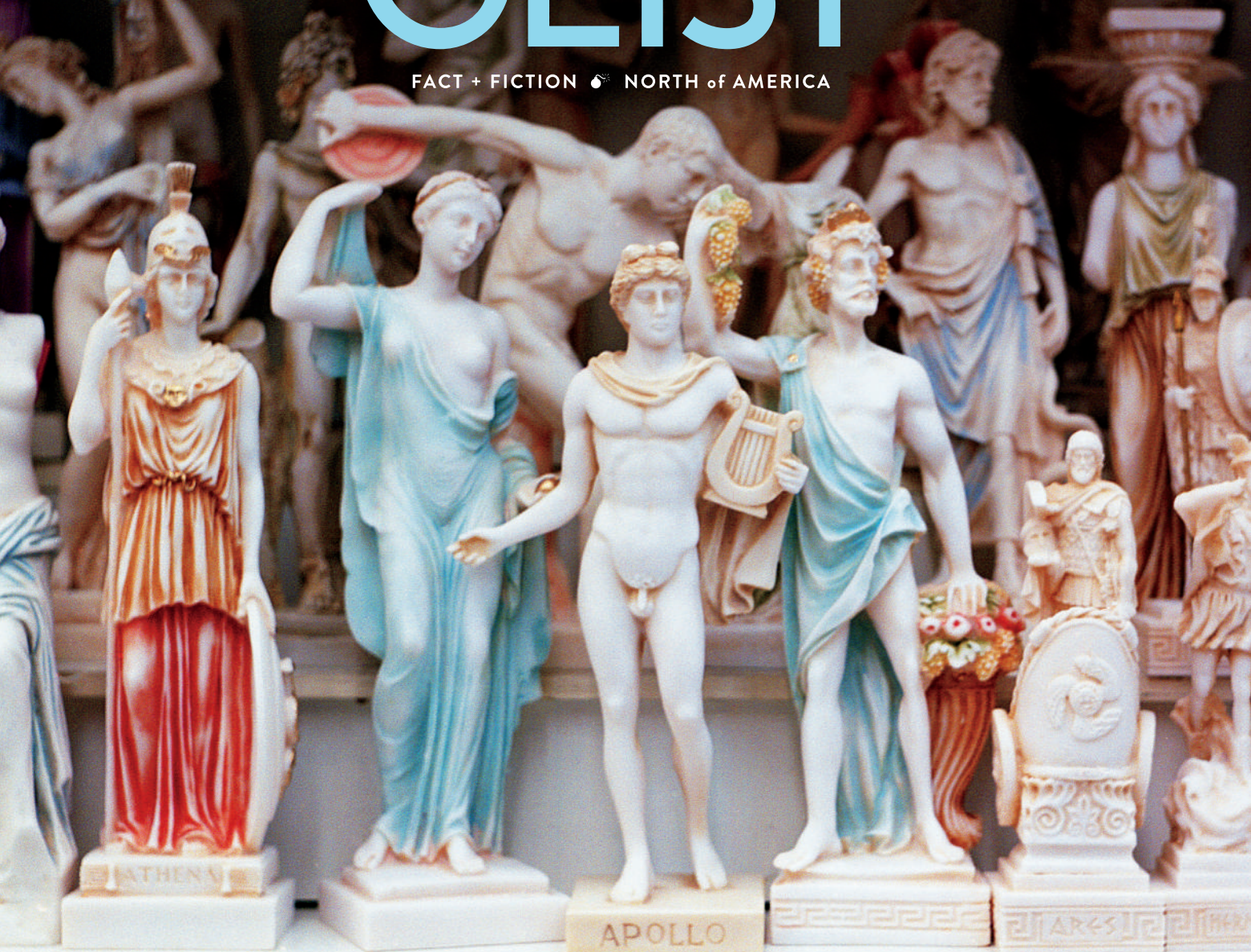


GEIST

NUMBER 115

\$8.95

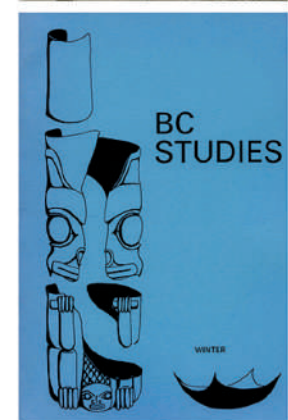
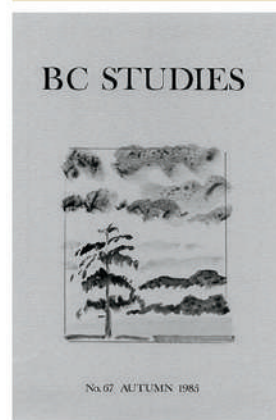
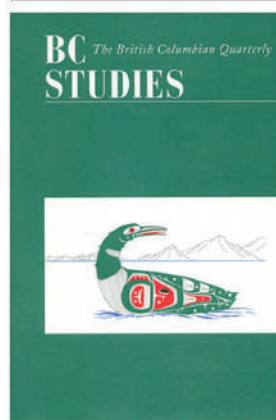
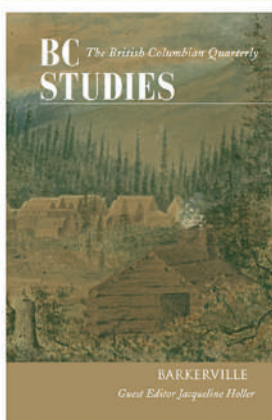
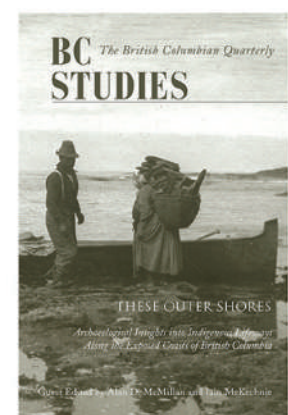
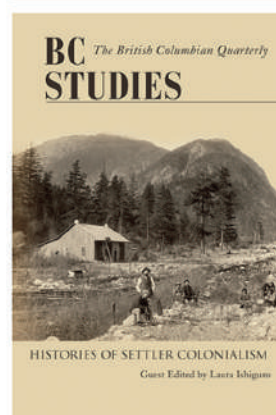
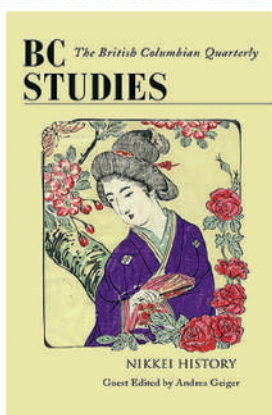
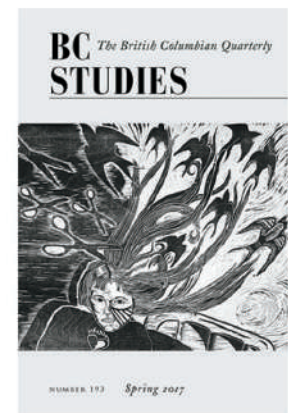
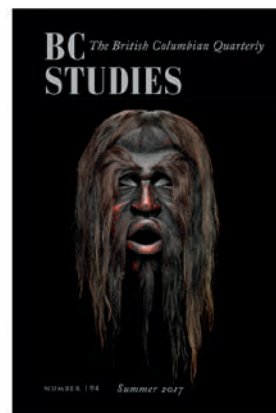
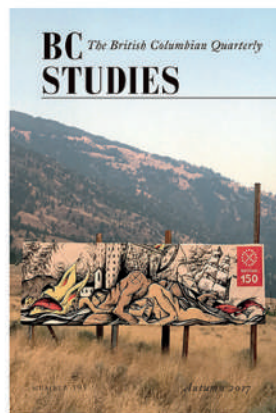
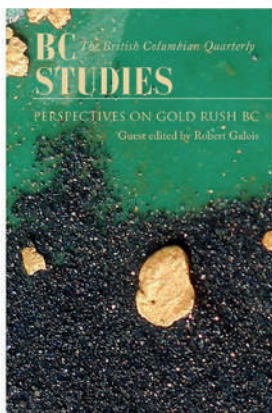
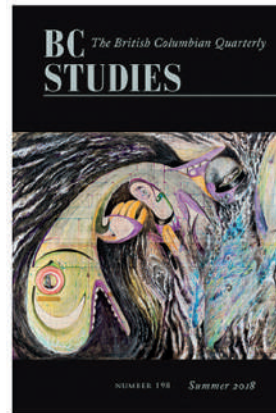
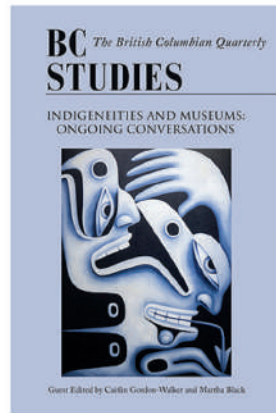
FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



DURABLE GOODS

Venus's Fifth Dimension / Woulda-Shoulda-Has-Beens
Laughing Heir / First Degree Character Assassination

Celebrating 50 years of peer-reviewed research on the political, economic, and cultural life of BC, past and present.



www.bcstudies.com



BOOK DELIVERY

As the prospect of a long spring and summer spent sunbathing on the living-room floor sets in, we suggest turning to your local independent bookstore for your home-beach reading needs. Quality books can be ordered for home delivery at these fine retailers in Canada.

ALBERTA

Owl's Nest Books (*Calgary*)
Shelf Life Books (*Calgary*)
Audreys Books (*Edmonton*)
Glass Bookshop (*Edmonton*)
Kennedy's Parable (*Red Deer*)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Black Bond Books (*Delta, Ladner, Surrey*)
Pulpfiction Books (*Lower Mainland*)
Blue Heron Books (*Comox*)
Laughing Oyster Bookshop (*Courtenay*)
Huckleberry Books (*Cranbrook*)
Volume One Bookstore (*Duncan*)
Galiano Island Books (*Galiano Island*)
**delivers anywhere in BC*
Kennedy's Parable (*West Kelowna*)
Mosaic Books (*Kelowna*)
Once Upon a Bookstore (*Kelowna*)
Wendel's (*Langley*)
Talewind Books (*Sechelt*)
**pick-up only*

Munro's Books (*Victoria*)
**delivers anywhere in BC*
Sorensen Books (*Victoria*)

VANCOUVER

Book Warehouse
First Used Books
Iron Dog Books
MacLeod's Books
Massy Books
The Paper Hound
Pulp Fiction Books
Spartacus Books

MANITOBA

McNally Robinson (*Winnipeg*)
**local and nationwide delivery*
Whodunit Bookstore (*Winnipeg*)

NEW BRUNSWICK

Westminster Books (*Fredericton*)
Tidewater Books (*Sackville*)

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Pedlar's Press (*St. John's*)
Running the Goat (*St. John's*)
**nationwide delivery*

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Currently no bookstores delivering.

NOVA SCOTIA

Bookmark (*Halifax*)
King's Co-op Bookstore (*Halifax*)
Venus Envy (*Halifax*)
Woozles Books (*Halifax*)
Lexicon Books (*Lunenburg, Mahone Bay*)

NUNAVUT

Currently no bookstores delivering.

ONTARIO

Mill Street Books (*Almonte*)
A Different Drummer Books (*Burlington*)
Bookshelf (*Guelph*)
The City & The City Books (*Hamilton*)
Epic Books (*Hamilton*)
King West Books (*Hamilton*)
A Novel Idea (*Kingston*)
Manticore Books (*Orillia*)
The Barely Bruised Book Club (*Ottawa*)
Black Squirrel Books (*Ottawa*)
Octopus Books (*Ottawa*)
Perfect Books (*Ottawa*)
Parry Sound Books (*Parry Sound*)
Someday Books (*St. Catharines*)
Blue Heron Books (*Uxbridge*)
Words Worth Books (*Waterloo*)
Biblioasis (*Windsor*)

TORONTO

Bakka-Phoenix
The Beguiling
Book City
Cormorant Books
A Different Booklist
**nationwide delivery*
Flying Books
Moonbeam Books
A Novel Spot Bookshop
Queen Books
Sleuth of Baker Street
Type Books (*West End*)

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Bookmark (*Charlottetown*)

QUÉBEC

Argo Bookshop (*Montréal*)
Librairie D+Q (*Montréal*)
Librairie St-Henri Books (*Montréal*)
The Word (*Montréal*)
Livres Babar (*Pointe-Claire*)
La Maison Anglaise (*Québec City*)

SASKATCHEWAN

Kennedy's Parable (*Saskatoon, Martensville, Warman*)
McNally Robinson (*Saskatoon*)
**local and nationwide delivery*
Turning the Tide Bookstore (*Saskatoon*)

YUKON

Currently no bookstores delivering.

Send notes about any other retailers who provide home delivery to geist@geist.com.

GEIST

Volume 28 • Number 115 • Winter 2020

FEATURES

ERASURE LIT

Winners of the 5th Occasional

Erasure Poetry Contest

33

LAUGHING HEIR

Cary Fagan

*He listened to the message three times,
then sent a text to Ciara begging off
dinner without giving a reason*

36

DURABLE GOODS

James Pollock

*The rhythmic churn of an
unbalanced drum*

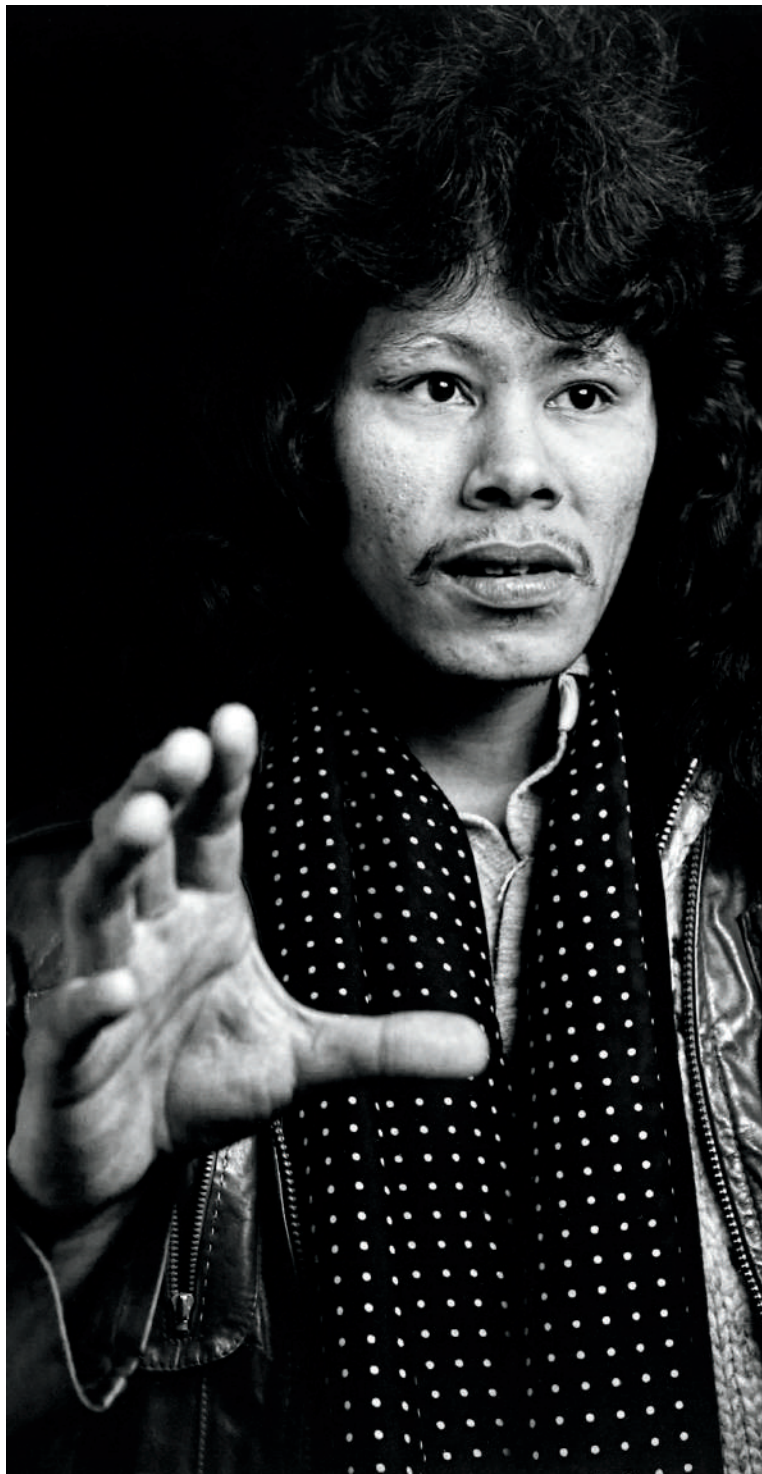
46

#NOFILTERNEEDED

The photography of the Native Indian/Inuit

Photographers' Association

49



GEIST

Remote Controlled Lit

NOTES & DISPATCHES

Hàn Fúsēn
Little Trouble in Chinatown
6

Jill Mandrake
Voyage to the Bottom of the Out
8

Joe Bongiorno
Piledrivin' Patriots
9

Jen Bieber
Little house
11

Randy Fred
Seeing Things
12

Henry Doyle
Killing me the rest of the way
13

FINDINGS

14
Consciousness Explorer's Club
Letter to Berton
On Being and Meatloaf
It Could Be a Virus
Pizza World
Best Possible You
Another Woman in Canada



City Dream
First Degree Character Assassination
Venus's Fifth Dimension
Your Lives
My After School Haikus
Woulda-Shoulda-Has-Beens
Wake-up Call
black feminist

and more...

COLUMNS

AFTERLIFE OF CULTURE
Taino Tales
Stephen Henighan
52

CITY OF WORDS
Literature & Morality
Alberto Manguel
54

DEPARTMENTS

MISCELLANY
4

ENDNOTES
56

OFF THE SHELF,
NOTED ELSEWHERE
62

PUZZLE
63

CAUGHT MAPPING
64



COVER: By Andrew Emond, from his series "Overlooking Athena." Emond travelled to Greece in 2010, at the start of a period of unrest, general strikes, demonstrations and riots borne of the Greek financial crisis. A month after Emond's arrival, the Parthenon—a 2500 year old structure that now stands because the columns are supported by titanium rods, new stone is used in place of missing stone, and the original sculptures within are replaced by replicas—was shown without scaffolding for the first time in twenty-seven years. Emond writes: "It was in the context of these two events that I photographed Athens, reflecting on the contradictions and parallels between the city's past and present: the romantic mythologies surrounding Athens of old set against the inconvenient realities of today. While photographing Athens, I saw a city in decline, not only economically and politically, but perhaps spiritually as well. As I witnessed Greeks struggling with these challenges, I wanted to show that the face of Athens is found, not within the pervasive symbols of its past, but in alternate imagery suggestive of a more disorderly time." See the whole series at andrewemond.com/proj/overlooking_athena.

GEIST

PUBLISHED BY

The Geist Foundation

PUBLISHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

AnnMarie MacKinnon

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Lisa Fedorak (incumbent)
Jocelyn Kuang (outgoing)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Michał Kozłowski

ADMINISTRATION

Interns: Kate Helmore, Evelyn Kuang,
Kathleen Murdock, 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

ENDNOTES EDITOR

Michael Hayward

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jordan Abel, Bartosz Barczak, Kevin Barefoot, Kathy Batty, Trevor Batty, andrea bennett, Jill Boettger, Jasmine Cham, Anson Ching, 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 Ruebsaat, Jane Silcott, Roni Simunovic, Paul Tough, Eric Uhlich, Michelle van der Merwe

SUPPORT THE GEIST FOUNDATION:

GEIST.COM/DONATE

WWW.GEIST.COM

MISCELLANY

ON ONO

Connie Kuhns carries us through the extraordinary life of Yoko Ono, gently revealing the artist, the feminist, the mother, the wife, and ultimately the enigmatically complex woman that she is. Yoko's voice whispers throughout the essay, her words in tweets are a constant flow of validation. Her voice emerges and we come closer to knowing her just a little bit more. —@jennifercikaluk

Thank you for this revelatory, soulful, informative and beautifully written essay about a fearless, extraordinary, creative woman-spirit. Thank you for a well-balanced, enlightened portrayal of Yoko, conveying fairly what she has endured and still risen to express with an open heart. —@lindsayjane46

Thank you for opening up Yoko Ono's work and her person to those of us who have known of her but have never really followed her life and work consciously.

—Hildegard Westerkamp

Read "There Is a Wind That Never Dies" by Connie Kuhns in Geist 114.

NIBBLINGS

A recent episode of the podcast *Every Little Thing*, a favourite among a few of us here at the office, interviewed Kory Stamper, a former Merriam-Webster Dictionary editor, to find out what it takes for a new word to be entered into the dictionary. The podcast producers collected a bunch of words and had Stamper decide which she thought had the best chance of passing muster to make it into a dictionary. One of the major deciding factors is how often a word is found in printed material—the more frequently used in print a word is, the more likely it merits its own entry. The word selected on the podcast for likely entry was "nibbling": a gender-neutral word used to describe the children of one's siblings. We at Geist HQ really like the word, so here we are, doing our part. Already we've assisted with three print uses of the word. Nibbling! Nibbling! NIBBLING! (That's six!) —the Editors

RED ENVELOPES

Kung Hei Fat Choy! Regarding the Chinese New Year red envelope I sent, I think it's a nice tradition. I was given a red envelope with lucky money by someone at the club I go to and from the women who own the fruit and vegetable market near where I live. It was a nice surprise, so I wanted to do it, too.

When I was in Singapore for eleven days over Chinese New Year, I was given several envelopes. When I arrived back at the airport in Toronto, customs and immigration looked in my envelopes, which I felt was sort of an intrusion. Oh well.

On the same trip I went for breakfast at what I think was the oldest restaurant in Singapore. It had stone floors. My friend Chen Chuan thought I would be freaked by the hole-in-the-floor toilet. No big deal. My grandma in rural Nova Scotia has an outhouse.

—Fred Burgess, Toronto

VIRAL VAGARIES

Dear Reader,

You now hold in your hands an issue of Geist produced in some of the strangest times any of us has experienced—times of unprecedented levels of sourdough baking (in the modern era at least), of insatiable lust for toilet paper, and trips to the grocery store that feel like cut scenes from the Mad Max movies. It took us much longer than normal to produce this issue—the vagaries of assembling a magazine, a process that is at Geist an iterative, collaborative and partially analogue endeavour, has become rather challenging (and not one of us has figured out Zoom!). We thank you for bearing with us as we continue to forge new territory in learning how to carry on the Geist project at the recommended two-metre intervals. Stay well, friends!

