

GEIST

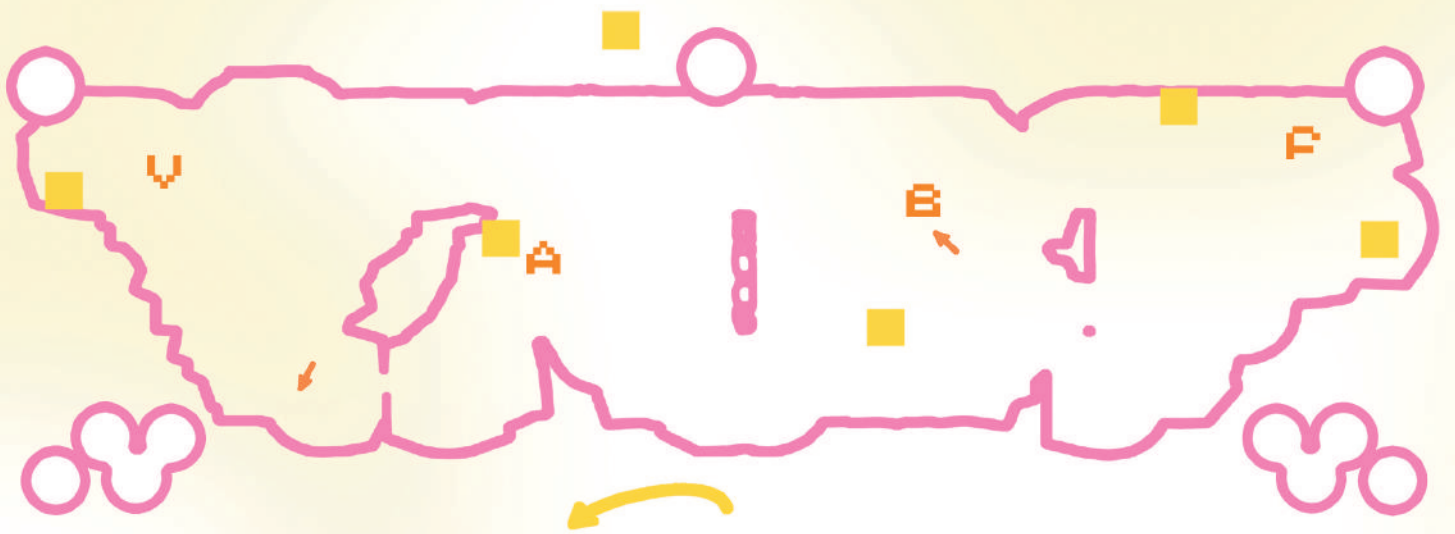
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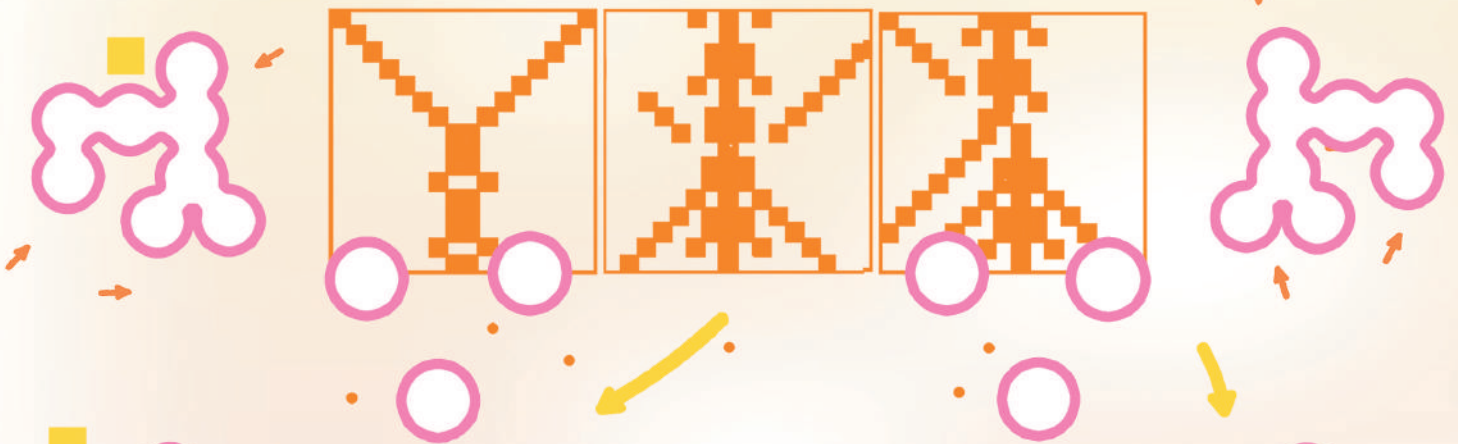
AGAINST THE COSMIC VOID

All the Broken Things / Monogamous Reading / Speculative Characters



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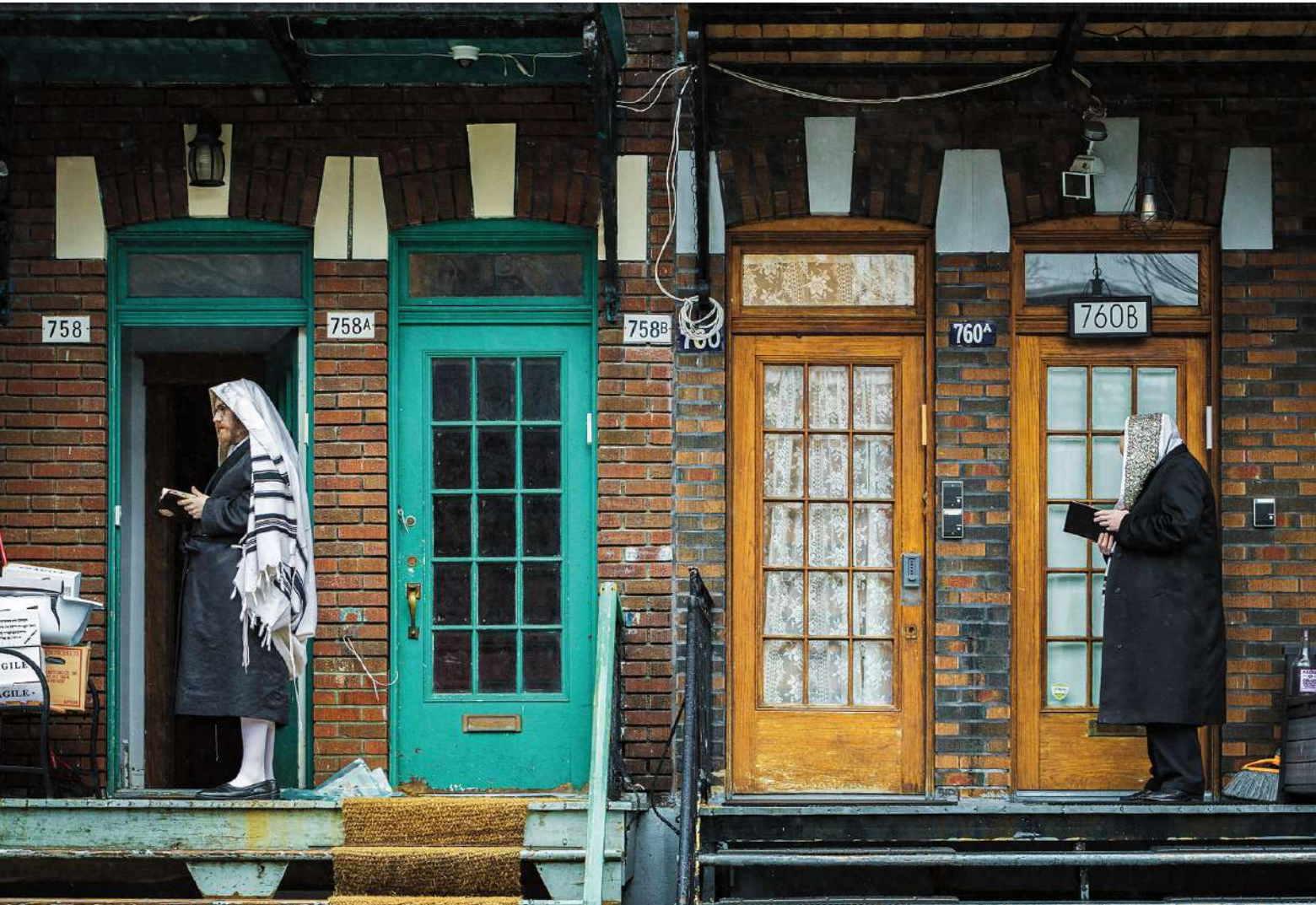
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Passover, or Pesach, is a major Jewish holiday that takes place in spring and that commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. It takes place in the fifteenth month of the Hebrew calendar, Nisan, which this year coincided with April 8 to April 16, 2020, in the Gregorian calendar. Celebrants typically gather for ritual meals, Seders, and recitation of prayers by a minyan, a quorum of ten Jewish adults. But this year due to COVID-19, community members were required to observe social distancing. The photographer of the image above, David Himbert, says members of the Hassidic community in the Outremont neighbourhood of Montréal, an area particularly hard hit by the virus during that time, were initially reluctant to observe Passover in confinement, but decided to indeed remain in their homes for

the holiday. The community's rabbis authorized prayers to take place outside of the synagogue, as ten adults would be visible and audible from the balconies and steps of the community.

Several times a day, members of the Outremont Hassidic community of about 7000 people came outside to recite and sing, affording Himbert the opportunity to make this picture—a scene of prayer and contemplation on the steps of an apartment building in the neighbourhood. According to Himbert, when Passover ended, the community shared pastries with their non-Jewish neighbours to thank them for their patience with the celebrations. More photographs of the 2020 Outremont Passover celebration can be seen at davidhimbert.com.

—AnnMarie MacKinnon

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ALL THE BROKEN THINGS

Geoff Inverarity

*No matter how much you prepare
there's always something new looming*

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HANNIBALO-GOD-MOZILLA AGAINST THE GREAT COSMIC VOID

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GEIST

Please scream inside your heart

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COVER: This photo was taken at 3 p.m. on February 28, 2019, on a highway through the high sierras of Las Altas Cumbres, some 3000 metres above sea level, in the province of Córdoba, Argentina, about forty-five minutes from the photographer Alex Appella's home.

The photo was part the Blue Sky Online Project, an online exhibit of sky photos (taken by cell phone) by thirty one artists from around the world, developed by Marie Lannoo at 330g artist run centre, with help from MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. See the whole series at mackenzie.art.

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COSMIC BABBLE

I've just reviewed the last several months of "Advice for the Lit-Lorn," the weekly blog about writing, editing and publishing at geist.com. Truly, it is a brilliant, humane, compassionate, witty, whimsical (yes, yes, too many adjectives, but needs must)—not to mention reliable—column.

"Advice for the Lit-Lorn" is the literary equivalent of an encouraging hug for all of us still trying to make sense of the cosmos through babble. From the blackfly-riddled wilds of Yoho Lake, I salute whoever writes it.

I hope you're all surviving these surrealistic days with as much grace as common sense allows. The occasional coffee cup heaved at a wall is also healthy.

—Gwen Martin, NB

"Advice for the Lit-Lorn" is written by Mary Schendlinger, retired senior editor of Geist, and can be read at geist.com and in the Geist weekly newsletter.

—The Editors

BOTTLE BATTLE

Thanks for the level-headed thoughts about trying to return your Avalon milk bottles to the Yaletown Return-It Express Depot ("Express Recycling Depot" by Roni Simunovic, *Geist* 110)—sometimes simple is complicated.

No bottle depot in BC can give you a refund for an Avalon milk bottle; the only way to get a refund is to return the bottle to where you bought it. The problem is that no grocery stores are accepting empty containers due to COVID-19.

The Avalon milk bottle has always been an enigma. I own six bottle depots in the Lower Mainland and see hundreds of these bottles at each

location, abandoned by frustrated consumers.

There is some light at the end of the tunnel; milk products are being added to BC's deposit regime at the end of the year.

In the meantime, the only entity I know of who benefits from Avalon's faux \$1 deposit is Avalon.

—Rod Lotzkar, BC

Dear Rod,

Thank you for further opening my eyes to the glaring inequities in the world of bottle returns.

As I wrote in my original piece, the high-end Return-It location in Yaletown asks users to drop their bagged empty bottles in a bin at the depot without sorting or confirming the contents with staff. This of course brings up the question: what would have happened had I included Avalon bottles in my bag of empties? Would I have not been given the \$1 per bottle deposit? Would staff have demanded that I return to the depot to retrieve the Avalon bottles? Charged me a \$1 Inconvenience Fee?

I always considered glass milk bottles to be pretentious, even more so now that I've learned about the very specific recycling requirements around them.

—Roni Simunovic

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

These days, for better or for worse, LGBTQ and its further extensions and variations are generally accepted initialisms for describing non-straight and non-cisgender identities in many publications. Of course, such words expose the limitations of our language, and evolve with, or behind, "the times." In reviewing this magazine's preferred initialism, LGBTQ2SI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, Two-spirit,



Kelsea O'Connor, Geist contributing editor, and Lindsay Vermeulen catch up on some reading at the Fushimi Inari-taisha shrine in Kyoto, pre-COVID.

Intersex, plus), our editors came upon several decade-old forum discussions about an alternative term to LGBT that has not made its way into the general vocabulary: QUILTBAG (Queer/Questioning, Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Transgender, Bisexual, Asexual, Gay). And when QUILTBAG was deemed too exclusive, some, in the far corners of the internet, proposed to include the terms Pansexual, Intersex (again), Polyamorous and Everyone else, thus extending the acronym to spell out QUILTBAGPIPE. QUILTBAGPIPE, perhaps the GOAT (greatest of all time) of acronyms, proposes a surreal alternative to the world we currently live in; it also exposes the advantages that all acronyms have over initialisms—they are more fun to say.

