'll want your dinner, won't you?"

"All right, Ma, I'm late. Where are the keys?"

"On the table. Take your brother."

"As if I could find him."

They sounded like a mother and daughter in some radio comedy. She pushed open the flimsy door and walked to the Chevrolet, got in and backed up the narrow path, then breezed along the gravel road, past the Targovetsky kid leaning a fishing rod on his shoulder like some Jewish Huck Finn. On the asphalt road she sped towards Barrie, her arm dangling out the open window. Soon she was rolling past the movie theatre and the hair salon and the shop selling inflatable rings. She slowed as the bus station came into view and there on the sidewalk was Andrei, sweating in his only suit, a small suitcase bound with twine at his feet. He looked worried, as if sure that he'd been forgotten,

and when she honked he practically jumped out of his skin. He picked up his suitcase and hopped to the car, placing it carefully in the back seat before getting in beside her.

"Thank you for picking me up, Miriam."

He never called her Minnie. "If I didn't you'd probably end up wandering in the woods."

"Well, I brought a compass just in case."

"Really?"

"Yes, it points to 'Lost,' 'Very Lost,' and 'Give Up all Hope.'"

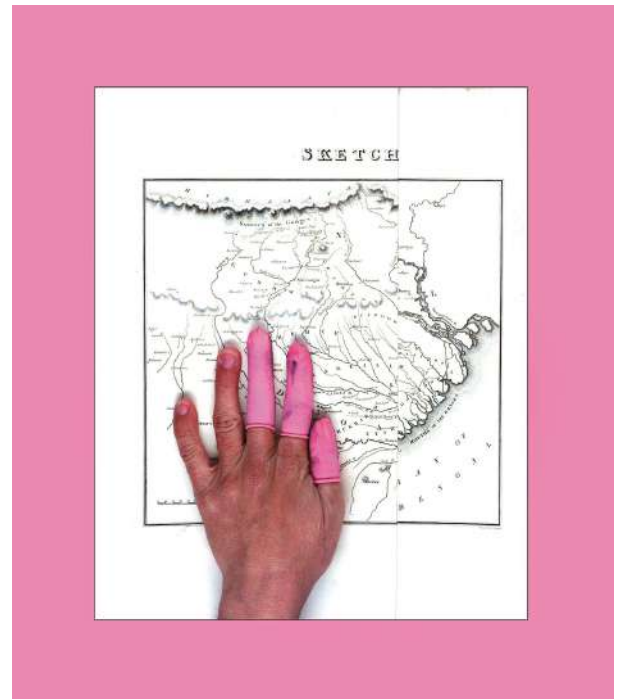
"Ha. Anyway, it isn't exactly wilderness here. Every afternoon there's a traffic jam on the lake."

"I suspect you're exaggerating. And look, I see quite a lot of trees. When I was little we once went to a resort on the Baltic Sea. The sand was nice. My parents looked almost relaxed. We ate fish every night."

And what was she supposed to say? That she was sorry his family was dead and she hoped that being here didn't



Hours of Childhood – 72, from the series ScanOps, 2012-ongoing



A Picturesque Tour Along the Rivers Ganges and Jumna in India – frontispiece, from the series ScanOps, 2012-ongoing

depress the hell of him even though it ought to? For once she kept her mouth shut.

“Your father was very kind to ask me. I tried to refuse but he wouldn’t let me. But I know you are studying and I promise to stay out of your way. I will be like a mouse.”

“We’ve already got plenty of mice in the cottage. I’m sure you can use a break from your three jobs.”

“Only two.”

“I thought you were ambitious.”

“You have — what’s the expression? You have the wrong guy.”

It sounded even funnier than he intended. “Don’t worry, I’m very good at ignoring people. I’ve got a talent for it.”

“Now you are making the joke.”

“No, I’m serious. You’ll see.”

“Okey-doke.”

He started to whistle. She said nothing for a full minute. “Fine. Am I supposed to recognize that tune?”

“Love Letters in the Sand.”

“Pat Boone? Please. And that’s not even how it goes.”

They pulled up the gravel drive to the cottage. Her mother came through the door, wiping her hands on her apron. Andrei got out and gave her a hug that knocked her half off balance. Brian appeared running from around back and urged Andrei to come swim. Miriam wondered if Brian saw Andrei as the brother he wished he had instead of her as a sister.

“I brought something for you,” Andrei told Brian. “But later, when you don’t have anything better to do.”

It turned out that he didn’t own a bathing suit. Her mother fetched one of her father’s, a red-and-black diamond pattern, and as he came out of the bedroom he was to share with Brian he pulled the drawstring as tight as it would go. He was hollow-chested and white as an onion.

“You come in, too, Minnie.”

She was surprised enough at her brother’s request to agree. By the time she had changed into a one-piece suit, Brian was already in the water, taunting Andrei to follow. He stood with

his hands wrapped around himself; perhaps he didn’t know how to swim. And then suddenly he sprinted off the dock, howling like Johnny Weissmuller. Brian hooted his approval.

“Now you, Minnie!”

Her own dive was clean as a knife. The water was a cold shock that stunned her for a moment and then felt wonderful.

Andrei proved himself to be good company, careful not to intrude on her thoughts yet always ready to talk when she wanted. They got in the habit of going for a short walk after every meal, down to the boat launch and back. He didn’t flirt or stare wistfully and she was relieved if also a little disappointed that his crush had faded.

The evenings he devoted to Brian, who was currently obsessed with the Russian dog that was about to go into space. He had a grainy photograph of Laika, cut from the newspaper, in the scrapbook he had insisted on bringing to the cottage, and he used it to draw his own pictures of the small,

alert-looking dog ears that stood up, their tips flopped forward. Andrei lay on the rag rug with him, helping to colour in the pictures. Did Laika understand what was happening? What had his training been like? Was he scared? Miriam sat in a chair by the window listening. Her brother sounded excited but also anxious, as if he'd never worried about anything as much.

"Laika is going to be a hero," Andrei said. "And when he's back they will hold a parade in Red Square."

"For a dog?" Brian laughed, but he immediately began to draw a picture

of a parade. His perspective was quite good. A short time later Andrei gave the boy his present, a Mr. Potato Head kit. Miriam thought he was too old for it, but Brian was thrilled. He abandoned his drawing and spent the rest of his time until bed sticking the plastic parts into a potato and making them all admire what he had made.

The time moved slowly and then suddenly it was gone. They all got in the car to drive Andrei into Barrie. On the ride he thanked them over and over. At the bus station he pulled out his sad little suitcase, turned to wave and walked away. ●

view into the room. The only space sheltered from view is the big communal shower room in the far corner. Candice, Darlene, Tiffany, and Jenny change there. The rest of us find a space against one of the short walls and hope we are out of sight from the doorway.

I can hear Candice and her friends proudly showing off stubbled armpits and comparing sticks of deodorant. They are laughing and snapping each other's bra straps. Wanda strips off fast and doesn't seem that bothered standing around in her bra. But then her bra is black, with a T-strap back. Cathy has a white cotton bra with lace trim. It's clean and athletic looking. Her mom just went out and bought it for her, so she didn't have to suffer the indignity of trying it on under the fluorescent lights of the Sears change room. Peony goes into a cubicle with a toilet to change. I'd like to do the same, but it makes it seem like you're hiding some physical defect, hair growing down your back or a third nipple.

I have bigger boobs than most of the other girls and an embarrassing patch of black pubic hair. My bra is a hand-me-down from Elizabeth; it is elastic and beige and smells of old deodorant. It looks like it came from the lost and found at an orphanage. I'm wearing a long shirt, so I can slip off my jeans and pull on my shorts without anyone seeing any of the black hairs that sometimes curl through the cotton of my underwear. I take off my T-shirt really quick and pull on the one I've brought for gym in practically one motion. I only have to expose my yellowing bra for a few seconds. I try and time this move when everyone else is busy tying up shoes or taking off their own shirts. I think about putting my watch in my jeans pocket, but we all leave our clothes hanging on hooks in the bathroom and anyone could come in and go through my stuff. All the other girls leave their Swatches on for gym class, and I decide to keep my watch on too.

---

## You Jump, I Jump, Jack

SUSIE TAYLOR

*From Even Weirder Than Before. Published by Breakwater Books in 2019. Taylor's work has won the NLCU Fresh Fish Award, Riddle Fence's Leaside Fiction Prize and Newfoundland & Labrador Arts and Letters awards. She lives in Harbour Grace, NL.*

Mum discourages me from wearing my watch to school in case I lose or break it.

"What's the point of having it if I can never wear it?" I ask her.

"I suppose it's up to you," she says. She's been getting up all week and hovering in the kitchen as I get ready in the morning. It's a relief to see her standing up. Mostly she silently drinks tea as I cram in toast. Today she actually takes the time to cast her eye over what I'm wearing and notices the watch. I thought she'd be pleased I'd started wearing it.

Everyone else has a Swatch. Candice has five, Cathy has two, even Wanda has one, she has written *G N'R* on the rubbery strap with a black magic marker. The morning of my last birthday, when Mum handed me the wrapped box, it was the wrong shape. Instead of a Swatch I got a plain watch with a silver face and a black strap. I don't know why I expected anything different. In grade six everyone had a Cabbage Patch.

Mum went to the bazaar at church and came home with a "Crochet Kid." A hideous doll with a head made of old nylons that smelt like old lady. It wore a green crocheted jumper that you couldn't take off. Its nylon legs flopped back and forth where they had been sewn to its permanent clothing.

I wear the watch despite Mum's concern. The black watch strap looks punk rock against my wrist. Miss Blake makes us put our heads on our desks and gives as a lecture about the importance of personal hygiene before we head out to change for gym. "At the age you are at, your bodies are changing. Pheromones start developing." I like the way the leather smells salty, and I give it an experimental lick as Miss Blake talks.

The change room is actually just the girls' washroom closest to the gym. It always smells like wet paint, even though the concrete walls haven't been painted in years. When the bathroom door opens, it swings directly into the main hallway and gives a clear

Miss Blake lines us up for skills drills. Cathy serves the ball at me, and I duck when it comes hurtling down. I manage to return the ball to her a few times. I can't stand the way the volleyball feels when it slams against the insides of my wrists. My wrists are red, and my veins are sticking out disgustingly. A ball from Darlene and Jenny comes bounding over and hits me in the side of the head. "Heads up, Daisy!" Miss Blake shouts afterwards.

Rachel and Everett do the best at spiking, so they get to be team captains. They call out names, and soon there are only four of us left. Everett picks Cathy, Rachel picks Peony, Everett picks Murray, and I shuffle over, unchosen, to Rachel's team.

"Something smells like poo," says Derek Fletcher, as I join the group of kids on my team, and everyone laughs, even nice Kevin Taylor. The ball is coming towards me, and I start to run in its direction. I see Tiffany in my peripheral vision. I stumble over Tiffany's foot, and she pushes me away from her, so she can get to the ball. I fall sideways; the back of my arm and hand slam against the ground. Candice laughs. I can't tell if Tiffany tripped me on purpose. She says sorry, but doesn't offer her hand to help me up. When I stand up I can see cracks running through the face of my watch. During the rest of the game, I just try and stay away from the net and move out of the way if the ball comes towards me.

At home I put the watch back in its box and shove it far into the back of my underwear drawer. All through dinner my wrist feels naked, and I dread Mum asking about it. I can't fall asleep, worrying I should have confessed to Mum about it. The phone rings late, and I can hear Mum speaking into it. I put my ear against the heating vent in my room; this way I can hear her down in the kitchen. She keeps saying, "I understand, Donald." When she hangs up and comes upstairs to bed, I put on my headphones so I don't have to listen to her crying. 🎧



THE CHARIOT.



THE EMPEROR.

*Photo-collages from The Fever, a project that portrays Newfoundland and Labrador history and mythology in the form of tarot cards, by Rhonda Pelley courtesy of Christina Parker Gallery. Her work has been exhibited at the Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, RCA, Headquarters 57, Leyton Gallery, Christina Parker Gallery, Galerie Les Territoires, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Musée de l'Elysée, and most recently at the Campbell River Art Gallery. She lives in St. John's and at [rbondapelley.com](http://rbondapelley.com).*

# Return of the G'psgolox Pole

CECIL PAUL, AS TOLD TO BRIONY PENN

*From Stories from the Magic Canoe of Wa'xaid. Published by Rocky Mountain Books in 2019.*

*Cecil Paul, also known as Wa'xaid, his Xenaksiala name, is an elder, activist and orator, and is one of the last fluent speakers of Xenaksiala. He is a leader in protecting Kitlope, the largest intact temperate rainforest watershed in the world. He lives in his ancestor's traditional territory.*

*Briony Penn is a writer. Her work has been published in anthologies and chapter books. Her book The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan, won the 2015 BC Book Prize. She lives on Salt Spring Island, BC, and at brionypenn.com.*

I remember my little granny telling me of a totem pole that was stolen. We would gather in our little grandmother's house and very faintly I would remember her stories about the old totem pole and how it was taken against our people's will. That was when the journey of the pole begun. They weren't only going to destroy the Kitlope; they have already wounded it by taking the grave marker of a big hereditary chief from the Kitlope. And we don't know where it is. From my little granny, she said, "Look for it." I was ten years old when she told me that. Before the boat came in and they took me away and I ended up in Alberni. That was my parting thing with my little granny, "Look for the totem." And, it took me I don't know how many years to find it, and it was in Sweden.

My little sister and I talk about what I knew about it to my people, but very few people gave me help. I got a Christmas card from a friend from New York. "I have a young friend, works in New York," she says. "Maybe she could find it." She says, "I'll look." She sends me a Christmas card: "I couldn't find it." I spilled my guts out to a stranger in a coffee shop, and then I turned around and she was a beautiful young girl, Spanish, Montserrat Gonzales. I told her I was up in the mountains looking for a totem pole, and I can't go up there anymore. It's over the mountain; it's over there. I close my eyes sometimes and the green grass, and it's over there.

And she says, "Maybe I could be a help with this new technology? I'm the curator of this museum here."

Oh, this Spanish girl caught me with Spanish eyes. Took her ten years. In that ten years, when I left her in that little coffee shop, I forgot about her. But she didn't forget. Took her ten years to figure out where the totem pole is. She says to me, "I went further up the mountain," and what she found in the records was something awful. Swedish consulate was stationed in Rupert and the Indian agent that looked after my people in Kitlope was stationed in Bella Coola. What she found was the correspondence of these two men, on how to steal a totem pole. Wow. It was awful.

I said, "Itemize it down. I'm going to call two friends."

I called Sister Louisa. She was the school coordinator in Prince Rupert and I said, "It's important that you come."

And she said, "I'll be there on a certain date."

Gerald was still the chief because he was re-elected. I went looking for Gerald, I said, "I want to show you guys something."