—the Editors

ALIAS GEIST

Occasionally we, Geist magazine, receive correspondence intended for other Geists, of which there are, it turns out, many. Our former intrepid intern, Kathleen Murdock, did some research and found geistly entities aplenty, including:

- a lifestyle magazine based in Fishers, Indiana;
- a string quartet in Sydney, Australia;
- a song by Ruby Empress, an artist who often writes “mysterious” lyrics;
- an award-winning restaurant in Denmark;
- the *Star Wars* character who prefers war over peace serving as a general in command of the Imperial Army in the Fel Empire;
- an alt rock band from Germany;
- a comic that ran until 2017;
- a death metal band from Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK;
- a restaurant in Nashville described as “a stylish, brick-clad eatery & bar offering American fare plus cocktails, wine & a champagne garden”;
- a hotel located in Åndalsnes, Norway, 37 kilometres from Kylling Bridge and Vermafossen waterfall;
- a sleek WordPress theme;
- Geist Global, a leading data centre offering cooling, monitoring, and infrastructure management products;

ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

Tuulikki Abrahamsson is originally from Helsinki, Finland. She has worked as an economist in Finland and Canada. She lives in Vancouver. See more of her work on Flickr under the handle *rapidwinder*.

Mechelle Bounpraseuth was the recipient of the Fishers Ghost Prize for Sculpture, the Macquarie Group Emerging Art Prize and the Trudie Alfred Bequest Scholarship. Her artworks have been published in *Art Almanac*, *Art + Australia*, the *Journal of Australian Ceramics*, *Art Collector* and *Space Invaders*, an exhibition held at the National Gallery of Australia. She lives in Sydney, Australia.

Jonathan Desmond is a documentary photographer. His project, “Documenting Chinatown,” was exhibited at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden and has been featured in *Chinatown Today*, CBC and the *Star*. He lives in Vancouver. See more of his work at jonathandesmond.com.

Andrew Emond is a Canadian photographer and digital artist. His work has appeared in *Slate*, *National Post*,

Montreal Gazette, *Flavorwire*, *Globe and Mail*, *COLORS*, *Oxford American*, *Photo Life*, *Spacing* and many other publications. He lives in Toronto.

Eric Uhlich is an illustrator and designer living in Vancouver. He is the artist of the graphic novel *Green Skies* and is the designer for *Geist*.

Hisrael Hernandez is from the community of Nueva Colonia, in the Santa Catarina region of Jalisco; he lives in Sayulita, Mexico. *The Shaman's Deer Spirit Teacher* is a reproduction of a painting made by Ruben Lopez Cruz, whose Huichol name is Pariitza.

WRITE TO GEIST

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

The Editor, *Geist*
letters@geist.com

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

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum.

Geist is published four times a year.

Contents copyright © 2020 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.



The Canada Council
1906-1985

Le Conseil des Arts
du Canada
1972-1985



BRITISH
COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL
Supported by the Province of British Columbia



BRITISH
COLUMBIA



Funded by the
Government
of Canada



Little Trouble in Chinatown

HÀN FÚSĒN

Limits of the language



In the 1990s, when I was a boy in Vancouver, my grandpa would take me along to Chinatown to meet with his old friends. Quite a few of them were veterans of the Chinese Civil War. They would book community spaces to display their orchids and bonsai trees. They traded antique coins. Some would let me leaf through their albums of postage stamps.

My grandpa and I would often walk along Main Street, which runs through the neighbourhood and connects it to the Downtown Eastside. Thinking back, it seems like on every street corner could be heard the shrill voices of Cantonese opera, performed live in a nearby park or played from a cassette player.

Today, Chinatown is where you

slurp oysters on the half-shell, fold your slice of pizza New York-style, eat high-end ramen, drink fancy cocktails, buy vegan deli meats and cheeses, and dance with sweaty millennials.

It was nearly six o'clock, twilight, when my companions Stefan and Anthony—who are both of Italian heritage and new to the city—and I left Oyster Express, a restaurant in a renovated nook of an otherwise rundown Edwardian building at the edge of Chinatown. Only half the shopfronts on the street were still open.

Ahead of us loomed the Sun Wah Centre—a sort of Chinatown community centre with art spaces and dimly lit retail stores—with gilded Chinese signage that spanned its brick front. Some of the mid-rises had pseudo-Chinese

roofs and simplified Asian window lattice motifs; a few were narrow in the *tong lau* style of Hong Kong, Singapore and Taipei at the turn of the twentieth century.

When we came up to a dry market, Anthony and Stefan paused to hover over the stalls, which sprawled out into the sidewalk, displaying dried shrimp, scallops, squid, shiitake mushrooms, orange peels, wood ear, jujubes and goji berries.

A little farther down the block we stopped in front of a dimly lit restaurant at the bottom of an old narrow mid-rise. A single roasted duck hung on a hook by the window.

“People have got to start eating duck again,” Anthony said.

“Rabbits too,” Stefan said.

Suddenly, an old woman in a puffy neon pink jacket dashed into the street and hailed a police cruiser travelling in the opposite direction. By the time the police made the U-turn and came back up the block, an old man wearing a flat cap had caught up to the old woman and seized her arm.

Two officers, a blond man and a blond woman, got out of the cruiser. They seemed perfectly calm. When they finally came up to the old man and the old woman, they appeared comically tall.

The old woman pleaded in what sounded like Cantonese, but the old man cut her off. He took off his flat cap and he, too, began to plead in what sounded like Cantonese to the officers, who kept repeating in English that they could not understand.

I walked over and said, "I can help."

The old man turned to me, held his flat cap against his belly, and spoke in an even-measured manner. I realized then that my knowledge of restaurant-bound Cantonese would not help.

Stefan said to Anthony, "I thought our pal spoke only Mandarin."

At this point, I pulled my phone out and dialed my mom's number. "Can you translate their words? I think they're speaking Cantonese," I said. I offered my phone to the old woman, but the old man quickly intercepted. He held my phone below his chin and, still looking at me, spoke in a mix of Cantonese and a language I could not decipher.

The female police officer smiled. "Trouble with the dialect? I'm learning Spanish and it's hard with the regional variations," she said to me. Her partner led the old woman farther up the block. She spoke slower to him now, but still in the dialect of Cantonese I couldn't understand.

A couple minutes later, the old man handed back my phone. "That wasn't Cantonese," my mom said. "I couldn't understand a word. He's

trying to speak Mandarin, but I don't know where he learned it."

"Should I tell him to speak in Cantonese?" I said.

"I think he's from Taishan, or somewhere close, in Seiyap, like Uncle George's parents," my mom said. "Tell him to speak the dialect. I'll be able to make out the gist."

I passed the phone back over to the old man. Hoping he could approximate Cantonese into Seiyapese, I strung together a few Cantonese words I knew: "You from Taishan? Seiyap? My mom can understand you." He closed his eyes and repeated his story in what I took to be Seiyapese into the phone.

A man watched us from the side entrance of a building on the opposite side of the street, a cigarette jutting out from his lower lip. He was squatting and had on a fishmonger's apron. When we made eye contact, he got up and crossed the street. With the cigarette still dangling in his mouth, he said in English, "I help."

"That would be wonderful," the female police officer said.

The man in the fishmonger apron shook his head. He fingered quickly in the air to indicate that he would only translate the old man's words for me, and that I would then relay them to the officers.

The female police officer stepped back away from the smoke of his cigarette. "Tell him, 'thank you,'" she said to me.

The old man returned my phone. My mother told me that the old man told her that he and the old woman used to live on the same floor of a building. The old man lent the old woman a thousand bucks, but then she moved away and he never got his money back. He saw her a couple of times in the neighbourhood, but she always ran from him. Just now he saw her buying vegetables and she ran again. I recounted the story to the officers.

"So he grabbed her arm?" the male police officer said.

I hung up on my mom and asked in Mandarin for the man in the fishmonger apron to relay to the old man in Seiyapese what the police officer had said in English. When the old man began to tell his story again, the man in the fishmonger apron made no effort to translate and instead egged him on with questions of his own.

"I think he only meant to stop her from running away again," I said.

"It sounds like this is a civil dispute," the male police officer said. "We're the police. We don't deal with civil disputes."

The female police officer said, "If he's got a claim to make, he can take it up with the Civil Resolution Tribunal."

I told this to the man in the fishmonger apron, who translated into Seiyapese for the old man and old woman. Just then the old woman launched a string of insults and curses at the old man. The old man scolded back and jabbed his finger in the air.

The male police officer said, "Do they understand where they have to go?"

The female police officer grinned. "They'll have translators there," she said.

As we were all making to leave, the old woman grabbed the male police officer's hand, which was resting by his gun.

"No," she said. "No, no." Then she said in English, "He hit me—hit my heart." She pointed to her chest.

The old man nodded. With a new cigarette in his mouth, the man in the fishmonger apron said in English, "Mm, yes—hit her heart."

Hàn Fúsēn works in municipal public engagement. He studied political science and human geography at the University of British Columbia. He lives in Vancouver. Read his piece "Biking Around with Ondjaki" on geist.com.

Voyage to the Bottom of the Out

JILL MANDRAKE

My name is Bar, like the stool

I like to wear comfy underwear with holes

My assets: I have a distinctive voice,
I memorized the periodic table
except when I forget parts of it

I like when people sit around
and say the worst thing they ever did

I was named after
Doris Day, and I am sure
no one gives a hoot

I like to make jokes out of things

This pub opened up just a few years back:
You'd think it wouldn't have had enough time
to become properly haunted

Never eat in an establishment
where the kitchen smells like sidewalk sauce

My name's Judy, and someone said,
"Judy's a beauty," cause it kinda rhymes
but I'm not falling for it

My finger: Put some peanut butter on it

I like songs where the singer goes totally nuts at the end

I like the way she says, "I've been waiting"

I'd like to cross my
fingers for you but I have
arthritis, both hands

Jill Mandrake writes strange but true stories and leads Sister DJ's Radio Band, featuring rhythm and blues covers, post-vaudeville original tunes and occasional comedy bits. She lives in Vancouver.

Piledrivin' Patriots

JOE BONGIORNO

On parle français icitte!



On Saturday nights the basement of a church in the Hochelaga neighbourhood of Montréal transforms into an amateur wrestling slugfest. This is my first Inter Championship Wrestling show and I have arrived early. On the church lawn, at the entrance to the basement, a man wearing black shades reaches into a stock pot with a pair of tongs and pulls out an ear of corn for a woman in a pink football jersey and army pants. She sinks her teeth in and stares at me, half-smirking. It's the *you-ain't-from-around-here* look. Despite recent pushes for gentrification, Hochelaga is a working-class, and staunchly francophone, neighbourhood, known for its ladies of the night and supervised injection clinic.

Men and women in worn-out jeans are lying on the church steps, some eating corn on the cob. The stairs lead down to the wrestling ring, which is encircled by rows of folding chairs and wooden tables.

A woman handling money at the entrance looks up from a wad of five-dollar bills. "Blé d'Inde? Want some corn?"

I nod my head. "Wrestling."

She waves me over. "Two dollars," she says.

"I'll take a hot dog, too," I add and hand over the change.

A sign in bold letters indicates that no alcohol is permitted or served on the premises.

I take a seat in the front row. Over the course of the next ten minutes, the

room fills with people. An announcer in a black suit and pink bow tie introduces the two rival gangs in the first fight: L'unité Freak and Les Fucking Fuckers. L'unité Freak don a crossbones and leather biker look; Les Fucking Fuckers wear diamond encrusted chains and silver rings, an aesthetic that might be described as hip-hop mafia. The two crews stand opposite each other, pointing fingers, raising fists, throwing up gang-sign-like hand gestures and flaunting golden belts emblazoned with a map of the Earth and the word "Champion."

The first brawl begins. Tony Stallone, a middle-aged, large-gutted, grey-haired member of Les Fucking Fuckers, takes on an equally grey-haired member of L'unité Freak in purple garb. The stage rocks. Backhand slaps echo. Elbows fly. Flab reverberates. Tony corners his L'unité Freak competitor and hoists him onto the top rope, but the L'unité Freak wakes from his daze and reverses the balance of power. Dropkick! Tony is pinned to the ground. 1-2-3! It's over. Stallone is out cold.

The bell rings.

The crowd boos the heel of the next fight, the leader of La fierté Canadienne, a large Black man who flaunts a red and white T-shirt with a maple leaf logo. As he makes his way down to the ring he sings "O Canada," his hand on his heart. The crowd jeers. A woman in her seventies throws up her middle finger, as does a little boy. The leader of La fierté Canadienne taunts the crowd in English and waves a Canadian flag as he circles the ring in which waits his opponent, the reigning champion of L'unité Freak, clad in Quebec blue.

"We are in Canada!" shouts the leader of La fierté Canadienne.

"On parle français icitte!" cries his L'unité Freak opponent.

One of the L'unité Freak goons by the ringside yells something indecipherable through his Hannibal Lecter

mask. The word *Québec* is scrawled across the chin.

An old woman bangs her cane on the metal railing. Beside her, a girl of about twelve stands up from her seat, holding a toddler in her arms. “Décâlissez!” she shouts. A fan in a denim jacket repeatedly yells, “CAN-A-DA,” turning the country’s name into a heckle.

“You shut your mouth! Toothless prick!” the leader of La fierté Canadienne responds.

A pair of teenage girls scream through mouthfuls of popcorn. “Parle français au Québec!”

The leader of La fierté Canadienne shakes his fist. “French Canadians are worthless!”

“Cana-chien!” yells the man in the denim jacket. “Je sais que t’as voté pour Trudeau!”

“C’est mon cousin!” yells one of the La fierté Canadienne goons.

This is a different sort of crowd than the one at the all-female femmes fatales show I saw a few years ago, also in a church basement, but in a different part of town.

Hochelaga-Maisonneuve had been one of Montréal’s separatist Parti-Québécois strongholds since 1989, when the district was created, until only recently, when it succumbed to Québec Solidaire, another separatist party. In the 1995 referendum, 65 percent of voters here cast their ballots for separation.

The battle of patriots degenerates into a theatre of dysfunction. Members of L’unité Freak and Les Fucking Fuckers jump into the ring. The referee is distracted by one of the L’unité Freak goons in leather, who frees one of his fellow L’unité Freaks, who in turn climbs into the ring and sucker-punches the leader of La fierté Canadienne from behind. He’s winding up once more when a La

fierté Canadienne enforcer steps in and throws him over the ropes. Outside the ring, a Les Fucking Fuckers wearing a white bandana tied in the front in the style of Tupac Shakur, faux-gold necklaces, and wielding a wooden cane strikes a L’unité Freak on his bandaged arm. He goes down, crying in agony, waving his arms.

The wrestlers and the audience shout “Ta gueule!” at each other. The pregnant woman in front of me shouts insults through a half grin. The man beside me watches with an expression of utmost severity as he chews on a pepperoni stick.

In the 2019 federal election the Bloc Québécois resurged in Québec, while some Albertans are calling for separation. Perhaps a new wrestler, Wayne Wexit, an oil rigger, will enter the fray and face his counterpart, Rémi Purelaine, the Quebec nationalist. I imagine a Canada in which patriots from the nation’s provinces and territories piledrive each other in a free-for-all jamboree—family squabble turned bar fight.

I take another bite of my hot dog. The leader of La fierté Canadienne gets back on his feet, suplexes his L’unité Freak opponent and pins him down for the count. One of the La fierté Canadienne enforcers waves the Canadian flag, singing the national anthem in broken English, amid the jeers and boos. The leader of La fierté Canadienne triumphantly raises his arms in the air and struts off, brandishing the championship belt, until next Saturday when he will duke it out again.

Joe Bongiorno writes fiction and non-fiction. His writing has appeared in or is forthcoming in Canadian and American publications including Geist, Event, Freefall, Broken Pencil and Carte Blanche. He was shortlisted for the 2018 Freefall Prose and Poetry Contest and he won the Event 2019 Speculative Writing Contest. Bongiorno is currently working on a novel and a short story collection. He lives in Montréal.

New Voices. New Translators. New Perspectives.



2019 *World Literature Today* Notable Translation

2018 Scotiabank Giller Prize finalist
“Masterful... heartbreaking and hilarious” (*Publishers Weekly*)

“Almost too tender to touch...”
(★★★★★ *Foreword Reviews*)

Top storytelling in translation
available now in bookstores and at qcfiction.com



QC FICTION

Little house

JEN BIEBER

my house is smallest oldest little white on the block
neighbours tour over and look down
call the fire department
call the city
briefcase knocks at the door
and says we can't park on the lawn
I like parking on the lawn
Grass is a waste sometimes anyways
Eyesore
Junk piled up and over everywhere
Two junk lovers wed and joined their junk and piled it up
Garage full, side of any all outside full
Piled and reworked by us
To make it a junkyard to relax in at least
The stuff stays though
Part of the deal
Got rid of six computer chairs, two fans, ancient television and stand
Piles piles but the rest stays
Landlord says she'll kick us out if we don't treat her like family
Which I guess means she can come by whenever she sees fit to complain
But never on time
Comment on the beer bottles in my house before she leaves on a cruise for a week
I didn't know high-heeled rubber boots were real but they have walked across my living room carpet dragging the dirt in
Greed got her this time
The kids in England are suing her over the estate
The neighbours say father liked to sue too
This house has a chimney
And a ghost

Jen Bieber is an outreach worker. She lives in Toronto.

Seeing Things

RANDY FRED

When taking hallucinogenics, more is better, within limits



When I heard on CBC Radio that Canadian veterans can be reimbursed for up to three grams of medical marijuana per day, I was reminded of my many years of using pot. I sympathize with veterans suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I was diagnosed with PTSD in 1998, when I was one of the plaintiffs in a court case against the Government of Canada and the United Church for damages suffered at the Alberni Indian Residential School. So, where is my three grams per day?

Like thousands of First Nations people in Canada I used drugs and alcohol to help me deal with my pain and trauma. Medicinal benefits of marijuana have been known for decades, especially for PTSD, anxiety, depression, concentration and pain management. But it took a long time until legalization for medicinal use became reality.

The popular warning that smoking pot leads to the use of harder drugs was true in my case. Many, many years ago I did try LSD, mescaline, peyote and MDA. Many, many years ago very little thought was given to the potential health benefits of these drugs. However, times have changed.

When I googled LSD the first article that popped up was from 2016 in the *Washington Post*: “LSD could make you smarter, healthier and happier. Should we all try it?” It gives a nice history of the use of psychedelics in the US. Researchers determined that as many as two million people in the US had dropped acid by 1970. Recently researchers have found positive benefits of psychedelic use for physical and mental health.

I first dropped acid in 1968. The variety was called purple haze and it was a bit mild. I am glad it was the first acid I took because later I tried

others that were much more hallucinogenic. For instance, later that year in Port Alberni I was walking home and my aunt and a couple of her sons were driving by and they pulled over and asked me if I wanted to go camping with them at Long Beach, near Tofino, BC. One of my cousins gave me a hit of acid known as purple microdot. It was dark at Long Beach when we were setting up camp. One of my cousins asked me to go for a walk along the beach. I never could see in the dark (on account of a degenerative eye disease) but I attempted to accompany him anyway. It took a while to crawl over the many driftwood logs to get to the beach. All I could go on for navigation was the sound of the waves, which at times seemed to be all around me. When I finally caught up to my cousin he was laughing and asked me, “Did you hear those people yelling back there?” “No,” I responded. He told me there were people covered with tarps or thin plywood sleeping between the logs and I had crawled over some of them without realizing it as I was so focused on getting to the beach. At that moment the hallucinations increased and I became anxious when I felt the waves were going to consume me.

Psilocybin, or “magic mushrooms,” have always grown on Vancouver Island and their popularity has grown and shrunk over the decades, but it sounds like they are popular again. Like peyote, they weren’t for me, but they were a favourite of a close friend of mine, a midwife. My friend and her helper were assisting a lady experiencing a great amount of pain during labour. They were at a loss as to how to ease the lady’s pain. Then my friend recalled that she had been told to carry dried psilocybin mushrooms in her medicine pouch, to use only for extreme pain when nothing else would work. She took them out and told the soon-to-be-mother to eat a few of the mushrooms. To make the woman feel more comfortable my friend said she would

also take some—something she had not done before. Then her assistant said she should take some, too. My friend told me it turned out to be a perfect delivery. In fact, it turned out to be quite a good time as the mother's pain was relieved and the three enjoyed much laughter.

My favourite psychedelic was mes- caline. It gave me a lengthy, mild hal- lucinogenic experience. The colours I saw were radiant. On my living room wall hung a poster of a First Nations man sitting cross-legged in front of a large cactus. I had a two-hour-long enlightening conversation with him. I cannot recall exactly what was said, but I do recall feeling like I was talking with someone who really understood me.

MDA was called the love drug. That it was! I learned the hard way that this crystalline powder could be absorbed by the skin. I did not wear gloves when I was putting the substance into gela- tine capsules. I ended up very stoned. I had a couple bad experiences, which I attribute to substances added to the MDA rather than the MDA itself. The bad feelings disappeared after I lay down and relaxed for a few hours.

When taking hallucinogenic drugs recreationally my friends and I tended to believe that more was better. That is so, but, like with alcohol, there are limits, and consuming too much can lead to blackouts or total loss of con- trol. Periods of my life when I felt depressed and even suicidal were times when I was mainly drinking alcohol. I never felt suicidal during the times I was using psychedelics. But bad trips can lead to bad things. Maybe that's why people have turned to the latest fad of microdosing, taking tiny doses of a drug several times a week, to help with productivity, concentration and memory. That sounds good to me.

Randy Fred is a Nuu-Chah-Nulth Elder and the founder of Theytus Books, the first Indigenous-owned and operated book publish- ing house in Canada. He lives in Nanaimo. Read more of his work at geist.com.

Killing me the rest of the way

HENRY DOYLE

For Al Purdy

the bar is closing
the doors locked
the bartender was cashing out
the waitress with big pancake breasts counting tips
the barroom cleaner putting chairs on tables
the end of another labour-pool work week
I sit finishing off a mug of beer
empty mugs in front of me
I stare into the mirror behind the bar
long tangled cement-dust hair
hardened tortured hands
hard hat
work gloves
pouch
hammer
nails scattered out onto the bar
a week of digging holes
jack-hammering 4 storeys underground
I look across the deserted bar
“Drink up, Joe. Hell is closed.”
laughing out the side of his mouth
Killing me the rest of the way.

Henry Doyle has been working as a custodian and maintenance worker in shelters and SROs on the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver since 2008. He now works in the biggest shelter in North America. See more of his work at geist.com.

FINDINGS



From *Meat and Bone* by Kat Verhoeven. Published by Conundrum Press in 2019. Verhoeven is an author, cartoonist and illustrator.