—*The Editors*

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Christy Ann Conlin, *Geist* contributor, whose short story collection, *Watermark*, was shortlisted for the Danuta Gleed Literary Award, conferred by the Writers' Union of Canada for the best debut short fiction collection by a Canadian author in the English language.

ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

Alex Appella was raised in Oregon, USA. Decades ago, she moved to

Argentina, where she can be found creating bilingual artist's books that are a celebration of her love for storytelling, travel and collages with movable parts.

Francisco Morales Hoil is a freelance editor and writer. He graduated from the Universidad Veracruzana, at Xalapa, Mexico, in 2006, with a bachelor's degree in Hispanic Linguistics & Literature, and has published both academic and literary essays and stories in several magazines, newspapers and new media outlets. This is his first published illustration.

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*.

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NOTES & DISPATCHES

Soy Alérgico

HÀN FÚSĒN

“Excuse me, are you the customer with the peanut allergy?”



The first EpiPen my girlfriend Courtney used during our trip to South America was after consuming a potato appetizer at a restaurant in the Plaza de Armas—the main square and historic centre of Lima—mere hours after we touched down in Peru.

On the plane over, she had rehearsed her lines in Spanish—“Soy alérgico al maní; moriré si como maní,” always repeating the phrases a second time with cacahuete substituted for maní because there are two ways of saying peanuts in Spanish and it couldn’t hurt to say “I’ll die if I eat peanuts” twice—so many times that it took me a moment to realize she was being serious when she said that her throat was itchy after the first bite of the ocopa arequipeña appetizer of boiled potatoes covered in a velvety green sauce. But then red blotches began to bloom across her face and her collarbone began to rise and fall faster.

I waved for our waiter to come over. He grinned as he walked toward us. He looked smart in his black shirt and red waist-apron, his gelled dark hair making him appear like an Iberian soccer player.

Courtney had already uncapped her EpiPen by the time he got to the table. “Are there peanuts in this dish? Didn’t you say there’d be no peanuts?” I said to him.

“No, there’s no peanuts,” he said. But then he looked at Courtney and said, “I’ll go get my manager.”

The manager, a blue-eyed man with freckly skin, came out to the patio. “Ma’am, there’s no peanuts in the sauce,” he said in English. “We do use crushed crackers to make it creamier, however, and we don’t make the crackers in-house.” He showed a handful of what looked to be animal crackers.

“How’s your breathing?” I asked Courtney.

“I think I have to use the EpiPen,” she said.

“I’ll go talk to the kitchen staff,” the manager said.

Not too long after, a man wearing dark jeans and a blazer over a white T-shirt walked up to our table from the street. “Excuse me, are you the customer with the peanut allergy?” he asked.

“Yes,” Courtney said. “Are you a doctor?”

“I came from the other restaurant,” the man said. He held up his smartphone like a badge. “I’m on the phone with the owner. Was this your waiter?” He pointed at our waiter, who said nothing. With his hands in his waist-apron, he suddenly looked boyish.

We nodded.

The man in the blazer and T-shirt spoke Spanish into his phone in a low monotone way, barely letting air escape through his lips. Then, in English, he asked Courtney, “May I ask how you’re feeling, right now?”

“My throat is very itchy. It’s getting hard to breathe,” she said.

“Please use your medicine, now,” he said, pointing to the uncapped EpiPen on the table.

I held Courtney’s knee as she jabbed the EpiPen into her thigh.

The manager of the restaurant stole back out onto the patio with quick, discreet steps. He went on one knee to face Courtney. “Ma’am, I have just called you an ambulance,” he said. Then he got up and turned to the man in the blazer and T-shirt and they mumbled to each other in Spanish.

“Miss,” the man in the blazer and T-shirt said, “We will wait out on the main street.” He sent the manager and our waiter back inside the restaurant. At the tables around us conversations hushed. A few of the kitchen staff had come out and were leaning over the bar in the restaurant.

We waited at the edge of the street, across the square, overlooking arches, palm trees and the Moorish covered balconies that Lima is famous for. The sky was grey and it was hard to tell if it was night or day because of the bright lights along the grand building facades around the square. “This is the historic centre,” the man in the blazer and T-shirt said.

“That’s why we’re here,” I said.

The two-lane street was filled bumper to bumper with cars. “The ambulance will not be here for a while,” he said. “Do you have more medicine?”

“I left the other EpiPen at our Airbnb,” Courtney said.

“Can I see that?” he said.

He looked at the side of the EpiPen and typed something into his phone. “This is a brand for adrenaline. We have something similar, but not this,” he said. He whistled toward the restaurant and within seconds our waiter appeared. The man in the blazer and T-shirt mumbled in Spanish to our waiter, who then slipped out onto the road between the cars and down a side street.

The manager of the restaurant brought out a chair for Courtney to sit in on the sidewalk. Our waiter returned with a box of white pills. The man in the blazer and T-shirt directed Courtney to take one of the pills. When Courtney tried to decipher the ingredients listed on the box, he said, “I’m on the phone with the ambulance. They said take it.”

The ambulance arrived more than an hour later. A police officer blocked one traffic lane with his motorcycle. Courtney climbed into the ambulance and the officer snapped a photo of her

with his phone as she disappeared behind the doors.

Ten minutes later, a short, pudgy man ran up to join the officer, the man in the blazer and T-shirt and me. He was wearing an oversized white button-up shirt and dress pants that sagged at the ankles. He pushed up on his wire-frame glasses as he spoke to the man in the blazer and T-shirt. Then he turned to me and handed me a box of the same pills our waiter had fetched for Courtney.

“This is the owner of the restaurant,” the man in the blazer and white T-shirt said. “He asks if your wife’s life is in danger.”

I took the box of pills from the restaurant owner. “Gracias,” I said. “I think she’ll be fine, but I don’t really know. I don’t even know how much peanuts she ate. It could’ve been cross-contamination, or it could’ve been the sauce. Are there usually peanuts in ocopa sauce?”

The man in the blazer and T-shirt translated for the owner. Then he said, “The owner would like to invite you to come back for a complimentary dinner at his other restaurant.”

“Thanks, but I think Courtney will be too tired,” I said.

When Courtney came out of the ambulance she was still flushed, but she was calm. The restaurant owner slumped into the chair by the road and wiped his forehead with his sleeves.

“The doctor said I consumed peanuts,” Courtney said to me.

The policeman took another photo of her with his phone.

“He knows based on your reaction?” I said.

“He said peanuts are a key ingredient in ocopa sauce,” she said.

When we went to collect our belongings inside the restaurant, our waiter was hunched over a table, folding napkins and wrapping them around sets of cutlery. He looked up and wiped his face when he saw us. Furrows on his face flattened and the rills of tears that

had run down his cheeks dried up.

“I’m happy to see you, ma’am,” he said. “You’re okay then?”

“Yes,” Courtney said. “Sorry you had to go through that too.”

“But now you’ll probably never allow this to happen again,” I joked.

“No,” he said. “I will not be working here anymore.”

The man in the blazer and T-shirt said, “Really, it is not a mistake that can be forgiven.”

“But I’m fine now,” Courtney said. “The doctor said tourists don’t even have to pay a penny. We won’t sue—not even a bad review.”

“Which is why I insist,” the man in the blazer and T-shirt said, “on the complimentary dinner. Please come back tomorrow if it suits your itinerary.”

The second EpiPen my girlfriend Courtney used during our trip to South America was after consuming a bowl of granola in Sucre—a town in the Andes in Bolivia, known for its mild climate and whitewashed colonial buildings—two days before we were to return to Vancouver.

Not long after we left the hostel, Courtney vomited the granola into a toilet bowl in the washroom of the Casa de la Libertad museum, where the Bolivian declaration of independence was signed in 1825. We hailed a taxi to get us to a nearby hospital.

The taxi driver charged us an exorbitant fee for travelling what my downloaded map indicated to be less than one kilometre, so naturally, I haggled for a lower price by showing him the boliviano coins I was prepared to pay. “No bueno,” he said, as he shifted the car into a lower gear.

I added two bolivianos to my palm. Just then Courtney shrieked from the backseat and jabbed herself in the thigh with the EpiPen.

In the hospital, a guard dressed in army fatigues separated me from Courtney as the triage nurse ushered her into a room. I filled out some forms at the front desk. “Exigez sa

travel insurance información—assurance médico?” I asked the lady behind the plastic window.

The guard took me aside. “Luego,” he said. I went out and sat by the hospital entrance with a party of elderly cholitas. They were dressed in layers of colourful skirts, shawls, cardigans and faded bowler hats with wide brims.

A half hour later, a nurse led me to Courtney. She was hooked up to an IV and lying in a hospital bed in the middle of the ward, sharing a space cordoned off by thin curtains with another female patient, who I later found out from Courtney was visiting from Potosí, a town high up in the Andes, when she got appendicitis. “Here is your boyfriend,” the woman from Potosí said in perfect English, grinning at Courtney. “Your girlfriend was worried for you—all alone out there.”

I was about to hug Courtney when an old nun with a square face came through the curtains. She blessed Courtney and then kissed her on the forehead.

With a thick thumb gesturing at me, the nun said, “Marido? Novio?”

The woman from Potosí sat up. “Novio,” she said.

Courtney nodded. The nun smiled, then she frowned and asked the woman from Potosí something in Spanish. Before the woman could translate, the nun said to me, “¿También de Canadá? Chino, you.”

“Muchos chinos in Canada. Like Peru,” I said.

The nun laughed. “She does not believe you,” the woman from Potosí said.

Later, the doctor came to check up on Courtney. “You’re stable. Now we observe you for an hour,” he said to her. Then he handed me a bill—every medicine administered to Courtney and every medical apparatus used on her was listed.

“Do I pay at the front desk?” I said.

He shook his head. “You go to a pharmacy down the street, buy these things, bring back,” he said.

Kissing in New Zealand

BILLEH NICKERSON

is the same as kissing
anywhere else,
your tongue doesn’t
circle in a different direction
and you still oscillate
between not knowing
whether to open
or close your eyes,

but I needed to realize this myself,
couldn’t just read it
in some traveller’s guide,
so when my travelling companion
attended a Lord of the Rings tour,
I slipped into a sex club instead,
which sounds raunchier
than its reality

for it was more about not wanting
to fly 14 hours
into another hemisphere
without kissing someone there
than any overt salacious need.
I guess I’m old-fashioned that
way,
though I should be more specific
with my wishes

as the first guy I kissed
hailed from Saskatchewan—
which is akin to travelling
the entire globe
only to find yourself
eating at a McDonald’s.
Like good Canadians
we apologized
for being Canadian,
then moved on to find Kiwis.

*Billeh Nickerson is a Vancouver author whose sixth book, Duct-Taped Roses, is forthcoming with Book*bug (Spring 2021). He is Co-Chair of the Creative Writing department at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, BC.*

Outside, old men in fedoras and button-up vests were smoking at the hospital entrance. The sky was clear, blue. I walked down a cobbled road lined with whitewashed buildings and terracotta roofs. Pharmacy signs jutted out on both sides. I went into one of the pharmacies and passed the list to a young woman in a white lab coat. “Sorry,” I said. “El médico said I can buy these here.”

The woman in the white coat nodded. She filled a large plastic bag with pills, vials, syringes, electrode pads, bandages, gauze pads, IV tubes and a saline bag. She took out a calculator and punched in the prices, underlining each item with her pen as she went down the list. I paid the equivalent of thirty-five Canadian dollars and then went back out onto the street,

where I noticed a chifa restaurant, serving Andean-Chinese fare—a fusion cuisine as absurd as American-Chinese and just as popular in these parts. Courtney still had some time before she could be discharged from the hospital, so I ducked in to order some fried rice and noodles to bring back with me along with the medical supplies. “Uno chaufa vegetal y uno tallarines saltados—no carne,” I said, then added, “No maní—cacahuete.”

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 “Little Trouble in Chinatown” on geist.com.

Echoes

BRADLEY PETERS

Grandpa records everything. His Plautdietsch
accent at breakfast orders you
to turn around, wave spoon at camera.

Back home, your parents perform
renovations: Mom slugging holes in drywall
for Pops to patch. After the car crash

Grandma plays tapes on loop
for a year. A rotten box of them
shows up blank but with sound.

You name each noise: Jackie chopping
watermelon, Deb slurping from the hose,
that neighbour's fat Chihuahua

in the kiddie pool. It gets so you know
which season by a wavelength
of breath. Grandma laughs at herself

in the living room, drapes drawn, watching
a black box. But when he huffs, mumbles
through the speaker, you don't blink.

•

Your bunkie has AIDS and loves a scrap. He chokes
below, coughs, lungs like a damp paper bag. The ones
he clocks just bolt. Christened Torpedo, in the caf

real quiet behind Hitler who cussed him out
for using the clippers, your bunkie winked then snapped
a hook into The Führer's ear. He stomped the steel

gangway outside Sharky's cell, red fists raised,
shouted I'm the king of the world before the COs
unloaded two cans of mace on him, flopped face down.

The grate engraved his gagging mouth. Milky hush
of spray stained his head. Sharky got him back,
cracked the tin edge of a food tray across

his scabbed dome, stamped him into the pay phone. Listen
to each sigh and night-toss. His skin peels the gym mat. Hear
him masturbate pre-dawn, the dry tug, reckless hoorah. Often

you hear him hearing you hearing him, hear him thinking
you never sleep, thinking you think too much. Your ears raw
from damp tissues molded in. His huffs echo through the cell.

•

Sleeping in a clapboard boathouse
on Matsqui Slough, one year out,
where wind whines through boards

worn concrete-smooth, the tin roof
rattles, sudsy floodtides pat divots
in the grey clay and muck and gulls

squawk from the dock all night, you,
awake at four AM, grind each huff
through your head, cough, mumble

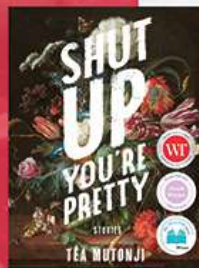
in bed and scare yourself.