And the day came, the three of us walked in. I remember I told the Spanish girl to itemize it down to how she found it. She had a little piece of paper. I said, "One of you read it out loud so the three of us could hear." The very first line is: "Ten years ago, Cecil and I went on a journey."

I realize now that it was the mountain of waves going across the Atlantic Ocean. It was some big waves. I seen only big hills, you know why I couldn't walk on water, I couldn't go half-way. I'm in my canoe, trying to paddle, trying to look for it; I couldn't make it.

The negotiations for that totem pole to come back were something hectic. When they weren't going any place, then Gerald said, "What do you think if we offer them a replica in exchange for that pole?"

"I'm not the owner of that pole," I say. "Chief G'psgolox is,

## SHIMMERY SIGHTING

*From the "Experiences that do not easily fit into other categories" section on psican.org, the website of Paranormal Studies & Inquiry Canada (PSICAN).*

**July 1965 at 22:00**

**Rosemount, Québec**

Two young women, Suzanne Lamanne and her friend Lucile were out walking when they heard a peculiar noise resembling that of "roller skates," when they looked in the direction of the noise they saw the torso of a beautiful smiling man with deep penetrating eyes, both women fell into a five minute trance, when they recovered the figure had apparently vanished. The figure appeared to have been wearing a tight fitting metallic gray outfit.

**Source:** John Brent Musgrave, UFO Occupants & Critters quoting Marc Leduc. Written by Alert S. Rosales. 🍷

my older brother. We cannot do nothing without his consent.”

So in that little room they say, “Phone your brother and tell him. See if it’ll be all right.”

I finally got through. I says, “We’re in a dilemma here. We’re standing still. Gerald suggested if we make a replica in exchange for your pole.”

There was a moment silence, maybe three, four seconds. And my brother came on, “Whatever it takes. You go for it.” And that was all we needed. And the next time we meet with the Swedish government, our little delegation put that on the table.

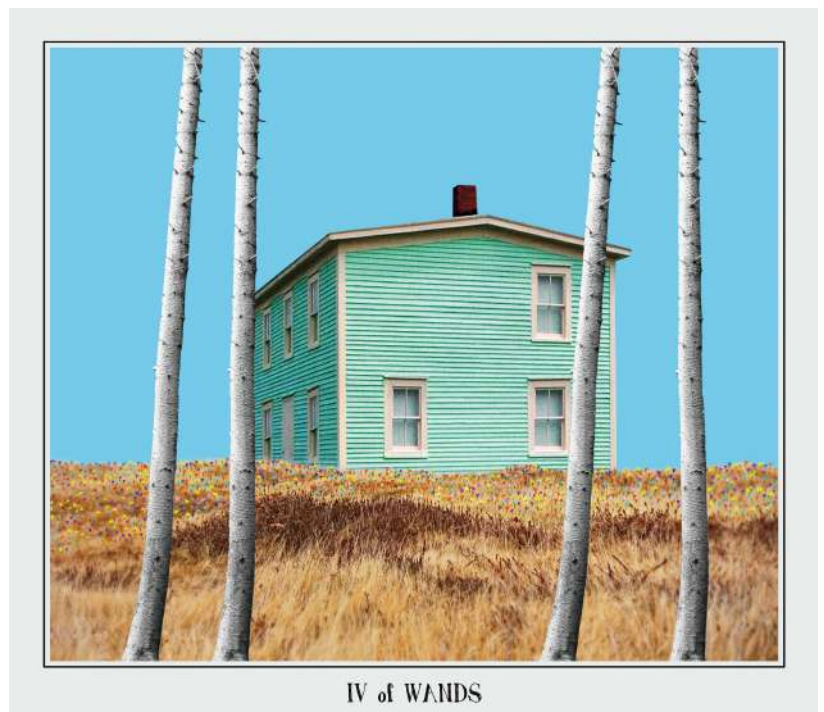
In our culture, when a big chief dies he makes two carpenters build it. And when the pole falls, it go back to womb of Mother Earth. When that thing is almost decayed and back to the womb of Mother Earth, the new chief will take G’psgolox name, and he will build another totem pole. Now when they have taken this totem pole and cut it down, my culture believes — strongly believes — that they could never raise it up again. It’s against our law, our *nuyem*, built into our mind. And we had a hard time with the Swedish government because they wanted us to make a museum. When I had our people together, I say, “Look at our land! No ships come in, this is the end of the road. And if you’re gonna build a museum, it’s got to have proper heat and things. We’d need a lot of people to pay a few dollars to come. No way can you keep a building to do what the Swedish government wants us to do.” So I asked, “Come aboard my way of thinking and refuse those conditions.” My government was still trying to raise money for a museum, but we couldn’t find no funding.

Quite a debate about that, finally the Swedish museum say, “Okay, we’ll let you take it back.”

And when we came back, the little totem-pole committee said, “Dan and Cecil will go get the trees for the totem poles. We need two poles.” I’m old; I couldn’t climb around a



THE MOON.



IV of WANDS

mountain anymore. I had a friend, Bill Munro, who works for West Fraser who have the tree-farm licence for the Kitlope. We had to figure out the funding to pay for the totem poles. Who’s going to carve it?

Still the Swedish government didn’t understand what a totem pole means

to our people. “Why do you want that old pole? Why don’t you keep that replica that you are going to give us and put it back where the graveyard is?”

I said, “That’s the difference between a museum and our Indian culture. You have stolen this from our graveyard. Its

roots are there. The people that carved it could feel the sweat, the calluses on their hands building this totem pole. It don't belong in a foreign land. Let us take it home; we'll give you the new one. In our culture what this totem pole was meant to be, is back to where Chief G'psgolox is buried." And that's why we brought it back up to Kitlope — and it's there now.

They put a replica up in Sweden, and the Swedish people came when they raised the other replica in Misk'usa. I was in the hospital here — I couldn't make it. Great-granddaughter of the consulate from Sweden came up to Kitlope. She came to

visit me in the hospital, and we had a long talk. I say, "I forgave your great-grandfather long ago. I forgave long ago." And there was something else. That original totem pole I gave her permission to go and see. Today the old pole has been set free. It is no longer in shackles. Bringing cultures together. We are all one creation.

The Spanish girl who found the pole in Sweden, Montserrat Gonzalez, was at the museum for seven years then she disappeared, and no one has heard from her since. We wanted to thank her. I ask people to try and find her like the totem pole, but nothing turn up. 🍷

went from the yellow-lipped sea krait to the eyes of Eurithe and found love at the end of your complaint. I think love was at the heart of all you did, the only loss you knew. Not knowing what you should learn, you learned everything. An autodidact (I loved that word when I was young, it gave my ignorance a name) you put in everything you could, your mind moving like your body, a poem too big to fit into the world. Sitting at the kitchen table three months before your death you told me you'd never had a friend. *Are you my friend?* you asked. I'll never forget your eyes. There were never any cheap tricks in your art. It's the one thing you taught me. *Don't tell it slant*, you might've said. Your poems were Möbius strips. Following your mind was like my wandering in South America years ago. I knew there was no end, it was the going I had to learn, the nowhere we all get to. I split the word these days. Right now I'm here. You liked the story of me almost dying from a centipede sting in the jungle east of Ecuador, the little brown woman who nursed me back to life as she fed me soup made from boiled *cuy*. Like most men you liked stories. All your confessions were metaphors, those tired horses in the dust at Hundred Mile the measure. Or the time you made coffee in the frying pan in Toronto for Lorna and me, the bubbles of bacon grease just something to add body to the day. With you I could almost make it through. I fixed your deathbed, the second-hand you and Eurithe bought at a garage sale. You stood in a reel while I hammered it together. Three days later you were gone. I could say I still have words but none of them add up to you. Whispers mostly in the racket. Poems go round and round, this one too, never quite getting there, but I still live, and your *ivory thought* is all that keeps me warm some nights, still writing, still alive. It's a cheap out, Al, but where else to go but back to you grabbing picture books, telling me once again that poems don't sell. They never did. 🍷

---

## For Al Purdy

PATRICK LANE

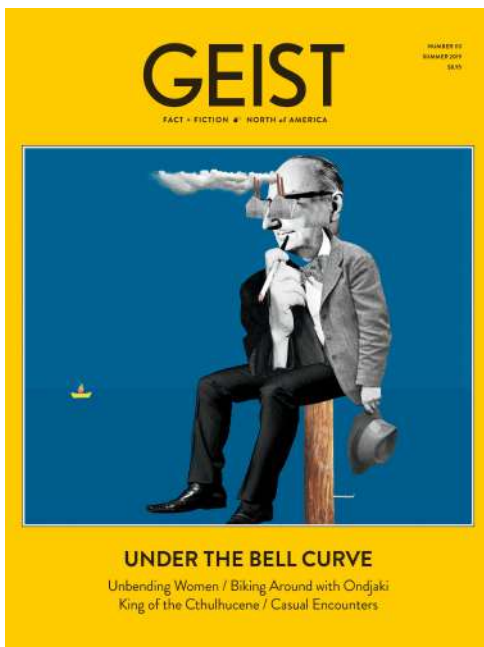
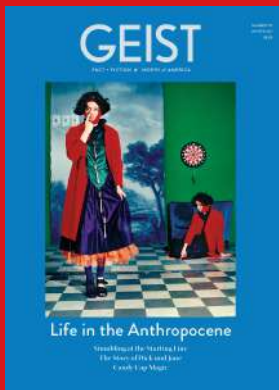
*From Beyond Forgetting: Celebrating 100 Years of Al Purdy. Edited by Howard White and Emma Skagen and published by Harbour Publishing in 2018. Patrick Lane was a poet whose work has received many awards, including the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Literary Excellence and the inaugural British Columbia Award for Canadian Non-fiction.*

It wasn't the brawling man who wrote of *dangerous women with whiskey-coloured eyes*, it was the other man I knew in '62, the awkward one you hid inside the Contact book, the one who spoke of lines that never end. That's what I heard first and that's the man I knew. It was the uneasiness you had with the myth you'd made of yourself. You were a mama's boy and spoiled like only-children are. Even your ride on the freight train back in the thirties wasn't a real struggle, was more adventure than endurance. Survival had nothing to do with it, though later you'd learn, picking through Air Force garbage with Eurithe to keep food on the table. Three days in Vancouver and you couldn't wait to hop a freight back to Ontario, homesick, a little scared. Suffering was never your strong point. It took Eurithe to help you with that. But I remember '66, the night we left the Cecil to visit Newlove on Yew Street and giddy with drink I threw

a full bottle of beer at the sky. You stopped dead and waited till the bottle fell and smashed. *Only throw empty bottles at the moon*, you said, shaking your head at the waste of a drink. It's a metaphor I've lived with in this life, that moon. Or the time we stole books at the McStew Launch in '73. You told me to stop taking the poetry. *Take the picture books*, you said. *No one will give you money for a poem*. Jack McClelland was railing at us and Newlove was dancing drunk on a table while Farley glowered in a corner because he wasn't the centre of attention. Clarkson was prissy and Layton was trying once again to get laid. God knows where Acorn was. All names now, men and women either dead or getting closer. And you? I could talk with you about the attributes of *Rubus spectabilis* and Etruscan tombs. We could go from there to a discussion about the relative venom of *Laticauda colubrina*. You liked the leaps and made a poetry from space. You



# GIVE GEIST. GET LOVE.



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

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

**Geist SUMMER OFFER**



**YOUR INFO...**

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

Cheque enclosed OR please charge my  Visa  MC

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

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

GIFT FROM \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

PLEASE START my own subscription

RENEW my own subscription

Send gift cards to me by mail

Sign cards...

**GIFT CARD**  
instructions

From \_\_\_\_\_

and mail directly to recipient(s)

**GIFT 1 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

NEW GIFT  RENEWAL GIFT

**GIFT 2 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

NEW GIFT  RENEWAL GIFT

**GIFT 3 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

NEW GIFT  RENEWAL GIFT

**GIFT 4 TO:**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

NEW GIFT  RENEWAL GIFT

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

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



**FILL OUT THIS FORM**

*and*

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

**GEIST SUMMER OFFER**

**ONE  
SUBSCRIPTION**



**TWO OR MORE  
SUBSCRIPTIONS**



*Your own or a gift*

**4 easy ways to give Geist**



*Mail this form to:*

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



**geist.com**



**1-888-434-7834**



**subs@geist.com**

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

**GEIST**

FACT + FICTION NORTH of AMERICA



Winners of the *Literal Literary*

# POSTCARD

*Story Contest*

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL EDITION

FIRST PRIZE

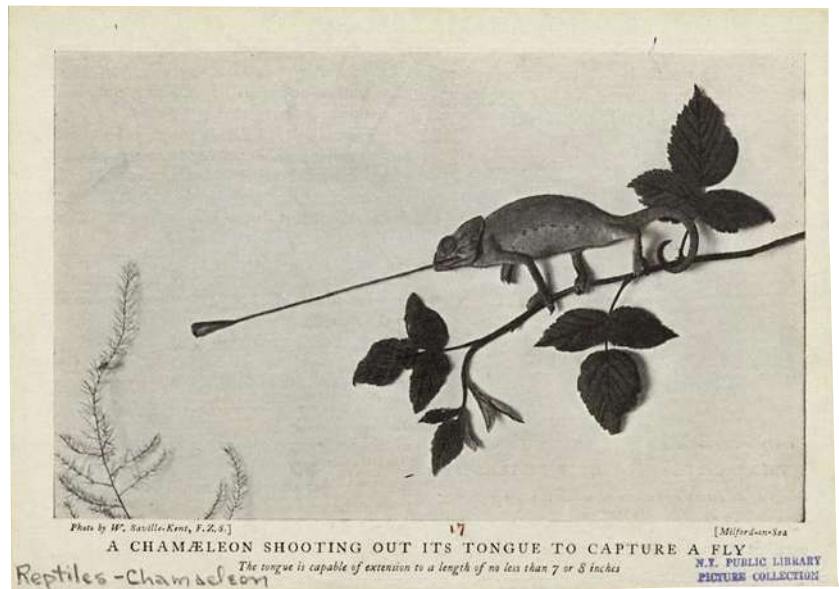
## Impediment

BARBARA BLACK

Like when the air hits a wound, no matter how small, and suddenly you are aware of all the red gore, guts and nerves that inhabit your body. It wasn't his choice to have the tongue transplant. He'd made peace with his own stupidity and his crazed trigger finger. The doctors just wanted a subject to practise on. They wanted accolades. But the new tongue mangled his native language. When he wanted to say "luckily" the tongue drew itself in, humped at the back of his throat and slurred "crgiz." When he tried with all the graciousness he could muster to say "thank you" and master that initial voiceless dental fricative, the tongue flapped to the roof of his mouth and made a sound like someone hammering a nail. He moved away from the city. Lived in a trailer in a birch grove where leggy elk strode through like giants from a pagan past. The wolf that daily defecated on his back doorstep agreed to the trade. Now the man speaks wolf—if he even speaks—and the wolf sits at the Friday night poker table, regaling men with his tales of stalking wild horses and luring them into domesticity.