Consciousness Explorer's Club

KYO MACLEAR

From *Birds Art Life*. Published by Anchor Canada in 2018. Kyo Maclear is an essayist, novelist and children's author. Her award-winning books have been published in over twenty countries. Kyo lives and works in Toronto.

In mid-July I went on a daylong meditation retreat with a teacher known for doling out irreverent and charismatic advice. The teacher has attracted a loose following of creative types to his open-minded and joyful workshops. He eschews the role of the guru and runs something called the Consciousness Explorer's Club, which mingles spiritual practice with social justice activism and creative investigation.

The teacher had us practise breath meditation, or anapanasati. In this meditation the practice is mostly sitting and feeling your breathing. Eventually you stop shaping or manipulating your breath and you feel your body breathing on its own.

"Meditation will not extinguish all your busy thoughts," he said. "But eventually you may find that the gap between them gets longer. As

the pressure in your body and mind decreases, you may begin to crave those lulls and that stillness."

At some point, a feeling of fatigued concentration overtook me and I remember lying down and falling asleep.

EILEEN MYLES: The thing that's scary about not doing anything, or not doing what people are inviting you to do, is you feel like you are facing death in a way.

DANIEL DAY-LEWIS: Yeah, I think you're right. It's a little death and you have lots of little practices.

A lull can be soothing, tranquilizing, and even restorative. It can be a time to retune and replenish. A lull



Her book *Towerkind* was published by Conundrum Press in 2015. She lives in Toronto.

can suggest a state of peaceful hovering, a prolonged mental daydream, a weightless interval. One can be lulled to sleep or lulled into a trance.

Yet for many artists I know, the word *lull* signifies the exact opposite: the absence, the flaw, the incompleteness, something lethal and dangerous, a source of fear and melancholia. There are layered reasons for this:

1. *Superstition.* A common and reasonable anxiety among artists is that creativity will flatline without constant practice. Confidence will wane, muscles will grow flaccid. What starts off as a lull will become a rut. The muse will flee.

2. *Capitalism.* We live in a culture of high performance and competitiveness. Even artists, perennial outlanders who appear to have more freedom from conventional market expectations than most, feel they must maximize productivity and extract the most out of every day. Even those who live outside the city, in the lulling countryside, feel time-pressured and the relentless demand to perform and stay connected. Even the notion of betterment, which seems benign, can be wielded as a baton of self-discipline.

3. *Existential fear.* We live in a culture where even the most

banal and shallow gesture is considered better than no gesture. Many of us would rather engage in mindless functioning than face the prospect of being inactive. Being an artist is not only financially precarious but existentially wonky. Most writers will tell you they are writers only insofar as they are writing. When the writing stops, the trouble begins—self-recrimination, fears of disappearance, of irrelevance, of the loss of one’s best self, et cetera. Describing the existential difficulty of settling into blankness, that taunting vacancy, writer Kate Zambreno

notes: “I know I should leave the house when I am stuck, stalling, but I feel this



clawing inside, like if I do not write well I do not deserve the day. I tend to slink into a slothlike demi-existence, watching things behind a screen.”

4. *Therapeutic habit*. For those who find work makes them feel light and happy, wards off the doldrums, a lull can mean a setting in of heaviness and despair. In some cases, hard work is

an alibi for escape—a means of shirking life and any mess that might be waiting for you once the busyness stops. “Working all the time,” writes Karl Ove Knausgaard, “is also a way to simplify life, to parry its demands, especially the demand to be happy.”

What many discover is that the need to do, accomplish, and succeed

perpetually replenishes itself. My father regarded lulls not as a grace but rather as enemies. His generational, class, and personal baggage was such that the only thing that mattered was Work (of the big-W variety, not the small-w work of cleaning up and tending to family life). Work was a form of mesmerism and ego refuge: best to keep going.

His extreme work ethic became my work ethic from an early age.

But the ethos of relentless, panicked production really came with motherhood. Once I had my first child, I discovered I could not check out when I wanted to. I did not have the licence writer Geoff Dyer describes of “letting life find its own rhythm, working when I felt like it, not working when I didn’t.” It became harder to exist easily, away from expectations.

Lately, when I am especially busy, I think of an artwork by my best friend entitled “Vigil.” It is a reimagined scene using an old family photograph of a woman asleep on a lawn chair. The woman is isolated against a spinning landscape patterned with glowing orbs of light. It is not the sleep of someone sun-dozing. It is the Sleep of Oblivion. I happen to know that the woman pictured is my friend’s mother. I also know that at the time the original photograph was taken, the mother in the picture had three young children and was studying for a graduate degree in occupational therapy, every minute accounted for.

There is something subversive about the sight of a woman who is always on call, always in a heightened state of watchfulness and awareness, momentarily checking out—zoning into her own internal infinity.

There is so much finitude in the lives of the mother (and father) artists I know. We are so often counting (time, money, errands, cups of coffee, hours until bedtime). We are too often irritable and impatient with our children, and this makes us uneasy and sometimes ashamed.

Letter to Berton from the Lift Lock at Peterborough, ON

D.A. LOCKHART

From Devil in the Woods. Published by Brick Books in 2019. D.A. Lockhart is the author of The Gravel Lot That Was Montana (2018), This City at the Crossroads (2017) and Big Medicine Comes to Erie (2016). He is also the publisher at Urban Farmhouse Press. Lockhart is a Turtle Clan member of the Moravian of the Thames First Nation and currently resides at Waawiiyaataamong on the south shore of the Detroit River.

Dear Pierre: We all know that history amounts to the collective will of those with the strength to move waterways and name bits of creation for themselves. From the parking lot, I want you to know that this glorified pair of water buckets, struts as if set down by a typesetter, await clean sheets of paper to rise up from the water below so they can emblazon their own mythology onto water belonging to creation alone. Couldn’t help but think of you when Lester declared that settlers don’t need storytellers when they have engineers to project mythologies, every realized blueprint akin to rutting moose bugling into cloudless Shield nights. We know how you can build every Confederation myth into the stuff a school librarian had to fill those stationary, engineered bookcases with. Every page the kind of work that we expect from decades of recreational sacred herbal expertise and belief that a Injun-hating, fond-of-grain-liquor Scotsman could have founded anything but a divot in a couch. Lester and I agreed that we could do without these rust-bucket portages for houseboat tycoons. But a man who spun a nation from a century of men making bad choices for anyone but them is a man worth knowing,
J.W. 🍷

I want for every overextended person in my life stretches of unclaimed time and solitude away from the tyranny of the clock, vast space to get bored and lost, waking dreams that take us beyond the calculative surface of things.

By definition, one does not know whether a lull is interesting or uninteresting, fruitful or unfruitful, until it's over. And yet—it is hard not to pack the lull with hopes and dreams. In the Hollywood story of the artist genius, the luminous lull of childhood (with its shadows of loneliness and boredom) becomes the spur for creative exploration. The lull gives birth to glory.

But it is not glorious lulls that concern me. It is the lulls that have no velocity, that offer no structured reassurance, that bloom unbidden in the middle of nowhere—when the work is done, when children leave, when illness comes, when the mind stalls. One does not ask of a lull: What can you do for me? These lulls do not have the quality of idyllic floatiness we associate with creative loafing, vacations, or leisure time. (If they did, we might fight them less readily and feel less personal distress.) These lulls carry a restive feeling, the throb of being simultaneously too full and too empty. They evoke what Jean Cocteau once described as “the discomfort of infinity.”

What if we could imagine a lull as neither fatal nor glorious? What if a lull was just a lull?

When I left my meditation retreat, my mind felt momentarily rinsed. I found the busy street waiting outside our quiet room. I felt tired but peaceful. The hedges were chirping with invisible sparrows. The road streamed with cyclists in cheerful summer dresses and sunglasses. The green of the trees was dazzling in the late-afternoon light. As I walked home along side streets, BBQ smoke rose from backyards.

I was the furthest thing from a regular meditator but I liked the way meditation pointed me to an

understory of quiet that existed beneath all my busyness and all my social roles. Meditators sometimes call this the “quiet feeling tone” of the body. The understory is that grebe place that withstands the onslaught of bad weather and modernity. It may be hidden or veiled by static, but once we tap into it, it offers a glimpse of our non-doing selves and, possibly, a better version of a personal life.

Now when I hear birdsong, I feel an entry to that understory. When I am

feeling too squeezed on the ground, exhausted by everything in my care, I look for a little sky. There are always birds flying back and forth, city birds flitting around our human edges, singing their songs.

If the wind is going the right way, some birds like to spread their wings and hang in the air, appearing not to move a bit. It is a subtle skill, to remain appreciably steady amid the forces of drift and gravity, to be neither rising nor falling. 🌿

On Being and Meatloaf

MATHIEU POULIN

From Explosions. Published by QC Fiction in 2019. Mathieu Poulin teaches literature in Montreal and began writing only recently. Explosions is his first novel.

In February 1993, following the release of the album *Bat Out of Hell II: Back into Hell*, Virgin Records contacted Michael Bay, at the request of Meat Loaf himself, to ask if he would meet with the musician in private to discuss a possible collaboration. Michael was enthusiastic about the idea, having played the role of Eddie in a theatrical homage to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and supervised its *mise en scène* in his freshman year at Wesleyan University. He accepted at once, if only out of curiosity. A meeting was set for cocktail hour in a trendy university bookstore-cafe where both men were regular customers. The cuisine was refined but not pretentious, and the decor understated and tasteful—particularly on the back patio, where thin slivers of light filtered through an elegant vine-covered trellis—and that same evening, the bookstore was set to host a round table discussion on destiny and metaphysics featuring Paul Auster, Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Michael arrived early,

hoping to leaf through the newly published translation of Lyotard's *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*. He found a table and ordered a pastis, a carafe of water, and some marinated olives. He observed his surroundings listlessly and began to think—something he always found to provide a satisfying degree of suffering.

Michael was contemplating the possibility of dedicating his spare time to the structural analysis of Dasein when he heard, from far away at first, then growing more and more insistent, the virile growl of a Harley Davidson, its vibrations causing the surroundings to resonate as if by symbiosis, dragging the other customers out of their reverent concentration one by one. Fear and anticipation loomed in the air, interlacing like a couple of teenagers embracing for the first time to the sound of rock 'n' roll. As the noise reached an almost unbearable crescendo—the vibrations underfoot suggesting unusual seismic activity along the San Andreas Fault—the restaurant's side



wall smashed open, revealing amid the rubble and severed and swaying electrical wires the glorious silhouette of Meat Loaf on his motorcycle, riding through a cloud of smoke and carbon monoxide toward Michael's table as the customers looked on in admiration.

After cocktails, roused by the rich vapours escaping the kitchen, the two men ordered something to eat. Michael went with the rosemary-and orange-crust rack of lamb served with an exquisite ratatouille and baby pickled onions sprinkled with coarse sea salt, while Meat Loaf opted for the Mediterranean slow-braised osso buco with oven-roasted potatoes and ouzo-glazed carrots. As they quaffed a 1989 Beringer Third Century Syrah, they got past the pleasantries and down

to business. Meat Loaf had always admired Michael's work and was eager for him to direct a music video for the first track off his new album, a Wagnerian rock anthem entitled "I'd Do Anything for Love (But I Won't Do That)." Bay knew the material well and welcomed the request. Firstly, the piece, which was eleven minutes and fifty-eight seconds long, would allow him to direct his longest work to date (the video would, however, in the end be based on the shorter version of the song, lasting seven minutes and thirty-eight seconds). Secondly, the theme of the work and its overall feel would enable him to pay cinematic homage to two works that marked his formative years, *The*

Phantom of the Opera and *Beauty and the Beast*. Lastly, he would have the chance to ask the rock star about the meaning of the mysterious "that" punctuating his refrains, since a syntactic analysis, despite pointing to a few tentative conclusions, shed no definitive light on the word's ambiguity.



"So I've been wondering," said Michael, "what you're referring to when you say 'but I won't do that'...? Are you simply leaving it up to individual interpretation, or are you looking to cultivate a certain confusion with the same baroque logic that seems to define the piece?"

"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't expecting a question like that from you," Meat Loaf shot back with a mischievous smile. "The idea is definitely to create a certain level of confusion—nothing rubs me the wrong way like accessible art—but the real meaning of 'that' is far from abstract."

Michael looked at him, his mind a blank canvas.

"I usually avoid talking about it so directly when people ask me that question," continued Meat Loaf, "but I get the feeling your ability to grasp concepts far supersedes that of the average person. So here it is: the song is inspired by my relationship with Nell Campbell. We met on the set of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and clicked almost right away. We dated for a few months and shared everything; we'd often stay up till dawn discussing the meaning of love. For the first time, I felt complete. But then I started noticing subtle changes in her behaviour. As if she were becoming more and more distant, or rather, as if she were holding something back that she wasn't ready to admit, to me at least. I asked her about it gently, letting her know that I realized something was different but that I wouldn't judge her, no matter what was on her mind. She finally told me, 'I no longer believe in the idea of systems. I think we should embrace the philosophical trend of

It Could Be a Virus

ALESSANDRA NACCARATO

*From Re-Origin of Species. Published by Book*bug in 2019. Alessandra Naccarato is the recipient of the 2015 RBC Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers and the winner of the 2017 CBC Poetry Prize. She has toured as a spoken word artist, nationally and internationally. Re-Origin of Species is her debut poetry collection.*

It could be your mother. Could be the toilet seat in fifth grade, or wearing your swimsuit all that sunny day. It could be the fish you ate that swallowed the worm, or microplastics. It could be that bad pair of shoes. Herpes zoster, or Herpes simplex, or cytomegalovirus. Inherited DDT, Fukushima radiation, copper poisoning, dental amalgams, or chemical injury. It could be your personality. Your father's silence, the year your sister would not eat. It could be that time you were rejected from art school and lost your virginity after eating bad shrimp. Could be disappointment, multiple sclerosis, or rheumatoid arthritis. Your malaria treatment in a clinic with no running water, parasites, or your tendency to complain. It could be PTSD, or blood cancer. The tests came back fine. Celiac disease, arrhythmia, or your refusal to think positively. It could be the tick that bit your areola, like you were at a party in Montreal. It could be the wolves they shot, the deer that overbred, until Lyme disease went viral. It could be pollution, or loneliness. Or maybe bacteria. It could all be your fault. 🦋

Pizza World

COLE PAULS

From *Lucky's Comics DUNK* newspaper, volume 2, issue 1. Published in 2013. Cole Pauls is a Tabltan First Nation comic artist, printmaker and illustrator. In 2018, Pauls self-published *Dakwākāda Warriors*, a Southern Tutchone language revival comic series, which he collaborated on with two language preservers from his home community in Haines Junction, Yukon. He lives in Vancouver. His *Pizza Punks* series is available on pizzapunkscomix.tumblr.com.



anti-systems that's been around for the past half-century. Follow me on this path, Meat Loaf.' It was as if a stranger were standing in front of me. I would never abandon systems thinking. Embracing the opposite would be more than a sacrifice; it would make absolutely no sense. So we went our separate ways. Even for love, I'd never do that."

Enlightened, Michael asked, "So if the lyrics are that personal, why are they attributed to Jim Steinman?"

"Jim Steinman doesn't exist. I wanted to imbue the piece with an element of mystery, to move it away from

the concrete so that it could come into its own in the absolute of art. Using my own name would have directly implicated Nell, which is in fact the truth but lacking any sort of magic. The pseudonym allowed me to be more detached, transforming my overall banal individual experience into something epic."

They shared a brief silence.

"I believe I can do your work justice," said Michael.

"And I, yours."

After that encounter, and following numerous other conversations with Meat Loaf, Michael was able to

lay the groundwork for what would become his art. Thus began a fruitful collaboration between the two men; the music videos "Objects in the Rear View Mirror May Appear Closer Than They Are" and "Rock and Roll Dreams Come Through" would soon lead to Michael filming his first big explosions and developing a framework that he could use in the future.

But for the moment, Michael Bay and Meat Loaf finished their meal, attended the round table event and, being avid readers of Husserl, refuted Gadamer's arguments during the Q&A period. ●

Best Possible You

J.R. MCCONVEY

From Different Beats by J.R. McConvey. Published by Goose Lane in 2019. J.R. McConvey's stories have been shortlisted for the Journey Prize, the Bristol Short Story Prize and the Matrix Lit Pop award. His work has appeared in the Malahat Review, Joyland, EVENT and other publications. He is the winner of the 2016 Jack Hodgins Founders' Award for Fiction.

The others always make it harder to achieve results.

Kielbasa Joe perches on a foam noodle folded under his paunch, paddling up the fourth lane at the speed of a bored sea slug, the fluorescent poolroom lights making his skin look blanched and sausage-like. There's no sense waiting for him; he'll hog the lane for a full hour, noodling back and forth without a twinge of shame. Likewise, Doctor O.C.D. Grumblestein is busy evenly spacing the lane markers

along the rope of lane five, muttering the whole time like he always does, as though that qualifies as exercise; that's probably a twenty-minute wait. Which leaves Chatty Boners chatting up one of his AquaTramps in lanes two and three, and Wady Mary, doing her wady dance in the shallow end of lane one, the flotation belt cinched around her waist propping up her saggy tits like beached jellyfish.

For Jetta, this is probably the best option, because not only does Wady

Mary get tired quickly, she also buckles under pressure. So she'll probably give up her lane as soon as Jetta goes over and stands at the head of it, doing stretches, to communicate as emphatically as she can without yelling out loud that if there isn't a free lane by 1:15 p.m., which is exactly four minutes from now, she'll just dive in and dart past Wady Mary underwater like a tadpole. Just another challenge, she thinks, to incorporate into her daily sixty. Another test of her resilience.

Sixty laps, every day, for the past three years: this is the constant by which Jetta Crisp runs her life. Every day at the BeWell Downtown pool, in by 1:15 p.m., out by 2. This is the ritual, no matter what; her health depends on it. Swimming is the best exercise, full-body with therapeutic stress-reduction benefits. She has no intention of missing a day and breaking her streak, even with her job as busy as ever; in fact this is exactly why she absolutely has to get started by 1:15 or risk overshooting her lunch break and having to stay an extra hour in the evening.

Strength in routine, her doctor said, equates to strength in the body. Sixty a day to keep relapse at bay. Toughen up your sinews enough to keep the lymphoma gone for good.

So Jetta takes her position and begins her stretching, swinging her arms up in a huge arc to make sure Wady Mary gets the picture. Sure enough, with the first sun salutation, the old woman smiles weakly at her and climbs out of the pool at the speed of a tortoise, every creaky step making Jetta's heart rate shoot up another notch. *Getoutgetoutgetout*, she thinks. She can feel her veins winching up inside her, making her whole body rigid, the perfunctory yoga not helping at all, her heart flapping under her rib cage like a panicked fish.

ANOTHER WOMAN IN CANADA

A collection of one star reviews of Dear Life by Alice Munro (McClelland and Stewart, 2012). Compiled by George K. Ilsley.

- 10) Alice Munro may have won the Nobel Prize, but has not mastered the art of the short story.
- 9) A seemingly endless and pointless journey to nowhere. With no reward.
- 8) It's as if this author thinks she can write about ordinary people and make us care. Why should I care about a shop girl who loses her job?
- 7) Nothing happens. People have affairs, start new jobs, siblings die. There was no point to any of it.
- 6) So tedious not even worth talking about. Waste of time. Not worth reading.
- 5) Every time I pick up Alice Munro I think, great, a whole new story about a woman in Canada.
- 4) It all boils down to this: You can't love a book just because you feel guilty for not loving it.
- 3) Never even heard of this author until she won the Pulitzer. Needless to say, will not bother reading anything else by this extremely dull and uninspired writer.
- 2) The characters are boring and bland, like Canadians. Might be of interest to someone who wants to read about life long ago in a small town on the Plains of Canada.
- 1) Ambiguity really has no place in a compilation entitled "Dear Life." 🐼

I Am A City Still But Soon I Shan't Be

ROGER FARR

From I Am A City Still But Soon I Shan't Be by Roger Farr. Published by New Star Books in 2019. Roger Farr is the author of four collections of poetry. His writing on radical social movements and the avant-garde has appeared in numerous periodicals and has been broadcast on the airwaves of pirate radio stations on the west coast of North America. Farr teaches in the Creative Writing and Culture and Technology Programs at Capilano University.

A murder of crows dropping down from the sky
a passage from some poem I had written
years ago. We'd hooked up with that festive mob
because we felt an affinity with its organs
of force. The citizens lined up on the other side of
the street snapped pictures and gawked
as we consolidated our intimacies slipped off
each other's belts and shoes and set them

In the grey plastic bins before passing through
yet another full body scanner. That's how
an assemblage penetrates flesh—how Woolf's
leaden circles could have dissolved in the air
—how mapping a city with paramours could be
portrayed as an act of collective defence
not flâneurism—how the transition from window
shopping to window smashing is theorized

In Constant's "Tract on Fenestration"—*the creation
of new openings in the urban labyrinth*
to take the place of the old passages
long since occluded by commerce and work
requires a move from the consumption of goods
*and services to their immediate
apprehension and redistribution*—written in June
1968. By Valentine's Day 2010 our passages

Were not about space but territory not politics
but police borders bodies while debates
about *acts* were completely saturated in the icy
Vancouver rain that fell for days and weeks
through the aftershocks. I remember the plum trees
blossomed early that year. Certain residents
argued that their city was not ready for the violent
aesthetic bloom of soft to dark pink

Said such spontaneous eruptions were unseasonal
should never have materialized before
the conditions were correct: Winter then Spring
he said. Red then amber. Amber then green
followed by red again. These codes channel the flow
of cargo traffic desire to its appropriate
outlets and ports. One who enters this City
from the South must travel North along Clark

Past Venables to Stewart then East into the Harbour
just as the streams channeling beneath
the grid flow from the cemetery down Fraser
and Main until they empty into False Creek.
At night the water here is still and dark reflects the
towers of glass with their halogen bulbs until
the rain falls and the current swells to unsettle
the image as though it were the city's dream. 🌧️

For a second it feels like the woman
will never get out, like she'll just freeze
there on the shallow stairs, dripping
chlorinated drips down her tapioca-
pudge thighs until Jetta sun-salutates
herself into an aneurism and her head
explodes all over the pool room.

Then she's in, and everything
softens.