Bradley Peters' work has appeared in Grain, subTerrain and Geist, and is forthcoming in the Malahat Review. Peters won the 2019 Short Grained Contest for poetry and was recently short-listed for the Ralph Gustafson poetry prize. Read more of his work at geist.com He lives in Mission, BC.

Winner of the
**2020 TRILLIUM
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SHUT UP YOU'RE PRETTY
Stories by Téa Mutonji

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Writers' Trust of Canada Fiction Prize finalist
A *Globe and Mail* Best Book of the Year



"The stories are vivid and unsettling in their detail ... Mutonji writes with grit and quick-witted humour. The ease with which these stories unfold is a facet of the author's craft: the prose holds its emotion in the same way the characters hold their pain."

—*Quill and Quire* (starred review)

"A sense of assuredness permeates Mutonji's writing in *Shut Up You're Pretty*. Through a series of 18 strikingly raw vignettes, Lol's identity flows like the Congolese river she is named after."

—*Toronto Star*

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Goodbye and Good Luck

JORDYN CATALANO

A COVID test in the city of a hundred steeples

The cab pulls up in front of my Montréal apartment. I am wearing an N-95 mask. I put on gloves, holding my arms up so the driver can see. I open the cab door.

“Wait, wait, wait,” the driver shouts in French. He struggles to get a wipe out of the dispenser on the seat next to him and then gives up.

“Okay, fine,” he says.

He looks upset as he half turns to look at me. He is middle-aged, with dark skin, a bald head and very dry hands.

“The only instructions I was given over the phone were to wear a mask and gloves,” I say in English.

“Next time let me open the door, okay?” he replies in English with a heavy French accent.

Fifteen minutes later we pull up to emergency at the Jewish General Hospital. I tell him we have to go to Pavilion N.

“Why didn’t you tell me before?” he asks.

“I told the cab dispatcher, I’m sorry,” I say.

He yanks on the steering wheel, does an illegal left turn and then guns it to Pavilion N.

“Are you gonna tip?” he asks.

“I guess so, fifteen percent,” I say.

“It’s twenty dollars extra to go to a test site, for cleaning the car after. The total is \$50,” he says. “And don’t touch anything while tapping the machine with your card.”

I tap, but it doesn’t work. We try again and it doesn’t work.

“You’re tapping it too fast,” the driver says.

We try again, and again it doesn’t work.

“I can use my bank card if you wipe the machine before and after,” I say.

He punches 5 and 0 into the keypad and passes me the machine.

I punch in my code and pass it back; he has a hand wipe spread over his hand, holding it open to receive the machine, like a doctor helping to deliver a newborn.

The driver gets out of the cab, opens the door for me and I get out at Pavilion N.

Two heads appear beyond the big sliding doors, hands held in a stop gesture. It is raining and other than the cab driver I am the only person here. The cab driver wipes down the seat belt, seat and door. Then he gets in the cab and drives off.

The hands in the window motion to come in.

A security guard says, “French, English?” He is tall, black, muscular. Then he tells me to wash my hands.

A nurse sits at the registration desk, behind Plexiglass with holes in it. She asks my name, address, place of work. She tells me to face the wall in the corner. I face the corner, but peek behind me. One of the adjoining walls is made of paper board. A slip of paper emerges from a small slit in the paper board. A nurse—round, dark skinned, ponytail—appears out of nowhere and grabs the slip of paper.

The security guard says, “You can turn around now.”

The nurse says, “Follow me, but stay two feet back.”

I follow her. The security guard sizes up the space between the nurse and me and gives me double thumbs up. The nurse stops at a hand sanitizing station and hands the slip of paper to another nurse with a high blonde ponytail, who puts the paper on a clip board and starts rattling off questions:

French or English? What are your symptoms? Have you travelled in the last fourteen days? Have you been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19? Have you had a nose job in the last ten days? Any other surgeries to the throat or nose in the last ten days? Are you immunocompromised?

I’m instructed to follow the pink and black tape on the floor all the way to the room at the end of the hall—without touching anything—where five more nurses wait, one of them scrubbing the walls. At the back of the room are two smaller rooms with glass doors. One of the nurses, her hair in a bundle, walks in front of me, telling me to walk along the path. Another nurse observes the whole operation.

In one of the small rooms waits a nurse in a protective mask and hood over her medical scrubs. She holds the door open with her body. The pink and black lines on the floor narrow as they get closer to the door. She tells me in French to walk directly to the chair in the corner of the room, and to hold my arms and bag close to me.

Then she says: “I am going to insert this swab in your nose, do not pull your head back, do not push my arm away, please pull your mask down over your mouth.”

She jabs the swab up my nose and holds it in place for twenty seconds. It feels like blood is gushing from my nose.

Then she says: “You should get your results in twenty-four hours. Do not leave your house until then. Do you have any questions? Okay, good luck and goodbye.”

On the first day of waiting my friend texts to say that she had her father, a retired lawyer, make a will for her, just in case. “You never know, better to be prepared, and once hospitalized no one will be able to see me,” she says.

In the evening, while taking bread out of the freezer to make toast, I discover a bottle of vodka that I didn’t know was there.

On the second day of waiting my neighbour brings over groceries and I spend several hours disinfecting each item. Later I pull up, and follow along to, a hip stretching video on YouTube, in which a woman makes quick motions, opening and closing her legs, lunging forwards and backwards, and then another video in which a woman does the frog pose. Around 7 p.m. I dial the test centre hotline; by 9:30 p.m. the waiting music has become a comfort in my ear. How long could I possibly be on hold for? All night? Days? Do they just disconnect at some point? Is there anyone on the other end at all? I hang up.

On the third day of waiting the phone rings at 10:15 a.m. The voice on the other end says, “I’m calling from the test centre. Your results are negative. Having tested negative does not mean you will not test positive in the future. It is important you take the precautions suggested to you. Good luck and have a nice day.”

Jordyn Catalano is an aspiring writer, soccer player and French speaker. She works odd jobs to pay the rent. This is her first publication. Catalano was born in Winnipeg and now lives in Montréal.

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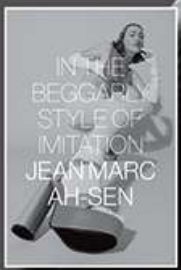


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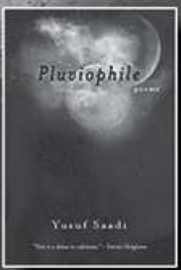
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Thank You All For Coming

ANDREA ROUTLEY

If Gina Gershon and Parker Posey had a lovechild, it would be her... And 25 other reasons I should stop talking to my straight friend until I am no longer stuck at home with my computer

1. I google her and read articles she wrote years ago, which received unending Twitter praise from hip heterosexual males.

2. I google images of her.

3. I am willing to DM on Instagram with her for several hours, something I would normally find tedious.

4. I ask for her mailing address so I can send her a “West Coast-inspired care package.” She says “OMG that’s so sweet, yes.” (She says that’s so sweet that’s so sweet that’s so sweet.)

5. I tell a friend that I think I have a crush on this straight girl. He asks, “Is she bi-curious?” and I deadpan, “That is not relevant,” but I feel ashamed and guilty, a lecherous old dyke, and I think of *Sister George*.

6. I am relating hard to the lovesick Laura of the 1950s lesbian pulp fiction novels by Ann Bannon.

7. I wonder if I can blame all these feelings on the fact that I’m currently reading the 1950s lesbian pulp fiction novels by Ann Bannon.

8. I plan on getting Asian fusion takeout from the lesbian restaurateur I messaged with, the one with the kid who wants a long-term partner with family values, so we can meet in person and maybe have a casual fling even though it’s quarantine time.

9. I tell my crush that skunk cabbage actually smells pretty good when it’s dried and would she like some potpourri in the care package? She says yes. She says yes! I would sooner send her rose petals, but I go with skunk cabbage because humour is a great disguise for my fantasy that she is gay (enough) and we are going to get married and be a stunningly successful writing power-couple.

10. I realize my idea about a quarantine fling with the family-values lesbian is really dumb and potentially kind of mean.

11. My crush sends me an audio message musing whether things that are written quickly retain that energy. She intones statements like questions, but at the end she says with a downward slide, “And I’m into that.” And I am into *that*.

12. I send her an excerpt from my story-in-progress, “Midden,” describing my lesbian protagonist’s erotic and tortured response to a video in which a woman harvests pearls from a freshwater mussel. I joke, “That was pretty much your experience of that video, too, right?? lol” (she has seen the video). She replies, “My fallopian tubes, like, did ache as I was reading.” I consider this evidence of something.

13. I google images of her, scan for queer subtext. The way she mugs for the camera. Ironic sexy poses. Something in the mouth.

14. I read tweets dating back two years.

15. I gather beach rocks for the care package. Beach rocks.

16. I tell my ex-girlfriend about my crush. “She probably has feelings for you, too,” she says; my ex does not believe our bodies respond to nothing. It doesn’t matter anyway, I think—whatever the chemistry, it’s going to be bad medicine. She suggests I confess my crush and I think this is a terrible, terrible idea. But I feel less ashamed and guilty having spoken about it. We complete our hike and she tells me to say hi for her. They have never met.

17. I don’t say hi for her.

18. One night, I have phantom fissure pain, an aching rectum that keeps me awake and crying for over an hour. I tell my crush about this and she says, “Maybe we are becoming more linked telepathically” (she is dealing with a fissure). When she suggests later that she saw an Oodie ad because I’d seen an Oodie ad, I think she is referring to our psychic fissure bond. If she were a lesbian, that is exactly what she’d be referring to.

19. Fissure. Bond.

20. I write a listicle because I can’t concentrate on my story-in-progress, its post-mortem of past relationships or relationships-that-might-have-been, infused with imagery of molluscs and crustaceans, torn apart and consumed, and musings on nociception and the experience of pain.

21. I wait for the next message.

22. ...

23. I wish I could send her this for editorial feedback.

24. Maybe I can just send her this for editorial feedback.

25. Maybe a year from now I can send her this for editorial feedback and she’ll say, “You had a crush on

me?” and I’ll laugh, like oh yeah, quarantine, amiright? And she’ll say she actually had a crush on me, too, but she didn’t want to tell me because of that thing I said about straight girls kind of messing with lesbian heads because they aren’t into it as much, could never be, so there isn’t really much at stake for them. So she thought maybe she was like one of those straight girls, but she realized later that actually she wasn’t, and the reason she goes “cold” after being “hot” with the men in her life is because she really is a lesbian and thus, inevitably loses interest in these men because she never psychically connects with them in the same way she is drawn to connect with women. “Really?” I’ll ask, to be sure, double sure, because she does have this unusual sense of humour, but by this time she has moved out west and is in fact at the same university program as me, so she’s right in front of me and her sincerity is obvious. “Do you

still have a crush?” I’ll ask, and she’ll laugh that shy way she did when I first met her, where she’s laughing at herself and me and the situation and how it’s like an awkward scene in a play, watching herself go through these scenes, but still genuinely in them, too. And she’ll say yeah. And then I’ll say I lied about it being a quarantine thing and that’s it! It’s easy. Because by then she’s gay, she really is, and I know what to do with that, and I won’t care about editorial feedback because I’ll never publish this stupid listicle, but I might read it at our wedding reception because it’s funny.

Andrea Routley is the author of Jane and the Whales, which was a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award for Debut Fiction. In 2020, a story from her forthcoming collection was shortlisted for the Malahat Review Novella Prize. Instagram @andrea_routley.

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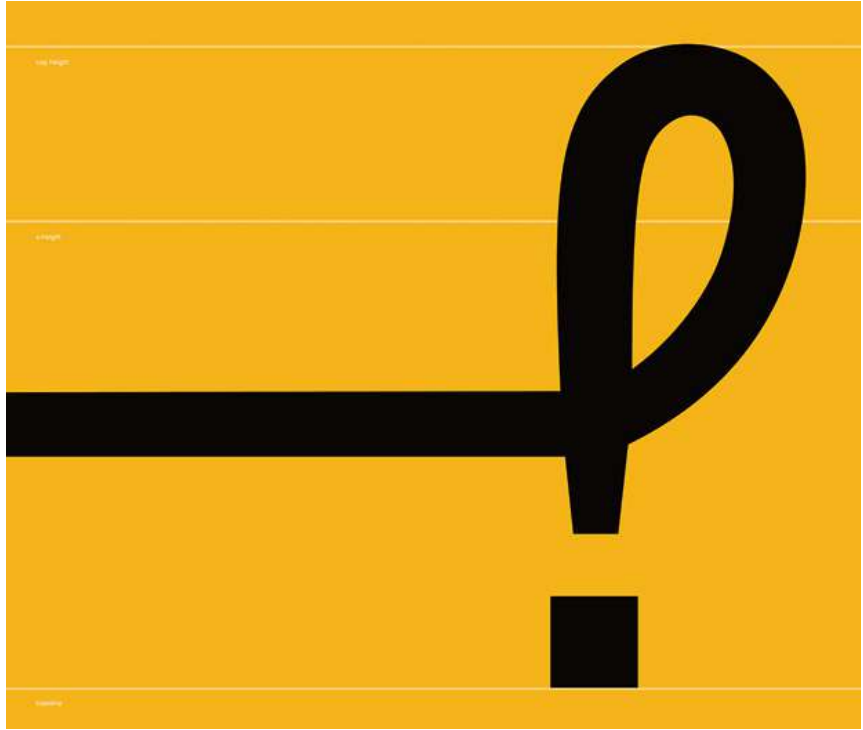
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FINDINGS



From Speculative Characters by Mia Cinelli, presented in 2019 at TypeCon, an annual North American typography convention. The characters “are proposed to supplement our existing typefaces, attempting to make the rich complexities of verbal (and nonverbal)

Toy Version Racism

DESMOND COLE

From The Skin We’re In. Copyright 2020 Desmond Cole. Published by Doubleday Canada, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Limited. Reproduced by arrangement with the publisher. All rights reserved. Desmond Cole is an award-winning journalist, radio host and activist in Toronto. His writing has appeared in the Toronto Star, Toronto Life, the Walrus, NOW Magazine, Ethnic Aisle, Torontoist, BuzzFeed and the Ottawa Citizen. The Skin We’re In is Cole’s first book. In this excerpt, Maynard refers to Robyn Maynard, Policing Black Lives (Fernwood Publishing, 2017).