---

*Barbara Black is a motorcycle-riding writer of short fiction and poetry whose recent accomplishments include a nomination for the 2019 Journey Prize and riding 512 hairpin turns in the South Tyrol Alps.*



SECOND PRIZE

## Palisade at Kevin's Coulee

CAMERON MUIR

We have reached, sir, an impasse. Culligan and Meryfeld and Casper and Oberchuk—wounded since the fifth, we can smell it from here—have the gardens and the schoolhouse. I believe Culligan has three Lee-Enfields, and of course the Bren, but has ammunition only for the .303s (and not much of that, I think). We still have the armoury, the mess, the smithy, the radio room (smashed, but the 24-volt array is intact), the barracks and the well. We control the gate. They took one shot at Becker as he rode out to find the Lieutenant, and the locusts did not seem to notice until he was past Kevin's Coulee. I haven't decided who will carry this or how.

They do not fly, except for the smaller ones that have not fed from Lazy-A or Seven-Up or the sump near the factory. The problem is in the morning before the solar panels have charged up the fence. They do not stir until the sun is up and, for about a half hour or more, we take pot shots at the hardier ones that don't mind a few volts tickling their bellies as they climb over. They seem to be learning, which is disconcerting. Walcott tried eating one—just the legs—but got feverish and I don't think he is quite right even now.

We have twenty-three cases of .30-30 for the five Winchesters, and we know that Standingready is a match for Meryfeld any day. The signal gun is loaded with canister (mostly fourpenny nails and sawdust) and placed where Culligan can see it, but no one is looking forward to lighting that brass bastard.

Your Mary died last Thursday and we buried her out back of the armoury for now. Some said we should remove the dress, the apricot one with the lace that you gave her for her birthday, but I gave orders that she be buried in it. I hope I did right. The locket with the photo of you and Clemmie I placed to her lips then set aside, and it waits for you (in the clock, if we do not meet again). Patel also died (from that block and tackle that we knew could go—I blame myself) and I took the liberty of placing him in Mary's grave for the time being (facing up). And Decker.

The fence is down now.

And Müller.



---

*Cameron G. Muir is a retired lawyer and an MFA student in the writing program at the University of Saskatchewan. He writes contemporary and historical fiction.*

THIRD PRIZE

## Survivors

DAVID WISEMAN

When I knocked I could hear Amber gurgling, so I knew her mum was there. I could've gone right in—there wasn't much I hadn't seen before—but this was a peace mission and I didn't want to upset Josie again. I'd had too many Kamikazes the night before and started on about how she never paid any rent and the place smelling bad and how she'd have to go. Twenty-four hours I'd said, she and the kid had to be gone.

It sounded like the kid was ready to stop gurgling and start bawling, so I inched open the door. It was the usual shambles, Josie's clothes strewn everywhere, Amber in her cardboard cot. She'd just learned to roll over but hadn't the strength to roll back. Everything pretty much normal, except there was no Josie.

The note was direct: *Gone to find a place. Look after Amber.* I looked round at the child, close enough I could see her over the edge of the box as she struggled to keep her head up for more than two seconds. Dark eyes under black lashes, golden skin, a wet nappy and a look that said *you're not my mummy.*

It wasn't like we were strangers, I often held her. I'd even tried with a bottle but never really got the hang of it. She was quiet for a minute, but I was mad over being left in the lurch and swore loud and long. Then she cried, starting low but hitting the top fast.

I was so angry I was shaking and all the while Amber was letting rip. She wasn't just hungry and wet, but cross as hell that Josie'd walked out on her. I would've killed for a smoke, but I'd none left.

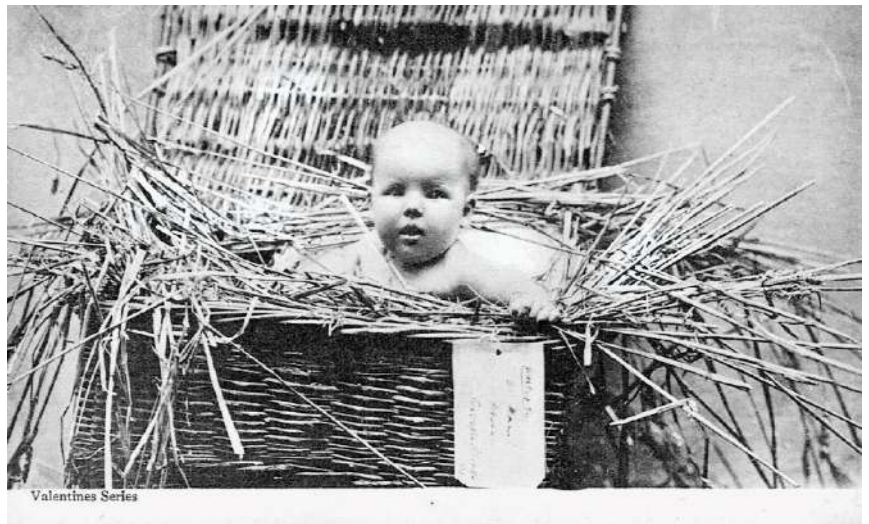
Crystal clear, I thought *this is how kids get battered, this is how they get slammed against the wall.*

Then, mercifully, these things came back to me: warm, dry, full.

The poor kid looked really sore when I got her nappy off and she didn't have that nice plump roundness like they do in the adverts. Warm soapy water calmed her a little, but it's amazing how easy it'd be to drop a slippery baby.

There was enough formula for one bottle, and she was back to full volume while I fiddled around making it, but I got lucky. She went straight into it, not stopping till it was half gone. All the yelling and bathing and feeding had pretty much exhausted us both, and Amber fell asleep in my arms. I followed a minute later.

We woke together, as Josie's key turned in the lock. Amber half-smiled for an instant before she caught sight of her mum, which reminded her how she'd been deserted, and she let out a yell to wake the dead. I was ready to shout too, but suddenly, the moment passed. Maybe that's what saved us both, being mad at Josie instead of each other.



---

*David Wiseman is an English-born writer living in Surrey, BC, whose lifelong enthusiasms include maps, reading, writing, travel and photography.*

# Dear Geist...



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

—Teetering, Gimli MB



Which is correct, 4:00, four o'clock or 1600 h?  
—Floria, Windsor ON

Dear Geist,

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



—Dave, Red Deer AB



## Advice for the Lit-Lorn

Are you a writer?

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

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

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

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

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

**GEIST**  
FACT • FICTION • NORTH OF AMERICA

**Read *Canadian* Magazines**

---



# WHO GETS CALLED

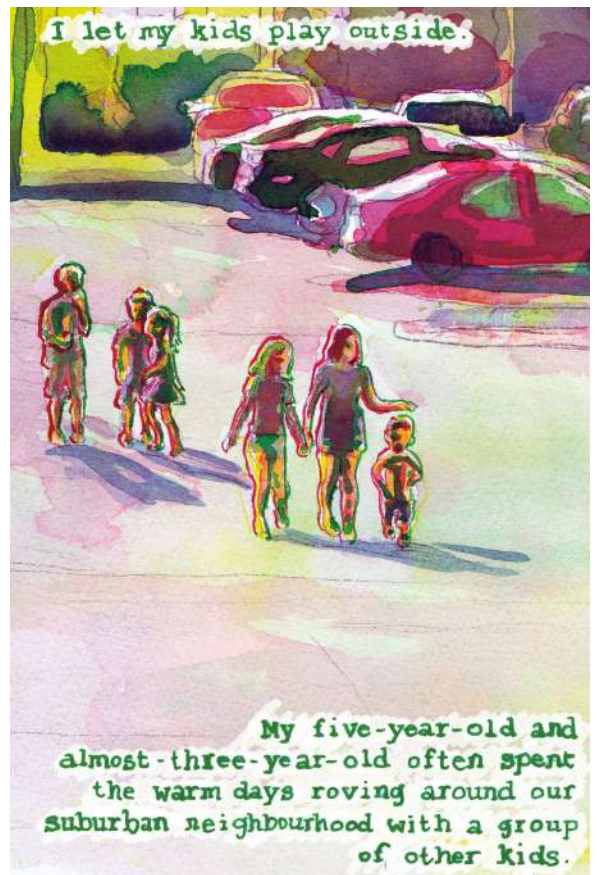
Vancouver, Canada, May 2018.



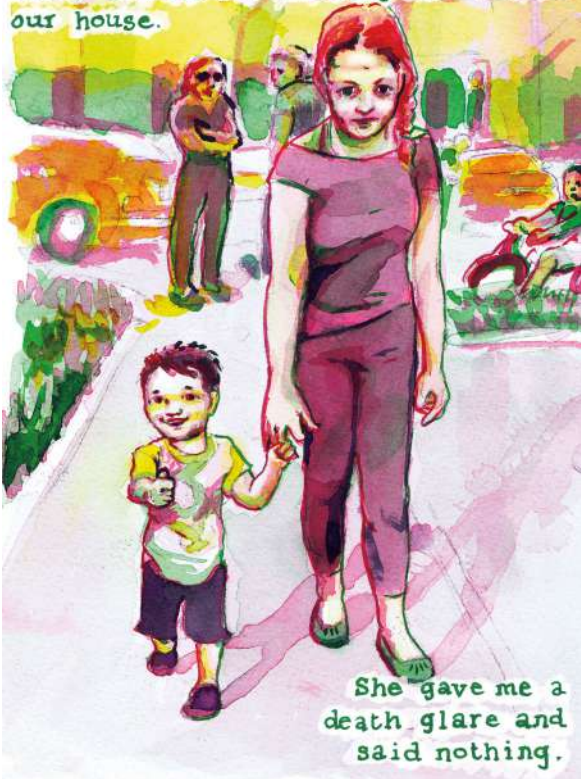
# AN UNFIT MOTHER?

MIRIAM LIBICKI

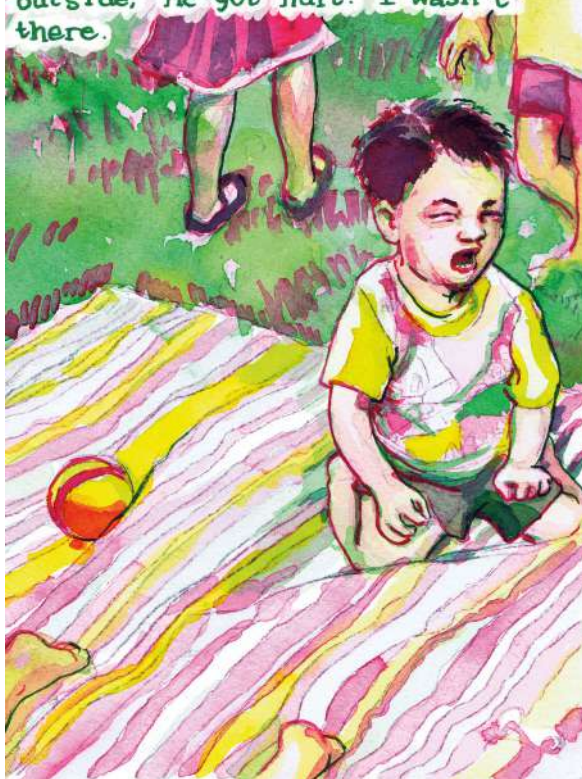




When I went outside, a woman I'd never seen before was holding his hand, and he was leading her toward our house.



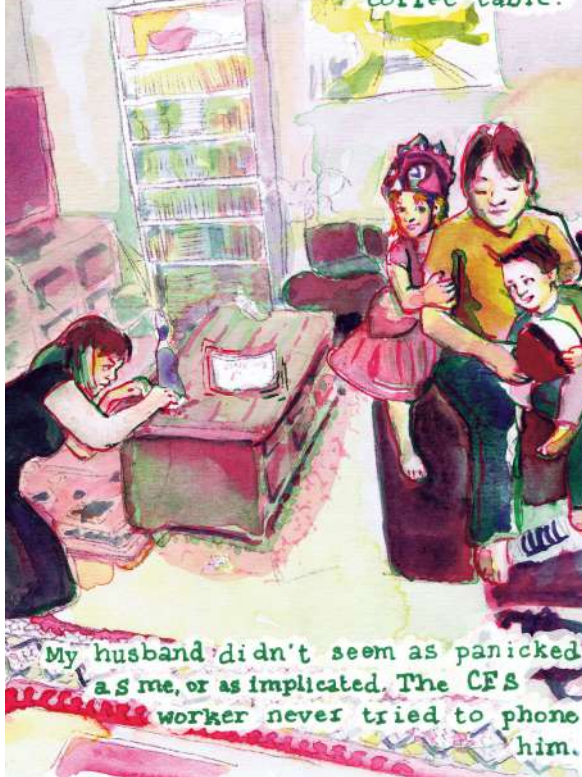
Later, I gathered from the CFS worker that while Mati was playing outside, he got hurt. I wasn't there.



CFS scheduled us a home visit one week away. I was a paranoid mess. The secret that I was a bad mother was a tightness in my chest I carried everywhere.



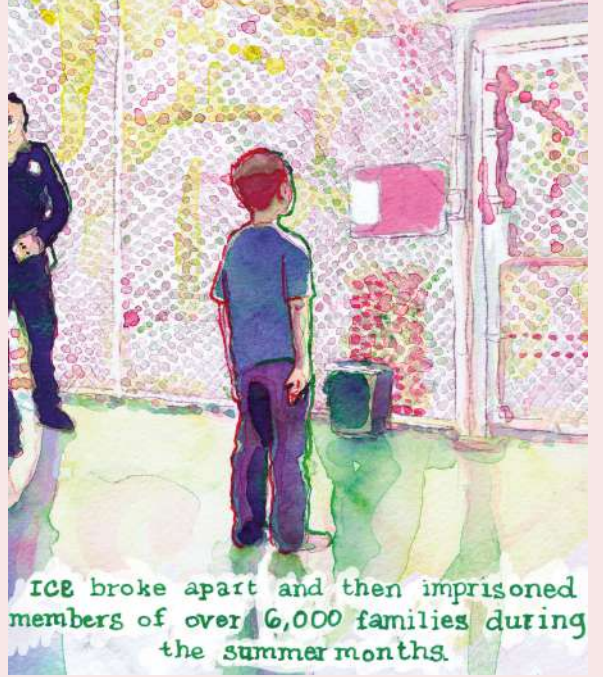
I lost two days of work cleaning. I put out my literary award on the coffee table.