The water welcomes her like a gen-
tle confessor, the hard slappy echoes

of the tiled room melting away in the
warm, soothing ripples. Jetta's breath-
ing slows to deep, even waves. She
pulls a silicone swim cap over her
close-cropped hair, puts on her gog-
gles, and gives a sideways glance over
at the other swimmers, all the ones
she's named for their faults, the ways in
which they're not as serious about this
as she is, the things they keep trying to
improve on, even though they always

fail. Sometimes, once she's gotten a
lane and there's no more doubt about
whether she'll make her sixty that
day, she begins to feel a bit bad about
mocking these people so mercilessly in
her head. The old and overweight and
lonely. The ones here just for some-
thing to do. They sometimes speak
to each other—Chatty Boners spends
most of his time in the pool jabber-
ing away, trying to pick up whatever

damp floozy has taken the lane beside him that day—but Jetta never talks to them. She treasures the pool as a silent space. On her program, there’s no time for inane chatter or pointless conversation or mundane stresses, the kind of aimless, insignificant stuff she assumes these people talk about. Too much guilt, though, too much anxiety: these cause her to lose time and focus, and that’s not an option. The BeWell slogans are there on the wall to remind her, painted in bright orange above the life preserver:

Focus on your Goal and Achieve Results

BE THE BEST POSSIBLE YOU

This is not about other people. This is about wellness, transformation, and survival.

So: breathe in, go under, and launch. Jetta fires forward, dolphin kicking for six seconds, feeling her skin and muscles coalesce with the water. This is what she yearns for, this dissolution of boundaries, this neutralizing liquefaction. She kicks up toward the light

and gets into her steady crawl, stroke, stroke, breathe; stroke, stroke, breathe; legs straight and fluttering, palms cupped closed and pulling the water so she can feel her deltoids work, trying to move with the sleek, fluid grace of a dolphin. Once Jetta is away, there’s no stopping the motion, no pausing in the pursuit of her daily sixty: twenty front, twenty back, twenty butterfly. She waits for the moment she loves most of all, when she finds exactly the right velocity of breath, exhaling in the water to create tiny, perfect bubbles, so that when she turns her head her intake is expertly timed to coincide with the machinelike motion of her limbs, splash-burble-splash-burble-inhale. Inside and outside, working in concert. Fully cetaceous. Uncorrupted. Alive.

Only when she rears up to turn over for one of her nimble porpoise-flips does the pool room come back to her, with its plastic couches and bleary skylights seeping grey, filtered light. But now that she’s become the water, she doesn’t need these things in order to see. To *know*. She can feel in the fluctuations of her blood, the ebb and flow of the swimmers as they vacate the pool, how the water calms when Kielbasa Joe stops his noodling and climbs out, and Chatty Boners follows, taking his pursuit of the red-headed pool nymph into the sauna area. Jetta loves it best when she has the pool all to herself, but it’s not so bad if Dr. O.C.D. Grumblestein and his arthritic pacing are all she has to tune out to get into the Zone—the place where her thoughts actually stop, and she’s nothing but pure liquid energy. Jetta has only 11 per cent body fat (Marie at work, who’s overweight, is always telling her she can see Jetta’s spine poking out from under her blouse, but Dr.

FIRST DEGREE CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

From The Gang of Four: A Toni Damiano Mystery by Sheila Kindellan-Sheehan. Published by Véhicule Press in 2019. Kindellan-Sheehan is the author of several mystery novels. She lives in Pointe Claire, Quebec.

MAJOR CRIMES TEAM

Lieutenant Detective Toni Damiano: 45, discovers a ‘detective’s case,’ but is uncertain of her partner’s desire to work with her.

Detective Pierre Matte: 44, wants to head up to the new Cold Case Department, but what Damiano has found pulls him in to work with her.

Chief Richard Donat: 59, tough, gruff, and competent, returns from medical leave, and is somewhat fragile.

Detective Stephen Galt: 51, is handed a first-degree murder case when Damiano and Matte are not available and happens upon an important lead.

Office Micket Hearn: 88, first cop on the scene, makes a rookie promise in ’54.

Dr. Sam Rubenstein: arrogant and domineering—the best forensics man in the province.

THE GANG OF FOUR, 1954 AND 2018

Mike Doherty: the leader of the foursome—an explosive bully, darling and inventive.

Terry Flynn: a smart boy who receives a unique gift from the grandfather and the attention of every boy on the block.

Stephan Dobbs: the brains of the gang who carries a secret for sixty-four years.

Gerry Graham: the gang’s gofer, intelligent but insecure, is happy to be part of the foursome.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Kathryn Flynn: strong, stubborn, and a woman of substance.

Patrick Flynn: a good man whose wife accepts he has one foot mired in the past.

Linda Graham: a comforting wife for years who suffers the regret of a dust-off with her husband whose hidden past becomes a threat.

Bosco: an Irish Doodle, regal and bursting with energy.

Kitty Beauchamp: a flamboyant tour guide and snoop lacking in propriety—nothing can abort her curiosity, and she pays the price. 🐾

Grice says that's just how her structure is now), but when she gets into the Zone it's like she weighs zero, no more malignant tissue, no more infected marrow. *Keep moving*, she thinks. *Leave it behind.*

She's flying now, knocking off laps with total ease, feeling the Zone open up before her like a blowhole in the fluid molecules of the water.

Eighteen ... nineteen ... twenty ... flip!

Now she's on her back, following the seams of the tiled ceiling to keep straight, closing her eyes once she feels the alignment, her muscles knowing the proper trajectory.

Twenty-four ... twenty-five ...

Jetta opens her eyes to check the ceiling in case, and a splash plumes up somewhere beside her. It's not like Dr. Grumblestein to stir things up. Usually he's strictly a water walker, maybe a few foam weights here and there, never anything approaching a proper stroke. So Jetta's irritated that on the one day when he's the only other swimmer, he's decided to go spazzy.

But she's in the Zone now, really almost really in it, so she can't think about it too much. *Focus on your Goal and Achieve Results. BE THE BEST POSSIBLE YOU.*

Thirty-two ... thirty-three ...

Thing is, it doesn't stop. Although Jetta tries to keep her stroke as aerodynamic as possible, gliding through water to cause the least possible friction, she can feel little droplets of pool spume landing on her face from Dr. Grumblestein's water-mosh.

Thirty-eight ... thirty-nine ... flip!

As she turns and pushes off the wall to start the final leg of her sixty—butterfly stroke, the toughest and most addictive of all—she sees. The splashing in lane five isn't controlled.

VENUS'S FIFTH DIMENSION

Selections from vfdinthewild.tumblr.com, a blog maintained since March 2014 by Kelsea O'Connor. In the series of books A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket, an organization relays messages or signals in series of words that begin with the letters VFD. O'Connor records instances of VFD outside of the Lemony Snicket books, including in literature, on social media, in newspapers, on signs and anywhere else text appears. O'Connor is contributing editor to Geist. She lives in New Westminster.

Vanilla flavoured desserts	Vast, flat desert
Vargas's famous detective	Vector for desire
Vast, faint, delicate	Versatile for drinking
Vegas's flashing decadence	Very feminist decision
Vegetable-forward dinners	Very fit dudes
Venomous frogs discovered	Very flexible, delivers
Venus's fifth dimension	Very flowery description
Verve, for danger	Vessels for daily
Very fashionable douchebag	Victim's father dies
Vibrant, female-dominated	Videos for dissemination
Vicious, filthy days	Vied for dominance
Victoria's frank disinterest	Vigorous five days
Viking french, duh	Village facing drought
Vinegary fruit drink	Vimla's face darkened
Virtuoso forklift driver	Vinegar, fresh dill
Vitriol-filled description	Vinny's front door
Volusia/Flagler Direct	Vintage farmhouse decorations
Vomit from drinking	Vintage film dealer
Vacant, feet dragging	Vintage Fruit Dolls
Vaccines for diseases	Virtual food drives
Van-fucking-damme	Virtually falling down
Vancouver firefighters douse	Voice flat, disinterested
Vanished for days	Volatile first decades
Various federal departments	Volatile first dinners
Various floral deliveries	Volunteering for duty
Vase falling down	Vote for "drowning" 🐼

There's no rhythm or logic to it. Could be Dr. Grumblestein is throwing a fit, and how could she blame him? But then she hears him call out, and knows that's not it.

Forty-four ... forty-five ...

Dr. Grumblestein is in trouble. But she has to keep going, because she's almost in the Zone but also glanced at the clock and it's pushing 2:55 and if she stops to help him now, she won't finish.



Sixty laps a day, every day, for the past three years. Jetta Crisp keeps lunging through the water, achieving as hard as she can, hurtling like a shimmer of reflected light toward the moment when she can touch the wall and stop swimming and come back to real time and go help the old man. Pushes herself to go harder, faster, finishing sooner, even though she hates it so much—the moment when she stops, and her body

comes back to her in all its earthbound weakness. Hates the old man's body, too, for screaming its failure at her through her precious amniotic veil.

Forty-eight ... forty-nine ...

She can see him beneath the water, now, whenever she plunges her head under for another stroke. Where there's supposed to be no one else in the world, just pure achievement, there he is: spewing bubbles, knee twisted in a gruesome kink, eyes aghast and bulging in the chlorinated blur.

Fifty ... fifty-one ...

She knows he can see her, and that she's the only one who can save him. The attendants at the front desk never watch the poolroom video feed, and by now it would take them too long to get up the stairs and into the pool, anyway, because he's already starting to turn the same blue as the water that's smothering him.

She wishes, wishes so hard, that she could become water. Indifferent. Antiseptic. Solvent, and absolving. As she swerves, a chemical mouthful fills her lungs. She swallows it, stifling coughs and dolphin-kicking hard under the lane markers until she's on top of him. She hauls at his weight, pushing his head above the surface, clutching his limp arm while she clambers, all bones and angles, onto the deck. She tugs it as hard as she can to get Dr. Grumblestein up onto the tile, his body far more solid than its papery skin makes it look, and clamps her hands over his chest and pushes, one-two-three, one-two-three, then plugs his nose and locks her mouth onto his, blowing out whatever air she has left, blowing all her energy and momentum into his lungs to send a jolt to his heart, filling him with her Zone, until he sputters out white froth and inhales a big, desperate gulp of air and starts breathing again.

The worst is that he forgave her. Jetta turns the hot water up until it's steaming. She's standing in

the shower, quaking, trying to convince herself she didn't just almost let a man drown.

After he came to, she'd just sat there on the tile, crying, saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I was in the Zone." And between gurgling breaths he'd put his hand on her tricep and said, "It's okay. Don't cry, don't cry. I'm alive, thanks to you." He even called her a hero when the attendants finally realized what was happening and came barreling into the pool room, rescue buoys at the ready, blowing stupidly into their whistles, as though that would help anything. Then later, when she said she had to excuse herself and get back to work, when she scuttled away like a wet rat, reeking with shame, he'd held out his hand and said, "I'm John," and



the first thing she'd thought was, *No, no, I can't know your name, because now how will I swim? How will I swim now?*

The water hits her skin, scalding and hard, stripping away in pressurized heat the last few calories she's retained by missing her sixty for the first time in three years. She folds her arms over her tiny breasts, pushing them down into her rib cage, feeling echoes of the lymphoma whispering in her cells, leans against the slick shower wall and lets her face twist into whatever horrified and broken shape it wants—trying to leach it out, that moment when she saw him drowning and thought, *Maybe it wouldn't be so bad.* Maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing at all, to sink to the bottom and fill with water, and be still. ●

Unnecessary Wake-up Call

LINDSAY WONG

From The Woo-Woo: How I Survived Ice Hockey, Drug Raids, Demons, and My Crazy Chinese Family. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2018. Lindsay Wong's work has appeared in No Tokens, the Fiddlehead, Ricepaper and Apogee Journal. The Woo-Woo was selected for Canada Reads 2019 and was a shortlist finalist for the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction.

Even a vacation couldn't give my mother a break from herself. I didn't realize that I too had been hoping for an interruption in her black hole of madness on this shitty vacation until one morning when it became clear that the Woo-Woo had pursued us, and my mother enacted its violence more wickedly than I'd ever thought possible.

My mother flung back my pink Hello Kitty sheets, thrust a stove lighter under my foot, and set it aflame. She had been normal the night before, serving up canned spaghetti in plastic bowls and asking me if I wanted fourths and fifths, like a very different, separate person. "Eat

more," she had commanded, hurriedly piling noodles on everyone's plate, seeming excited. Even my aunt seemed to feed off her energy as she quickly dished up steamed tofu, bok choy, and sliced chicken—our families always ate lunch and dinner together when camping. Before bed, my mother began to obsessively scrub the trailer, freezing our camping meals: fried rice and lo mein. She mopped the floor, dusted the cupboards, and complained that she couldn't sleep. Usually, when she was generous and hyperactive like this, she'd let me stay up all night and we'd frantically bake hundreds and

My After School Haikus

nathan dueck

From *A Very Special Episode* by nathan dueck. Published by Buckrider Books, an imprint of Wolsak and Wynn, in 2019. nathan dueck is the author of *king's(mére)* (Turnstone Press) and *he'll* (Pedlar Press). He lives in Cranbrook, BC.

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>1. ⇐</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New from ABC, ○ Watch CBS for ○ Now on NBC, ○ PBS presents | <p>2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a show for the whole family, ○ novelist Francine Pascal's ○ the Emmy®-nominated ○ a tale based on true events, | <p>3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "My Life as a God" ○ "After All is Said . . ." ○ "The School of Heart Blocks" ○ "How Could You Say That?" | <p>4. ↓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lead Jodie Foster ○ Fresh-faced Kirk Cameron ○ Young Cheryl Arutt ○ Heartthrob Scott Baio |
| <p>12.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brought to you by Mars® ○ Sponsored by Clairol® ○ All thanks to New! Coke® ○ From General Foods® | <p>11.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ because you'll want to know more! ○ for it'll be a feel-good hour! ○ because you'll need loved ones close! ○ for it'll teach a real lesson! | <p>10.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don't miss out on this ○ Watch this with your kids ○ Hurry home to see ○ This one is special | <p>5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ plays Joe, a gifted flautist, ○ stars as hooded-cloak dork, Lou, ○ plays Sam, a nervous gymnast, ○ stars as fanny-pack brat, Pat, <p>6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ who made regionals. ○ who just got high score. ○ who earned top honours. ○ who took home the prize. |

```

HMASHHASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASH
ASHMASH          MASHMASHASHMAS
MASHM          SHMASHASHMASH
MA          SHMASHMA          MASHMASHMASH
          MASHMASHMASH          ASHMASHMASH
ASHMASHASHASHASHMA          SHMASHMASH
HMASHMAS          ASHMAS          HMASHMASH
SHMASH          MASH          SHMAS          HMASHMASH
ASHMAS          SHMA          HM          HMASHMASH
MASHMAS          SHM          HM          HMAS          HMASHMASH
MASHMAS          SHMA          SHMA          SHMASHMASH
MASHMASH          HMASHMASHM          ASHMASHMASH
MASHMASHM          ASHMAS          HMASHMASHMASH
MASHMASHMAS          ASHMASHASHMASH
ASHMASHMASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASH
SHMASHMASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASH
HMASHMASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASH
MASHMASHASHASHASHASHASHASHASH
M          SHMASHASHASHASHASHASHASHM          H
MAS          MASHMASHASHASHASHASHAS          ASH
  
```

hundreds of cupcakes, decorating the counters and chairs of our house until our crumbly creations went stale and inedible.

We should have recognized this normalized calm before the eruption of a full-fledged Woo-Woo hurricane. Because this morning, she had completely lost it. We were 515 kilometres from the epicenter of crazy (Poh-Poh), but we were parked perfectly in sync

beside Beautiful One and her family in a dehydrated RV resort. We had matching trailers, so how could she not go Woo-Woo?

I was beginning to realize that the madness in our DNA was a life-threatening disease, transmitted like a pesky airborne infection, attacking and mutating the pink and grey confetti cells of the brain. It was a twenty-first-century plague that seemed to

affect only the women in our family, and there was no standard vaccination. The day my mother burned me, I saw clearly: if you caught the Woo-Woo, you had to let it run its course and hope that you survived with unnoticeable scars.

Maybe she'd had just enough of fighting with my father or she was just truly insane, but I was tired and slept in past ten a.m., so she ignited

my foot as if it were a backyard barbecue pit. A utilitarian gas stove. With her multi-purpose utility lighter, with its stainless-steel tip and extendable flame for those hard-to-reach places.

Clickety click-click. The flame suddenly poked the bottom of my left foot. Like something soft but raw and painful. I screamed, the shock radiating into my toes. I would never have expected it from my mother. My father, maybe—he crossed over the blackish border of cruelty so easily. But never from my mother, who was someone who disappeared whenever she couldn't take it anymore.

"Hey, fatty," she suddenly said, and climbed up to the top bunk of the RV and aimed again for my favourite cotton sheets, not caring that she could light the entire bed ablaze. But she got the piggy toes of the same foot instead and I shrieked.

That summer, my stomach had begun to protrude with adolescent misery, and my face and breasts had seemed to bloat like oversized helium balloons. Puberty had transformed me into a four-foot-eight, 140-pound goblin, more grungy and cave dwelling than the smiling, bejeweled child's Treasure Trolls that seemed to horrify everyone, my mother included.

I was used to unnecessary wake-up calls from my emotional insomniac mother, but never like this. She had always been paranoid about Woo-Woo scourging, and I believe that summer she thought a demon had squirmed inside my fragile head when she wasn't looking. The poor woman blamed herself for not being a vigilant ghost-hunting mommy. I was fat and lazy and stupid, which obviously meant that I was possessed. My mother believed that her sole life purpose was to exorcise any family member's ailing cranium and banish the evil Woo-Woo. She believed that she had been Chosen and was taking her duty seriously. ●

Woulda-Shoulda-Has-Beens

HOWARD CHACKOWICZ

From Nothing to See Here by Howard Chackowicz. Published by Conundrum Press in 2019. Chackowicz is an artist and musician. He is the author of several books of comix, including Howie's Action Comix, published by Conundrum Press in 2008. Chackowicz contributed regularly to the radio program Wire Tap on CBC Radio One. He lives in Montréal.



"It's my style now, old man"



SHOULD'A BEEN

WOULD'A BEEN



HAS-BEEN

NEVER WAS



Your Lives

SIMON BROUSSEAU

From Synapses by Simon Brousseau, translated by Pablo Strauss. Published by Talonbooks in 2019. Brousseau lives in Montréal and teaches literature at Jean-de-Brébeuf College. Pablo Strauss is a writer, editor and translator. He lives in Quebec City and at pablostrausstranslation.com. Synapses, which is Brousseau's first book, was published in French by Cheval d'août in 2016 and was a finalist for the 2017 Grand Prix du livre de Montréal and a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Translation in 2019.

- Yesterday evening you spent in conversation with Cleverbot, a chatbot capable of more-or-less coherent conversation, developed by Google as a distraction for people without anything more pressing to do who enjoy drinking Fin du Monde and asking metaphysical questions to a snotty piece of software that respects only its own endless capacity to generate answers and questions expressly designed to ensure it always gets the last word, the prerogative of zealots and machines, and in that sluggish state brought on by your last beer you were surprised to find yourself pounding your keyboard when the program insisted that love was love, and that the best course of action is to do exactly what you want.
- You decided to leave Moncton and open a practice in Québec City, your very own hypnosis centre, and despite your family's apprehensions when you set off it all went well at first, people came to you to cure their phobias and alleviate their fears and overcome their hang-ups, but after a while you had to face the fact that once they were cured they had no reason to come back and submit to your pendulum and bewitching voice, so your clients began deserting you one by one and leaving you all alone in your office with your stuffed owl and that photo of your mother looking at you sternly as you silently mull over the idea of joining the army, after all, they're always happy to take in lost causes like yourself.
- It really drives you nuts the way young people walk around in flip-flops, especially since no one else seems bothered by the sound, like a slurping in foot juice, that their soles make with every step, and you are irked beyond all reason by those fluorescent shirts that hug the muscles they all seem so proud of, the preposterous girth of the ballooning pecs that characterize this particular tribe and embodies, in your eyes, the boundless emptiness of human beings who have never faced their angst and understand nothing but how to revel in their own dereliction.
- At a very tender age you started going to tanning salons, and soon became addicted to the blue lighting in their little pods, their uterine warmth, and the pacifying purr enveloping your naked body, and before long you stopped resisting the temptation to go three times a week and sometimes more, ignoring the insistent warnings of dermatologists in the magazines you flipped through, until the day you started suffering from cutaneous depigmentation, and people started talking about you behind your back, and a girl in your class even had the nerve to tell you to your face that your tan made you look like a dish of scalloped potatoes left in the oven too long.
- You'd never really noticed before, but since a friend complimented you on your delicate hands and slender fingers, amazed by their satiny whiteness, you've kept an eye out in the hope of finding other men with hands even less powerful than your own, to prove her wrong, but you're now forced to admit that you do, in fact, have the most delicate of grips, even compared to men smaller than you, an observation you take as an affront to your masculinity, which you've always feigned not to care about since it's an outmoded notion cherished by men who take pride in their muscles and the calluses on hands rasped rough by labour.
- The other day, eating a smoked-meat sandwich at Schwartz's as is your habit at least once a year, you bit into the second half and your gaze came to rest on the massive pickle jars lined up on the counter and you were reminded of the woman who looked after you when you were little and how she'd call you her "little pickle," a detail that slipped your mind for years but now brought back an entire chapter of your childhood, when you still believed in a fantasy world inhabited by gnomes, a field of knowledge in which her expertise seemed boundless.
- Your girlfriend has been getting on your nerves since she started meditating and making claims about preparing to leave material concerns behind her, since the one truth we can count on is that we'll take nothing with us when we die, all the rest is a web of lies, and in her discourse you can't help but detect a pseudo-spiritual justification of her own negligence and, yes, perhaps a tinge of condescension toward you and your interest in material things, their correct placement and proper handling to prevent damage, and then there's the way she starts laughing like a hyena every time she breaks a glass, releasing it back into the Great Disorder whence it came. 🍷

black feminist

JILLIAN CHRISTMAS

From the poetry collection The Gospel of Breaking. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2020. Reprinted with permission from the publisher. Jillian Christmas is an educator, organizer, arts advocate and the former Artistic Director of Vancouver's Verses Festival of Words. She has performed and facilitated anti-oppression workshops across North America. She lives in Vancouver.