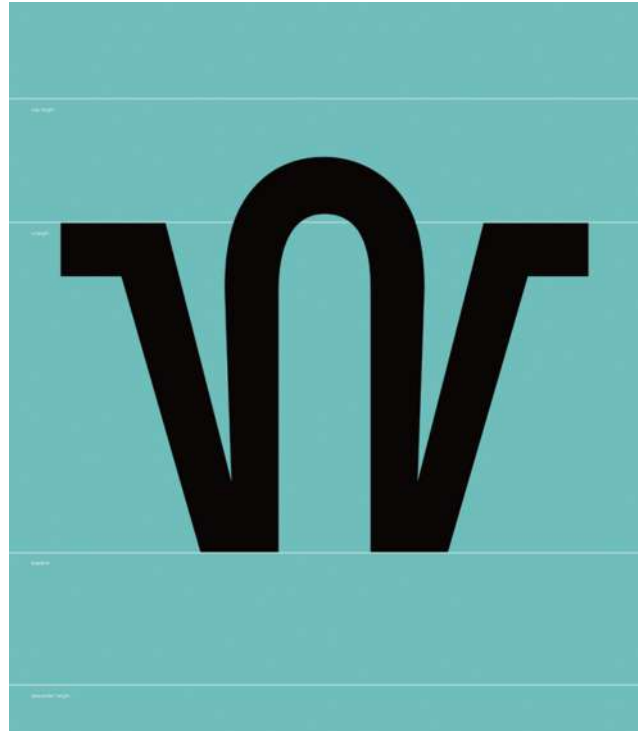
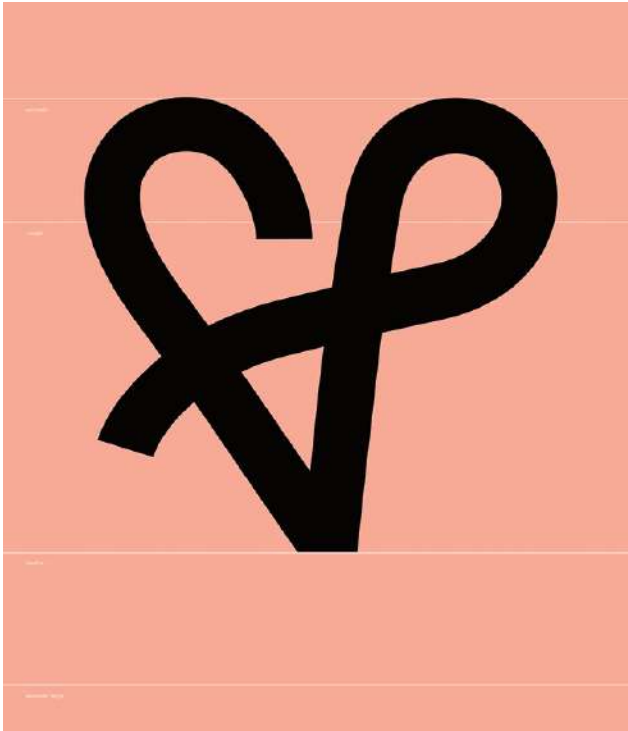
In my experience, the average white Canadian doesn’t know that British and French settlers enslaved Black and Indigenous peoples on these lands for two centuries, and simply shifted legislative tactics once they had abolished “legal” slavery. Those who do acknowledge slavery in Canada often add that it was “not as bad as in the States,” a nod to the

white Canadian proverb used as a checkmate end to a conversation. No need to consider anti-blackness here.

This idea that Canada’s racial injustices are not as bad as they could be—this notion of slavery lite, of racism lite, of what my friend calls the “toy version of racism”—is a very Canadian way of saying “remember what we could do to you if we wanted to.”

Passive-aggressive racism is central to Canada’s national mythology and identity. White supremacy warns Black people against setting our own standards and pursuing dreams that stray too far from the global atmosphere of anti-blackness.

The ongoing reality of police surveillance of Indigenous communities across Canada is also rooted in the country’s colonial laws. In 1885, the federal government enacted pass laws to control the movement of Métis people in and around what is now Winnipeg who were engaging in armed resistance against white settlers. The practice soon expanded across the country and lasted for nearly sixty years without formal approval from Parliament. Hayter Reed, one of the government officials who lobbied for and implemented the



conversation visible.” Mia Cinelli is an artist, designer and winner of the Graphis Silver Award for Typeface Design. She is Assistant Professor of Art Studio and Design Digital at the University of Kentucky. She lives in Lexington, Kentucky.

pass laws, described his vision in a letter to a superior: “No rebel Indians should be allowed off the Reserves without a pass signed by an I. D. official. The dangers of complications with white men will thus be lessened, & by preserving a knowledge of individual movements any inclination to petty depredations may be checked by the facility of apprehending those who commit such offences.”

When police engage in what we now call carding, they are maintaining a tradition of surveilling Black and Indigenous people, suggesting that our very presence as free people on the street is suspicious and in need of investigation. At one time, the prospect of free Black people informed the actions of slave catchers. In our time, white Canada continues to view Black people as an inherent threat to

its safety and sense of order. The fear informs the police practice of stopping and questioning us. Maynard is clear, though: police do not act in isolation. Rather, they are carrying out the will of Canada’s white majority, in the service of maintaining a colonial settler state where whiteness is supreme.

The modern era of carding in Toronto began, as so many police interventions do, in the wake of a crisis. Toronto’s media dubbed the summer of 2005 the “summer of the gun,” after the city witnessed twenty-five gun-related homicides between June and September. In response, local police vowed to step up their presence in areas where many of the shootings had occurred. The force created a new unit, called the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy, or TAVIS, to police so-called high-

crime areas. TAVIS and the modern carding regime quickly became the citywide norm, and the unit was responsible for a disproportionate share of carding and, by extension, the disproportionate surveillance and profiling of Black people, particularly Black youth.

Carding data across Canada is collected sporadically and has historically been made public only after residents and the media demand access to it. The data we do have is damning, and in conjunction with the testimonies of people who experience police surveillance, it hints at the overwhelming scope of police interference into the daily lives of the people they target: Black people, Indigenous people, sex workers, people in crisis, homeless people, poor people, queer people, trans people, two-spirit and gender

non-conforming people, and people living with physical disabilities, addictions, or mental health issues.

In 2012 the *Toronto Star* published “Known to Police,” its most comprehensive investigation into carding. The paper reported that “between 2008 and 2012, police filled out 1.8 million contact cards, involving more than a million individuals, in stops that typically result in no arrest or charge. The data end up in a massive police database that currently has no purging requirements.”

In every single police district in Toronto, police disproportionately stopped and documented Black people and other racialized groups without making arrests or laying criminal charges. During these years, Toronto police carded three times more Black people than the actual Black population of Toronto. The likelihood of police stopping Black people for nothing increased in predominantly white neighbourhoods, with police responding to calls from white residents about Black people on their streets.

In the areas of Toronto where higher concentrations of Black people live, the stats were equally devastating. According to the Star’s investigation, “from 2008 to 2012, the number of young black males, aged 15 to 24, who were documented at least once in the police patrol zone where they live exceeded the young black male population for all of Toronto.” The report noted that, as police continued the practice of carding, it was likely that all young Black men in certain areas of the city would end up in the carding database. Subsequent reporting showed how carding records had destroyed education and job opportunities for the Black people police target. For example, in April 2014, Transport Canada revoked the security clearance of Ayaan Farah, a young Somali woman working for an airline at Pearson International Airport in Toronto. The RCMP used carding data to claim that Farah had contacts with criminals which jeopardized airline safety, but refused to name those people for privacy reasons. Farah could no longer work at the airport, and two years passed before the Federal Court ruled that stripping her of her security clearance because of unnamed contacts was unfair, incomprehensible, and unreasonable. But the judgment didn’t include compensation for Farah’s years of lost income and the assault on her reputation.

In 2014, two years after “Known to Police” had exposed the scope of carding, the *Star* documented that the total number of carding stops had decreased by 75 percent from the previous year, yet the proportion of stops of Black residents had actually increased. The same report noted that Black residents, who made up roughly 8 percent of the city’s population, were involved in 27 percent of carding stops. In one predominantly white area, Black people were 17 times more likely than white residents to be carded.

In one of its most striking revelations, the *Star* exposed that many

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE

A selection of BISAC codes added and removed in 2019. Each autumn, the Book Industry Study Group publishes an update to its book publishing subject codes, called BISAC subject headings, which are used in publisher metadata to classify books for retail sale in the US and English-speaking Canada. The codes are added, revised or deactivated based on requests from the publishing industry. See more at bisg.org/page/BISACedition. Compiled by Kelsea O’Connor, Geist contributing editor.

INCOMING

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 Keyboarding
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 Ada
 BASIC
 COBOL
 FORTRAN
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 Site Directories
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police superiors had been using an informal quota system to encourage officers to surveil the public. One supervisor told her officers she expected them to perform at least three street checks per shift and that officers who failed to meet these standards might not qualify for a promotion.

“Known to Police” was part of a long effort by the paper’s reporters to illuminate the practice of carding and its implications for racialized people. The *Star*’s 2002 series “Race and Crime” had revealed that police disproportionately took Black people to police stations for simple drug offences, kept us overnight more often than white residents, and ticketed us more often than white motorists after pulling us over for no apparent reason. In response to this reporting, the Toronto Police Association sued the *Star* for an astronomical \$2.7 billion in damages for allegedly labelling every individual Toronto police officer as racist. Although the Supreme Court ultimately threw out the case, it was a clear instance of the police association leading the charge to discredit the *Star* and, by extension, Toronto’s Black population.

“Known to Police” did re-energize media attention to racial profiling and surveillance and helped to elevate the ongoing resistance in local Black communities like Weston–Mount Dennis, where I had first heard the term “carding” at the York Youth Coalition meeting. They and other community groups, including the African Canadian Legal Clinic, Jane Finch Action Against Poverty, No One Is Illegal–Toronto, Justice for Children and Youth, and later the Anti-Black Racism Network, and Black Lives Matter–Toronto, documented community experiences with the police and agitated for change. They were all continuing the 1980s and ’90s work of the Black Action Defence Committee and community activists like Sherona Hall, Akua Benjamin, Dudley Laws, Charles Roach, and Lennox Farrell.

VW Ramblings

KAT CAMERON

From Ghosts Still Linger. Published by University of Alberta Press in 2020. Kat Cameron is the author of the poetry collection Strange Labyrinth (Oolichan Books, 2015). Her book of short stories, The Eater of Dreams (Thistle-down Press, 2019), was shortlisted for a Danuta Gleed Literary Award. Her work has appeared in more than fifty journals and anthologies in Canada and the US. She lives in Edmonton.

Found poem on a VW bus

Check ego. Pay attention.
I’m diagonally parked in a parallel universe.

Where are we going? Jerome, Arizona.
Grow your own dope. I need the money.
No guts, no glory. Go for it. It’s the scenic route.

Why am I in this handbasket?
Don’t make me release the flying monkeys.
Bring back the wolf. Plant a man.

My family is a freak show. I refuse to grow up,
but I’m open to change. Elvis Presley died for your sins.
Sometimes I wake up grouchy. Other times I let him sleep.

We are all here because we are not all there. You can’t be first,
but you can be next. No one is ugly at 2 a.m.
Thanks for honking, now piss off.

No one died when Clinton lied. Question the answers.
Are we having fun yet? Every breath is a gift.
Have you ruined your day yet?

Actions speak louder than bumper stickers.
Attitude makes the difference.

Despite the unwillingness of Toronto city council to challenge police authority on carding, community groups and individuals kept the pressure on. Mayor Rob Ford barely mentioned carding or racial profiling during his four-year term from 2010 to 2014, and the media scarcely asked him about it. Bill Blair, police chief from 2005 to 2015, took the communications lead on the subject. In the early days of 2015, when Blair could

no longer defend the racist practice, he quietly released an internal memo ordering the police to temporarily suspend carding. Blair chose not to publicly announce the move, and only discussed it after news of his memo was leaked to the media.

Blair, who had overseen the creation of TAVIS and the subsequent explosion of carding, retired in the spring of 2015. His successor, Mark Saunders, defended carding and

promised to “keep the community safe but also minimize the collateral damage that [carding] is causing.” Many were surprised that Saunders, the city’s first Black police chief, would refer to the effects of carding as “collateral damage,” but given his politics and the imperatives of the position, it was unreasonable to expect anything else from him.

Shortly after he was sworn in as chief, Saunders was interviewed by the CBC’s Dwight Drummond, a well-known Black journalist who had spoken publicly about his experiences being racially profiled by Toronto Police. When Drummond asked Saunders if he’d ever been carded himself, the chief replied, “Yes, I have. I’m glad you’ve mentioned that because it taught me the value of proper training. There was a period of time where I was stopped multiple times, and I can tell you it was during that phase where Toronto really didn’t recognize, or didn’t admit, that we had street gang issues. The officers on the road kinda figured it out, but it wasn’t translated to them, and so the officers were left to their own devices. And so I would be stopped multiple times, I mean, multiple times. Now, granted, I wore my baseball cap backwards but that’s not a criminal offence. But it fit a persona, it fits what you see on TV as a bad guy, and I would get stopped.” Saunders went on to explain that as he was stopped more regularly, even as a police officer, it became harder to listen to the excuses from police about why he was their target. He nevertheless said arbitrary stops were a thing of the past. “When we as a service started to train the officers on what street gangs were about and how they behave and what their characteristics are, and what to look for, it stopped.”