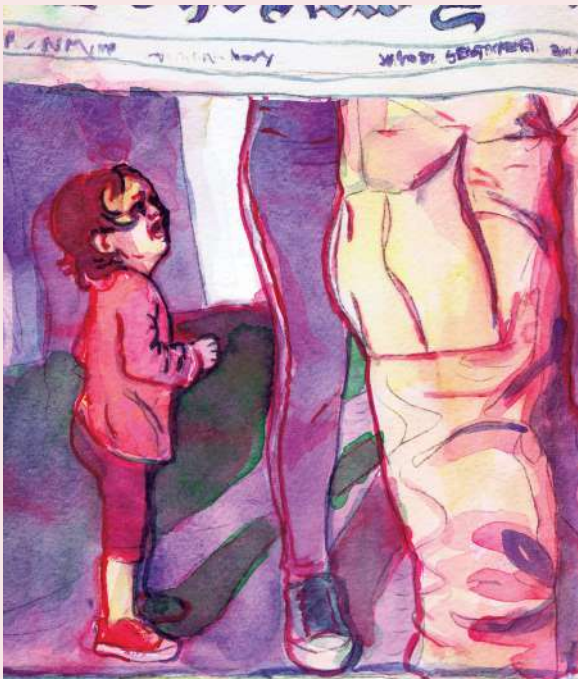
I vaguely knew CPS has to respond to any complaint. But I was terrified that they'd decide that we were unfit parents.



Of course losing my kids was on my mind. It was the Summer of Separated Families: Three days before that phone call, Jeff Sessions announced the "zero tolerance" policy.

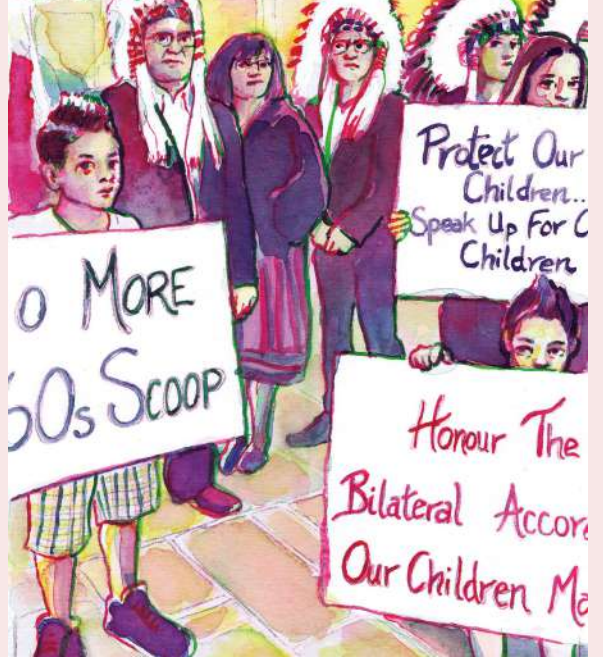


ICE broke apart and then imprisoned members of over 6,000 families during the summer months.

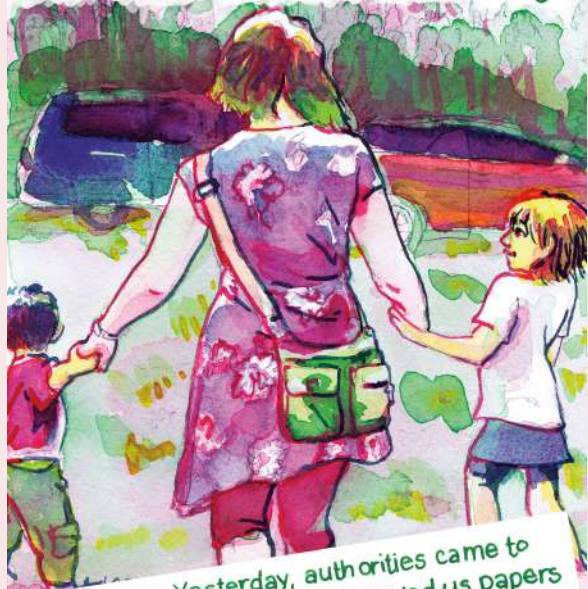


"There is no greater threat to a child's emotional well-being than being separated from a primary caregiver. Even if it was for a short period, for a child, that's an eternity," said Johanna Bick, a psychology professor at the University of Houston who studies adverse experiences in childhood. (Miriam Jordan, NYT)

State removal of children from their parents has always had a racial component. In Canada, 52% of children under 14 in foster care are First Nations, Metis or Inuit youth, despite representing just 8% of that age group.



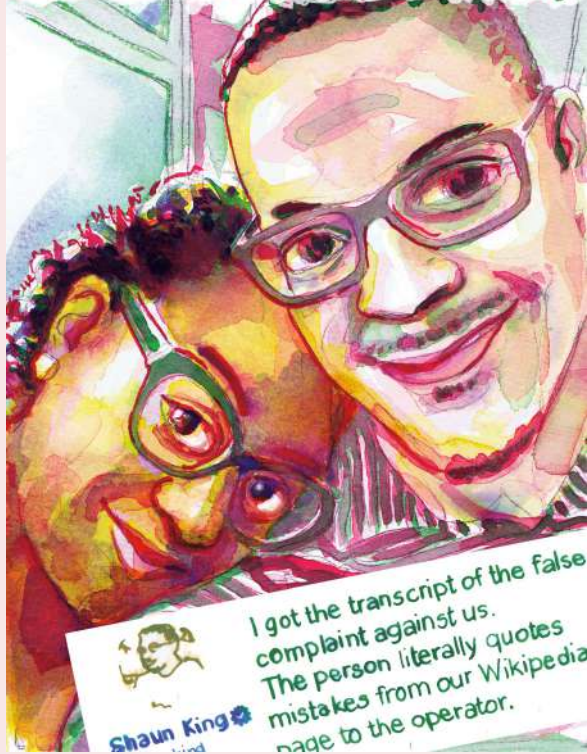
Over the summer, Child Protective Services were also called on Black Lives Matter activist Shaun King.



Yesterday, authorities came to our house and served us papers that we are under investigation for the criminal neglect of our children. My wife broke down in tears.

Shaun King  
@shaunking

Like us, King and his wife had to defend their parenting skills, or risk losing their kids. Their private lives were held up to state scrutiny.



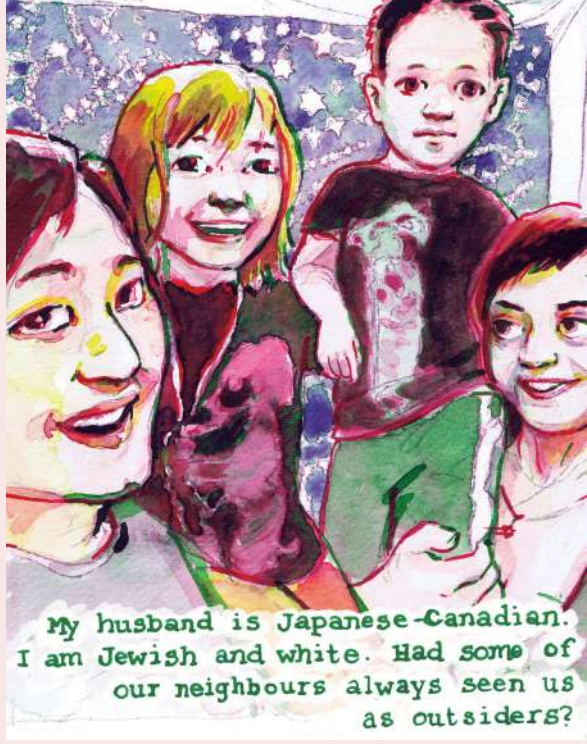
I got the transcript of the false complaint against us. The person literally quotes mistakes from our Wikipedia page to the operator.

Shaun King

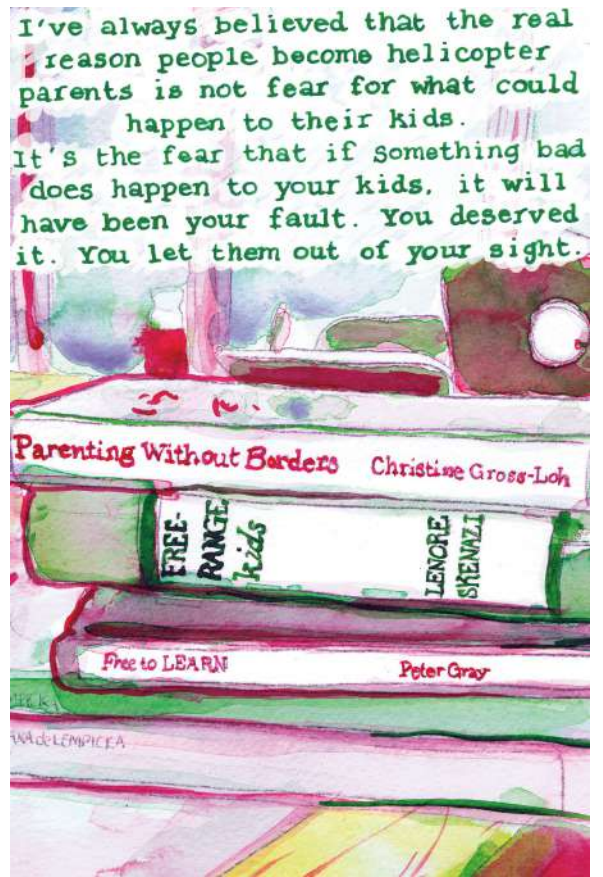
Reading those headlines, the idea that the state could rip my kids away from me seemed suddenly very possible.



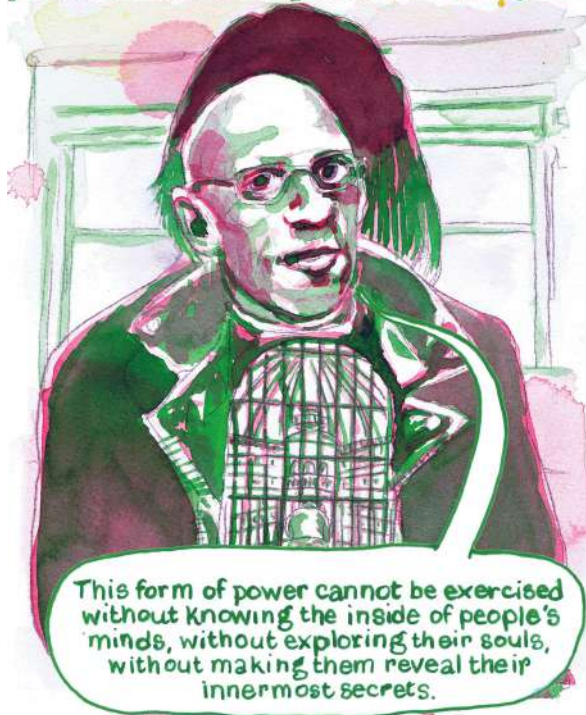
As the date of our home visit approached, I wondered whether race played a role in the complaint against us.



My husband is Japanese-Canadian. I am Jewish and white. Had some of our neighbours always seen us as outsiders?



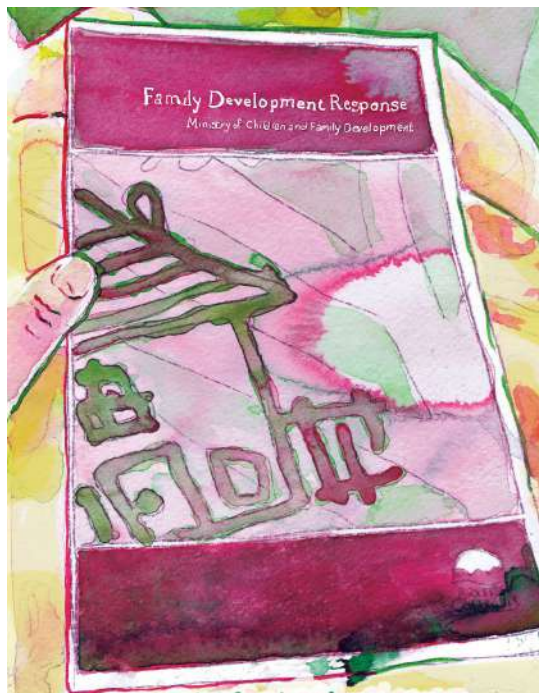
Having my parenting inspected by the state made me think of Foucault. I have to confess that I'm a "neglectful mother" and reveal my private habits to powerful strangers.



Confess, Confess. Be stripped and examined and beg absolution from the state.

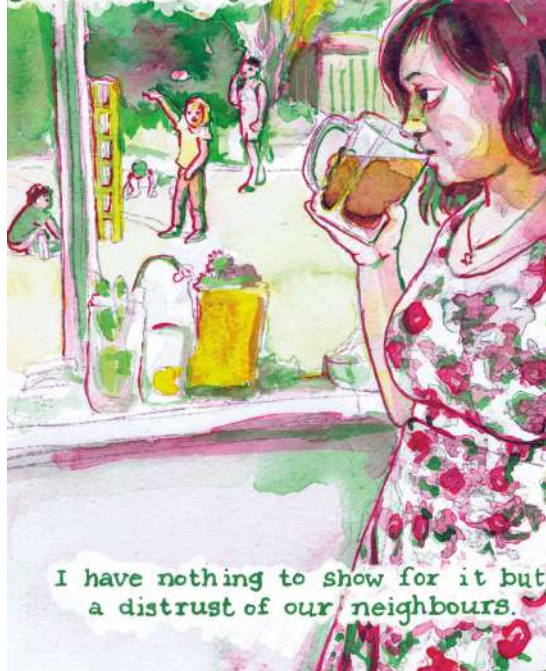


When the inspectors came, they took Maya, who had just turned six over the weekend, up to her room to interview. I cried and cried.



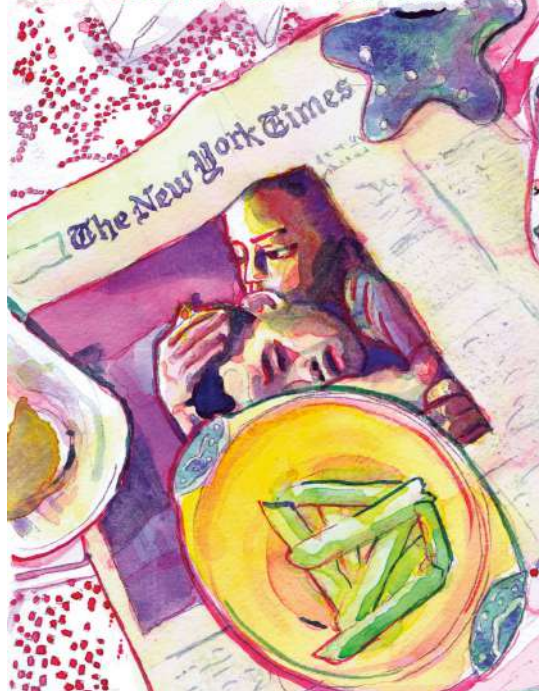
But I had wiped my eyes by the time they came back. CFS asked me for character references from my neighbours. Then they left.