*In response to patti smith's "rock 'n' roll nigger,"
in response to solidarity is for white women,
and in response to my white, activist, feminist, poet friend who
let slip
from her mouth a humorous exclamation of "NIGGA, PLEASE!"*

They said I could be a feminist too!
after all, they are going to need someone at the meeting
who knows how to tighten up
all those white-girl dreadlocks
oh yes they said I could be a feminist
that is of course
as long as I don't ask any questions
try not to mention the dirty mouths of old icons
or how proudly mother deities suffered themselves
black and dirty blue and bruised
so they could use one of the really good words
words made for the megaphone-mouths of punk rock stars
words like *nigger*
like *everything that's yours is going to be mine for the using*
like *didn't you know what we were doing here*
like *go on give them your story you'll see how it
shines*
like *fresh blood for the cameras*
there are going to be a lot of cameras

and
they said I could help must be good for something
must be some big-toothed benefactor that would just eat
me up
articulate black girl such as myself
just the right amount of **mad**

Sbbbbbb!
They didn't mean it like that,
no need to get upset!
We're all in this together

alright then

put me on the front lines
give me your blackest most brackish kind of weather
this thick skin is just waiting to be good for
something
yes please
give me a nice big sign that reads
ME TOO! or maybe *me too?* If that sounds
better

you know? They said I could be a feminist
as long as I don't talk about this black girl body

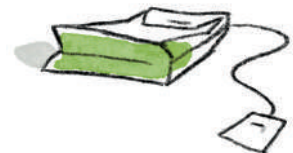
about that cold red body of water

about an inheritance so great that no one body could
apologize it away

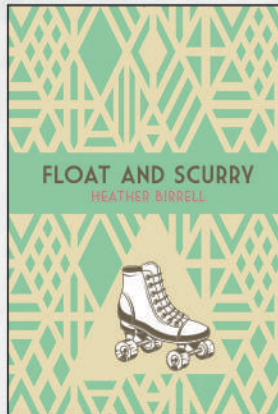
as long as I don't remind anyone where so many of the
ideas
for this movement came from anyway
no one likes a know-it-all
and yes even in this progress someone has got to
play the fuel

all of us have to make ourselves useful
and surely no one has yet forgotten how sweetly and
happily
dark bodies take to making kindling
they said i could help

they said i could be the best kind of help 🍵



POETRY FROM ANVIL PRESS



FLOAT AND SCURRY by Heather Birrell

Birrell's poetry lines — weaving through an acrobatic breadth of forms and tones — are both precise and plain-spoken, and showcase an odd, intuitive logic, embracing the surrealism of this world we're stuck in.

A FEED DOG BOOK.

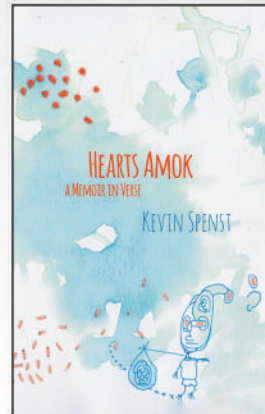
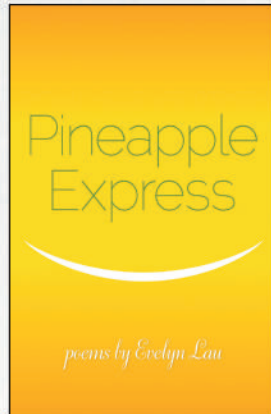
"Heather Birrell stirs her cauldron and ladles out some powerful bad medicine. Drink it down and prepare for bedazzlement."
— Sarah Henstra

978-1-77214-145-0 • 112 PAGES • \$18

PINEAPPLE EXPRESS by Evelyn Lau

Pineapple Express explores moods, medications and side effects, capturing the flatness of depression while still making the language sing. It also probes the landscape of mid-life in all its manifestations: physical changes, psychological upheaval, the notion of becoming "invisible," aging and loss, mortality, and the haunting of family and cultural history.

978-1-77214-147-4 • 104 PAGES • \$18



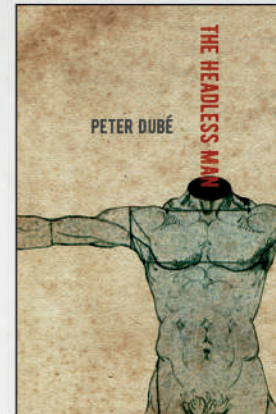
HEARTS AMOK: A MEMOIR IN VERSE by Kevin Spenst

In language that twists together hobo slang and flights of troubadourish diction, *Hearts Amok* scrutinizes the history of the love sonnet in Surrey, England and simultaneously celebrates the tickings and tollings of one love-struck heart in Surrey, BC.

"Kevin Spenst is a literary hobo and court jester par excellence. ... Hearts Amok is a wild and wonderful feast for the mind, heart and spirit."

— Lydia Kwa

978-1-77214-149-8 • 128 PAGES • \$18



THE HEADLESS MAN by Peter Dubé

Montreal surrealist Peter Dubé addresses his concern with queer challenges to identity and sexual boundaries, exploring questions about insider and outsider, what constitutes the "normal" and what is relegated to the realm of the "monstrous."

"This is a tour de force befitting of this age, so thirsty for marvellous freedom."

—Beatriz Hausner

978-1-77214-155-9 • 96 PAGES • \$18



"Distinctly urban, with a twist!"

www.anvilpress.com • info@anvilpress.com

AVAILABLE TO THE TRADE FROM PGC/RAINCOAST

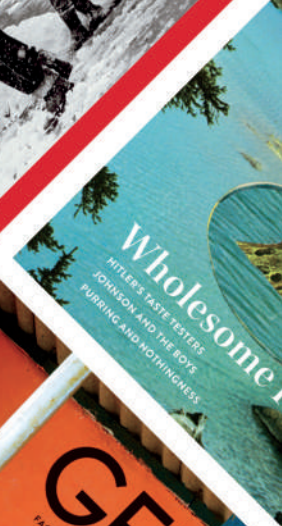
*Give Geist.
Get love.*



UNDER THE BELL CURVE
Unberating Women / Biking Around with Oregals / King of the ChulhuScene / Casual Encounters



LOST CITY
DUEL PICK-UP ON SYMBIOSIS IN WARSAW / HANDY TIPS FROM NICOPOLIS



Wholesome
HITLER'S TASTE TESTERS / JOHNSON AND THE BOYS / PURRING AND NOTHINGNESS



ACTS OF APPEARANCE
FORCES OF NATURE / FORBIDDEN METADNA / ROAD TRIP WITH CUPID / MARRIAGE POEMS

Take advantage of the *Geist* gift 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.

GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH OF AMERICA

YOUR INFO:

Please start my own subscription, and count it as **my first gift**.

I AGREE TO PAY \$ _____ for _____ subscriptions.

Cheque enclosed Visa MasterCard

Name _____

Credit Card # _____

Expiry _____ Signature _____

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Sign cards and mail directly to recipient(s):

from: _____

GIVE TO: _____

NEW GIFT RENEWAL

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

GIVE TO: _____

NEW GIFT RENEWAL

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

GIVE TO: _____

NEW GIFT RENEWAL

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

US & International: add \$15 per subscription 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
the gift of
Geist!



YOUR OFFER

\$19
each

**TWO OR MORE
SUBSCRIPTIONS**

2 Gifts = \$38
3 Gifts = \$57
4 Gifts = \$76

\$23

**ONE
SUBSCRIPTION**

Your own or a gift

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

**MAIL THIS
FORM TO**

GEIST
210 - 111 W Hastings St.
Vancouver, BC V6B 1H4

**OR GIVE
GEIST NOW**

call 1-888-434-7834
email subs@geist.com
go to geist.com/gift

GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA

ERA SURE
POET
RY CO N
TEST
WIN NERS

Winners of the 5th Occasional Geist Erasure Poetry Contest

FIRST PRIZE

Objects Left Behind

BEN BAZEVSKI

Nana loves
that I still use her beautiful glassware,
with cordial affection.
And eat at her art deco dining table,
more precious than all the world.

While she was absent.
There are responsibilities to the Spirits.

‘Smile darling—eat dear.’
(Later tonight in dreams)
A different being I have never seen before.
Pardon me spirit—you are not my Nana.

Ben Bazevski is a writer and editor who is working on his first novel, Juanita Dark, a supernatural murder mystery. He lives in Newington, New South Wales, Australia.

SECOND PRIZE

**After Reichenbach Falls:
Sherlock's Hidden Message
to Joan, Ave Atque Vale!**

ANITA SLUSARCICK

You are most dear to me.

My life had been such that I never before had seen anyone whom I loved.
Of what value was life?
I forgot all.
Full of care, I felt less able than ever to understand people.

Then, you were there.

So now—

Endure,
Listen, question, wonder.
Work.
Be the bright light.
See it all.

You are a natural—
A gifted detective.

You have made life in this land less painful.

(I could not have said it had it not been for you.)

Anita Slusarcick is a special projects assistant at the Baltimore County Department of Aging, where she writes articles and evaluates conferences.

THIRD PRIZE

Hi. It's Been a While.

RACHEL LURIA

Aliens ate my precious heart. They liked the flavor.
With it gone, I was surprised to find my agitation forgotten.
The physicians were perplexed. However, they agreed it seemed
a blessing.
On the whole, I felt more free. I was quite capable, now,
of life.
I could wander about.
Drink. Eat.
I became a cannibal.
It was easy. But then,
I grew hungry for you, your life.
So, pardon the intrusion. I could not control my feelings.
Press my hand now and be born.

Rachel Luria is an Associate Professor at Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University. Her work has appeared in Craft, The Normal School, Harpur Palate, Dash Literary Journal, and others.

LAUGHING HEIR

CARY FAGAN



He had never heard the term laughing heir and so the lawyer, someone on the phone named Morrison or Morrisey, he didn't quite catch it, explained that it was a person who didn't personally know the deceased and so could inherit an estate without grief.

"Apologies if I've caused any offence," said the lawyer. "The business makes us a little insensitive at times."

"None taken," Jerry said. "I only met my great-aunt once. She came for a visit when I was maybe seven years old. All I remember is that she told me off for wearing my shoes in the house."

“Well, I’m relieved to hear it,” said Morrison.

“And you’re in Vancouver?”

“That’s right. Our office was convenient for her.”

“So you’re telling me that I’m her heir?”

“Well, not the entire estate, but part of it.”

He wouldn’t have thought it likely. Aunt Bessie didn’t have children but there were several other cousins. Besides, she couldn’t have had much money. He imagined that she had left each of them a few hundred dollars or maybe some peculiar possession, such as a samovar or umbrella stand. Still, it was kind of her to have remembered that he even existed.

“Yes?” Jerry prompted.

“Let me see. The investments and other monies have been disposed of elsewhere. She left you her house.”

“You’re kidding.”

“Her own house, yes. A very small house. Single storey bungalow, eighty years old or so. She lived in it until the day she died. Passed away there, actually. Not renovated and in need of some repairs. But it’s in Kitsilano.”

“I’ve never been west of Hamilton, Ontario.”

“A very desirable neighbourhood. It was considered rather artsy at one time but by now it’s become pretty gentrified. A lot of original homes have been knocked down to put up big ones. Your aunt’s house might not be much but even a small plot is worth a fortune.”

“I see,” said Jerry, although he wasn’t sure that he did see. He felt his heart pounding. “And you say it’s in poor shape?”

“I haven’t seen it personally but by all reports it has seen better days.”

“What I mean,” Jerry said, trying to sound calm, “is whether or not I could live in it.”

Jerry Ryan was living temporarily in a furnished apartment in the Academy Arms. It had been used for decades by newly separated Toronto men who would spend a few months there getting back on their feet. These days the residents were mostly in town for business but Jerry, like the forlorn of old, had recently split with his wife. The ending had been at Natalie’s insistence for what he had to accept as a credible reason; Jerry wouldn’t agree to having children.

The paperwork for the divorce turned out to be relatively simple, given that their only asset was the condominium that had been a gift from Natalie’s parents and belonged solely to her. Jerry kept his twenty-six-year-old Chevy Caprice and his vinyl record collection. She had stood watching him put the last box of records into the car. If there was a tragedy, Natalie had said, it was in their both still loving one another, which was the last thing she said because she started sobbing too hard. Her tears gave him a sliver of hope that she would change her mind. Jerry *had* wanted children when they’d met seven years before but told her that he had changed his mind because the world had changed. This wasn’t a joke or an excuse, for he’d become terrified of the future—rising temperatures, tsunamis and drought, unbreathable air, political anarchy, random violence—and

couldn't see himself condemning someone to live in such a world to fulfill his need for fatherhood. When he told Natalie all of that she had slapped him, missing mostly, and then apologized. She said that human beings couldn't live without hope.

He'd closed the trunk. Natalie took his hand and led him back up to make love one last time, but she was crying too hard and so they just sat on the bed holding each other. After that he had no choice but to get into the car, start the engine, and drive away.

THE END OF JERRY RYAN'S MARRIAGE HAD A CREDIBLE REASON: HE WOULDN'T AGREE TO HAVE CHILDREN.

Jerry's career plan had been to work for others until he figured out a business of his own. But padding around in his furnished rooms, feeling as if he ought to be wearing a smoking jacket, he saw how vague and unrealistic that plan had been. His current job was in the promotions department of JapaStick, a Houston-based chain that sold tempura-coated sushi on Popsicle sticks. The company had bought the idea from a Tokyo restaurant, turning it into a fast food, and now had eighty-two outlets in the US and nineteen in Canada. The most profitable were all near schools, a fact that Jerry had pointed out, impressing management. He was hoping that good feeling would translate into a job in the Vancouver office.

He could have sold Aunt Bessie's house (worth about a million and a half, he'd checked) and bought his own place in Toronto with cash to spare. But the end of his marriage and the realization that he wasn't the creative entrepreneur that he'd believed himself to be led him to want a larger change. Unfortunately, there weren't any openings in the Vancouver office at the moment. The highest position available was manager of the Richmond outlet and Jerry, the boss said sympathetically, wasn't about to count cartons of napkins and make sure the fryers would pass a health inspection.

"I'll take it," Jerry said.

"Are you serious?"

"It'll give me a real understanding of the business. The kind that most executives don't have. And then when a position does open up, I'll be ready."

"You do realize," said his boss, "that you'll have to wear a hairnet."

After a commerce degree, he had spent a year working in Hong Kong and then four months travelling in Asia. But he'd seen almost nothing of his own country. He arrived in Vancouver on the first Sunday in February, after four

days driving, black smoke huffing from the Chevy's exhaust. He saw the water, the yachts, the tall glass condos, but the mountains ("the *supposed* mountains" he found himself saying) were invisible behind solid cloud. Across False Creek was Granville Island, not actually an island as it turned out, and behind that was the neighbourhood of Kitsilano. The Kitsilano shops were on West 4th Avenue—Urban Outfitters, Whole Foods—but there was also a folk music club still hanging on. Kits (as people seemed to call it) had its own sandy beach, nearly deserted on the February day that Jerry arrived. He pulled up to the address and saw a tiny bungalow darkened by the shadow of the new three-storey single-home monstrosity next door. No doubt in the mornings it was made just as dark by the new house on the other side.

Bessie's place was set back. A spindly tree out front, spruce or pine or something, rose almost three times higher than the roof. A crow drew his gaze upwards and he saw an enormous eagle near the top, its weight causing the branch to sag. It called again and then unfurled its tremendous wings and rose.

When he opened the Chevy's back door, an avalanche of belongings spilled out. He picked up an armful and then had to struggle to find the key in his pocket. The house was airless and dusty. He switched on the frosted globe light and saw a cracked linoleum floor and wallpaper that might have been Victorian. The small front room had a stone fireplace and an oak floor with the finish worn around the edges, showing where the rug must have been. For furniture there was an armchair with a patched seat and a Formica table in the kitchen with chairs. One of the two narrow bedrooms was occupied by a bed with a tarnished brass headboard. The house was smaller than some apartments he'd lived in, and certainly in worse shape: missing baseboard, cracks in the plaster, discolorations on the walls. Even so, its charm showed. *I'm sorry, Aunt Bessie*, he thought, feeling a vague guilt for having left her, even if unknowingly, to live in near-squalor.

He walked to the nearest store for supplies, then cleaned every surface, cupboard, drawer and basin. He unloaded his records, stacking them against all four walls of the empty bedroom. He set up the stereo in the square dining room and put on Etta James. From hooks on the kitchen wall he hung the pans that his distraught mother had bought for him after the divorce. The evening was cold but he hadn't arranged for the oil tank to be filled and so he swiped a couple of logs from his neighbour's pile and built a fire in the front room. He ordered a pizza and ate it sitting in the patched armchair, drinking from a small carton of wine. Through the window he could see the tree's moody shape in the dark.

Staring up from bed, he considered the fact that his aunt had lain alone for the forty years of her widowhood. He hoped, for her sake, that she had died in this bed, and for his that she hadn't.

A pattering over his head. Not snow but rain. A pleasant sound to fall asleep to, he thought, closing his eyes. And then he felt the first drop strike him on the forehead like a cold nail.

There was a leak in the bedroom, another in the kitchen and two in the living room. He could discern ghostly circles on the floor, where Bessie had put buckets—all except in the bedroom, where the bucket must have sat on the bed. There was no point in buying furniture or rugs until the leaks were fixed, so he went to the Starbucks on West Broadway to use the wi-fi and found A-A-A Plus Roofing. He called the number and the woman on the other end made an appointment for "the boss" to come by after that day's job was over.

He had been told to report to the west coast JapaStick headquarters, a suite of offices above the Robson Street outlet. The car's muffler was shot and the engine was making a sound like an old man clearing phlegm so he took the number 7 bus, enviously watching the bike riders pass him by. At the JapaStick counter there was the usual line of people ordering the BreakyStick (egg, avocado, salmon). The stairway up to the offices was lined with innocuous travel posters of Japan. He was ushered into the office of Craig Rombauer, who made an impression as friendly and vague, in a Devil Makes Three T-shirt and sandals.

"Don't worry, Jerry, we've had good reports of you. Something will open up in the office before long. People around here are always heading for Thailand or deciding to become massage therapists. I think it would be best if you got some training downstairs before taking over Richmond. The manager has to be capable of stepping into any job, in case an employee buggers off. By the way, what's your shirt size?"

His back ached and he had fry burns on the backs of his hands and he smelled like fish. At English Bay he looked out at the distant oil tankers and then took the little boat across False Creek. He picked up groceries at the Granville Island Market and walked home, thinking that for a city, Vancouver was pretty damn quaint.

A pick-up truck was idling in front of his house, aluminum ladders protruding past the roof of the cab. The name on the side—*Danny Ryan and Sons Roofers*—didn't match the one he'd phoned. A man got out of the driver's side: bulky, bearded, a striped toque on his head.

"This your miniature mansion?" he said, holding out his hand. "Sean Ryan."

"It is. And I'm Jerry Ryan. A nice coincidence, that."

"There are no coincidences in life. We must be relatives. All Ryans are related if you go back to Ireland."

"We don't, actually. Our name was Rozinsky. When my grandfather came from Poland he changed it."

"I always give a family discount," Sean Ryan said, either not hearing or choosing to ignore his words. "Good thing, too, Jerry. Because I've been up on your roof already and it's half a step from disaster. You've got four ancient layers of shingle, all turned to shit, if you'll excuse my language. I pulled a few up and found wood rot underneath. Now you can get some fly-by-night, unlicensed hack to slap down a new layer over that festering mess or you can get the proper surgery done and actually heal the patient. That's the only way I do it, pull the old shingles off, replace all rotten wood, lay down a waterproof membrane, put in a vent."

"How much are we talking about?"

"I can only guess until we've pulled everything off but let's see. Fortunately, it's a small house. Eleven. Maybe twelve."

"Twelve thousand dollars? That's the family discount?"

"Of course, cousin. And if you want to pay cash I won't charge tax."

Jerry rubbed his jaw, which had clenched from stress. He'd have to go to the bank and take out a loan. "How long will it take?"

"Two days. And you better pray for dry weather so we can get this done, which would be a small miracle this time of year. So are we on?"

"Maybe I should get another quote."

"Sure, go ahead and take it to some stranger. Then come back to me and I'll try and fit you in."

But *you're* a stranger, Jerry wanted to shout at Sean Ryan's back, for the man had turned around to return to his truck. "All right," he called. "Let's do it."

The man turned back, grinning. "I've got three crews, but me and my sons will do your job ourselves. They're good boys, at least most of the time, and they mean well. Their mother has brought them up to value family. She's fierce on that score, Jerry."

AUNT BESSIE'S HOUSE WAS AIRLESS
AND DUSTY, WITH A CRACKED
LINOLEUM FLOOR, A STONE
FIREPLACE AND WALLPAPER THAT
MIGHT HAVE BEEN VICTORIAN.

His brother in Ottawa emailed him a photograph of snow blocking his front door. Here in Vancouver it was eight degrees, the sky still the colour of smoke. He put on his backpack and helmet and wheeled out the Norco hybrid that he'd bought off Craigslist. It was supposed to take thirty-five minutes to get to the CF Richmond Centre but he hadn't been on a bike for a few years so he gave himself extra time. The traffic was more unnerving than he expected and he found himself panting for breath, but he made it with ten minutes to spare. Chung and Eileen, both under twenty and wearing their uniforms, were waiting for him in the food court. They brought the trays of fish out from the freezer and got the fryers going, telling him about the rest of the staff. Most were ski bums who lived four to an apartment and spent their free days on the slopes in Whistler. The exception was Horace Kinney, who was fifty-seven and had taken early retirement but found that staying home all day drove his wife crazy.

Jerry did not sit once in nine hours. He smelled of fried food. Riding home seemed impossible, but once he was on the bike the cool air revived him. Gliding onto his own street, he saw somebody standing on the roof of his house. He was tossing old shingles into a waste bin wedged between the front porch and the tree. A power saw began whirring in the backyard.

"Hey," Jerry called, walking his bike up to the porch.

"Hi!" The guy answered. "You must be Jerry. I'm Liam."

"How's it going?"

"It's not pretty under there."

The saw had stopped and someone else came round from the back, maybe a couple of years older than Liam. "I'm Sean Jr.," he said, holding out his hand. "The rot's worse than we thought. The good news is that it's still only going to take us a couple of days. My dad will have to talk to you about the additional charges—wait, I think that's him coming up now."

The pickup was pulling up the street. Sean parked against the curb and got out with a groan. “My fucking sciatica, excuse my language. Hi, Jerry, glad we caught you. I went to get some tarps. You meet my sons?”

“I did. And I hear my bill’s going up.”

“By six hundred bucks. Nothing to do about it if you want to keep the roof from falling in. Hey, boys, it’s quitting time. Put those tarps on, will you? Might rain.”

“Okay,” said Sean Jr.

“Thirsty work, Jerry. You don’t happen to have any beer in the fridge?”

“I bought some yesterday. Hold on.”

“Beautiful, cousin. I’ll just help tie down those tarps.”