Less than forty-eight hours after the appointment of Toronto’s first Black chief was announced in April 2015,



Toronto Life published my cover story “The Skin I’m In.” The piece chronicled my own experiences with carding and police surveillance and gained immediate and sustained attention. Many white people expressed surprise that my stories of harassment and detention could be true. Many

Black people were just as surprised that a magazine catering to the tastes of Toronto’s elite had printed the thing at all.

I had the privilege of being able to tell my personal story of police harassment, to have that story feature on the cover of a prominent magazine, to be interviewed by media across the country. I am a Canadian-born citizen, able to communicate in English and French; I attended university; I am an able-bodied, cisgender male journalist and I was allowed to be heard in a way that most people are not. I’d recently been to Ferguson, Missouri, where I covered protests around the decision not to indict police officer Darren Wilson for the fatal shooting of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown, a decision that fuelled a mass mobilization of Black Americans. As one of the few Canadian journalists who’d made that trip, I earned a lot of airtime with prominent national broadcasters.

I’d also done live coverage of Toronto’s 2014 mayoral election for a major TV network. More people had come to recognize me, so the idea that I might directly experience police surveillance troubled a lot of white, liberal-minded people. If I’d seemingly played by the rules and was still a target, what did that say about our presumably inclusive and multi-racial city?

Despite the tireless emancipatory work of Black people and our comrades, it was under public pressure from members of his own social class—university presidents, retired judges, and former cabinet ministers—that Mayor John Tory changed his public stance on police carding. Tory,

who replaced Ford in 2014 and had previously expressed his strong support for the practice, called a press conference and, with tears in his eyes and with reference to my now five-week-old article, announced that his administration would direct the police to end carding.

Three months after Tory professed he’d changed his mind on carding, the *Toronto Star*, whose data had supplemented the personal stories in my *Toronto Life* piece, recruited me to write a weekly column. They even announced my column’s debut on the front page of the print edition. After being a struggling freelance journalist for over five years, I was sure I’d finally got my proverbial big break.

I took advantage of the opportunity my column afforded to explore a broader range of issues. I wrote about provincial and federal politics, cycling, taxation, public transit, food banks, cab drivers, government claw-back of child support payments to mothers on social assistance, services for the homeless, and the indefinite detention of migrants in Canada. Carding remained newsworthy, and I wrote about it whenever there were updates or I had fresh observations.

Mayor Tory didn’t end carding—it seems now he had never intended to. When he vowed to stop the practice, Tory had said, “Carding has eroded public trust to a level that is clearly unacceptable.” He offered repeated reassurances of a “clean slate” for those targeted by police. Just eleven days later, at the next meeting of the Police Services Board, the mayor and his colleagues approved a policy that allowed carding to continue, though presumably under stricter rules. This wasn’t what Tory had promised—he seemed to be betting that his announcement would drown out his actual policy decision. And the provincial government, which had since intervened, seemed prepared to maintain the practice as well. 🌧️

For the Ladies

PAUL BAE

From You Suck, Sir. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2020. Paul Bae is a comedian, writer, actor and podcaster. He is the award-winning co-creator and co-writer of the podcast The Black Tapes and the author and producer of the podcast The Big Loop. He lives in Lions Bay, BC.

RACISM

One of my Chinese grade ten students approaches me after school.

Him: “Sir, have you ever experienced racism?”

Me: “Sadly, yes.”

Him: “What did you do?”

Me: “It’s always different. I used to let it slide, but when I was old enough to find my voice, I stood up for myself. Did something happen to you today?”

Him: “Someone called me a Chinaman.”

Me: “That must have hurt.”

Him: “Has anyone ever called you a Chinaman?”

Me: “Yes.”

Him: “Did you get mad?”

Me: “Of course. But mainly because I’m Korean.”

TRUST

Grade twelve student: “Sir, can I get an extension on my essay?”

Me: “Sure.”

Him: “Don’t you want to know why?”

Me: “Well, there’s no reason not to trust you, so no.”

Him: “Wow. Thanks!”

He’s about to walk away but then returns.

Him: “Um, I didn’t really have a reason, though. I just procrastinated.”

Me: “And *that’s* why I trust you.”

Him: “Cool!”

YEARBOOK WRITE-UPS

The grade twelves are working on their grad write-ups for the yearbook. I’m reading one student’s very brief sentence.

Me: “Is this it?”

Him: “Yup.”

Me: “A bit inappropriate for your last words in school, don’t you think?”

Him: “That’s how I want to be remembered.”

Me: (Reading) “For the ladies.”

He shrugs.

Me: “What exactly is for the ladies?”

Him: “Me.”

Me: “Really?”

THE CONVERSATIONALIST

Grade twelve student: “Sir, I saw you in the mall last weekend.”

Me: “Yeah?”

Him: “Yeah. What were you doing there?”

Me: “Shopping perhaps?”

Him: “Nice.”

Me: “Great talking with you.”

Him: “Cool.”

EXCUSE

A grade ten student walks into class fifteen minutes late.

Him: “Sorry I’m late, sir.”

Me: “Don’t worry about it. Just make up the time after school with me.”

Him: “But I have a good excuse.”

Me: “You slept in?”

Him: “But for a good reason.”

Me: “Let’s hear it.”

Him: “Really?”

Me: “Yeah.”

Him: “My alarm wasn’t working.”

Me: “That’s the best you could come up with?”

Him: “You put me on the spot.”

ORIENTALISM

One of my Chinese students approaches me during English 10.

Him: “Sir, why are we ‘Asian’ and not ‘Oriental’?”

Me: “‘Oriental’ is considered politically incorrect now and kind of offensive.”

Him: “Why’s that?”

Me: “It’s a term used by white colonialists to describe a huge group of people.”

Him: “But, isn’t ‘Asian’ also a term given to us by white people? Like, anything we call ourselves in English is probably not something we came up with ourselves, right?”

Me: “Your brain has outgrown me.”

LOVE POEM

A grade nine student is working on something at his desk during lunch.

Him: “Sir, what rhymes with love?”

Me: “Writing a poem?”

Him: “Yeah.”

Me: “Is it for that girl you were telling me about? Didn’t you just start dating?”

Him: “Yeah.”

Me: “And you want to tell her you love her already?”

Him: “I didn’t think about that.”

Me: “Nothing wrong with taking your time on this.”

He looks down at his paper:

Him: “Then what rhymes with make out?”

WHEN I GROW UP

Grade eleven student: “Sir, what did you want to be when you grew up?”

Me: “Depends on my age. When I was in high school, I wanted to be a lawyer. When I was seven, I wanted to be Superman. And for a brief time when I was four, I wanted to be a dancer.”

Her: “You were so in touch with yourself for a four-year-old.”

Me: “Thanks. What?” 🍵

How to Pronounce Knife

SOUVANKHAM THAMMAVONGSA

From How to Pronounce Knife. Published by McClelland & Stewart, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Limited, in 2020. Reproduced by arrangement with the publisher. All rights reserved. Souvankham Thammavongsa's stories have appeared in Harper's, the Paris Review, NOON, Best American Nonrequired Reading 2018, among other publications. She is the author of four books of poetry; she is the recipient of an O. Henry Prize and a ReLit prize.

The note had been typed out, folded over two times, and pinned to the child's chest. It could not be missed. And as she did with all the other notes that went home with the child, her mother removed the pin and threw it away. If the contents were important, a phone call would be made to the home. And there had been no such call.

The family lived in a small apartment with two rooms. On the wall of the main room was a tiny painting with a brown bend at the centre. That brown bend was supposed to be a bridge, and the blots of red and orange brushed in around it were supposed to be trees. The child's father had painted this, but he didn't paint anymore. When he came home from work, the first thing he always did was kick off his shoes. Then he'd hand over a newspaper to the child, who unfolded sheets on the floor, forming a square, and around that square they sat down to have dinner.

For dinner, it was cabbage and chit-terlings. The butcher either threw the stuff away or had it out on display for cheap, so the child's mother bought bags and bags from him and put them in the fridge. There were so many ways to cook these: in a broth with ginger and noodles, grilled over charcoal fire, stewed with fresh dill, or the way the child liked them best—baked in the oven with lemongrass and salt. When she took these dishes to school, other children would tease her about the smell. She shot back, "You wouldn't know a good thing even if

five hundred pounds of it came and sat on your face!"

When they all sat down for dinner, the child thought of the notes her mother threw away, and about bringing one to her father. There had been so many last week, maybe it was important. She listened as her father worried about his pay and his friends and how they were all making their living here in this new country. He said his friends, who were educated and had great jobs in Laos, now found themselves picking worms or being managed by pimple-faced teenagers. They'd had to begin all over again, as if the life they led before didn't count.



The child got up, found the note in the garbage, and brought it to her father.

He waved the note away. "Later." He said this in Lao. Then, as if remembering something important, he added, "Don't speak Lao and don't tell anyone you are Lao. It's no good to tell people where you're from." The child looked at the centre of her father's chest, where, on this T-shirt, four letters stood side by side: LAOS.

A few days after that, there was some commotion in the classroom. All the girls showed up wearing different variations of pink, and the boys had on dark suits and little knotted ties. Miss Choi, the grade one teacher, was wearing a purple dress dotted with a print of tiny white flowers and shoes with little heels. The child looked down at her green jogging suit. The green was dark, like the green of broccoli, and

the fabric at the knees was a few shades lighter and kept their shape even when she was standing straight up. In this scene of pink and sparkles and matching purses and black bow ties and pressed collars, she saw she was not like the others.

Miss Choi, always scanning the room for something out of place, noticed the green that the child was wearing and her eyes widened. She came running over and said, "Joy. Did you get your parents to read the note we sent home with you?"

"No," she lied, looking at the floor where her blue shoes fitted themselves inside the space of a small square tile. She didn't want to lie, but there was no point in embarrassing her parents. The day went as planned. And in the class photo, the child was seated a little off to the side, with the grade and year sign placed in front of her. The sign was always right in the middle of these photos, but the photographer had to do something to hide the dirt on the child's shoes. Above that sign, she smiled.

When her mother came to get her after school, she asked why all the other children were dressed up this way, but the child didn't tell her. She lied, saying in Lao, "I don't know. Look at them, all fancy. It's just an ordinary day."

The child came home with a book. It was for her to read on her own, for practice. The book the child was given had pictures and a few words. The pictures were supposed to explain what was going on with the words, but there was this one word that didn't have a picture. It was there on the page by itself, and when she pronounced each letter, the word didn't sound like anything real. She didn't know how to pronounce it.

After dinner, the three of them sat down together on the bare floor, watching television side by side. From behind, the child knew she looked like her father. Her hair had been cut short

in the shape of a bowl. The child's shoulders drooped and her spine bent like there was some weight she was carrying there, like she knew what a day of hard work was all about. Before long the television pictures changed into vertical stripes the colour of a rainbow, and her parents would soon go to bed. Most nights, the child followed, but tonight she was bothered by what she didn't know and wanted to know it. She opened the book and went looking for that word. The one that didn't sound like anything she knew.

That one.

It was her last chance before her father went to sleep. He was the only one in their home who knew how to read. She brought the book to him and pointed to the word, asked what it was. He leaned over it and said, "Kah-~~nnn~~-eye-~~ffff~~. It's kahneyff." That's what it was, what it sounded like to him.

The next day, Miss Choi gathered the whole class together to sit around the green carpet at the front of the room. She did this when she wanted to get someone to read out loud. Sometimes a student would volunteer and sometimes she would point at someone, but on this day Miss Choi looked around and found the child.

"Joy, you haven't read yet. Why don't you get your book and read for us."

The child started reading and everything went along just fine until she got to that word. It was only five letters, but there might as well have been twenty there. She said it the way her father had told her, but she knew it was wrong because Miss Choi would not turn the page. Instead, she pointed to the word and tapped at the page as if by doing so the correct sound would spill out. But the child didn't know how to pronounce it. Tap. Tap. Tap. Finally, a yellow-haired girl in the class called out, "It's knife! The k is silent," and rolled her eyes as if there was nothing easier in the world to know.

This girl had blue eyes and freckles dotted around her nose. This

The legend of the craft brewery of Medicine Hat

MERCEDES ENG

From My Yt Mama. Published by Talonbooks in 2020. Mercedes Eng teaches and writes in Vancouver, on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories. She is the author of Prison Industrial Complex Explodes (Talonbooks), winner of the 2018 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize, and Mercenary English (Talonbooks). Her writing has appeared in Jacket2, The Downtown East, The Volcano, in public art projects and in the collectively produced chapbooks, r/ally (No One Is Illegal), Surveillance, and M'aidez (Press Release). Eng is working on a women's prison reader and a detective novel set in her grandfather's Chinatown supper club, circa 1948.

so in 2016 Bro #1, Bro #2, and Bro #3 opened a craft brewery named after an Indigenous vehicle of conveyance that the Niitsítapi Peoples call "imatáá manistsí" which were used by *Great Plains aboriginal bands to haul their stuff. It usually consisted of two long poles with some sort of framework, lashed to the sides of your dog, and the frame carried your tipi and food*

your dog? your tipi and food? are these cowbros trying to play *Indian?*

Early fur trappers trekking through the Canadian West, and even the RCMP, copied it. As such, travois are an iconic part of Medicine Hat's early history and are intrinsically connected to this part of the world, they are uniquely prairie ... like us ... and they represent travel and movement through the great outdoors love for which brought the bros together

so Bro #1 met Bro #2 who had enough money to acquire a building downtown even though he didn't even know what he was gonna do with it, although not the original building that was located on Montreal Street back in the founding days of Medicine Hat which is lost to time but the building now in that location which was built in 1939

so they started talking about turning the building into a brewery and realized they'd need more money so that's where Bro #3 who Bro #1 knew from the Cypress Hills biking trails comes into the legend: Bro #3 was *a casualty of the latest oil-patch recession and was looking for something to fuel his dreams rather than just his pocketbook*

I'm not a craft brewery person myself as I see them as agents of gentrification and I'm anti-gentrification or more accurately I'm anti-gentrification-as-an-ongoing-instantiation-of-colonialism-and-~~yt-supremacy~~ as I'm assuming that most craft breweries are owned by yt guys who wanna create these legends about the genesis of their businesses like they're some kind of frontiersmen boldly going where no one's ever gone before

... so come on down, see what we've done with the place, try the beer ... and don't forget to bring your dog and travois to haul your growler home 🍷

girl's mother was always seen in the parking lot after school honking in a big shiny black car with a V and a W holding each other inside a circle. Her mother owned a black fur coat and walked in heels like it was Picture Day every day. This girl was like everyone else in the class, reading loud and clear, winning prizes. The

child was the only one not to have won one yet. On this very day, Miss Choi added a red yo-yo to the sack. Had the child known what that word was, that red yo-yo would have been hers, but now it would remain locked in the top drawer of Miss Choi's desk.