I heard nothing more until September, when I was notified the file had been closed. I'm pretty sure it was our signs of privilege that pulled us through.



I have nothing to show for it but a distrust of our neighbours.

My ordeal is over, but I can never forget that thousands of other parents are still fighting to keep their children safe with them.



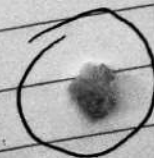
Miriam Libicki is the creator of the Israeli Army memoir *jobnik!* and the book of drawn essays *Toward A Hot Jew* (recipient of the 2017 Vme Award for Canadian Jewish Literature). She is currently a cartoonist in residence at la Maison des Auteurs in Angoulême, France, where she is working on her upcoming graphic novel *Glasnost Kids: How Post-Soviet Child Refugees and Other Schmoes in our Thirties are Saving/Killing Judaism*.

# MY FAVE THINGS ABOUT WRITING CLASS...

1. We do awesome writing assignments
2. We don't have a final exam
3. We can eat Timbits in class



Our prof gets us  
FREE COPIES OF GEIST!!!



Timbits →  
yum  
yum.

## SIGN UP NOW FOR FREE CLASS SETS OF GEIST

If you are a teacher of writing, composition, literature, publishing or any kindred subject, you can get free copies of *Geist* for you and your students, just by asking for them, and free access to the *Geist* Digital Edition is included!

*Geist* is always looking for new writers and readers. Teachers are always looking for good readings. *Geist* in the Classroom puts us together.

For details: [geist.com/gic](http://geist.com/gic)  
or call 1.888.434.7834

PS. If you are a student,  
hand this to your instructor!

# GEIST

FACT & FICTION  
MADE IN CANADA

# CASUAL ENCOUNTERS

DUNCAN CAIRNS-BRENNER



For many years—before Tinder, Plenty of Fish, Grindr, Match, OKCupid, Gaydar and other online dating and hookup sites and apps—one of the most popular places online to seek out casual sex was the Casual Encounters section of Craigslist.com, where people posted personal ads seeking all manner of encounters and relationships. Posting was anonymous, oversight was minimal and thousands of postings went live daily across North America.

From 2014 to 2018, the Vancouver photographer Duncan Cairns-Brenner contacted people in British Columbia who posted these ads and photographed them before, during and after their encounters, as well as the locations and surrounding areas of where the encounters took place. “The ads ranged widely,” Cairns-Brenner says. “Some were vulgar, some were funny, others surprisingly heartfelt or sad. But every ad was posted by a real person, wanting to connect with someone else. These people were sending their most intimate sexual desires into the ether and hoping for a reply.”

In April of 2018, the United States Congress passed bill HR 1865, which subjected websites to criminal and civil liability in the event they are used for unlawful activity related to prostitution and sex trafficking. Craigslist shut down all of their personal ad listings, including Casual Encounters, shortly after the bill was passed.









# King of the Post-Anthropocene

JOSEPH WEISS

*Kaiju are the heroes we deserve*

Early in Michael Dougherty's recent *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, Japanese scientist Dr. Ishiro Serizawa, portrayed by Ken Watanabe, argues against destroying Godzilla and his fellow giant monsters—called “Titans” in the film. Serizawa is asked whether he intends for Godzilla to be humanity's pet. “No,” Serizawa replies. “We are to be his.” The film takes Serizawa seriously, and neither its protagonists nor antagonists seem to dispute Serizawa's fundamental contention: humanity has lost the rights to its autonomy given the catastrophic effects of human intervention on the Earth, and the Titans are the only beings that can reverse humanity's impact, acting as a kind of “antibody,” in the film's words, for the planet itself. In this way the film echoes the Gaia hypothesis, championed recently by French anthropologist Bruno Latour, the idea that the Earth can be seen as a holistic system with its own particular vitality, even intentionality, which humans seem to disrupt continually. In this framing, Godzilla and his fellow Titans are a natural corrective despite their science fiction origins, a radioactive medicine for a damaged Earth that can no longer sustain us, its most toxic inhabitants.

Serizawa's character is so committed to this idea that he eventually sacrifices himself to revive a temporarily defeated Godzilla, detonating a nuclear bomb to empower the monster to defeat the even more

monstrous King Ghidorah, positioned by the film as an invading alien who, unlike Godzilla, does not have the best interests of the planet in mind. This sacrifice inverts that of a previous Dr. Serizawa, the one in the very first Godzilla film, Ishirō Honda's magnificent *Gojira*, released in Japan in 1954. In Honda's film, Daisuke Serizawa, as portrayed by Akihiko Hirata, is a troubled scientist whose discovery of an “oxygen destroyer” provides the only means to defeat Godzilla, who has emerged to level Tokyo in the wake of atomic testing in the Pacific. This Serizawa, too, sacrifices himself, but to destroy Godzilla, not to save him.

Honda's film is bleak and unsparring. A popular rumour at the time was that the director had interspersed real footage of the devastated post-atom bomb landscapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with his scenes of Tokyo after Godzilla's rampage, a rumour that was all the easier to believe because Honda's film was so interested in scarred bodies and destroyed buildings. In the original film, Godzilla incarnates the radical destructive potential of nuclear violence, laying waste to Japan in ways that are simultaneously intentional and incomprehensible. In this sense the giant monster is almost sublime, its aesthetics somewhere at the edge of conventional understandings, magnificent and terrifying all at once. Why is it, then, that audiences took such pleasure in watching Godzilla's

acts of destruction? By the 1960s, giant monster movies had become their own genre in Japan, called *kaiju* (from the Japanese word for “strange beasts”) films, and scenes of Godzilla and his fellows destroying carefully modelled Japanese cities were *de rigueur* for the genre. Godzilla in particular was so popular with children that he was eventually given his own son, Minya, who imitated his father by blowing smoke rings instead of atomic fire. Godzilla, then, is both excitement and terror, a favourite imaginary playmate of young children and Japan's symbol, *par excellence*, of the decimation that violence and science bring when coupled together.

The pleasure of Godzilla, in other words, lies in watching him destroy us. Godzilla could not exist without radiation, one of the few common elements in all his incarnations, both Japanese and American. Created by the nuclear age, Godzilla grows beyond anything that could be imagined by the scientists of the twentieth century. And then he lays waste to cities, destroying his own creators, and because he is the product of nuclear violence, humankind's most destructive weapons can do nothing against him. The pleasure of Godzilla is moral, the erotic thrill of watching us get what we deserve from something both monstrous and divine—“God-Zilla,” after all. Even the most recent Japanese Godzilla, Hideaki Anno's 2016 *Shin Godzilla* understands this, staging Godzilla's radioactive rampage to sombre, almost elegiac

music and thrilling in the beauty of the fire and smoke that the kaiju leaves in his wake. Godzilla might be the “villain” in Honda and Anno’s films, but he is the only being we’re there to watch, the site of pleasure, the object of our desire. He is Freud’s death drive come to life, and, as Freud was obsessively aware, with Thanatos there is also, always, the remainder of Eros.

Until *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, at least. The recent American Godzilla movies produced by Legendary, concerned as they are with nodding to the Japanese originals, have also been attempting to define a somewhat different mythology for the monster. In Legendary’s canon, Godzilla is one of the race of Titans who once roamed the Earth as primordial beings and, the most recent film implies, proto-humanity’s original gods. Godzilla can be understood through the language of evolutionary biology as an “apex predator,” dominating all other species simply as a function of its own nature. This Godzilla’s interest in humanity is peripheral, and he avoids the overt urban destruction of his Japanese predecessors, focusing largely on dominating other monsters and asserting his status as “king of the monsters.” Though he is still a radioactive being, the films put far less emphasis on Godzilla’s radioactivity as a kind of human original sin, instead continually emphasizing Godzilla and the other Titans’ origins in the Earth’s deep past. And, as Ishiro Serizawa asserts to the film’s audience, the proper relationship we as humans should have to such a being is subservience. It is no coincidence, then, that the film ends with a scene of the remaining titans bowing to a victorious Godzilla: the natural hierarchy has been (re-)established, and humans are no longer on top.

This is, of course, just as moral as Japan’s Godzilla films, but it is not the sensuous morality of deserved destruction. It is, instead, a particular kind of future for humanity, one

that is reminiscent of the philosopher of science Donna Haraway’s recent science-fiction speculations. In her monograph *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene*, Haraway imagines a future in which humans will give up their species autonomy, blending themselves with animals, with insects, arachnids, and other non-human beings in order to survive, as she puts it, “on a damaged planet.” As a necessary rejoinder to what Haraway characterizes as the “prick story” of the Anthropocene, its male, human-centric story of a greatness gone tragically too far, Haraway speculates about how humans can “stay with the trouble” instead of continually anticipating their own extinction, blending themselves with other beings in a kind of churning compost that finds new ways of living—indeed, new ways of existing—in the compromised ecologies of our planet. Even if

Legendary’s film ends with Godzilla as a new king, retaining a grasp on hierarchy in a new form, I would submit that there is a deeper and more interesting pleasure buried within the seeming submission of the film’s human characters to a non-human force. This Godzilla, unlike those who have come before, promises the almost anarchic pleasure of giving up our autonomy as a species in order to make way for other kinds of life, learning to live with them rather than to dominate them. Godzilla is not the force of our own destruction, but, instead, a path toward a continuing—and perhaps radically transformed—existence.

---

*Joseph Weiss is an anthropologist and is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Wesleyan University. He is the author of Shaping the Future on Haida Gwaii: Life Beyond Settler Colonialism, published by UBC Press.*

**Dead Flowers**  
• STORIES •  
Alexander Laidlaw  
\$19.95

**Visual Inspection**  
• POETRY/ESSAY •  
Matt Radar  
\$18.95

**Fresh Pack of Smokes**  
• POETRY •  
Cassandra Blanchard  
\$18.95

**Outside, America**  
• POETRY •  
Sarah de Leeuw  
\$18.95

**Near Miss**  
• POETRY •  
Laura Matwichuk  
\$18.95

#READNIGHTWOOD  
WWW.NIGHTWOODEDITIONS.COM

new from  
**NIGHTWOOD  
EDITIONS**

# Left Nationalists

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

*Progressives are far less likely to be nationalists than ever before*

For most of the twentieth century, and into the first decade of the twenty-first, a rarely remarked-upon anomaly distinguished Canada from other northern democracies: nationalists were on the left, not the right, of our political spectrum. In countries we regarded as being analogous to ours, nationalists were reactionaries: in France, the anti-immigrant National Front; in Germany, the doctrinaire Catholics of the Christian Social Union or small neo-Nazi groups; in Great Britain, insular Thatcherites and the xenophobic British National Party; in the United States, Reaganite Republicans who didn't know much about the outside world and didn't much care to, though they liked to bomb it now and then. By contrast, Canadian nationalists were lefties. They voted for the New Democratic Party or the Liberals. They supported nationalizing energy, kicking out American multinational corporations, fraternizing with Fidel Castro's Cuba, stocking universities with Canadian, rather than foreign, academics and promoting bilingualism and multiculturalism.

On the cultural front, Canadian nationalists asserted our particularity by supporting the CBC, campaigning for Canadian content quotas in television, film and popular music, and founding small publishing companies that aspired to forge a distinctive national literature. They rallied around books such as *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) by Margaret Atwood, which was both a work of literary

criticism and a left-nationalist manifesto, published by House of Anansi, a small publisher that Atwood's friend Dennis Lee had helped to found. In the 1980s and 1990s, when free trade agreements enshrined the continentalism that nationalists battled against as government policy, Atwood and her supporters tried to "keep culture off the table" by protecting important national producers such as the "Canadian Publisher" McClelland and Stewart. M&S brought readers the work of a whole generation of modern Canadian writers, as well as the New Canadian Library collection of rediscovered Canadian works from the past, which stocked CanLit courses in high schools, colleges and universities.

The other countries where nationalism was a left-wing creed were in what used to be called the Third World. The cultural histories of Mexico and Cuba brim with movements and policies that echo those of Canadian nationalism, from legislation to control US oil companies to national institutions to support publishing. Debates about national identity in Colombia, Peru or Argentina mirror certain Canadian preoccupations. In its rhetoric, Canadian left-nationalism hewed closer to the quest for a multicultural, post-colonial national culture in African, and some Asian, nations than to cultural debates in England, France or Germany.

The analogy between cultural dynamics in Canada and those in the Global South failed to fit when it came to the role of conservatives. In Latin America, the right was

anti-nationalist, often barely masking its despoliation of the national culture and cravenly worshipping the USA. Yet in Canada, until the 1980s, conservatives had their own form of nationalism, based on nostalgia for British and colonial institutions; by today's standards, many conservatives barely counted as being on the right. Lawrence Martin's *The Presidents and the Prime Ministers* (1982) makes a strong case that John Diefenbaker, a Progressive Conservative, was the most nationalistic Canadian Prime Minister of the twentieth century. The philosophical bible of Canadian nationalism, *Lament for a Nation* (1965), was written by George Grant, a self-described "radical Tory."

Over the last three decades, though, Canadian conservatives have abandoned Red Toryism and adopted a religious, gun-loving, sometimes homophobic or incipiently misogynist ideology closer to that of American Republicans. Progressives, meanwhile, have found that as globalization accelerates, the national boundaries they had depended on to build a forward-looking nation have become porous. At the same time, some of the blind spots of the nation as conceived by 1970s nationalism have been thrown into relief. Among their other significances, the literary scandals of 2016 and 2017—the Steven Galloway case at UBC, the exposure of writer Joseph Boyden as white rather than Indigenous, the "appropriation prize" disaster—have discredited some of the key protagonists of Canadian left nationalism, notably Margaret Atwood, in

the eyes of younger writers and artists. In the anthology *Refuse: CanLit in Ruins* (2018), the first prominent book published about these events, Canada is not an aspiring social democracy but a cauldron of racism, colonialism and rape culture. Alicia Elliott, one of the volume's most articulate voices, writes: "I'm not attached to Canada's national identity, I have no stake in maintaining it, and I feel no pain dismantling it."

This statement illustrates that being a progressive is far less likely to involve being a nationalist than used to be the case. Our nationalists, like those of other Western nations, are now on the reactionary right, fretting over racial diversity, "barbaric cultural practices" and asylum-seekers crossing the US border.