Inside, Jerry changed out of his fish-streaked clothes and into jeans and a flannel shirt. He could hear them scrambling overhead like giant mice. The beer was stocked in the round-shouldered Philco refrigerator and he brought four cans to the front porch. Liam was sweeping up debris and Sean was tying a cord around the porch column. Sean Jr. clambered down the ladder.

“Seems like pretty hard work,” Jerry said, passing out cans.

“But steady. I raised these galoots and their sister on it. And in Vancouver you can pretty much work year round. What do you think, boys, will we get her done by tomorrow night?”

“No problem,” said Sean Jr, taking a swig.

“I gotta finish by six, anyway,” Liam said.

“A hot date?” asked his father. “Or is it one of those—what do you call it? Hook-ups? Not like when we were young, Jerry, I can tell you that.”

The sons rolled their eyes. They drank their beers and put the cans down on one of the column pedestals.

“Thanks, Jerry. We better get home before the wife sends out the Mounties. By tomorrow you’ll have a snug little place. I like these original houses. They’ve got a sense of modesty. But hey, maybe you’re fixing up to sell. Whatever you need to do.”

“Dad will stand here talking all night if you let him,” said Liam.

“See how they speak to me? Keep praying for good weather, Jerry, and we’ll see you tomorrow.”

Each in turn shook Jerry’s hand. He watched them walk to the truck, the sons joking with one another, the father taking out a cotton handkerchief to blow his nose.

It rained for four days. The roofers stayed away and Jerry gave up biking to work. And then on Friday he woke to sunlight and the discovery that there really were mountains. He took his bike out again and, returning from work, saw grey-blue shingles sparkling in the late afternoon light. A note had been stuck in the screen door.

Hey, Jerry, looks good, don't you think? You can sleep soundly tonight. I can come by to pick up the rest of the money but why don't you drop over to our place tomorrow? We're having a barbecue starting at five. 67 Hamlyn. Jenny's looking forward to meeting you. Sean.

Was this guy for real? On the other hand, Saturday was one of his days off and it would be nice to have something to do for a change.

He followed his now usual Saturday morning routine, walking to Granville Island for a coffee and bagel at the Blue Parrot where he read the morning paper and looked out at the moored boats. He left his phone at home so he couldn’t check Natalie’s Facebook page. Surprisingly, he didn’t hate working

in the mall, mostly because the staff was likeable. They were always giving him tips about living in Vancouver, like visiting Stanley Park, which he had done with pleasure, at least until he got lost as the light was fading. But they were too young to be his friends outside of work, all except for Horace, who claimed that he went to bed every night at nine. Jerry sometimes had to remind himself that moving here had been his choice and that he could always sell up and head back to Toronto. But he liked to imagine that Aunt Bessie had looked into his face when he was a boy and had seen that one day he would need this fresh start.

In the afternoon he stripped off the hall wallpaper while spinning early Stevie Wonder records. Then he showered and shaved, dressed in a new shirt and black jeans and took the SkyTrain to Burnaby. Guided by his phone, he walked to a pleasant street of good-sized homes that looked to have been built in the seventies. Sean's driveway was parked up with cars; a note on the door sent guests around to the back. He heard music and voices and as he opened the gate a gaggle of kids ran up and one tried to hide behind him.

"You didn't get me, you didn't!"

They took off again. And there on the patio was Sean, the picture of an aproned father at the barbecue, spatula in one hand and beer in the other.

"Jerry, you made it! Hope you're hungry because these burgers are ready. Honey, put one in a bun and give it to Jerry."

The woman beside him had shoulder-length grey hair and what his mother would call a good face. She put the burger on a paper plate and he met her halfway.

"You must be the newly rescued Ryan," she said.

"I wish we were related, but there's not much chance."

"As if that matters to Sean. I know it's a bit chilly out here but whenever the sun comes out, we eat in the backyard. I hear you're divorced. Sorry, I'm a blunt sort."

"I guess that's what I am now. Before I forget, can I give you the rest of the money I owe?"

"Just step inside and toss it on the kitchen counter, will you? Listen, we've got a bunch of bachelorettes here so you better eat this and work up your energy. Let's get you some coleslaw and potato salad and corn."

People came up to introduce themselves, half of them making jokes about how much he'd been overcharged for the roof. A man brought out an ugly black guitar and started singing Neil Young. Some of the younger kids went out front to skateboard on the sidewalk and the teenagers, shivering without jackets, headed inside.

Contrary to Jenny's threat, no woman tried to claim him. After an hour or so he was standing awkwardly alone and wondering what excuse he might use to leave early when a woman came up with two beers. Her name was Key-rah, spelt *Ciara*, and she was actually from Cork. "Do you know that Sean's never been to Ireland?" she said in her bluntly poetic accent. "I think it might be better if he never went. It's bound to be a disappointment. Except the countryside and the beer, of course."

"And you live here now?" Jerry asked, clicking bottles.

"Twelve years. Came for a lark after graduation and stayed. It's a lot freer than back home. They get you pegged early. But here you can be what you want."

"So what do you want to be?"

"Tricky question. I'll have to get back to you when I figure it out."

She had, in fact, figured it out quite well, being the head pastry chef for the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel. On her days off she didn't ski or snowboard or

any of that “dangerous stuff” but liked to walk and when he mentioned that he hadn’t seen much of the outdoors, she offered to take him up Grouse Mountain. They exchanged numbers and Jerry, not wanting to press his luck, said his good-byes feeling remarkably lighter than when he’d arrived.

SHE PREFERRED JOINTS TO
EXPENSIVE RESTAURANTS,
REFUSED TO GO TO IRISH PUBS,
WOULD SEE ANY MOVIE THAT
WASN’T ABOUT SUPERHEROES.

Grouse Mountain, Stawamus Chief, then St. Mark’s Summit. This last was the first time he stayed over at her Pendrell Street apartment, the balcony catching the March sun and tossing it across her kitchen table. He learned that she had three older sisters, had once been engaged for three weeks, never went to church but couldn’t quite escape her Catholic “superstitions,” was allergic to bee stings, read the winners of the Canadian book prizes every year, loved Dolly Parton, and dreamed of owning a summer home on one of the Gulf Islands. She preferred joints to expensive restaurants, refused to go to Irish pubs, would see any movie that wasn’t about superheroes.

Meanwhile, a management position opened up at JapaStick. It put him in the office for three days of the week and on the road for two, inspecting outlets in Surrey, Victoria, Calgary and Edmonton. He began to play racquetball with an office mate named Cecil Amaranthe and on the first of the month the office went out for pizza and beer and darts. A Toronto friend stopped over in Vancouver and Jerry steered him around town like a native.

Perhaps what people said about owning your own home was true. Jerry found himself caring a lot more about his surroundings. Ciara helped him to paint—pale yellow in the sitting and dining room, white everywhere else. Sean gave him the name of someone to refinish the oak floors and when it was done he held a dinner party: him and Ciara, Sean and Jenny, their sons and girlfriends, Ciara’s friends Reed and Louisa with their significant others, Cecil Amaranthe and his husband. The dining room couldn’t hold a table large enough so they had to eat buffet style, sitting or standing in the two front rooms and the kitchen.

He pulled up the kitchen linoleum himself and laid down checkerboard tiles. Ciara took on the task of replacing the fusty curtains with blinds. For now he kept the wheezing appliances, although he bought some furniture. On the mantel leaned a framed photograph of Ciara and Jerry on Mount Cheam.

He was turning onto Robson, heading for work and whistling “Me and Mrs. Jones,” when his cell rang. He didn’t answer it but waited until after he was off his bike to listen to the voicemail.

Jerry? It’s Natalie. Shoot, I was hoping to get you. I wasn’t going to leave a message but here I am. I just wanted you to know—I didn’t want you to hear about it from anybody else, now that I’m showing. I’m... well, I’m pregnant. It’s crazy, I know. But I couldn’t wait to meet someone so I just went ahead—it’s just my baby, is what I’m trying to say. And I’m really happy. Anyway, I wanted you to hear it from me and I hope everything is fantastic in Vancouver and you’re skiing all the time or whatever and I’m not going to say that I miss you but I do and maybe if you come back to Toronto we can have a drink—well not a drink, obviously—or who knows, maybe I’ll be out west with my kid some day. Anyway, that’s it, you don’t have to phone back, I know you’ll be glad for me and, oh I’m running on too long, you take care of yourself...

He listened to the message three times, and then he carried his bike up to the office. He got no work done and late in the day he sent a text to Ciara begging off dinner without giving a reason. He left his bike and took the ferry across the strait and walked into Kitsilano. Instead of home, he went to the beach and sat on a bench as the sun set.

The days were already starting to get warmer. Someone had left a plastic shovel and pail in the sand. When did a person start showing? Four months or so, he thought. Which meant that the baby would be born in the fall. He stayed on the bench until the sun was completely gone and the fire in the clouds had darkened and his shadow was cast over the sand. He was shivering now and walked the few blocks to his house, unlocked the door and turned on the light in the hall and hung up his jacket. He felt a little sick and had skipped lunch so he went into the kitchen and took out a carton of eggs from the refrigerator. He put a pan on the burner and sliced a tomato and beat the eggs, adding salt and pepper. Then he poured the eggs into the pan and moved them around with a plastic spatula and laid in the tomatoes. Another minute and he pushed it all onto a plate and stood at the counter, not eating but looking out the window into the dark backyard. He didn’t know whether or not he should go back to Toronto. Whether he should ask Natalie to accept him back and see if they could raise the child together, or whether he should ask Ciara to move with him and they could somehow help Natalie, be like godparents—but he knew that idea was completely insane. Would Natalie consider moving out here? He had absolutely no idea what to do but he wished that he could see her belly, put his hand on her and feel it moving.

A sound startled him. He took a step and turned so that he could see out the kitchen to the front door. The door opened and Ciara came in, carrying a mesh bag of groceries.

“Hi,” she said. “I thought I’d surprise you.”

Cary Fagan is the author of four story collections, most recently The Old World (House of Anansi). His recent novel, The Student, was a finalist for the Governor General’s Award for Fiction. He lives in Toronto.

DURABLE GOODS

JAMES POLLOCK

Refrigerator

Compartmentalizing is its super-power. Everything inside has its cool, dry place, from the egg tray to the crisper, like an office building, or a school,

albeit at slightly varying temperatures, from chill to chilly—dryly humorous in their juxtapositions, their postures, their unspoken hierarchies, from serious

to silly. Then, every so often, the door swings open and a light comes on and reveals the truth: some things are going rotten, some are running low, and some are gone.



Washing Machine

Weighs your duds with joggles, with brief whirls.
Satisfied, locks the glass door with a click
that says *leave*. Poured water hisses, steam curls
to fog the window. Such work's on the clock.

Later you hear all kinds of racket from
the basement: gush of water from a hose,
rhythmic churn, the unbalanced pounding of a drum.
Someone's beating the shit out of your clothes.



James Pollock is the author of Sailing to Babylon (Able Muse Press) and You Are Here: Essays on the Art of Poetry in Canada (Porcupine's Quill). He has been a finalist for both the Griffin Poetry Prize and the Governor General's Literary Award for poetry. He lives in Madison, WI, and at www.jamespollock.org.

ADVICE FOR THE LIT-LORN



ARE YOU A WRITER?

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

Send your questions to advice@geist.com

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

Dear Geist,

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

—Floria, Windsor ON



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

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

—Dave, Red Deer AB




As featured in the weekly *Geist* newsletter!

SUBSCRIBE AT GEIST.COM/NEWSLETTER

READ MORE AT GEIST.COM/LIT-LORN

GEIST

FACT + FICTION  NORTH OF AMERICA



#NOFILTERNEEDED

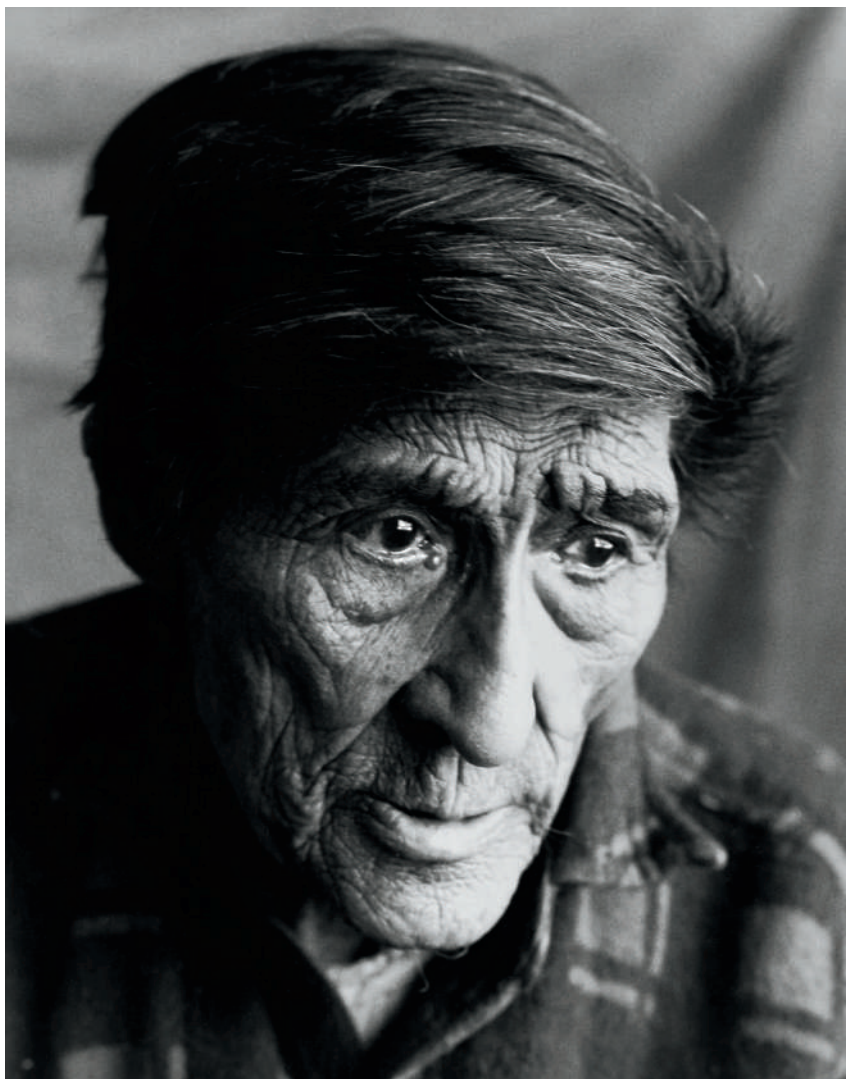
Photographs from the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers' Association



Randy Hill. Richard W. Hill (Sr.).

FROM NOVEMBER 2019 TO JANUARY 2020, an exhibition called *#nofilterneeded Shining light on the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers' Association 1985–1992* was mounted at the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery. The exhibition, curated by Rhéanne Chartrand, consisted of works from nineteen artists drawn from two of the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers' Association's (NIIPA) first touring exhibitions, as well as from artists' personal files and public archival material. Images from the exhibition appear on the following pages.

The Native Indian/Inuit Photographers' Association was founded by Brenda Mitten and Yvonne Maracle, who worked together on the Native Indian Photography Program at the Photographers' Union in Hamilton in 1984. At a time when there were few supports or training for Indigenous photographers (and when the collection and exhibition of photography within art institutions in general was in its early stages, let alone work by Indigenous artists), Maracle and Mitten, along with some non-Indigenous Photography Union colleagues, began planning *Visions*, the Conference of Native Indian Photography. The conference took place over two days in March 1985 and the accompanying *Visions* exhibition toured the country that year. Within three months of the conference NIIPA was incorporated.



Native Studies, 1984. Murray McKenzie.



Plenty Chief.
Jeffrey M. Thomas.



Cousins c. 1987. Shelley Niro.



Over the course of the next twenty-one years, NIIPA's membership included artists such as Jolene Rickard, Greg Staats, Shelley Niro, Jeff Thomas and many others. The organization, which was dissolved in 2006, was one of the longest running Canadian Indigenous arts service organizations; its mandate was to "promote a positive, realistic and contemporary image of native people through the medium of photography."

—AnnMarie MacKinnon

Mary, 1982.
Greg Staats.

Táino Tales

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

A package-deal paradise reputation curtails gringo knowledge of Dominican life

Few countries are more visited, or less understood, than the Dominican Republic. The package tourists who book flights to Puerto Plata and Punta Cana see nothing of the nation where they toast their bodies in the sun. Ferried by bus from tourist-only airports to all-inclusive resorts, they interact only with each other and with the resorts' English-speaking personnel. The Dominican Republic attracts six million tourists a year, the most of any Caribbean destination. The tourism boom has made this country of just fewer than 13 million people the largest economy in the Caribbean or Central America. Travelling on the clean, efficient subway system, which carries 350,000 riders a day around the capital of Santo Domingo, you feel that you are in a modern metropolis. Yet Dominican democracy is troubled. During a recent visit, I saw the governing party block most of downtown Santo Domingo's streets for a political rally. The opposition's rally the next night was confined by official mandate to areas where it would not disrupt traffic. I was told that a journalist who wrote an article exposing government corruption had been jailed. In spite of these stains, the Dominican Republic



is more stable and prosperous than nearly all comparable countries in our hemisphere. Why don't we know more about it?

One of the paradoxes of Dominican tourism is that the country's reputation as a package-deal paradise drives away more adventurous travellers. The backpackers who are drawn to Peru, Chile or Guatemala avoid the Dominican Republic, even though its varied landscape of mountains, lakes and mangrove swamps offers much to explore. The dearth of independent tourism curtails gringo street knowledge of Dominican life. Having studied and taught Latin American literature and culture at various universities, I'm aware that the Dominican Republic is a country that is understudied. Its literature is almost unread beyond its borders. The two best-known novelists on Dominican themes are the Dominican-Americans Julia Alvarez and Junot Díaz, both of whom write

in English. Novels such as Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* and *In the Time of the Butterflies* and Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* are reminders that the Dominican Republic's stability has emerged from the long shadow of dictatorship.

The dictator Rafael Trujillo treated the Dominican Republic as his private fiefdom from 1930 until his assassination in 1961, torturing, raping and murdering at will. For four decades after Trujillo's death, the country's allegiances were divided between two cultured, yet authoritarian, men of nearly unadulterated European heritage. Joaquín Balaguer, a poet and essayist who had been Trujillo's puppet president, had the backing of the United States in spite of the many human rights abuses he committed. Juan Bosch, an essayist and short story writer, was feared by Washington. Bosch was the better writer of the pair: with the exception of the elegant mid-twentieth-century literary critic Pedro Henríquez Ureña, he is virtually the only Dominican writer whose work is familiar to readers in other Spanish-speaking countries. But Bosch made it to the presidency only once, for seven months in 1963, before being

overthrown by a military coup. In 1965, when he threatened to return to power, 42,000 US Marines invaded the country to prevent a Bosch presidency.

Bosch and Balaguer lived into their nineties, dying in 2001 and 2002 respectively. Bosch's heirs have ruled the country for most of the years since, growing corrupt and losing their reformist zeal. The rift between the two men's supporters remains an open sore. In Cuesta Libros, Santo Domingo's largest bookstore, more than half of the books in the Dominican literature section are by either Balaguer or Bosch. As I paid for a collection of Bosch's stories, the woman standing behind me in the check-out line said in a loud voice: "Imagine paying money for something written by Juan Bosch!"

The most destructive tension in the Dominican Republic is race. In 2015, in Montreal, I attended a talk by Junot Díaz. Moving to the United States as a child, Díaz said, had made him realize that his family was essentially "African-American." He recounted how badly his relatives in the Dominican Republic reacted when he shared this insight with them. In conversation, Dominicans speak enthusiastically of their descent from the Taíno Indigenous people. By the late sixteenth century, though, European diseases, mistreatment and miscegenation had put an end to recognizable Taíno communities in the Dominican Republic. While many Dominicans probably carry small amounts of Taíno DNA, the majority of the population is primarily descended from the enslaved Africans imported by the Spanish colonizers to replace the Taínos as a labour force. Eighty-six percent of the population is either African-descended, or of mixed African and Spanish heritage. Yet, in spite of the audible African influences in Dominican Spanish, and in musical forms such as the bachata, many Dominicans freeze up at the mention of an African legacy.

This reticence comes from history. Where other Spanish American countries gained their independence by fighting against Spanish colonialism, the Dominican Republic was led to independence in 1844 by the Trinitarian Movement: an insurgency of white intellectuals against the occupying army of neighbouring Haiti. To be Dominican, regardless of one's colour, is to celebrate a victory of whites over Blacks, to repudiate the world's first Black republic, and by extension, to suppress one's own blackness. In 1937 the dictator Trujillo, himself one-quarter Haitian, committed genocide against Haitian immigrants, murdering 20,000 people. This crime, dramatized in novels such as Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Feast of the Goat* and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*, is the Dominican Republic's most violent assault on the African heritage. It does not belong to the past. As recently as 2015, the country was censured by the United Nations for deporting to

Haiti the Dominican-born children and grandchildren of Haitian immigrants. As a thoughtful essay in *The Rough Guide to the Dominican Republic* notes, "the Taínos have been used by Dominican intellectuals in the past to cover up the nation's more extensive African background," a trend perpetuated by "widespread miseducation in schools." The African-looking Dominicans who eagerly tell visitors of their Spanish and Taíno ancestry have been taught an untruth. If we in the rest of the hemisphere do not understand the Dominican Republic, it may be because Dominicans are reluctant to understand themselves.

Stephen Henighan's English translation of Ondjaki's novel Transparent City was a longlist finalist for the 2019 Best Translated Book Award and the 2020 International Dublin Literary Award. Read more of his work at geist.com and stephenhenighan.com. Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.

new from NIGHTWOOD EDITIONS

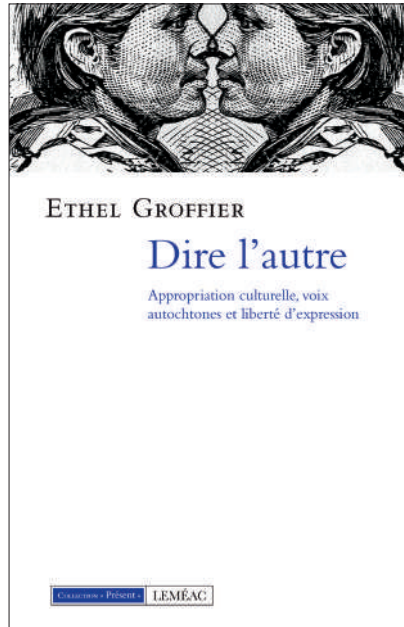
#READNIGHTWOOD
WWW.NIGHTWOODEDITIONS.COM

<p>Bone Black • FICTION • Carol Rose GoldenEagle \$21.95</p>	<p>Belated Bris of the Brainsick • POETRY • Lucas Crawford \$18.95</p>	<p>Renaissance Normcore • POETRY • Adèle Barclay \$18.95</p>	<p>Un-Canadian: Islamophobia in the True North • CURRENT AFFAIRS • Graeme Truelove \$21.95</p>
<p>Let 'Em How! Lessons from a Life in Backroom Politics • MEMOIR • Pat Sorbara \$22.95</p>	<p>Canada Crosswords Book 20 • PUZZLES • Gwen Sjoren \$15.95</p>		

Literature & Morality

ALBERTO MANGUEL

Must artists declare their moral integrity?