Later that night, the child looks over at her father during dinner. How he picks up each grain of rice with his chopsticks, not dropping a single one. How he eats, clearing away everything in his bowl. How small and shrunken he seems.

The child does not tell him the k in knife is silent. She doesn't tell him about being in the principal's office, about being told of rules and how things are the way they are. It was just a letter, she was told, but that single letter, out there alone, and in the front, was why she was in the office in the first place. She doesn't tell how she had insisted the letter k was not silent. It couldn't be, and she had argued and argued, "It's in the front! The first one! It should have a sound!" and then she screamed as if they had taken some important thing away. She never gave up on what her father said, on that first sound there. And none of them, with all their lifetimes of reading and good education, could explain it.

As she watches her father eat his dinner, she thinks of what else he doesn't know. What else she would have to find out for herself. She wants to tell her father that some letters, even though they are there, we do not say them, but she decides now is not the time to say such a thing. Instead she tells her father only that she had won something.

At the end of the school day, Miss Choi was waiting for her by the door. She asked the child to follow her to the front desk, where she unlocked the top drawer and pulled out the red velvet sack. "Pick one," she said. And the child reached inside and grabbed at the first thing her fingers touched. It was a puzzle with an airplane in the sky.

When she shows her father the prize, he is delighted because, in some way, he has won it too. They take the prize, all the little pieces of it, and start forming the edge, the blue sky, the other pieces, the middle. The whole picture, they fill those in later. 🌧️

Instructions for My Father

JEFF MUSGRAVE

Originally published in PRISM international in 2013. Jeff Musgrave has published work in Grain, the Queen Street Quarterly, subTerrain, the Antigonish Review, Arc, EVENT and Prairie Fire. He lives in Toronto.

*(black & white photograph of my father
on a beach, taken by my mother, 1967)*

Leave the woman taking
this picture, Dad;
dive into the water and
swim for your life.

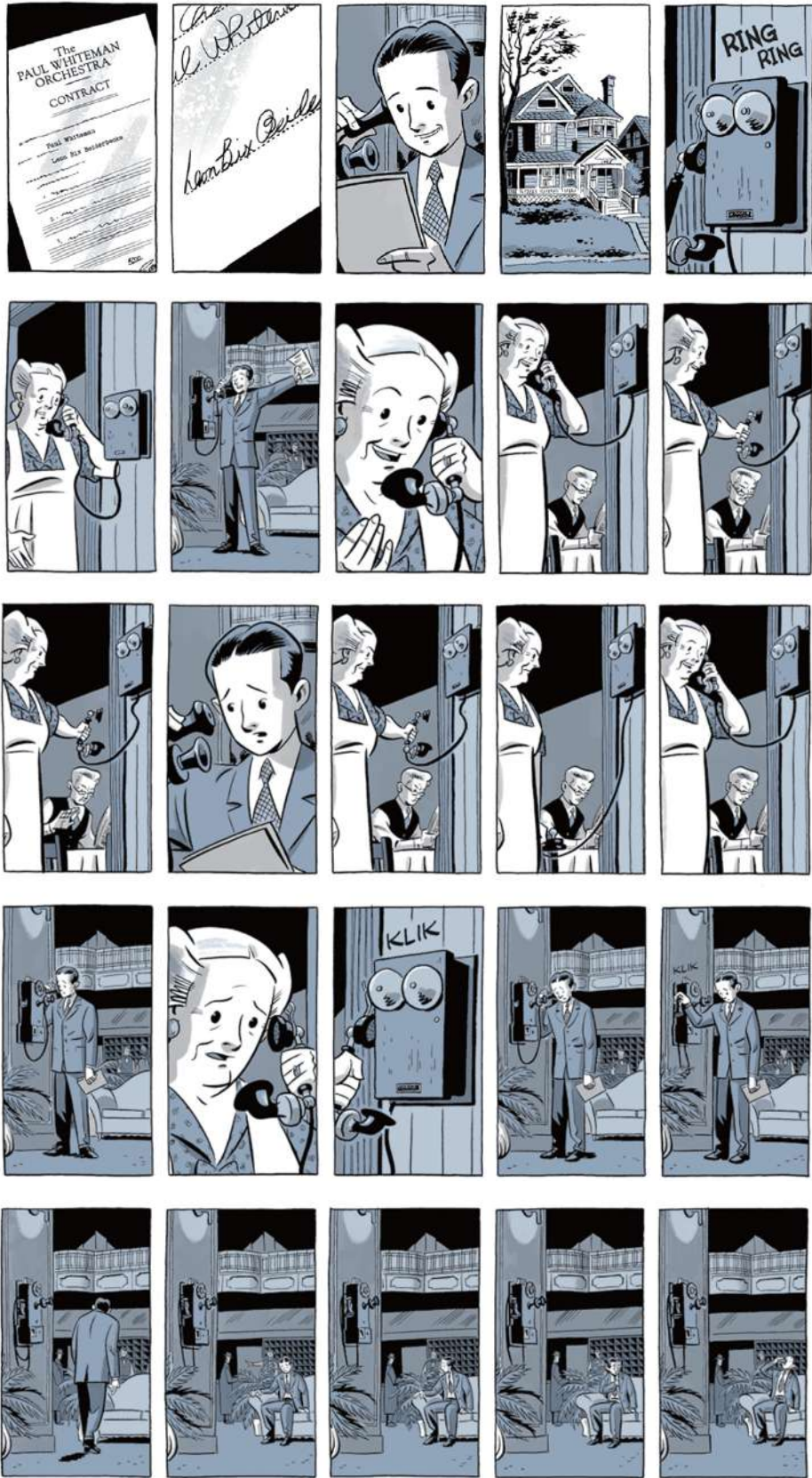
Crawl onto the beach of
the next village and
marry the prettiest
girl you see. That night,

when I come to you in
nightmares, please stay
calm, as I will bring
scenes from your foregone future:

holes the size of fists
in closet doors, and
choirs of rum bottles
on window sills.

Feel better by going for
a walk on the beach.
Peer across the water
and imagine

the boy from your dream,
smiling and waving. He is
happy that, for you,
he simply never was. 🌧️



From Bix by Scott Chantler. Copyright © 2020 by Scott Chantler. Published by Gallery13, an imprint of Gallery Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. Printed by permission. Chantler is the author and creator of numerous graphic novels, including Two Generals, Northwest Passage and the Three Thieves series, which won a Joe Shuster Award. He has been nominated for five Eisner Awards, two Harvey Awards and a Doug Wright Award. He lives in Stratford, ON.

Elf in the Breadbox

MICHEL TREMBLAY

From Rite of Passage. Published by Leméac Éditeur and Acts Sud in 2010 and Talonbooks in 2020. Translation copyright Linda Gaboriau, 2019. Michel Tremblay is a novelist, playwright, screenwriter and translator. He has been awarded dozens of awards, including the Governor General's Performing Arts Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award in theatre. Tremblay is a Chevalier de la légion d'honneur de France and a Grand officier de l'ordre national du Québec.

Once upon a time there was a spunkie who had to leave his native Scotland with his whole family because of the Great Famine.

Before we go on, you should know what spunkies are. Spunkies are beautiful emerald-green elves who, once night falls, wear a lantern on their bottoms. They hide in the woods during the day and sleep underground, preferably among the roots of garden vegetables. People who don't like them, in general villagers who are unhappy that their breadboxes have been raided by the nocturnal visits of these naughty creatures, say they are bad, sneaky, even perverse, but more indulgent people claim that the tunnels they dig to make their homes in the garden help aerate the soil—a bit like earthworms—and that losing a bit of bread from time to time is a fair price to pay for having healthy soil. You see, spunkies love bread. They live under vegetables, they could devour as many as they want, especially the potatoes that grow like weeds in Scotland. They prefer, however, the good soft crumbs and the crisp crust of bread. They burrow tunnels in a loaf, the way they do in the earth, beginning in the centre and working their way to the crust, leaving not a crumb behind, but a family without bread.

After nightfall, spunkies emerge from their tunnels in tight groups, lanterns on their bottoms, children and adults, males and females alike, and they invade a kitchen within seconds and ransack a breadbox within minutes. Little cries of joy can be heard in the

night, followed by the rustling of feet on the wood floors because spunkies love to dance in the moonlight—if there is some—after their feast. Singing when the bread is particularly good.

Everyone knows that there is no point in getting out of bed to surprise them or chase them away; by the time you've lit a lamp or grabbed a broom, the kitchen is empty. Like the box. The family attacked—spunkies perform their pilfering one house at a time every other night—has to accept its fate and suffer the loss fuming. No bread for breakfast, but a fine garden, well-aerated.

Some, the stingiest villagers, the ones who refuse to share anything with anyone and who consider the loss of one loaf of bread an unspeakable tragedy, stubbornly persist in hunting them down. They set mouse traps—as if spunkies weren't smart enough to avoid them—resort to flypaper, butterfly nets, and even go so far as to hide behind the woodstove to catch them.

They are called will-o'-the-wisp, or Jack-o'-lantern, or Joan-in-the-wad, or Jenny Burn-Tail, but spunkie is much easier to say, especially for children who dream of capturing some and keeping them in a glass jar, even if they're afraid of them.

In France they are called fireflies, or *lucioles* because the French variety is shinier. People even say the French ones are much chattier than their Scottish cousins. Another big difference: French fireflies only shine for one night, whereas spunkies in the British Isles are tougher and can live for hundreds of years.

All of which is to say that our hero—let's call him Spunky, for short—was one of the countless victims of the Great Famine that had besieged Scotland for several years. That was not so long ago and apparently consequences can still be seen. The Scots have become miserly, they say, because they were deprived of everything, even black bread.

Much has been said about the devastating effects of this famous famine on human beings—the extreme poverty, dysentery, mass exodus especially to America—but no one has studied the fate of the fairies, the trolls, the goblins, gnomes, elves, and other extraordinary creatures born of man's imagination and who depend upon its vivacity and vigour to survive. The World of Magic was born, lives on, and will survive as long as there are humans all around the world who pretend to believe in it, who fear it and chat about it around the fire in the evening, wide-eyed, agitated, and breathless. When humans cease to believe in their existence or are too preoccupied by serious problems to think about them, creatures of Fairyland grow weaker, they wilt from lack of attention or belief in their role in this world and their usefulness, and they finally disappear.

That is what could have happened in Aberdeen, where our story begins, if the spunkies hadn't decided, after a long year without bread—spunkies can't stand potatoes and that's all people managed to grow in Scotland during those dark years—to jump on the first boat leaving for anywhere in order to survive.

That is how Spunky, who was considered a young man despite being some two hundred years old, found himself with his whole family in the Aberdeen port, a huge naval yard where boats were being built that immediately set sail to transport wood and human beings to destinations so far away and so exotic they defied imagination. The wood was an attempt to bring back money, the humans, an

exhausted Scotland relinquishing its last resources, a great hemorrhaging.

Spunky's father, so old and shrivelled his lantern shone a pale yellow, but who still possessed amazing strength and determination, had announced a few days earlier, in an accent impossible to imitate here, in words I will translate into our talk:

"I refuse to disappear 'cause those ones stopped believin' in us just 'cause they're starvin' to death! If we travel far away, if we cross the Big Pond, if we leave for America, maybe we'll find folks over there who'll believe in us, fear us, and feed us!"

The spunkies used their ears to find their way around: they wanted to emigrate to a country where they'd understand the language, North America, of course, but maybe Australia or New Zealand as well.

A magnificent ship with colourful sails leaving for India tempted them

briefly—the British Empire reigned that far, after all, and people spoke English almost everywhere there—it smelled so good and looked so proud. But what kind of bread would they find in India? Just when they'd become so discouraged they were prepared to jump aboard the first ship to take them wherever, at least as far as possible from their misery and the lack of bread, Spunky's father spotted the *Rhode Island* about to set sail for New England. He consulted some rats he knew who informed him that Rhode Island, in addition to being a boat, was also a state in the United States where, apparently, life was good and rich. In bread? The rats conferred before declaring that wherever you find the good life, there is always bread.

The family gathered under one of the moorings that tied the magnificent sailing ship to the wharf, to receive the

last instructions from the head of their family.

Spunky, however, decided he didn't feel like listening to his father hold forth as usual, dispensing with absurd confidence useless orders that no one would follow and proclaiming the commonplaces which had been his specialty for centuries and which drove all his offspring crazy. They had been a bit estranged, Spunky and his father, for some fifty years and Spunky would have gladly left him behind. The thought of no longer having to put up with his presence delighted him. His father was getting old and after his death, he would become the head of the family, so he simply had to bide his time. Oh, life without him, what freedom!

Little did he know!