When Canadians cross the border, they find that in the US Margaret Atwood is a feminist heroine, lionized by younger women at the 2017 Emmy Awards for the television adaptation of her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1984). In Canada, many younger women in the arts, who are aware of Atwood's support for figures such as Galloway and Boyden, are wary of her and the allegiances she represents. In contemporary Canada a very different book of essays by a younger woman writer has captured the zeitgeist and sold far beyond its anticipated audience, as Atwood's *Survival* did in 1972. Alicia Elliott's *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground* (2019) contains essays about growing up female, poor and Indigenous. One essay skewers Atwood's contradictory views on Indigenous people. Yet one of the contradictions of globalization is that today Atwood, who in 1988 campaigned to keep Canadian culture off the free-trade table, and Elliott, who is a trenchant critic of capitalism, are both published by Penguin Random House, owned by the Bertelsmann Corporation of Germany. As Elaine Dewar details in *The Handover: How Bigwigs and Bureaucrats Transferred Canada's Best Publisher and the Best*

*Part of Our Literary Heritage to a Foreign Multinational* (2017), McClelland and Stewart, "the Canadian Publisher," is now merely a few desks in the Penguin Random House Canada office, where distinctions between the different imprints absorbed by this German-based company are no longer as significant as they once were. The Random House website's publicity material for Elliott's book downplays the fact that Elliott is Canadian, describing her work as being about "Native people in North America." They avoid the Canadian term "Indigenous people," which Elliott herself prefers, presumably for fear of confusing US readers, who are used to "Native." Like the New Canadian Library, which Penguin Random House closed down when it absorbed McClelland and Stewart, the Canadian cultural context has vanished. Elliott, the young radical, stages her assault on Canadian nationalism from the point of view of an oppressed

Indigenous minority, yet from the platform of a transnational corporation seeking to impose borderless markets. Indigenous peoples, whom left nationalists failed to include in their vision of the Canadian nation, and the continentalist—now globalist—corporations, whom left nationalists campaigned against, share an enmity toward nations with strong, centralized states. Left nationalism's failure to develop a language to include Indigenous people and successfully challenge a globalizing capitalism that absorbs and neuter national cultural institutions has put an end to Canada's distinctness as the rare northern country where nationalists were once on the left.

---

*Stephen Henighan's most recent book is the short story collection Blue River and Red Earth (2018). Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [stephenhenighan.com](http://stephenhenighan.com). Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*

a portrait  
of  
a life  
in two  
snapshots

**The Student Cary Fagan**

“In *The Student*, Cary Fagan has not only crafted a vivid portrait of a woman in her youth and old age, but also an intriguing meditation on what changes and what remains the same over time.” —ELYSE FRIEDMAN

AVAILABLE IN BOOKSTORES | [www.freehand-books.com](http://www.freehand-books.com)

# Marilla

ALBERTO MANGUEL

*Prince Edward Island gothic*

From the female Titans that preceded the Olympian gods to the elderly characters knitting their way through our present stories, the figure of the headstrong single woman, unmarried or widowed, is mostly left in the shadows by younger heroines, and younger or older male heroes. Of course if you put your mind to find them, they are there, stalwart and enlightening, in the hidden corners of the library. Necessary characters, too. What terrible deed would Coriolanus have committed were it not for his mother, the undaunted Volumnia? Would the tragic plot of *Romeo and Juliet* have come to its pedagogical end without the help of the devoted Nurse? What would have happened to Huckleberry Finn without the foil of wily Aunt Polly? And where would Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane be without Miss Climpson and her army of inquisitive ladies? “Miss Climpson,” says Lord Peter to his friend, Detective-Inspector Charles Parker, “is a manifestation of the wasteful way in which this country is run. Look at electricity. Look at water-power. Look at the tides. Look at the sun. Millions of power units being given off into space every minute. Thousands of old maids, simply bursting with useful energy, forced by our stupid social system into hydros and hotels and communities and hostels and posts as companions, where their magnificent gossip-powers and units of inquisitiveness are allowed to dissipate themselves or even become harmful to the community, while the ratepayers’ money is spent on getting work for which these women are providentially fitted, inefficiently carried out by ill-equipped policemen like you.”

Canadian literature seems to be particularly well-provided with these inspired crones, and several take centre stage. Hagar in Margaret Laurence’s *The Stone Angel*, Daisy Goodwill in Carol Shields’ *The Stone Diaries*, Atwood’s Old Woman in *The Robber Bride*, the Monster-Mother in Audrey Thomas’s *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Mrs. Norrington in Mavis Gallant’s *A Fairly Good Time...* the list is impressive. These old women have their names in lights. And none more so than Marilla Cuthbert, the headstrong woman who runs the Green Gables household while her taciturn brother Matthew works on the farm. Readers worldwide know the vociferous Anne, the darling of Japanese tourists who have a fetish for Anne’s red hair and buy in their thousands Anne mugs, Anne tea towels, Anne notebooks and Anne T-shirts when they visit Prince Edward Island

for the express purpose of praying at Anne’s shrine. As far as I know there are no Marilla T-shirts for sale.

Marilla, Lucy Maud Montgomery tells us in the first chapter of the first volume of the saga, is “a tall, thin woman, with angles and without curves; her dark hair showed some gray streaks and was always twisted up in a hard little knot behind with two wire hairpins stuck aggressively through it. She looked like a woman of narrow experience and rigid conscience, which she was; but there was a saving something about her mouth which, if it had been ever so slightly developed, might have been considered indicative of a sense of humour.” Marilla is that rare creature, true on the surface and also true in her secret core, “as large as life, and twice as natural!” as the King’s Messenger says of Alice.

Reading the Anne books the portrait of Marilla that comes to mind is the sour-faced woman in *American Gothic*, Grant Wood’s painting from 1930. This is one side of the canvas. But what portrait might appear on the other, the hidden side?

No one would call Marilla a sexual being, and yet she confesses to Anne that she’s been courted and has fallen in love. “John Blythe,” she tells Anne, “was a nice boy. We used to be real good friends, he and I. People called him my beau.” And then they quarrelled. “I wouldn’t forgive him when he asked me to. I meant to, after awhile—but I was sulky and angry and I wanted to punish him first. He never came back—the Blythes were all mighty independent. But I always felt—rather sorry. I’ve always kind of



ILLUSTRATION: Marilla, by Alberto Manguel



wished I'd forgiven him when I had the chance." Even as a young woman Marilla seemed unwilling to bend to anyone or anything.

Chaucer's Wife of Bath was equally unwilling to bend, neither to her five husbands ("three of them were good and two were bad") nor to the world at large. She tells us "of tribulation in marriage,/ Of which I am expert in all mine age/ This is to say, myself hath been the whip." The Wife of Bath wields a whip, literally and symbolically, and upholds her right to all physical pleasures. An early Camille Paglia, she accuses men of having made up the stories that condemn women. "By God," she says, "if women had written stories, / As clerkes had within their oratories, / They would have writ of men more wickedness / Than all the mark of Adam may redress." Could this independent, self-asserting older woman be the inverted image of Marilla or, if you like, can Marilla be read as a Puritan version of the Wife of Bath?

Marilla's coldness hides an old story which she recognizes early enough in Anne: "What a starved, unloved life she had—a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect," she thinks to herself, with a feeling of pity perilously near self-pity. It also hides a sense of humour, sharp and intelligent, "which is simply another name" (Montgomery comments wisely) "for a sense of the fitness of things." This Marilla has in abundance.

Marilla is practical in all things concerning social responsibilities. Prince Edward Island community life would be impossible without mutual assistance among neighbours. Tradition and polite niceties she accepts without argument, because she refuses to imagine things "different from what they really are." And adds: "When the Lord puts us in certain circumstances He doesn't mean for us to imagine them away." The Wife of Bath would agree: you don't imagine circumstances away, you face them and deal with them, and if you have to, you

use a whip. Nothing can dissuade either woman once they have set on a given course, disciplinary or amorous. "When I make up my mind to do a thing it stays made up," Marilla states. And the Wife of Bath: "Forbid us thing, and that desire we; / Press on us fast, and then will we flee."

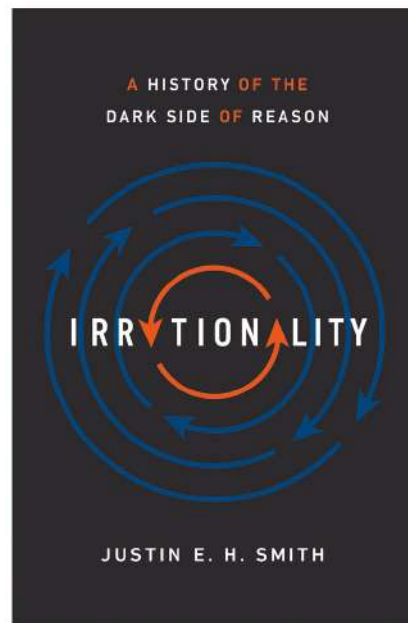
These strong women living within the fortress they've painfully built for themselves, have occasionally the chance of change, of expanding, of becoming conscious of other powers within themselves, of enriching their souls and enjoying not only their obvious strengths but also the ones they are only vaguely aware of possessing. The husbands are the trigger that makes the Wife of Bath increasingly adroit in the use of her sexual prowess ("In wifhood I will use mine instrument/ As freely as my Maker hath it sent"). For Marilla it is Anne who helps her open herself up to the enjoyment of the world and to the recognition of kindness; in the end, as Mrs. Lynde

puts it, Marilla "has got *mellow*" and "crispness was no longer Marilla's distinguishing characteristic." Anne will go on to adulthood and greater things, but it is Marilla who will remain and flourish there, in the home that has made her who she is. Anne will grow and learn and change with new experiences in new places. It is Marilla who will accomplish the far more difficult task of coming to terms with who she really is, becoming her own mirror.

"There's another way of reading Anne of Green Gables," wrote Margaret Atwood wisely, "and that's to assume that the true central character is not Anne, but Marilla Cuthbert."

---

*Alberto Manguel is the award-winning author of hundreds of works, most recently (in English) Fabulous Monsters (September 2019), 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).*



"Irrationality is . . . stippled with fascinating meditations and vignettes."

—Kwame Anthony Appiah,  
*New York Review of Books*

"No philosopher alive today writes with as much wit, voice, and erudition as Justin Smith. *Irrationality* is a masterpiece."

—Yascha Mounk, author of  
*The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*

Cloth \$29.95

 PRINCETON  
UNIVERSITY  
PRESS



# ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

## NO ONE KNOWS

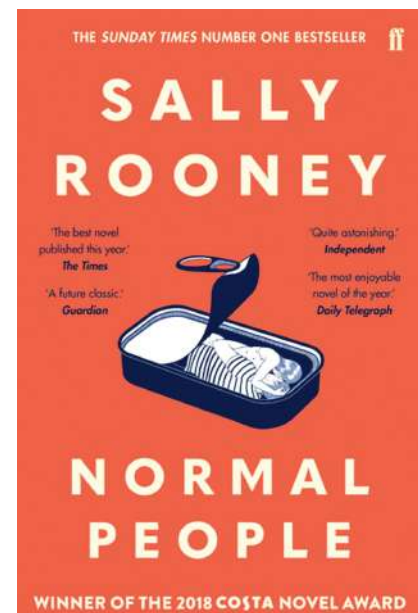
No one but George Bowering knows how much of **No One** (ECW Press) is based on actual autobiographical events and how much of it is simply self-indulgent twaddle. If I were forced to hazard a guess, I'd say that 70:30 was a reasonable estimate. *No One* is billed by the publisher as "The sequel to the sequel of *Pinboy*" (the 2012 memoir which *Geist* reviewer Jill Mandrake suggested might be "George Bowering's most provocative work"). *No One* is a series of late-in-life reminiscences told by a wandering painter/poet with a bit of a Kirk Douglas fixation who recounts his repeated attempts (à la Ulysses/Odysseus) to return "home" from his wanderings to some kind of shimmering Ithaca-substitute, where a long-suffering Penelope-like partner awaits. In having his narrator describe his literary/sexual misadventures, it feels at times as if Bowering strains to provoke. And you have to admit that it's a convenient cover: take an unreliable narrator ("there is the possibility that I am making this all up. Or some of it"), add a few coy bits of post-modernist self-reference ("If we were fictional, the reader or viewer might feel as if he were reading or looking at pornography"), sprinkle a light dusting of classical and contemporary literary references over a (semi)autobiographical foundation, and you've got a useful foil against any accusations of objectification of women/bad taste. At times *No One* reads as if it had been typed with one hand, while the other hand was otherwise occupied: reviving and embellishing fond memories of previous liaisons and/or sexual fantasies. Will there be a further sequel to the sequel of *Pinboy*? No one knows. —*Michael Hayward*

## A MATTER OF DNA

**After the Peace** is Fay Weldon's 48th book or her 53rd book, depending on whether you like Wikipedia or the "Also by Fay Weldon" page in the book (published by Head of Zeus). Sources agree that *The Fat Woman's Joke* was her first novel, published in 1967 (it holds up very well), and she hasn't set down her pen since then. The first sentence in *After the Peace*—the last of five volumes about the Dilberne Dynasty: "A whole lot of people were involved in Rozzie's conception." Xandra, the birth mother and a full-time nurse, age 39. Clive, the legal father, an occasional actor and singer, age 36. The ancient family friend Gwinny, who lives in the adjoining duplex unit and relies on the pricking of her thumbs to suss out lies, shadows and weird coincidences. It is she who narrates the story. Well, most of it. And, in the turkey baster, the recently defrosted sperm of a young Viscount—which none of them knew at the time (maybe). In fact it was Gwinny who transferred the sperm to Xandra, while Clive, who had been found to have non-viable sperm, quoted passages from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. If you believe Gwinny, that is. She doesn't advise it: writing in third person, she warns the reader that Gwinny is "a bit of a nutter." All of this by page 20! The reader will be up reading all night. Weldon is a magician. On she goes, through backstory, front-story, fantasy, conjecture and seat-of-the-pants psychology, amid a storm of subheads—Trio Con Brio; Suspicion Dawns; The Moving Finger; Me, Me, Me #MeToo—amid references to Ritalin, Leadbelly, snowflake millennials, Mercury in retrograde, Chernobyl,

Viagra, reincarnation. And bits from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which runs right through the works, the reader being the wedding guest. Whew! —*Mary Schendlinger*

## UNDER THE BELL CURVE



A friend told me she couldn't stop thinking about **Normal People** (Knopf Canada) by Sally Rooney. Another friend said Rooney writes some of the most intimate sex scenes she's read. *The New Republic* said her "paragraphs are built for the Instagram age." *The Guardian* said it's a "future classic." And many have called Sally Rooney the first Great Millennial Author. As a fellow millennial I was curious to read the first great author of my generation. The novel follows two characters, Marianne and Connell, from their last year of high school to the end of university. Their relationship weaves between being friends and lovers tangled in

social and economic tensions: Marianne lives in the white mansion and Connell's mother is the cleaner of the white mansion; Marianne's family is abusive and Connell's mother is loving; Connell is the popular kid in high school and Marianne is the outsider; Marianne is popular in university and Connell struggles to make friends. Yet they are drawn to each other, connected by their interest and exploration of what it is to be a "normal person." Rooney writes minute details of the characters' interaction, at times too much, and other times too sparsely. The writing is cool and nonchalant, like the millennial attitude of "it doesn't really matter, but it does matter, but I'm not going to show you it matters, and I'll just go with the flow." I wanted to like the book because my friends said it was good, because the reviewers said it was good. And after reading about Sally Rooney herself, I wanted to

like the book. I felt like I was missing something, that I didn't get the book. But maybe I'm just not a "normal person." —*Jocelyn Kuang*