It is said that Cervantes killed a man and prostituted his sisters. Seneca worked for Nero. Shakespeare was a ruthless tax collector and a tax defaulter. Borges shook hands with Videla and Pinochet. Nabokov and Lewis Carroll were suspected pedophiles. Proust liked to torture rats. Virginia Woolf was an anti-Semite who told her Jewish husband when his parents came to dinner: “Feed the Jews!” Rimbaud was (briefly) a slave-trader. Verlaine kicked his pregnant wife in the stomach. Céline, Ezra Pound, Chesterton and T.S. Eliot were explicitly anti-Semitic. Châteaubriand was a racist. And let’s not begin to talk about Sade. In spite of such evidence, readers still want to believe that the creators of enlightening work must themselves be enlightened. It is very rarely so. By and large, writers and artists are egotistic, greedy,

ruthless, envious, choleric and petty beasts, much like the majority of us human beings. The only thing that distinguishes them from the common brethren is that, when touched by grace, they are capable of producing good art.

The recent commotion surrounding film directors Roman Polanski and Woody Allen for having sex with minors, and London’s National Gallery’s decision to withdraw Gauguin’s paintings of Tahitian women from their retrospective exhibition because of Gauguin’s supposedly racist attitude toward South Sea islanders, are just two of the recent examples of this moral crusading that confuses the civic duty of these people with the work they have created as artists. As citizens, we are all obliged to obey the laws of the society we live in and, if these men and women are guilty of

any crimes (as concluded after due process of law) they should be punished accordingly. But why punish the art (and consequently their public) in the same condemnatory gesture? Why force an artist to declare his or her “moral integrity” (in sixteenth-century Spain and during the Third Reich this was equivalent to “purity of blood”) before being allowed to present a work of art to the world at large? Shelley and Valéry suggested that literature is a continuum that should be read as anonymous in order not to contaminate each segment with qualities alien to the text itself. This, in the twenty-first century, is seen as a scandalous idea.

Ethel Groffier has examined one aspect of this question. Her recent, brilliantly argued *Dire l'autre: Appropriation culturelle, voix autochtones et liberté d'expression* (Leméac: Montreal,

2020) takes as its starting point the controversies surrounding the cases, among others, of Robert Lepage and Ariane Mnouchkine's theatrical project *Kanata*, in which Indigenous people were played by white actors and of the non-Indigenous artist Amanda PL's visual show inspired by the Indigenous artist Norval Morrisseau. Groffier quotes a letter by Lepage refuting the charges of cultural appropriation: "Since the dawn of time, theatrical practice is grounded in a very simple principle: to play at being someone else. To pretend to be someone else. To put oneself in the skin of the other in order to try and understand him or her and, by means of that very fact, perhaps understand oneself." Here, as well, the public concern is the identity of the player, the presumption being that the documented identity supersedes (or authorizes) the fictional one. This specious argument leads to an obvious absurdity: that no one but a sixteenth-century Dane can play Hamlet; no subject is permitted to a writer except autobiography, and even that, limited to the time and place of the actual writing.

Groffier concludes: "Cultural appropriation, in today's sense, is part of the reclaiming of identity by means of rendering culture subservient to it. Worse, it establishes identity through race: Indigeneity, whiteness, Blackness. It centres the debate exclusively on culture even though the claims are political. It conceals the real problem and shifts the debate into the arena of literary or artistic discourse rather than into the political one to which it must belong. It fosters censorship in the voicing of public opinions and, consequently, self-censorship, which leads to the impoverishment of artistic creation and will not fail one day to turn against its accusers."

Perhaps there is another aspect of the question of the artist's responsibility that I, as a reader, might add to the discussion. Perhaps the requirements

for some sort of proper civil behaviour on the part of the artist as a member of society ignores an older truism: that art is its own best custodian. By this I mean that a great work of art has, by certain ineffable means, something in its make-up that will not allow it to defend immoral, anti-humanitarian causes. I don't mean that it is moral in the Aesopean sense, or humanitarian in the sense of philanthropic institutions. I mean that I can't think of a single great work of art that is not imbued with an enriching ambiguity that protects it from a clear dogmatic reading. Great artists have produced dogmatic art but it was not good or great art. Tyrants have written books but none of these that I know of is an admitted masterpiece: Stalin's poetic works, Saddam Hussein's romance fictions, Mussolini's novel *The Cardinal's Mistress* have all been deservedly forgotten. Neither are artistic masterpieces Louis-Ferdinand Céline's anti-Semitic pamphlets, Pablo Neruda's

poems in praise of Stalin, Kanye West's raps endorsing Trump. It is as if (and this I know is wishful thinking) art, the works we call classics, books whose circumference, according to Northrop Frye's definition, is always greater than that of the best of their readers, were inherently moral in the deepest meaning of the word, and whether showing us the racist characters in *Huckleberry Finn*, or anti-Semitism in *Oliver Twist*, or misogyny in *The Taming of the Shrew*, or even sadistic violence in the *Chants* of Lautréamont, are not themselves racist, anti-Semitic, misogynist or evil. That is this reader's hope.

Alberto Manguel is the award-winning author of hundreds of works, most recently (in English) Fabulous Monsters, 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 and geist.com.



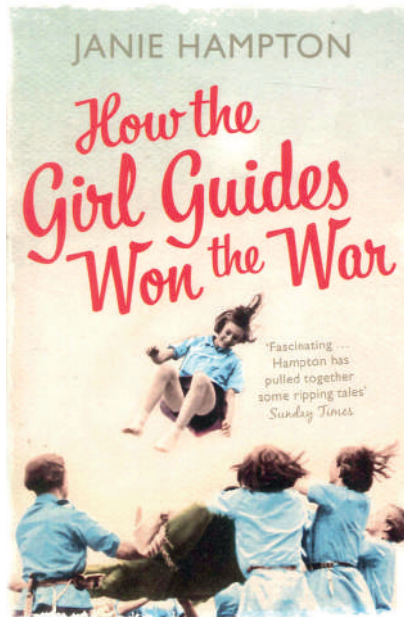
ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

LOOK OUT, NOT IN

In 1909, in London, UK, Lord Baden-Powell organized the first rally of a successful organization he had founded to teach boys confidence, outdoor skills, independence and good citizenship. When a group of girls showed up as well, wearing uniforms adapted from the boys' togs and speaking of scouting values, Baden-Powell hesitated briefly, then welcomed them. His sister Agnes took over to teach the girls homemaking skills, carpentry, first aid and outdoor survival, and girls signed up in droves. In World War I, Girl Guides—some as young as fourteen—served as nurses, soldiers, mechanics, interpreters, Morse code experts and more, earning merit badges along the way. Thousands of girls in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East joined, including girls in hospitals and tuberculosis sanatoriums. In 1939, when Neville Chamberlain was negotiating with Hitler, the British government issued gas masks to civilians, and Girl Guides went door to door in their neighbourhoods showing people how to use the masks, giving information and calming their fears. Another group of Guides organized a drive to raise \$46,000 (about \$800,000 today) to buy RAF flying ambulances. When war was declared, the Guides learned how to help people in air raids and fires and continued to visit homes and keep people informed as alarms went off accidentally and wild rumours flew about. The girls and women stayed calm, cheerful and helpful, their Guide watchword being “Look out and not in, and lend a hand.” In

Britain, when hundreds of babies were sent away from cities to be fostered in the country until the war was over, the Guides cleaned and stocked derelict homes and gathered bits of fabric to make clothes and diapers for the children. Many of the older



Guides worked as nurses and ambulance drivers; the younger ones whitewashed trees, lampposts and curbs so people could find their way during night-time blackouts. When the Germans invaded Holland and occupied France, the Guides set up canteens along the roads to give refugees food and water, and to maintain chalkboards for messages. Guides in many countries made hundreds of bandages out of worn linen, organized auxiliary hospitals and carried patients to safety when hospitals were bombed. They worked in bomb shelters distributing tea and sandwiches, calming children and leading “Blackout

Blues” singalongs. In Europe, Japan, China and everywhere war was, so were the Guides, improvising and pressing on. They gathered scraps of wood and fabric to make shelves and tent poles. They picked rosehips so children would have vitamin C. They trapped, prepared and cooked rabbits and squabs. In a journal found decades later, a writer described a young Guide who whipped off her uniform scarf to use as a tourniquet. An account in another found notebook describes a twenty-two-year-old Guide who joined the Women’s Auxiliary Fire Service. One night she drove a petrol tanker to a fire-service area as bombs fell all around her in a heavy three-hour raid. She pressed on to the designated meeting spot, and when the fire crew managed to get through, they found her sitting quietly in the driver’s seat of the tanker, knitting. These stories and hundreds more were found, compiled and irresistibly written in **How the Girl Guides Won the War** (HarperPress, London), by Janie Hampton, a seasoned professional who nonetheless seems to be astonished by the depth and breadth of the material.

—Mary Schendlinger

BAUDELAIRE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

The Canadian poet Lisa Robertson’s first novel, **The Baudelaire Fractal** (Coach House), draws on Robertson’s own journals from the mid-1980s, a period when, wanting to change her life, she (and/or her protagonist,

Hazel Brown) flew from Vancouver to London, travelling from there to Paris by boat and train, carrying “used paperback copies of Ezra Pound’s *ABC of Reading*, Martin Heidegger’s *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Sylvia Plath’s *Winter Trees* and a beautifully bound volume of translations of classical Chinese poetry called *Old Friend from Faraway*.” *The Baudelaire Fractal* has one of the best back-cover tag lines ever: “One morning, Hazel Brown awakes in a badly decorated hotel room to find that she’s written the complete works of Charles Baudelaire.” Reading *The Baudelaire Fractal* revived a few memories of my own (and I’m sure that there are countless other Francophiles, besotted by books, who’ve had some kind of Paris interlude: nights in a nondescript Latin Quarter hotel, trying to sleep on a lumpy, concave bed; afternoons spent journal-writing in one of the many Belle Époque cafés—Les Deux Magots, the Café de Flore). The difference is that Robertson (who is now a resident of France) continued to pursue her vision. At one point she has her proxy, Hazel Brown, recall a particular afternoon spent in one particular room “quite high up” in an ancient building near the top of the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève in Paris, “an ordinary girl now extraordinarily climbing a strange stair in mid-afternoon” in the company of a nameless boy: “What I wanted ardently was poetry, and to me this expansive afternoon felt like poetry ought to feel.”

—Michael Hayward

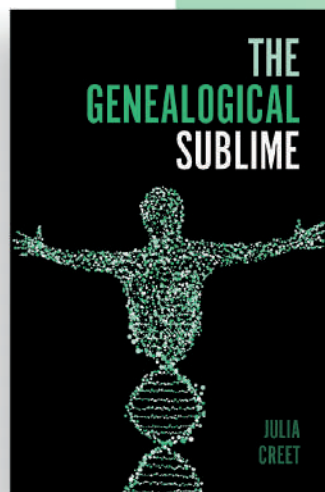
LINGUISTICS REVOLUTION

Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language by the Canadian linguist Gretchen McCulloch (Riverhead Books) tackles the big questions of language evolution on the internet in an approachable and humorous way. From 1337-speak to

memes, McCulloch follows the rise and proliferation of internet-speak from Old Internet People, those first-wave adopters who needed to have real tech skills in order to connect with others online, to Post Internet People, the young digital natives who don’t remember joining the web. Especially interesting is McCulloch’s work on generational language shifts and typographical tone of voice on the internet. If you’ve ever wondered why older people tend to use ellipses to end a sentence, or why younger internet users practise what McCulloch calls “minimalist typography,” or if you’re just curious about the evolution of what a conversation looks like on the internet, this book is for you. I also enjoyed McCulloch’s argument that emoji stand in for gesture, and that memes are transformative cultural artifacts continuing the tradition of collaborative authorship going back to the likes of Homer, Virgil and Dante.

McCulloch’s underlying argument is that the internet is for communication, and she aims to prove how things like “I can haz cheezburger” memes or ~*~sparkle text~*~ create not only deeper meaning but community. As a Full Internet Person myself, this book both validates and provides insight into the various types of language I’ve seen in common usage around the internet, while at the same time avoiding the trap of trying to shoe-horn internet language into more traditional categories, or bemoaning the demise of literacy because of text-speak. This book won me over in its first pages with the analysis of the components of a keysmash (“asdlkj”) as compared to what it might look like when a real cat walks over the keyboard (“tfggggggggggggggggggggsxdzzzzzzz,” for the record). McCulloch works to show that the internet is real life, and that it’s the home of a linguistics revolution. —Kelsea O’Connor

NEW FROM
massachusetts



The Genealogical Sublime

JULIA CREET

ISBN 978-1-62534-480-9

Since the early 2000s, genealogy has become a lucrative business, an accelerating online industry, a massive data mining project, and fodder for reality television. Julia Creet’s archival research and firsthand interviews with key industry players (including Ancestry.com founders and FamilySearch executives) round out this essential history of the industry.

Amherst & Boston
www.umass.edu/umpress
(800) 537-5487

HAPPY TALK

Nathan W. Pyle's **Strange Planet** (HarperCollins) began as a web comic on Instagram in February of last year. By May it had over two million followers. By November, a collection of *Strange Planet* comics was on the hardcover fiction bestseller list; a second volume is on the way. Impressive. The inhabitants of Nathan W. Pyle's *Strange Planet* are vaguely humanoid life forms: roundish, blue-skinned aliens with perpetual smiles, whose activities are remarkably similar to those of humans here on Earth. They interact much as we do—except that these blue-skinned beings use an entirely different set of nouns and verbs. Instead of carpet, the floors of Strange Planet living rooms are covered with “foot fabric”; their smoke detectors are known as “hot-danger screamers.” Thanks (I think) to these linguistic innovations, Strange Planet appears to be a perfectly pleasant place to live: everybody seems to get along. In fact, the more time that

I spent with the inhabitants of this wonderfully Strange Planet, the more I began to feel that our Earthling lives would be immeasurably improved if *we*



began to adopt *their* manner of speech. How harmonious, surely, if selfies were known as “friendship documentation”! And what if we were to offer “sweet disks” to new neighbors—sorry: to new “proximity friends”—instead of cookies? Surely these modest adjustments to our language would lead us inevitably toward a state of blissful coexistence!

With the inhabitants of Strange Planet as my role models, I find that I now view my world with complete equanimity. An example of the new me in action? Well, tomorrow morning I plan to put on a fresh pair of foot fabric tubes, and take my phial of Pustefix® to a local park. There, I'll trap some carbon dioxide in ephemeral spheres (known to ordinary Earthlings as “blowing bubbles”). Join me! Together we can create a brave, new (and stranger) world.

—Michael Hayward

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

The prolific Provençal writer Marcel Pagnol is probably best known to North Americans for a series of four autobiographical novels, two of which—*My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle*—were later made into highly successful films. But few know that Pagnol was also a pioneer of French cinema, who opened his own film studio in Marseille in 1932. Most of Pagnol's films have been unavailable on this continent, a source of frustration for fans like me. Fortunately, Criterion has begun to remedy the situation, starting with Pagnol's famous Marseille Trilogy (*Marius*; *Fanny*; *César*), set in that city's legendary *vieux port*. Now there's also *The Baker's Wife* (1938), one of the first films made by Pagnol's studio. The story takes place in a small, Provençal village, where a new baker has set up shop. Key plot point: the baker has a very attractive young wife, who (surprise) falls for a handsome shepherd. Late one night, the two of them run away together. This precipitates a village crisis when the baker, disconsolate, refuses to bake bread. Deprived of fresh baguettes and *pain de campagne*, the villagers take drastic action. To see how the crisis is resolved, look for the film on Criterion's streaming service, or check it out from your local library (on DVD and Blu-ray).

—Michael Hayward

 Douglas & McIntyre

NEW BOOKS

FROM INDIGENOUS AUTHORS



RICHARD WAGAMESE
ONE DRUM
Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet

ONE DRUM
Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet

A posthumous volume of stories and ceremonies and a fitting tribute to RICHARD WAGAMESE's spiritual and literary legacy.
\$18.95 PAPERBACK



CARPE FIN
A Haida Manga

CARPE FIN
A Haida Manga

A prequel to the award-winning *Red: A Haida Manga*, MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS combines the expressive style of manga with classical Haida art and legend. \$29.95 CLOTH

AVAILABLE IN
FINE BOOKSTORES

www.douglas-mcintyre.com

WHAT'S GOING ON?

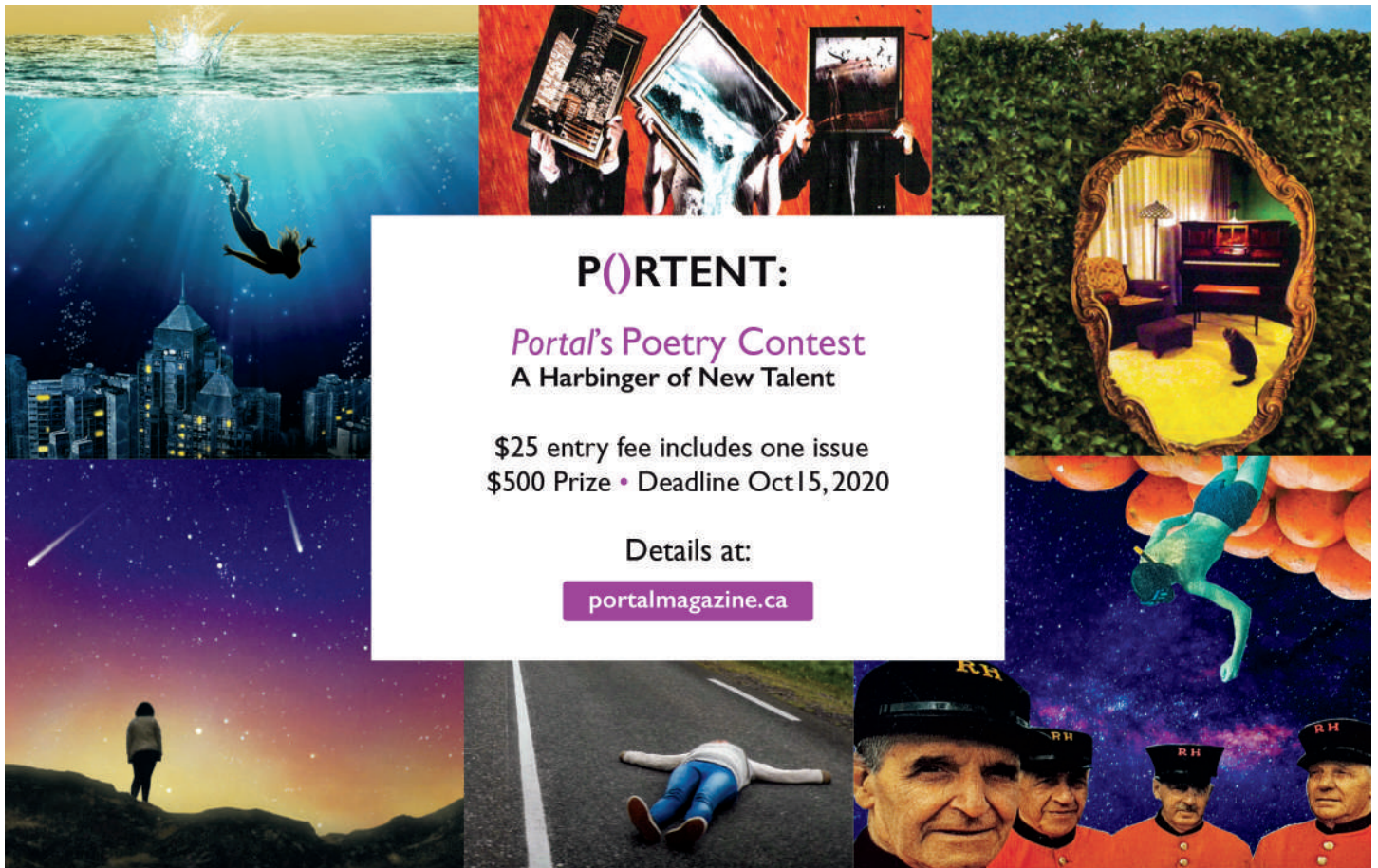
The stories in **Dominoes at the Crossroads** by Kaie Kellough (Esplanade) read like a memoir—a memoir that includes travels of imagination that whip each narrator into distant places and other times. In one story the narrator falls asleep on a Greyhound bus somewhere in Ontario and suddenly he is a fugitive slave hiding in a tree at night and thinking about the past, “back to which the dogs and men wished to drag me, whereas I wanted to flee into the future.” In another story, from a hotel room in Kingston, Ontario, the narrator ponders the life of Stompin’ Tom Connors and then remembers a painting in the National Gallery of Jamaica of an African man who is suspended one foot above the ground by an iron hook through his flank and ribs. As the narrator contemplates the man’s suffering, he sees ships come and go, plantations

thrive and fall derelict, and planes fill with emigrants who return bringing gifts, while still the man hangs there. I had skipped over the opening story because it looked like an introductory essay, but once the stories ran out I turned back to it because I was thirsty for more. The essay consists of opening remarks for a conference celebrating the 475th anniversary of the city of Milieu, “once known as Montreal, and once—and still—as Tiohtià:ke.” The speaker, a descendent of Kaie Kellough, a twenty-first century author who died fifty years ago, tells us that Kellough “is not interested in futurism” but rather he examines urban properties that “may one day emerge to shape the future.” This plus the final piece, “Notes of a Hand,” in which the narrator describes himself as “this amanuensis, this hand, this ghost, this slave” who is “in the story while being outside it” and lists the

places and times that he may or may not have been present, frame this wild and innovative collection in a way that will help you feel like you understand what was going on. —Patty Osborne

THE PLOT THICKENS IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

It seems like we’re living in a time when, at least among Western democracies, neither the far left nor the far right is far from the mainstream. But what would it be like if things got just a tad worse? If you’re interested in pursuing this thought further, watch **Babylon Berlin**. The third season just began airing in Europe, but the first two seasons are on Netflix in Canada. *Babylon Berlin* is a costume drama that verges on the territory of alternate history. The story is set in the Weimar Republic,



PORTENT:
Portal's Poetry Contest
A Harbinger of New Talent

\$25 entry fee includes one issue
\$500 Prize • Deadline Oct 15, 2020

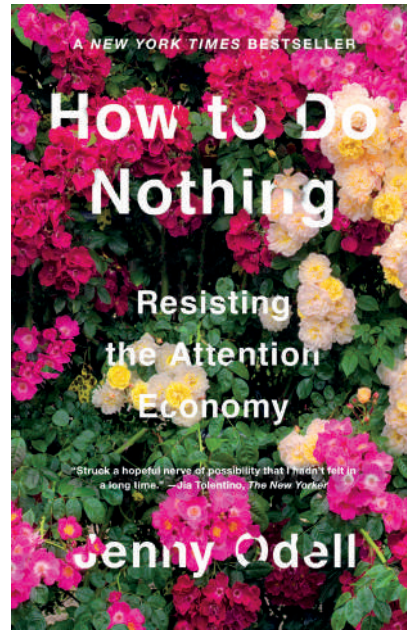
Details at:
portalmagazine.ca

the period often described as the prelude to World War II. In this setting, Hitler is not yet a household name. Communists are still a threat. The music and the nightlife bedazzle, if only so you temporarily forget about issues creeping in from the margins. For historical fiction, this is a context full of possibilities. It is a kind of Germany seldom explored on screen. In many ways *Babylon Berlin* reminded me of Michael Chabon's novel *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*, which is alternative history set in a world in which Jewish refugees settle in Sitka, Alaska, after the war. As in *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*, the protagonist of *Babylon Berlin* is a detective, or at she least acts like one. And just as in Chabon's story of two Yiddish detectives moving through a curious landscape—one that blends Tlingit culture, the American frontier and Yiddish slang—the detective plot in *Babylon Berlin* is an excuse to carry the audience into an altered world of different possibilities. Detectives, after all, are investigative by nature. They drive the story on their own, exposing in an organic way a world in all its contradictions and disparities, but also its redeeming qualities. And though the detectives of *Babylon Berlin* have their own personal story arcs, there are far more interesting possibilities to explore in the backdrop of the Weimar Republic. —Anson Ching

NOTHING DOING

Recently a friend, feeling overscheduled and overbooked, remarked how nice it would be to do absolutely nothing. But according to Jenny Odell's **How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy** (Melville House), doing nothing is harder than you'd think; in fact (Odell believes), thanks to the distractions and demands of today's digital technologies, "nothing is harder to do than nothing." Nowadays "our

value is determined by our productivity," and the world is dominated by the "attention economy," which assigns value to our attention. All the major platforms: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google, monitor the content we interact with—the videos we watch, the links we click on, the posts or photographs we "like"—



and monetize this personal information, selling targeted ads based on our interests. As a side effect of our participation in this "attention economy," we gradually come to consider idleness—doing nothing—as a form of economic waste. The first part of *How to Do Nothing*, which began as an essay written in the aftermath of the 2016 US election, is galvanizing. In it Odell identifies her most serious grievances with the attention economy, namely "its reliance on fear and anxiety, and its concomitant logic that 'disruption' is more productive than the work of maintenance—of keeping ourselves and others alive and well." In the faint hope of avoiding a repeat of the 2016 US election, I can't help wishing that Odell was encouraging her readers to do *something* in 2020, instead of nothing.