His fate changed in one second and he would never again see a single member of his family. 🍷

All the Funnest Music

ANDREW WEDDERBURN

From The Crash Palace, set for publication by Coach House Books January 2021. Andrew Wedderburn's debut novel, The Milk Chicken Bomb, was shortlisted for the Amazon.ca Books in Canada First Novel Award. Wedderburn's writing has appeared in filling Station and Alberta Views. He lives in Okotoks, AB.

In Golden, the day bartender propped open a back door with a four-gallon plastic pail of dishwasher sanitizer. "You're early," she said, wiping her hands on a black apron.

"We could get all loaded in early and be out of your hair before you open up," said Wrists. "Squeeze in a line check and be tip-top ready to go when folks show up."

"Pete deals with the bands and Pete isn't here and there's people in the bar."

"How about we just unload then so we're not worried about the gear in the van driving around town then."

"It's a fire exit. Don't block anything."

The bar was a big old ski tavern attached to a two-storey main-street hotel, with timber-frame beams, neon signs for brands of interior BC beer Audrey had never heard of, and old signs from ski hills: *Widow's Peak Double Black Diamond, Runway to Paradise Quad Chair*. She sat at the bar and found an unfinished Sudoku puzzle in the paper while the Lever Men brought in the gear. She'd gotten to know the daytime smells of a bar over the last week, before enough people and their bodies and their new cigarettes came in and changed the chemistry of the air. Bleach and kitchen garbage, the previous night's cigarette

smoke, deep fryer oil, spilled beer. It was different from the hotel restaurant back in Canmore, stronger. The Lever Men finished piling the gear onto a short stage in the corner and Hector went across the street to get them all coffee in paper cups.

A girl with a blond ponytail and a puffy down-filled ski jacket came in and leaned on the bar. Waved at the busboy in the back of the room scooping ice out of the ice machine. Her mirrored ski sunglasses on her head reflected the bar lights' orange and gold. She turned to evaluate Audrey and the Lever Men.

"What are you guys, some kind of rock band?"

Rodney turned around slowly on his stool.

"We," he said, "are the Legendary Lever Men. One night only."

"Lever men? Like, men with levers? Really?"

He swept an arm out to indicate something larger than the current

room. “Famous from the St. Albert Hotel in Winnipeg to the Red Lion Inn in Victoria.”

She pivoted on her heels and leaned an elbow on the bar. “Are you one of those fun bands that play music people like to hear and everybody dances all night and it’s great? Or one of those un-fun bands that play music no one knows and it’s too loud so that you can’t hear your friends and couldn’t dance to it if you wanted to and people have to just wait it out?”

“We play all the funnest music beloved by the young people of today,” said Rodney.

“That’s right,” said Dick, “the funnest.”

She looked at Audrey. “Are you the singer?”

“She’s our manager,” said Rodney.

“Ah. I see.”

Around eight o’clock, the bar filled up with off-duty chairlift attendants, between-shift busboys, and just-finished day staff from the other bars and restaurants up and down the strip. They chattered in Australian and Quebecois accents and drank pints of dark beer between sticky shots of cinnamon schnapps and Jameson’s whisky. Everyone was wearing down-filled vests and toques despite the increasing heat. Audrey sat at a corner table, watching. Across the bar, Hector and Dick played pool

with a group of young women, all of them laughing and drinking. The girl with the ponytail racked up the balls and bent over to break, staring across the table at Hector. He looked back at her with a cartoon fox look, a look she hadn’t seen on any of the Lever Men before. His whole face transformed with the look he gave the girl in the ponytail while she broke, making him into some other, different man that Audrey had never seen before.

“Hector Highwater,” Rodney’s voice said out of the PA speakers. “Richard Move. Hector Highwater and Richard Move to the stage.”

When he climbed onstage, Hector

Denouement

HOWARD WHITE

From A Mysterious Humming Noise. Published by Anvil Press in 2019. Howard White is the founder of Harbour Publishing, an award-winning author and a Member of the Order of Canada. He lives in Pender Harbour, BC. Howard White’s father, Frank White, was a truck driver, logger, gas station operator, excavationist, waterworks technician and author of Milk Spills and One-Log Loads: Memories of a Pioneer Truck Driver and That Went By Fast: My First Hundred Years. He died in 2015 at the age of 101.

Looking after my old man during his decline
Through his nineties and finally past 100
I expected to be an unpleasant duty
And it definitely had its messy parts
But overall it was very enjoyable,
Definitely brought us closer than ever
Even though he was a shadow of the man he’d been.

It was very educational, not just
In instructing me in the care industry
Trouble getting up? Buy a lift chair.
Legs get tired standing at the stove?
There’s a thing like a walking-stick seat
You can move around the kitchen.
Afraid of falling in the tub?
There’s a \$1000 gizmo to ease you up and down.
Can’t stand at all any more?
Time to move to a power wheelchair.
Trouble loading peas onto the fork now?
They have a big spork that comes with
A special plate with a fence around it.
But really it’s better to put everything in wraps or rolls.
Can’t even manage that anymore?
Purée everything for easy spoon-feeding.

Like the man said it’s a long way down.
But clever technology is waiting at every step
And it’s all half price or less on Craigslist.
The thing I really learned, though,
Was how the final stages of life’s ending
Form an exact parallel with its beginning:
After nine decades of slow change
Things start moving quickly again.
Every week a changed ability of the body or mind
Creates a whole new situation
Needing altered gear and care strategies.
And the fact your care-receiver
Is changing every day for the worse
Is not as depressing as you might think.
There is something satisfying
About all these long-lost chickens
Coming home to roost. 🐔

whispered something in Rodney's ear. Levermann rolled his eyes. Dick Move held his hands together prayer-style.

Rodney sighed and jerked his head toward Wrists.

The drummer just shrugged when Hector talked to him. Then he stick-counted a quick four and they all started up a country and western train beat, Rodney chick-chick-chicking a couple of palm-muted chords.

The crowd looked up from what they were doing. Audrey watched. Usually they had about thirty seconds of attention before they lost a crowd.

Dick Move went to the microphone at the front of the stage, cleared his throat, and started singing "Folsom Prison Blues."

Someone in the crowd cheered.

He had a gut-deep easy baritone, and after Johnny Cash they did Willie Nelson, Townes Van Zandt, and Lee Hazlewood. They played these songs effortlessly, like they had been doing them every night for months. People clapped enthusiastically after each tune. In each song during the middle eight Rodney took exactly one step toward the crowd and whipped out a blazing hot solo, which became more dexterous and complex as the night went on. People cheered when the Lever Men started into songs they knew and they moved some tables at the front so they could dance.

The girls from the pool table danced right at the front, waving their arms above their heads.

They finished with "Waiting Around to Die" and a woman at the bar with skull-tight grey skin and a small dog cradled in her buckskin jacket clapped and cried.

Later, Dick sat down heavily across from Audrey. His face was flushed, his breath lit up with whisky fumes. He coughed and leaned into the table toward her.

"Audrey, here's the thing," he said,

speaking slowly to assemble the words. "We're going to stay late tonight."

"We have to load out still," she said.

"The thing—the thing about that. Heck and I we talked to them. Talked to them."

"Talked to...?"

"The bar. Tender. Talked to him. He's also," Dick paused to grin, pleased with what he was about to deliver, "also the day bartender. See? Tomorrow. Day bartender tomorrow. So I've talked to him and we'll leave the gear here and load out in the morning."

She watched him and didn't say anything.

"Okay, so we're staying late."

"The thing," he said, then paused to figure out how to assemble the next sentence. "The thing, Audrey, is it's better if... they've got rooms for us, maybe, maybe you just go to bed early?"

"Maybe I'll stay," she said.

Hector and Rodney sat down on either side of Dick, each of them with beer bottles. Dick took a beer and drank for a long time.

"Audrey," said Rodney, putting an arm around Dick's shoulder, "you've got a pretty good thing going right now, correct? Ongoing adventure, getting the van A to B, nothing doing beyond delivering us like mail wherever we're addressed for the day."

"Sure."

"So don't change the composition. Got me? We're going to stay late and maybe if you just go back to the room, then tomorrow we carry on and your good thing hasn't changed."

"What might change?"

"Let her stay," said Hector, looking at her over his bottle. He gave her the cartoon fox look from before over the top of his bottle and she inhaled and sat up straight.

"You guys are going to be so drunk in about half an hour you'll be passed out before I'm even done brushing

my teeth," she said. Dick chortled and drank his beer. Wrists went back to the bar and leaned over to talk to the bartender, who nodded, then rooted around under the counter and gave him something.

Wrists came back and put a hotel room key down on the tabletop. A plastic pine tree with the room number embossed on it. Dick got up and went back to the pool table, where the girls were doing shots of Jägermeister. Put his arm around the waist of the girl with the ponytail and started laughing at whatever they were laughing at.

"We'll see you in the morning, Audrey," said Rodney.

"It's Lethbridge tomorrow," she said slowly, chewing off the words, feeling her bright red cheeks and hating their bright-redness. "Which is stupid because we were in Cranbrook last night and Cranbrook to Lethbridge is an easy drive, and Revelstoke to Golden to Cranbrook would have been an easy enough drive, but you did everything in the wrong order, so we've got to drive all the way back we already came. But whatever. We'll do it so you can get to Lethbridge in time to play for the dishwasher in the Lethbridge Shithole. We'll take the Number 1 past Banff and then take Highway 22 down to Nanton. We'll miss Calgary and all the city traffic that way. Then over to Highway 2 and it'll be a good six-hour drive at least, so sleep in. Load your shit and I'll meet you later."

She got up and then paused.

"If you can play music people actually like, why don't you?"

The other Lever Men all looked at Rodney, who thought about it for a while.

"It's not about people, Audrey. It's about us. We do things for us. You know how that is."

She went up to her room and had a long hot shower. Then lay on the bed with her headphones on, listening to Link Wray as loudly as she could stand. Thinking about Hector's fox face. 🦊





Now this is not lens distortion. That is the most dismal phone booth I found on my travels. It's in the Whiteshell, or was, because, I think, just towards the end of my safari, Dan mentioned to me that he'd ripped out one in the Whiteshell and he wondered whether I'd gotten a photo of it in time. It was about to uproot itself with a grand topple. You can see, it's so touching; it's yearning for mother earth.

From Prairie Modernist Noir: The Disappearance of the Manitoba Telephone Booth by Jeanne Randolph. 2018/2020 archival ink-jet print, edition of two 8 1/2 x 11 inches, photos courtesy the artist and Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Toronto. Jeanne Randolph is an artist, curator, musician, psychiatrist, cultural theorist and the author of Psychoanalysis & Synchronized Swimming (YYZ Books, 1991), Shopping Cart Pantheism (ARP Books, 2015), and other books. Randolph took these photos in 2016, using an iPhone. She was given a list of telephone booths in the province by a "mole" at Manitoba Telephone Systems (Bell/MTS); she travelled as far north as the 54th parallel in Flin Flon, and as far south as Emerson, near the Manitoba US border. Jeanne Randolph writes: "For more than fifty years payphones stood as small modernist buildings. They were built to stand and to withstand, to be mended efficiently after every attack by weather; vandalism, car crashes and thrown rocks. Now they are neglected; each and every booth is depreciating in melancholy decline—until Bell/MTS uproots them and drags them away."



This is a scene on the Trans-Canada outside of Austin, MB. It's too murky to discern what's there—a closer view is only slightly brighter. I was disappointed that at a distance from the object of my desire, distortions aren't especially obvious.



Here it is from another view. I wanted to document this sort of view as often as I could—the forsaken telephone booth among its injured friends. As you can see, in a way, it's in its own forlorn community.



This is a classic. Not to you, I do understand.

This belongs to the Desolate Phone Booth collection. Also the Derelict, Sleazy Brother of the phone booth collection. This little ne'er-do-well is on the Trans-Canada toward Headingly. Or was. I've sped by often, trying to get out of town. Then one day I looked and it was no more. Now, I have to say, that is not just because of erosion and acts of god. A wonderful man at MTS understood this project and he gave me a list of all the phone booths in Manitoba. Even as I was tracking them they were disappearing. This one probably did get pulled out by its roots.

And notice the goofy distortion here. I know it's derelict but those poles, they were definitely not leaning into the wind.



Now, this...this...THIS is...a resort. Wrong time of year. There was a swimming pool, a frozen swimming pool.

This place is called The Lilac, and it advertises itself with a logo of a great big blue dolphin. The big blue dolphin is "standing up" on its tail fin at the edge of the pool. You tell your child—and they have to be pretty small to get through his you-know-what under the tail-fin—to go up the little stairs inside the dolphin and then jump out of the dolphin's mouth into the swimming pool.

It's the good-times version of Jonah and the Whale.

Free Parking, Alberta

Selected tripadvisor.com reviews of the UFO Landing Pad attraction in St. Paul, Alberta, rated #1 of 5 "things to do" in St. Paul. The UFO Landing Pad was built in 1967 for the Canadian Centennial, and designated international territory by the town of St. Paul.



The gift shop houses some lovely local artists and handcrafts, plus a very knowledgeable (about St. Paul and area) young woman on staff.



As a former resident of St. Paul I've seen the landing pad many times. It's worth a visit if you're in town. Not sure it's ever been used but there's always a first time. Was a Canada Centennial project that lives on.



Makes a fun selfie... that's about it. Dissatisfied by their info centre and gift shop though. Summer student never lifted his head from his iPhone to say hello... selection of items was dusty and cheesy too. Save your money and save your time.



It's exactly what you think it will be. Exactly. What you're envisioning—it's that. Gift shop, check. Lots of flags, check. Giant map, check. Wheelchair accessible, check. Sign with cut out holes for children's faces, check. By far, without a doubt, the best UFO landing site I've ever been to!



I was here years ago when Mother Theresa came to town, so had seen it before, but was very happy with the woman in the gift shop. I needed information about several things around town—restaurants, veterinarian. She was very helpful.