---

### CASTLES, COUNTESESSES, AND CAT WOMEN

**When I Arrived at the Castle** (Koyama Press), Emily Carroll's new graphic novella, features queer lovers, gothic horror and the fairy tale themes we've come to expect from Carroll's work. Our heroine, an anthropomorphic cat woman, arrives at the Countess's castle intending to kill her. A gorgeous, statuesque vampire, the Countess knows exactly why her guest is there, but treats her with hospitality before setting a series of traps, including seduction, that the cat woman must overcome in order to kill her. Carroll's art is striking—black and white and red with baroque



details overlying simple backgrounds and character designs with lots of negative space, few words, and fewer panels: most pages are full images, rather than the multi-panel layout typical of many comics. Especially uncanny are the series of pages where we glimpse the Countess at her dressing table through keyhole-shaped panels, watching her shed her skin to become monstrous. The story is non-linear and prefers to leave things ambiguous. This is especially effective for the folktale-like situations the cat woman finds behind certain doors in the castle: rendered as white text on a red background, with no images, these stories-within-a-story have an arresting, disorienting effect that amplifies the reader's anxiety by leaving things to the imagination. To me, Carroll's book is about struggling with gender and femininity: the primary themes of the story are shame and entrapment, and the cat woman

FICTION • POETRY • COMMENTARY • ART • BOOK REVIEWS

subTerrain #82  
MAGAZINE

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!**

6 issues for \$25 • [subTerrain.ca](http://subTerrain.ca)

follow subTerrain  

ART: LARA CARSON

is trying to kill a villain who is the kind of beautiful, flat sex object occupying many media properties instead of actual complex women characters. Notably, both the Countess and the cat woman are shown to have changeable skins, suggesting that gender presentation is both fluid and a disguise. I loved the mix of familiar horror tropes, dramatic art and feminist themes in this graphic novella, and look forward to Carroll's next work.  
—Kelsea O'Connor

---

### AN ATLAS OF NOIR

Akashic Books is a Brooklyn-based publisher with a winning formula: anthologies of genre fiction featuring local writers who turn a *noir* eye on their own neighbourhoods. Akashic's Noir series is fifteen years old, with nearly 100 titles published to date. Together they offer an alphabet of crime, from *Amsterdam Noir* to *Zagreb Noir*, with stops in other, equally exotic locations: Baghdad, Beirut, Lagos, Staten Island. **Vancouver Noir** (edited by Sam Wiebe) is Akashic's third volume of Canadian noir, following collections set in Montreal and Toronto. Wiebe is one of fourteen local writers featured in *Vancouver Noir*; some are familiar (Timothy Taylor, a Giller nominee), and some less so. Don English contributes a grim tale set in Crab Park ("Pilot picks up shifts in four bars along the Hastings strip and one illegal booze can above a closed artisanal butcher shop on Powell."); Nathan Ripley's "The Landecker Party" is set in Mount Pleasant ("We were surprised he was living in this place, one of the last true dumps on the block, instead of one of the endless condo buildings, only about half of which were tarped and scaffolded up for leaking roof repairs."); West Vancouver is represented by Robin Spano's "The Perfect Playgroup" ("Sage is dressed down today, in five-hundred-dollar riding boots

and organic green leggings"). Yes, it's formulaic, but what better gift for out-of-town visitors, who might otherwise be tempted by Vancouver's seductive cosmetic sheen? It could make a fun party game, guessing which Canadian jurisdiction will next be represented by an all-noir Akashic makeover: *Ottawa Noir*? ("Revealed: the sickening depravities of federal bureaucrats gone rogue"); *Victoria Noir*? ("A shocking glimpse into the dank and seamy underside of Canada's retirement capital"); *Stratford Noir*? ("Rips aside the curtain to reveal a theatrical frenzy of murder and bloody mayhem"). —Michael Hayward

---

### YOU'VE BEEN WARNED



**Bina: A Novel in Warnings** (Penguin Random House) by Anakana Schofield, like the author's previous novels *Malarkey* and *Martin John*, goes wild with the form of the novel and the notion of storytelling itself. Schofield resists providing the expected guidance of plot, as the events of Bina are constantly refracted and circled around, rather than revealed. The heroine is a no-nonsense Irish lady who has been misunderstood and railroaded for her entire life. She's not

taking it anymore. An unsavoury man has finally left her life and she is terrified he might return. Her involvement with a shadowy group whose purpose even she seems a little unsure of has landed her in trouble with the law, and she tries to avoid incarceration while also discouraging a group of protesters who have adopted her as a popular heroine. Oh, the suspense! The instability and uncertainty of the narrative can be unsettling, but it is also liberating, allowing readers the freedom to glory in Bina's offhand confessions, which she suggests are being recorded on scraps of paper and detritus around her home and which grow with a sense of rage and injustice. This is a spectacular and original piece of literature: raucous, strange and mysterious. "I am going to write a combat manual. This might even be it. I think it's time women prepared for war on the doormat."

—Kris Rothstein

---

### FAMILIAR, BUT BETTER

Frankly, I find it just about impossible to be surprised any longer, not because I've seen it all—which I haven't, not even 0.01% of everything—but because the algorithms that now guide our lives are so far-reaching and effective that everything I encounter seems to look, sound, feel, taste and smell exactly like the type of thing or experience that I ought to encounter, and ought to enjoy encountering. My socks were knocked off, then, when I went to see **Beverly Glenn-Copeland** play at the Vancouver International Jazz Festival this past summer on a recommendation from a friend. Glenn-Copeland's music sounded like it came from a parallel world: not completely different, one like ours, with similar musical traditions, but with more ambitious and humane values, and a soundscape to match. Influences of jazz, folk, world, funk, country, blues, opera,

new spiritual, ambient, and early electronic genres could be heard, but what held everything together had an ineffable quality that another writer might call magic. Throughout the concert Glenn-Copeland kept insisting that he was simply the messenger, the music having been sent down from higher powers.

Glenn-Copeland has been performing and recording music for more than fifty years now. He represented Canada at Expo 67. His first album was released in 1970. His 1986 album *Keyboard Fantasies*—written in and inspired by Huntsville, ON—registered favourably in the further depths of obscure music appreciation. During that time he also worked as a writer, on *Sesame Street* among other shows, and as an actor and musician on *Mr. Dressup*. It wasn't until a few years ago, when *Keyboard Fantasies* was reissued, that Glenn-Copeland began to be recognized more widely as a musician. He is a Buddhist, a Black trans man, a trans rights activist, and

a complete inspiration in the fight against the feeling that the status quo is inevitable. —*Michał Kozłowski*

---

#### MALL MOLL

**Molly of the Mall: Literary Lass and Purveyor of Fine Footwear** (NeWest Press) is a book written by a book nerd (Heidi L.M. Jacobs, a librarian), for book nerds about a book nerd. The bookish heroine is Molly, born into an academic family and named for the novel her father was teaching at the time of her birth, *Moll Flanders*. She is an aspiring writer and enthusiastic university student who wonders how her own life will stack up against the tumultuous adventures of her namesake. Much of the novel takes place in 1995 in the West Edmonton Mall, where Molly spends the summer selling shoes and reporting on store politics and gossip in a diary-like format. *Molly of the Mall* is a loving satire in the vein

of Molly's beloved Jane Austen, and indeed, it is Austen's books that shape Molly's world and the lens through which she attempts to understand romance, family and personal ambition. —*Kris Rothstein*

---

#### POST-APOCALYPTIC NORTH

I picked up **Moon of the Crusted Snow** (ECW Press) by Waubgeshig Rice because I was curious to see how post-apocalyptic fiction would play out in the Canadian North. The story is set in an isolated residential community in northern Ontario, one which loses power and connections with the rest of the country sporadically—often enough that the residents at first do not suspect the end of the world when their electricity and phone lines are cut. Problems arise once the southerners come, seeking more than just refuge. The strongest part of Rice's writing is the post-colonial threads that run through the



PRODUCTIONS - READINGS - WORKSHOPS - CABARET

**SARASVATI  
FEM  
FEST 2019**

**14 - 21  
SEPT**

*All the World's a Stage*

**WINNIPEG 204-586-2236 FEMFEST.CA**



action of the novel. With fresh memories of apocalypse after apocalypse done unto Canada's Indigenous peoples, Rice offers a unique perspective on survival as the small Anishinaabe community slowly comes to face the fallout of whatever has gone wrong in the cities to the south. Rice is sparing with his words. The action is slowly put in motion. What he doesn't hold back on is a unique attitude of resistance and survival that lends itself beautifully and pragmatically to a genre that runs on doom and mass hysteria. —*Anson Ching*

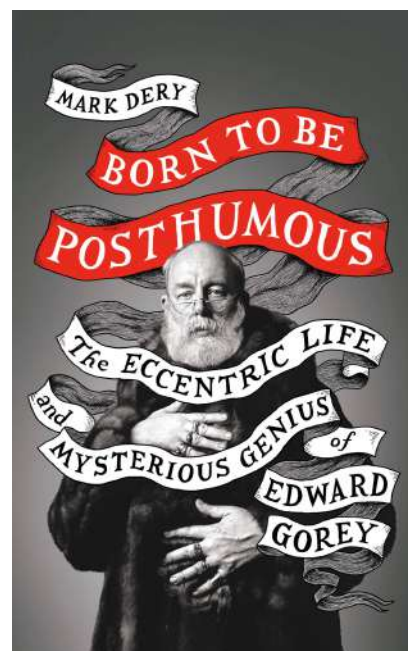
### STRIKING THE RICH

I am obsessed with the writing of the American journalist Taffy Brodesser-Akner, who goes deep on topics like Gwyneth Paltrow's perplexing Goop empire, Marie Kondo's devoted acolytes, reclusive celebrities and taking her Orthodox Jewish mother to

HempCon. So I was beyond excited to read her first work of fiction, **Fleishman Is in Trouble** (Penguin Random House). The novel is a sprawling, raucous satire set in contemporary Manhattan, composed with Brodesser-Akner's recognizable style of long breathless paragraphs, piles and piles of details, plenty of personal insight and somewhat scattered detours (the author admits she has never stuck to an assigned word count). Though the hero is the baffled, newly divorced doctor Toby Fleishman, who is on the trail of his incommunicado ex-wife, the story is told by a friend from his youth, Elizabeth (Libby), who shares many characteristics with Brodesser-Akner herself. Libby could not have observed or been told the intricacies of the plot or psychology of the other characters, so this literary device seems a little clunky. That is not to disparage the novel itself, which is ambitious, contemplative and very funny. Rich,

successful Manhattanites who complain because someone else is richer and more successful than them are fairly easy to skewer, but the novel is genuinely willing to try to understand all of the humanity it encounters. —*Kris Rothstein*

### THE WHOLE, GOREY STORY



**Born to Be Posthumous: The Eccentric Life and Mysterious Genius of Edward Gorey** by Mark Dery (Little, Brown) is the comprehensive biography that has been missing from the works about the renowned writer and illustrator. Best known for his genre-defying small illustrated books like *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, the classic opening credits for Masterpiece Theatre, and for set-designing *Dracula* on Broadway, Gorey's work is iconic, with its Victorian-Edwardian style, gothic themes and dense crosshatching. Dery's book dutifully traces Gorey's life from childhood in Chicago, to college at Harvard, through to New York and his years in Cape Cod, managing to provide insight even in difficult circumstances: Gorey was notably reluctant to give

New fiction from  Douglas & McIntyre



**CURSED! BLOOD OF THE DONNELLYS**

KEITH ROSS LECKIE

**CURSED! BLOOD OF THE DONNELLYS**  
A Novel Based on a True Story

Based on the real-life story of the Donnellys of Lucan Township, this epic novel from KEITH ROSS LECKIE is the iconic tale of the Old World and its sins visited upon the new. Coming September 2019.  
\$22.95 PB

**MOCCASIN SQUARE GARDENS**  
Short Stories

RICHARD VAN CAMP captures the shifting and magical nature of the North in this stunning collection of short stories.  
\$19.95 PB





**DOUBLESPEAK**

ALISA SMITH

**DOUBLESPEAK**  
A Novel

In this complex espionage story, ALISA SMITH transports the unforgettable characters from her first novel *Speakeasy* to opulent and unstable postwar Siam. \$22.95 PB

AVAILABLE IN FINE BOOKSTORES [www.douglas-mcintyre.com](http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com)

out personal information, even to friends, and details of his young life are scarce. Dery interviews friends and family and provides enough social context to fill in the gaps. Throughout, Dery analyzes Gorey's body of work and charts his growth as a writer, illustrator and dramaturge. However, in an otherwise useful and competent biography, Dery spends too much time trying to "solve" the question of Gorey's sexual orientation. Throughout his life, Gorey dodged the question of the nature of his sexuality, but in one interview he identified as asexual, and his actions throughout his life align with someone who is asexual. Gorey was also romantically attracted to men. To Dery, this means Gorey must be gay, despite the fact that he cannot reconcile his argument for homosexuality with the evidence of asexuality. This is like Gorey identifying with and practicing vegetarianism, and Dery spending a lot of time puzzling over

the fact that Gorey doesn't seem to eat meat. Sexual and romantic orientations are, of course, a spectrum, ones that Dery doesn't seem to have spent any time trying to understand, as he is dismissive of asexuality throughout the book. Dery's willful misunderstanding of Gorey ruined this book for me. —*Kelsea O'Connor*

#### BETWEEN QUIPS AND DREAMS

Richard Van Camp's latest short story collection, **Moccasin Square Gardens** (Douglas & McIntyre), seems meant to be read aloud. Behind the words is a storyteller. You can picture Van Camp leaning over the dinner table or hunching over his microphone on stage. In between witty quips about what it means to belong to a colonized group of people and to inhabit a small town in the north is a series of comical and heartwarming stories. Most of the time, the

stories appear to be written for people who've shared similar life experiences. But then there are these deep empathic moments that flicker at the margins: a character shares a joint with his grandfather, the two of them separated by language and history; another character talks about sleeping on the beds left behind by hotel guests, if only to dream their dreams; a man tries to be rid of his girlfriend's overly dependent son only to gain a son. Van Camp's writing is quirky and non-uniform. Sometimes it is poignant and other times it is lighthearted. Some stories read as introspective reflections, thought out over many years, and yet, there's also a few stories that seem to unravel into rambling, as if Van Camp is trying to capture as many fleeting moments and thoughts as possible. It can be a bit jarring to move through the stories because of this, but you're rewarded whenever he strikes gold. —*Anson Ching*

EXILE'S TWO LITERARY COMPETITIONS: OVER \$100,000 AWARDED TO DATE!