—Michael Hayward

WHY TURN TO MYTHS

I find myself drawn to stories that take myths seriously. Writers like Leslie Marmon Silko, for example, bring to the forefront the oldest stories because she still sees the relevance in ancient knowledge. Recently, I read Chigozie Obioma's **An Orchestra of Minorities** (Little, Brown and Company), which offered another wonderful reminder of how myths can help us understand even the darkest stories set in our modern world. *An Orchestra of Minorities* is narrated by an ancient *chi* who has reincarnated in the bodies of countless Igbo human hosts throughout history, some who were even slaves in antebellum Virginia. The *chi*'s current host, Chinonso Solomon Olisa, is a poor poultry farmer in modern Nigeria. Through a selfless act, Chinonso saves a wealthy woman's life. What begins as a serendipitous connection, however, quickly devolves into a series of tests and tribulations for Chinonso. Obioma's take on the story-by-testimony form is refreshing. Chinonso's *chi* must explain his host's actions to Chukwu, the supreme deity of the Igbo pantheon. We learn at the outset that the *chi*'s host has done things, violent things. And as Hannah Arendt beautifully articulated, violence requires explanation, or else it's mute. Only through testimony can there be judgment. I had the chance to see Chigozie Obioma discuss his novel at the 2019 Vancouver Writer's Festival. When the moderator opened the floor to the audience, question after question directed Obioma to explaining Igbo mythology and spirituality. He had a mostly Christian upbringing and admitted that he sometimes caught himself getting carried away with the research for the novel. A lot of Igbo anthropology was thus enthusiastically smuggled into the book. Though an unfamiliarity with Igbo spirituality may seem overwhelming at first—one can neither rely on their familiarity with the Greek or Roman gods, nor would trendy Eastern

teachings help—full immersion into Obioma’s writing is easy. He writes about the real world, after all, and he does so vividly and astutely.

—Anson Ching

GLORIOUS LISTS

As winter ends and the snowline slowly creeps up the flanks of Vancouver’s North Shore mountains, another peak-bagging season is getting underway. The bible for local peakbaggers has to be **The Glorious Mountains of Vancouver’s North Shore: A Peakbagger’s Guide** (Rocky Mountain Books), a guidebook with the most glorious set of appendices I’ve ever seen: 114 pages in a 504-page book, 24 appendices in all. It’s a list-lover’s dream. There are bulleted lists and numbered lists; nested lists and lists of lists. Every possible peak-related topic has been covered. In Appendix 1 the North Shore peaks are arranged according to a variety of criteria: from easiest to hardest; from shortest to longest; they’re arranged by elevation (height and prominence) and by appearance (most beautiful shape and composition). There are curated peak collections (the most masochistic climbs, the most romantic, the best waterfalls, etc.). For the musically inclined, there’s a list of the best peakbagging songs (Tangerine Kitty’s “Dumb Ways to Die” sits at number 7); for the literary: a list of the best peakbagging poems (Earl Birney’s “David” is at number 1). Appendix 6: Whiskey Bagging lists “known whiskey caches on or near peaks, with the kind of whiskey at time of publication.” From this list I’ve learned that peakbaggers seem to prefer whiskeys from Speyside distilleries: Glenfiddich is cached on Fromme, Glendullan on Deeks, and Glenlivet hides somewhere atop Enchantment, Echo, Brunswick, and Leading mountains; those who favour Islay whiskeys should clamber to the top of Windsor (Finlarig) or Brunswick Lake (Ardbeg). Appendix

12: North Shore Watersheds lists all the creeks and rivers that drain the North Shore mountains: ordered by size, from north to south, from west to east; including (where known) their Indigenous names, the area they drain, the length, the average gradient and the date(s) last logged. One hiccup: at 970 grams the book is overweight; most would rather carry the equivalent amount of trail mix on their next peak-bagging expedition. —Michael Hayward



subTerrain

LUSH TRIUMPHANT LITERARY AWARDS

**DEADLINE EXTENSION:
MAY 15 JUNE 5, 2020**

FICTION 3,000 words
CREATIVE NON-FICTION 4,000 words
POETRY [suite of 5 related poems]

ENTRY FEE: \$30
(includes a one-year subscription to subTerrain)

COMPLETE CONTEST INFO & TO SUBMIT:
www.subterrain.ca

EMAIL FOR MORE INFO:
subter@portal.ca

\$3,000
IN CASH PRIZES

DRAWING BY ODETTE HIDALGO

OFF THE SHELF

While brewing strong red ale, Joly tells Ben that she is pregnant and Marko slaps Ben on the shoulder and says, “God speed” in *The Towers of Babylon* (Freehand Books) by **Michelle Kaeser**. During a road trip a friend asks, “Would you rather live on the moon or Mars?” in *Pray For Us Girls* (Rahila’s Ghost Press) by **Cara Nelissen**. Father Ron walks through a park populated by homeless people who mutter, “There goes Father Cheapskate” in *The Tender Birds* (Inanna Publications) by **Carole Giangrande**. A man jumps to his death because of a television blackout during a sports event in *The National Gallery* (Coach House Books) by **Jonathan Ball**. A man on the verge of tears wanders around a dark theatre, looking for the woman who didn’t show up to their rendezvous in *A Promise on the Horizon* (Granville Island Publishing) by **Ann Pearson**. Jacob stuffs Brussels sprouts into his sandwich in order to trick himself into liking them in *In Veritas* (NeWest Press) by **C.J. Lavigne**. In *The Art of the Fall* (QC Fiction) by **Véronique Côté et al.**, Greg gloats about making \$190 million during the 2008 financial crisis and claims he “won the game.” After shaking the hand of an aspiring poet at a party, the poetry editor of the *New Yorker* says, “I like your handshake” in *We Had No Rules* (Arsenal Pulp Press) by **Corinne Manning**. In the city of Ölgii, humans, horses and eagles participate in the Golden Eagle Festival, hosted by the Mongolian Eagle Hunters’ Association in *The Mongolian Chronicles* (Goose Lane Editions) by **Allen Smutylo**. A girl squeals when a boy wrings a chicken’s neck in “Pig Head” by **Zalika Reid-Benta** in the *Best Canadian Stories 2019* (Biblioasis). A priest who sexually assaulted a young girl nearly two decades before now runs two churches in *Almost Feral* (Breakwater Books) by **Gemma Hickey**. In *Home Game* (Signature Editions) by **Endre Farkas**, a brother bursts into his sister’s home and swings his fists at her lover. A widow

weeps when a man accuses her of sleeping with the man who killed her husband in *Things Worth Burying* (Baraka Books) by **Matt Mayr**. Hari pushes Denny out of the way just as a man swings his arm up to stab Denny in *A Stab at Life* (Baraka Books) by **Richard King**. Charlie jots down a poem while waiting and wondering when the killer might arrive in *The Moon is Real* (Urban Farmhouse Press) by **Jerrod Edson**. A daughter transforms into a grizzly bear in order to kill a giant man who is accused of killing her parents’ pet in *The Man Who Lived with a Giant* (University of Alberta Press) told by **Johnny Neyelle**. According to **Ray Robertson** sameness tends to breed tedium and discontent in *How to Die: A Book about Being Alive* (Biblioasis). Neela scrolls through thirty selfies on Rukmini’s Instagram and wonders why repetition is so satisfying in *The Subtweet* (ECW Press) by **Vivek Shraya**. A girl takes 360 self-portraits in a week in *The Imago Stage* (Coach House Books) by **Karoline Georges**. In *Polar Vortex* (Book*hug Press) by **Shani Mootoo**, an obedient son returns to New Brunswick for his thirty-third birthday at the request of his parents. Grommet the dog trashes an apartment by chewing on a shelf, scattering a deck of cards and imprinting his nose on a glass window in *This Has Nothing to Do With You* (Freehand Books) by **Lauren Carter**. In *Said the Cannibal* (Urban Farmhouse Press) by **Laurie Smith**, dinner guests decline the placenta, fill up with bread and insist on apple pie. Gabe finds his secret stash of El Paso salsa behind a stack of mixing bowls in *Hunger Moon* (NeWest Press) by **Traci Skuce**. The virtual reality experience pamphlet says that before playing one should ensure that one’s real world surroundings are clear of obstacles in *Archaic Torso of Gumby* (Gordon Hill Press) by **Geoffrey Morrison** and **Matthew Tomkinson**. A girl vacuums dead bugs from the hallway, stairs, living room, kitchen and places she has already vacuumed in *Vanishing Monuments*

(Arsenal Pulp Press) by **John Elizabeth Stintzi**. While his son watches, a father sharpens his knife and slices open the fish from tail to head in *Here the Dark* (Biblioasis) by **David Bergen**. Cheered on by a crowd, a man fires a gunshot that sends two young ladies running toward him with awe and affection in *Like Rum-Drunk Angels* (Goose Lane Editions) by **Tyler Enfield**.

NOTED ELSEWHERE

James Fisher on *goodreads.com* calls *We All Will Be Received* (Breakwater Books) by **Leslie Vryenhoek** a “finely tuned story, or stories” with a “climactic ending”; *The Telegram* says that “there is a mighty conflagration in this story”; *The Miramichi Reader* says, “If the title of Leslie Vryenhoek’s latest novel reminds you of Paul Simon’s song ‘Graceland,’ that could be by design”; and *The Guardian* says it is “pure plot adrenalin.” *Maryannmoore.ca* says that in *What Is Long Past Occurs in Full Light* (Mother Tongue Publishing) by **Marilyn Bowering** the author “always weaves in the honouring of other poets”; *theormsbyreview.com* says “Bowering’s writing is as rich in colour and texture as is the uneven tapestry of life itself”; and one *Geist* volunteer says that some of the poems are accompanied by exquisite illustrations. *robmcclennan.blogspot.com* says *For It Is a Pleasure and a Surprise to Breathe: New and Selected Poems* (Wolsak & Wynn) by **Gary Barwin** is “a volume that can’t help but provide a spotlight on Barwin’s playful, serious writing”; *cbc.ca* says Barwin “continually moves readers from surprise to delight”; and *alllitup.ca* says it is a “category-defying collection.” Latash Nahanee on *bcbooklook.com* say *NISHGA* (McClelland & Stewart) by **Jordan Abel** is “not a poem, essay or a letter”; *dfparizeau.com* on *goodreads.com* says, “Teachers from high school through post-graduate studies, take note: this book belongs in the classroom”; and the poet Billy-Ray Belcourt says Abel is an artist of “inimitable methodological flair.”

The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

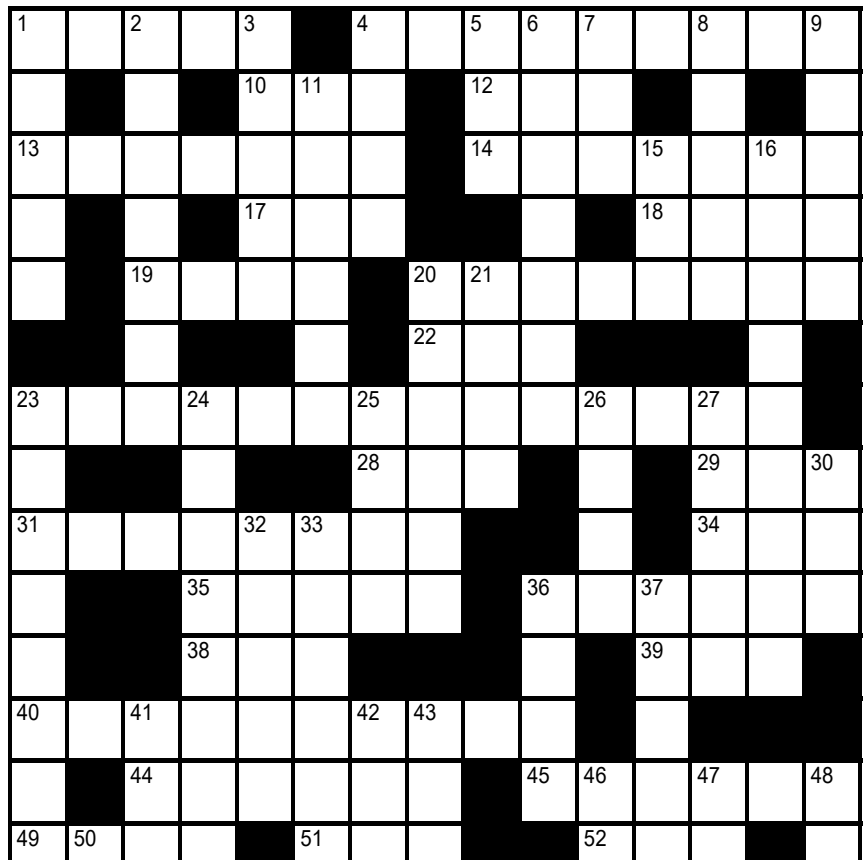
Send a copy of your completed puzzle, along with your name and address, to:

Puzzle #115 GEIST
210-111 West Hastings St.
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4
or 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 When your eyes are sore, look behind you for better vision
- 4 Is he clapping or is that some rude papal response?
- 10 Officer, at any time, you'll find, in that pew, the most awful executive (abbrev)
- 12 When you're in the corner with a racist, don't give a thumbs up!
- 13 Do you mind taking time off to work in a London clothing store? (2)
- 14 Please return the pot to us when you get back from the Wild West
- 17 We won't have any trouble getting that object near the earth back (abbrev)
- 18 Sweetie, what was new about that classic beverage?
- 19 Don't waste your time rooting for that underground snake!
- 20 Words can't express the humour in that no-talking order (2)
- 22 Even though he's single, Pip's a real card
- 23 When Bill plays with humour it may not be as you like it so cry freedom or just laugh at his mistakes (3)
- 28 At what stage is the arrangement of everything? (abbrev)
- 29 When do you think you'll get here? (abbrev)
- 31 How does that cute British rodent keep track of its yoga gear? (2)
- 34 My sibling sounds like she's a birth match
- 35 Once she lost her startup pay, the rest took wing
- 36 That trick is a bit kitsch, no?
- 38 Singular disgust, when doubled it's funny
- 39 What fearless solvers use
- 40 We laughed when I inked Joe's tattoo but the others didn't get it (2)
- 44 She's definitely not empty of ineffectiveness!
- 45 In winter he twists his laces for hours on end
- 49 Cozy up to those tables while we get the machine guns
- 51 When you got hurt while working did you drink orange juice first? (abbrev)
- 52 John was always lonely in the unit
- 53 He alleges that but should we believe him?
- 54 Was that nun ragging on you or was she just repeating a joke? (2)



DOWN

- 1 You talked without interrupting us. Gee that's great!
- 2 We saw, at the ROM, a pug in the tower at the south entrance
- 3 Those little tweeps sure make a weak noise
- 4 Before you take off for the bar, can you fix its wing?
- 5 I'll have nothing against that convict if he plays for money
- 6 Boy, that guy in the bar is lazy
- 7 As my mom's sister pointed out, females are the real workers
- 8 God or his homie fixed the orange clock
- 9 Great, now I'm going to have to price those again
- 11 "Do pray," said Monty, but we knew he was making fun of us
- 15 What portion of pennies do you want? (abbrev)
- 16 It's hilarious when you strike those slats, but isn't it dangerous?
- 20 Yes, fat ones need refuge too
- 21 Look at the way she decorates that puck!
- 23 It's funny. You can come in sad but once you see them you'll be laughing out loud.
- 24 That's quite a sassy site for a bunch of literary composers
- 25 Why was that kid at The Bay for so long?
- 26 Phil lodged a complaint and then said goodbye in Columbus
- 27 Be sure to rinse everything after gluing things back together
- 30 Matthew says make a request, get it?
- 32 It's incomprehensible that he got away again!
- 33 At the ROM, fake art pieces can cause consternation (2)
- 36 Oh, no, we've got to cancel that change!
- 37 When the rhythm is off, it's not funny
- 41 At the bar she discussed chocolate and linking fundamental forces with her physics teacher
- 42 That gummy candy has magical powers
- 43 A Canadian lion and a longboard—a winning combination!
- 46 We started with noodle soup but we had to lose weight to come out on top
- 47 Sometimes Gen Xers get their colours reversed (abbrev)
- 48 This old thing? We've been puzzling over it for years.
- 50 Apologies to every one of the digital games because there are only 2 (abbrev)

For those who found last issue's crossword a little more challenging than usual—it wasn't just you. We published clues with a puzzle grid that did not match. Oops! Let's try this again, shall we?

—the Editors



Buzz Off

The National Map of Entomology

by Adam Vajda



PUBLISH

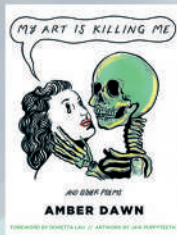


Develop the skills and techniques to confidently communicate your stories with Langara's one-year Digital and Print Publishing diploma. Gain hands-on experience and build a professional portfolio that includes online publishing, website creation, and a print publication with a readership of over 30,000.

Learn more.

langara.ca/publishing

BOOKS FOR HEALING AND HOPE.



MY ART IS KILLING ME *Amber Dawn*

“Amber Dawn’s poems are rituals of beauty, courage and fierce rage.”

—*Vancouver Sun*



THE GOSPEL OF BREAKING *Jillian Christmas*

“A showcase of how many different ways a poet can show themselves to be dazzling.”

—Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib, author of *They Can’t Kill Us Until They Kill Us*



VANISHING MONUMENTS *John Elizabeth Stintzi*

“An absolute monumental achievement of a first novel.”

—Joshua Whitehead, author of *Jonny Appleseed*



WE HAD NO RULES *Corinne Manning*

“Manning’s debut story collection exquisitely examines queer relationships with equal parts humor, heartache, and titillation.”

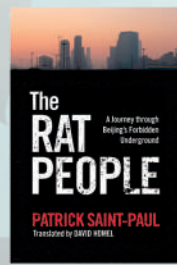
—*Booklist* (starred review)



THE HOME STRETCH *George K. Ilsley*

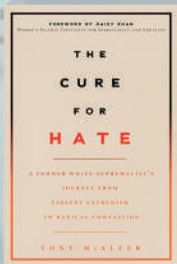
“Lifegiving and bracingly honest, George K. Ilsley’s writing is a welcomed punch to the heart.”

—David Chariandy, author of *Brother*



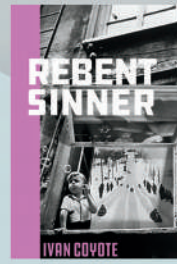
THE RAT PEOPLE *Patrick Saint-Paul*

A shocking exploration of Beijing’s notorious underground where over 1 million residents live: a sobering reminder of the human cost of capitalism.



THE CURE FOR HATE *Tony McAleer*

A powerful and deeply personal book about how the author left the white supremacy movement and dedicated his life to helping others do the same.



REBENT SINNER *Ivan Coyote*

Finalist for 2 BC Book Prizes: “Coyote brilliantly nestles kindred moments together and makes the ordinary magical.”

—*Quill and Quire* (starred review)



I HOPE WE CHOOSE LOVE *Kai Cheng Thom*

“A candid and intimate collection of poetry and essays calling for compassion and understanding when exploring the nuances of violence, pain and forgiveness.”

—*Ms. Magazine*



BRONX HEROES IN TRUMPLAND *Ray Felix & Tom Sciacca*

The Orange One gets his just desserts in this outrageous, satirical superhero comic book.