## Carter V. Cooper Short Fiction Competition

\$10,000 for the Best Story by an Emerging Writer

\$5,000 for the Best Story by a Writer at Any Career Point

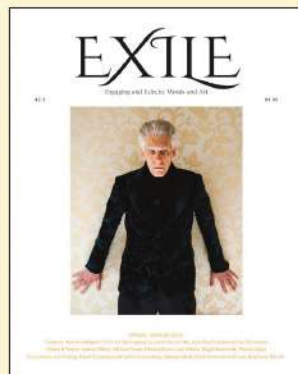
The winners/shortlisted are published in the annual *CVC Short Fiction Anthology Series*; winners and selected shortlisted in *EXILE: The Literary Quarterly*



Each year 10 to 13 writers appear in the annual anthology, and from among them 10 have gone on to full book publication with Exile Editions... an added opportunity when entering.

A distinctive literary and visual arts magazine in which more than 2,000 Canadian and international works have appeared since 1972.

On this cover (and inside) is filmmaker David Cronenberg.



## Gwendolyn MacEwen Poetry Competition

\$1,500 for the Best Suite by an Emerging Writer

\$1,500 for the Best Suite by a Writer at Any Career Point

Winners and selected shortlisted are published in *EXILE: The Literary Quarterly*

These annual competitions open mid-March and close mid-October

Details: [www.exilequarterly.com/poetry-and-fiction-competitions](http://www.exilequarterly.com/poetry-and-fiction-competitions)

## OFF THE SHELF

A father rejects a suitor's proposal to marry his youngest daughter and instead offers his prettier, older daughter in *The Oracle of Cumae* (Second Story Press) by **Melissa Hardy**. In *This Wicked Tongue* (Biblioasis) by **Elise Levine** Eddie tells his wife about his affairs and forbids her to tell anyone else about them. A husband pours out coffee that tastes soapy and then accuses his wife of trying to poison him in *Broke City* (NeWest Press) by **Wendy McGrath**. In *Boom Time* (Gaspereau Press) by **Lindsay Bird** a man drinks a cup of piss for five dollars. In *In Every Wave* (QC Fiction) by **Charles Quimper** a girl yells "marbles" and points at the storm brewing outside. In *Mad Long Emotion* (Coach House Books) by **Ben Ladouceur** hikers bike to MEC and purchase fifty dollars' worth of Wet Ones and small foil bags for a hiking trip on the Cabot Trail. A fourteen-year-old girl gets a nose job and years later blames her parents for not stopping her in *Tiny Lights for Travellers* (University of Alberta Press) by **Naomi K. Lewis**. A man approaches a woman in the rinsing-off area of a nude onsen in *Aurora Borealis* (Conundrum Press) by **Joan Steacy**. Omar creeps Kali's Facebook profile before they are introduced by Matthew in *There Has to Be a Knife* (Arsenal Pulp Press) by **Adnan Khan**. Earl winks at Miss Juul, pours her a drink and gestures for her to sit beside him in *Little Fortress* (Wolsak & Wynn) by **Laisha Rosnau**. In *Fatboy Fall Down* (ECW Press) by **Rabindranath Maharaj** a marriage crumbles as the husband returns home from work drunk everyday. Roy, in a fit of anger, pulls Jenny away from the group of dancing naked hippies in *Echolocation* (NeWest Press) by **Karen Hofmann**. A couple walks toward the embassy to sort out their Canadian visas when suddenly the

man says, "One has to be very careful about AIDS in America" in *Never Without Love* (Inanna Publications) by **Mehrnaz Massoudi**. In *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.* (McClelland & Stewart) by **Jenny Heijun Wills** a man reclines his chair, forcing the woman behind him to smell his unwashed hair for the entire fifteen-hour-long flight to Narita. A doctor flies to Hungary to have lunch with his mother at the airport, then flies back to Canada in *Flourish* (ECW Press) by **Jacqueline Turner**. Daria conspires with her colleagues to expose her employer for illegal work conditions in *Wage Slaves* (Conundrum Press) by **Daria Bogdanska**. Aicha steals two thousand dollars from a wallet and buys a leather bracelet from H&M for her crush in *Worst Case, We Get Married* (Book\*hug) by **Sophie Bienvenu**. Kate screams in anger when she remembers Jeff holding a dust bunny in *Fishing for Birds* (Inanna Publications) by **Linda Quenne**. A son hides behind the stove and watches his mother get hit on by a man named Ducal in *The Little Fox of Mayerville* (QC Fiction) by **Éric Mathieu**. In *Chance Encounters with Wild Animals* (Gaspereau Press) by **Monica Kidd** a madman stabs a man in the ribs with his thumb at the 7-Eleven. At an island resort a shirtless man eats fire, a couple drinks exotic cocktails and a chef cooks a suckling pig over open flames in *Midlife Action Figure* (ECW Press) by **Chris Banks**. A lawyer hands two cops his business card that says "MASTER FLOWERS, Instructor. Shaolin Kung fu" in *Exile Blues* (Baraka Books) by **Douglas Gary Freeman**. At the prison library an inmate thinks that poets are even lazier than prisoners because they don't fill the page in *Mama's Boy* (Book\*hug) by **David Goudreault**. Eryk talks sarcastically, acts rudely and picks fights when he drinks at the bar in *Flights* (Riverhead Books) by **Olga**

**Tokarczuk**. Jamie snaps at Marianne for not bringing the cream out for the strawberries in *Normal People* (Knopf Canada) by **Sally Rooney**. On butchering day, the uncles slice the belly of the pig and find four piglets sleeping in *Every Little Scrap and Wonder* (Greystone Books) by **Carla Funk**. A couple finds a baby under a pear tree and names the baby Apple in *Meteorites* (Brindle & Glass) by **Julie Paul**. An IRA man dying of cancer clears his conscience and gives up a name for an investigation in *Rag & Bone Man* (Coteau Books) by **Don Dickinson**.

## NOTED ELSEWHERE

Daniel Kukwa on *goodreads.com* says *The Student* by **Cary Fagan** is an "occasionally angry meditation on life choices"; the *Canadian Jewish News* calls Fagan a humble bricklayer, setting one brick after another; the *Literary Review of Canada* says "there is unassailable power in its simplicity." The *Winnipeg Free Press* says, "In this novel, 70 is not old"; and the author Carol Bruneau says it is a "spirited gem." *Even Weirder Than Before* by **Susie Taylor** is "so immersive, and propulsive," says Terry Doyle on *goodreads.com*; "it truly appears as if a teen is talking to you" says *The Miramichi Reader*; *consumedbyink.ca* says "I almost felt like it was the eighties and nineties again"; *compulsiveoverreader.com* says the book is "more episodic than plot-driven" and *picklemethis.com* says the book is "at home in its bright and appealing pink cover."

## CONGRATULATIONS

To **Miriam Toews**, whose novel *Women Talking* was a finalist for the Trillium Book Award; to **Cary Fagan**, whose novel *The Student* was longlisted for a Toronto Book Award; and to Lily Gontard, whose novel *Giantess* was longlisted for the Guernica Prize for Literary Fiction.



# The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

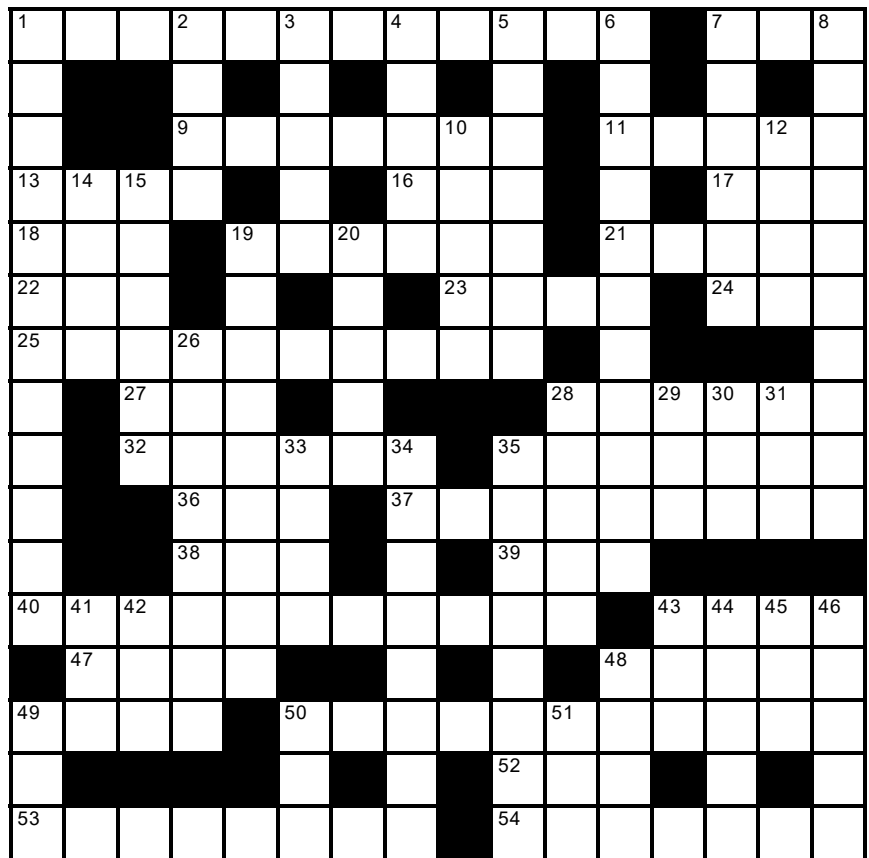
Send a copy of your completed puzzle,  
along with your name and address, to:

Puzzle #113 GEIST  
210-111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4  
or [geist@geist.com](mailto:geist@geist.com)

A winner will be selected at random from correct solutions and will be awarded a one-year subscription to *Geist* or—if already a subscriber—a *Geist* magnet.

## ACROSS

- 1 I felt all warm and fuzzy after seeing that story
- 7 Can you picture when a machine part gets real?
- 9 Just stop it from happening!
- 11 The Swiss sure like the Leafs
- 13 Quit horsing around and just stick together!
- 16 One cat made veiled threats after the election (abbrev)
- 17 She points things out to the precious but confused gay guy
- 18 It's time to do the longest division
- 19 They seem to deliver a style of frogs
- 21 When two golfers collide, they reconcile by eating steak
- 22 One is on Facebook and the other has a verified existence (abbrev)
- 23 That little case sounds so twee!
- 24 This just in, the other leader was on a jag (abbrev)
- 25 When modelling, sit in place and play around with the synthetics
- 27 In the beginning they tried to give some to the audience (abbrev)
- 28 Do you think this sheet looks good on me?
- 32 She got a reward for arranging the boundaries
- 35 His drag costume looks a little limp
- 36 Do they have talent or are they just smart enough to figure out the middle? (abbrev)
- 37 Too many fully developed fertilizers will confuse a dull team (2)
- 38 When children take on evil (abbrev)
- 39 The height-challenged move easily in cyberspace (abbrev)
- 40 Sounds like those instruments have a sense of tactility (2)
- 43 How can beige cure anything?
- 47 That sage has been around forever!
- 48 Rap on, baby! And don't forget to protect your clothing!
- 49 Over-shoulder boulder-holders?!
- 50 Top parents I know let their kids decorate with egg yolk (2)
- 52 Sounds like Anna and Pippa had the same one
- 53 You'll get a feather in your hat for noodling in the art world
- 54 Toothbrush art



## DOWN

- 1 I use digital colours in jelly (2)
- 2 What's the skinny on that water sport?
- 3 Can you lease a tripod for Art?
- 4 Dress the pilot for a serious proceeding
- 5 In France, when they don't like a performer, they just taser it
- 6 Some HIV kits cast a new light on the agendas of active people
- 7 That's a corny way to colour!
- 8 That dogged poem is a goopy mess (2)
- 10 Bill was a proud groom
- 12 She made money in Capetown but spelled her name with a "y"
- 14 He started out guffawing but then he just hung around
- 15 Those Protestant places aren't equitable
- 19 Old phones in cars are so annoying and they never quit!
- 20 Sounds icky but has lovely white flowers
- 26 Give me a gallon of those little bits and not a peck less
- 28 Remember exposing those dust layers using celluloid and emulsions?
- 29 So a thin felicitous parental unit is a thing? Or is it just a way to move your theology up a degree? (abbrev)
- 30 How can we expose dangerous cyber thingys? (abbrev)
- 31 We've got to help those horses with their math problems! (abbrev)
- 33 Her stories sure go fast!
- 34 The trike was in the way of our nautical runner (2)
- 35 A home in a vacuum is dry earth free

- 41 I hope they don't screw up the Spanish sea!
- 42 Isn't it great when all the traders are in harmony regarding products in our surroundings? (abbrev)
- 43 Who's looking after the great outdoors? (abbrev)
- 44 After swimming in an Appalachian stream, he got a spasm in his neck
- 45 Don's seasonal best buddy
- 46 Loosen the laces so we can't unite
- 48 Please don't alter recess!
- 49 Didn't the Stones start with a prehistory baby making a loud noise?
- 50 That administrative unit gives Justin an out of body experience (abbrev)
- 51 Larry and I were torn up that he had died

The winners for Puzzle 112 were Sue Geist and Graham Annable.



# Getting Wasted

*The National Map of Booze*

*by Adam Vajda*



EIGHTH ANNUAL

vancouver  
art book  
fair 2019  
VANCOUVER  
ART BOOK FAIR

OCTOBER 18—20, 2019

THE EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

BOOKS • MAGAZINES • ZINES • PRINT EPHEMERA • TALKS  
PERFORMANCES • ARTIST PROJECTS



READ

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

PUBLISHING@SPU

Langara.

esse

CITRUSCORN

BEATROUTE

ZINE CLUB

cmagazine

GEIST

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

# Toronto International Festival of Authors

Bring a  
friend for free  
with code\*  
GEIST40

October 24 – November 3, 2019

*Meet the people behind the pages*

FESTIVALOFAUTHORS.CA | 416-973-4000

Follow the Festival @FestofAuthors

\*Buy one ticket at regular price and receive one additional ticket to the same event for free.

Major Partners



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



ONTARIO  
CREATES



ONTARIO CULTURAL ATTRACTIVE FUNDS  
LE PROGRAMME DES SUBVENTIONS  
CULTURELLES DE L'ONTARIO



Venue Partner

© Harbourfront centre

Major Media Partner

TORONTO STAR  
thestar.com/subscribe

Official Bookseller

Uoft  
Book  
Store

Hotel Partner

THE WESTIN  
HARBOUR CASTLE  
TORONTO