It has great '60s styling with updated additions. The steps and the pad (with flags behind) give a great backdrop for group photos. It's a fun, easy accessible

small town monument! The gift shop is a must visit!



Messages of intergalactic peace are very positive. A must see!



Not a fancy place but clean and friendly. Pizza is very good and lots of varieties. Two for one available too. Friendly staff.



My cohort walked here from the golf course as we were in St. Paul on a medical education trip—it was so cute. The dedication is the most hopeful, honest, and encouraging thing I've read recently. The pad itself could accommodate a UFO about the size of a Winnebago, but it's the thought that counts.



Unfortunately, the UFO landing pad was closed when I attended in May and was due to open the weekend after I returned to Ontario. I did manage to get a few pictures because I think that this place is awesome and it's right on the main road, so you can't miss it. If you are driving at night time, you definitely won't miss it. It's lit up like a giant space ship, which is why my pictures and small video are done at night time. I will try to post the video as well. You might want to check the website to see when it's open but I think that it's open until the end of the season. I have heard rave reviews about this place and next time I'm in town then I'm going to stop in and visit. Hopefully, it will be open next time. Can't wait to see you again UFO Landing Pad, St. Paul in Alberta, and family. Some pictures to view including my newest grandson.

Unfortunately, the video won't load so I'll YouTube it soon. Enjoy your visit and don't forget to rate my review please.



Built by the town in 1967. It is a real UFO landing pad. Not a toy or a joke. Paid for by government money and donations so you know it is legitimate. There is a museum with bits and pieces of UFOs (what is the plural of UFO?). Elvis will take you on a guided tour. I have been to the space needle in Seattle so I know how to judge these things.



This has been a tourist attraction for decades. It was built by a local who had the cement mixing plant in St Paul. There is places to take photos with aliens and the lights flash all the way around it. Take your kids and have some fun.



I visited that place with friends. It is not what I was exactly counting for. I thought it will be a way bigger. But hey if you are in the neighbourhood it is worth to stop for 5 minutes. there is a small shop and something a la visitor centre. Few well known photos on the walls and information board. The truth is out there. Maybe not in St. Paul, Alberta, but somewhere over there. Free parking.



I just don't get the big deal i guess, no one really could explain to me what it was about or why it was there. Of course i had pics with it because it was something different but i just found that there was more hype about it than what it turned out to be.



Criticized by some, it is a different kind of an attraction. With the talk of a Mars expedition, it seems to be more fitting now. 🌟

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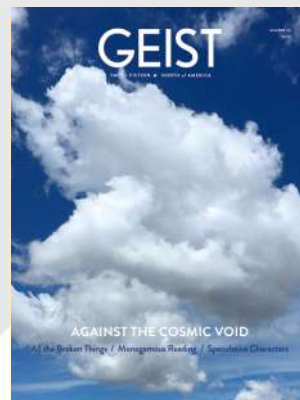
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All the Broken Things

GEOFF INVERARITY

LOOMING

Everybody's talking
about The Looming Pointless Catastrophe
how pointless it is
how much it looms.
What a catastrophe it's going to be.

We're stockpiling for the short term,
the long term we don't know.
No matter how much you prepare
there's always something new looming,
like the Unexploded Grief Bomb
we found buried deep
out in back of the house.

It's been there for decades,
we figured a previous owner,
but I'm not so sure.
Besides, it's ours now.

It's on some sort of timer
we have no idea.
Thing is, it's going to explode
sooner
or later
(hard to say which would be worse).

Someone else's Grief Bomb
went off down the street last night.
There were sirens, lights, and weeping.
So there's that.
We know about that.
We'll take a casserole or something,
as one does.

I have to admit,
I resent all this Looming.
Try not to, but there it is:
life's a bomb on a timer.

But I mean everything's fine more or less,
if you don't count what's looming.
After all,
whatcha gonna do?

TRAFFIC REPORTS IN STRANGE CITIES

*You're driving into a city you've never been to
with the radio on
listening to a traffic report
about roads and places you've never seen.*

Got the radio on

*Everything is exotic, mysterious, potential—
bigger sales, better service.
It's all better, sleeker, more exciting,
more modern than that provincial dump of a town
where you live.*

Radio on

— ...because it's another beautiful morning here in the foothills!

That makes fourteen in a row! But who's counting?

And now, here's traffic with Jen Lunaria.

How're things on the road this morning, Jen?

Thanks, Andy.

Things on the road? Well, they are not looking good, my friend. Not looking good.

Be warned, commuters! Heavy, heavy volumes.

Everything moving very slowly,

from the Benchmark all across to the Navigants.

And maybe you'd want to avoid the Bypass Memorial

Bypass Bypass today

after that big oyster meat spill.

At least keep your eyes peeled for the seagulls.

And the cars keep coming.

Got the radio on

Traffic's seriously backed up

from the Celebrant's Mall

past the Brief Sojourn Funeral Home,

beyond the Young Paupers Cemetery,

past the gates of the Old Fever Hospital.

Radio on

Detours in place around the New Dawn Research Lab even though most of the Modified Animals that broke out are already back in their restraints.

Crews are sifting through the rubble for clues though we still don't know how the animals got ahold of the guns, the ammunition, or the drugs.

And the cars just keep coming.

Got the AM Radio on

I guess everybody's heading down to the Marmite Centre for the big game, Jen.

Go Roadrunners!

Yeah, thanks, Andy. That's really not it.

I dunno, man,

the cars keep coming and coming,

and nobody knows where they're coming from.

OK, seriously, you should be thinking ahead to this evening, people.

There's no way you're making it home with this volume of traffic.

I dunno. I really don't.

I guess you better

you better

please, please

just leave work right away, now;

remember the curfew's still in effect,

and the Army have orders to shoot on sight.

ONE DAY

(for Melody)

One day we will wake up clear-headed, refreshed after an excellent night's sleep,
turn to face the day, and find well-scrubbed pots, cutlery in the right drawers,
and dishes in gleaming stacks on shelves.

One day the gutters will be clean, the deck swept and stained, the grass
green and short, plants watered, the garden weeded, the camping equipment aired,
the matches and sleeping bags dry,
the hole in the screen door patched.
One day we will have caught up with the laundry.

Now that we have all the right tools for the job, we can put them away for the last time.
We have returned all our empties and disposed of our garbage in an ethical manner,
answered our emails and paid every bill:
in short, all the chores are finished.

The last five pounds are lost, and the bloodwork came back negative.
Our pets have had all their shots, and our children, who visit often,
are healthy; they are happy and successful in every area of their lives.

We can't remember the source of a single argument,
so we dropped all our grudges and found that the bridges we burned
had been rebuilt using sturdier construction materials.

The car waits, shining, bodywork finally fixed, serviced on schedule,
tires correctly inflated, fluids replete,
ready for any journey.

One day, all the broken things will be mended.

Geoff Inverarity is one of the founders of the Gulf Islands Film and Television School. He is also a father and an award-winning screenwriter, producer and poet who splits his time between Galiano Island and Vancouver. He is currently the president of the Galiano Literary Festival. His poetry collection All the Broken Things will be published next spring by Anvil Press.

Hannibalo-God- Mozilla Against the Great Cosmic Void

LOUIS-KARL PICARD-SIOUI
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY KATHRYN GABINET-KROO



The force of impact is calculated according to the velocity of the vehicle when it collides with the noble beast's immovable body. Troubling: despite what the sign says, the distance travelled in these two kilometres cannot be quantified. The moose is just massive enough to cause creative chaos. The boiling-hot asphalt buckles the road. A strident silence announces the beginning of the performance. A secret song, a hymn to violence. The crimson chrome explodes. The shards of glass scatter across the blazing bitumen. They illustrate the most exquisite facets of the pain. The vehicle's body bellows one last time under an insolent sun. Your own body was hemmed in tight. Now, it's everywhere. Here and there.

This is your most beautiful painting and you'll never know it.

APRIL 19, 1985

Soon it will be my birthday. Again. No point in rushing, good things come to those who wait. For a fist that blackens your left eye. Or rather, your right: it's on the left when you look in the mirror. I get them confused sometimes. I wonder whether the real world is not actually the one reflected in the glass. Some say that the mirror gives access to another world, the world of spirits. Kitchike's Elders say the opposite. That mirrors keep the wraiths at bay. They're afraid of their reflection. I look at myself and think that maybe I'm a spirit too. Because I don't like to see myself in the mirror. Especially when my face is badly bruised. Mother says that it's the same thing every year: I get peevish a few days before my birthday. I grouse and get into squabbles at school. I do everything I'm not supposed to do. Mother says lots of things that I'm sure I'll learn to respect one day. For the moment, I couldn't care less. I certainly feel guilty during the thirty-two-hour sermon she inflicts on me each time, but contrary to her expectations, the lecture doesn't seem to stick. No way am I going to let someone call me *karwish*, even if, just like that little snot Sylvain who spat the word in my face, I have no idea what it means. But the tone with which he flung his venom clearly indicated that it was an insult.

"Kawishhhh!"

I wonder if it's spelled with an e?

OCTOBER 12, 2007

I met this girl, Éliane. A girl from the North. Still and always the North. Tonight, we talk about movies. She tells me about the love affair she had with Elliott when she was young. Elliott and his mountain of stuffed animals. I remember *E.T.* very well. Mother took me to the city to see this Spielberg masterpiece when I was a kid. I'd been astounded by cinema's inherent truth, and my relationship to time was changed forever. Not because of the film as such. I remember getting there late. The first in a long series of late arrivals. We had missed the beginning of the showing, but that was a minor issue because after the final credits, the movie started again as if it had no beginning or end. My mind navigated between the cosmic cycle of eternity and an uninterrupted line of Smarties that served as bait for an exosystemic Pac-Man. It was my first post-modern experience. I was eight years old.

AUGUST 28, 1990

There's a rerun of *The Dog Who Stopped the War* on TV. "War, war, that's no reason to get hurt!" During the advertisements, they show news flashes. Balaclava-wearing Natives equipped with Chinese imitations of Russian-made automatic weapons are spreading terror south of Montreal. The people want bread and circuses, but the wicked Indians refuse to share their cemetery so that the golf course can be expanded. Once again, the city is beleaguered by the bloodthirsty savages of history books. The great return of the Iroquois, those ghosts from another time who refuse to disappear before French-Montreal's Holy Empire. Kahnawake, a village of diehards surrounded by the Gallic colony of Bourrassites. The poor colonists on the South Shore watch the same channel as I do. When the movie is over, they go out into the street and throw dirt at the Elders and the children fleeing the reserve. Except that it's summer, so they throw rocks instead.

"*Kawiiiiishbbb!*"

MARCH 23, 1998

My heart is in tatters, I have no appetite. I'm nauseated by the mere thought of swallowing any food whatsoever. I am gutted. A gaping black hole has taken refuge inside me. Three years, less three months, less three days. That's how long my youthful love lasted. Stéphanie. Her name is Stéphanie Yaskawich. She woke up this morning and she no longer loved me. It's Thursday. Garbage night. She decided to clean the house, then to clean out the house. It was her turn to take the garbage cans to the curb and, while she was at it, she kicked me to the curb as well. Without anger, without hate. The most natural thing in the world. She said, "Thank you, Charles, for these wonderful years. But the two of us are finished. Over and done. I don't love you anymore." And so I left. I pummelled the garbage cans with

my fists, just to mock myself for being there, just for having existed. Mother says that I'm worth more than that. That I have a brilliant future ahead of me. That Stéphanie's the one losing out. I realize that I was wrong, finally. I've grown up a lot though I still couldn't care less what Mother says. But still I'm happy that she says it.

JULY 13, 1983

Summer brings its share of fun for Kitchike's kids. A crowd overruns the main street, little kiosks line up in a row, and feathers are brightly coloured. It's the pow-wow. Bright-eyed tourists, children with their balloons, Father Pinault's cassock and his embroidered moosehide stole, the Indian princess and her brave on horseback... And the mascots: Yogi Bear's brother, the chief in his feathered outfit, the local troupe that competes with the neighbouring city's gang of rejects and their Fur Festival. And as a bonus, this summer we have E.T. The one-and-only, the real deal. Woohoo! E.T. came back, I knew he would. He stretched out his index finger with its firefly tip and called the band council to announce his big comeback. Then, like every other piece-of-shit aristocrat or royal since Lord Durham, he decided to make his first public appearance at the Kitchike pow-wow.

God Bless the Queen!

God Bless the Alien!

God Bless the fucking pow-wow!

SEPTEMBER 1, 2012

I'm sitting on my left buttock, my back crooked, my hip against the back of the chair, my legs splayed out to the side, and I wonder why. Why I cannot beat the odds. Why I am still staring at my screen instead of sitting up straight. Or better still, standing up, putting on my jacket and going out, escaping this prison that our apartment is too quickly becoming when I'm caught between one status and another, that of agoraphilic codependent and that of single father. Everything is on the kitchen table. I have nowhere else to set up. I stare at the screen and see my reflection. I've aged, but it's still me. The same look in the eyes, the same crooked nose that pulls to the left. I mean to the right: it pulls to the right in the mirror. I still get it mixed up. But I always feel the insult when I touch it. A souvenir from a teenagers' fistfight. Probably on the eve of my birthday. It's hard to remember. I increase the screen's brightness and my reflection fades. The light dispels the darkness and restores the balance of power.

Wait, once again the question intrudes on my thoughts. I have a tangle of memories, the kind we all have when we contemplate our first years of life. What was really and truly the first movie I saw in the theatre? *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, *E.T.* or *The Empire Strikes Back*? I could have spent the rest of my life asking the question, trying to

convince myself that it's merely a detail, a footnote in the history of my existence. But tonight, I decided to stop being the victim of the hazy nature of my early memories. So I take matters in hand and google theatrical release dates.

The Empire Strikes Back: 1980.

E.T.: 1982.

The Muppets Take Manhattan: 1984.

This may explain my fascination with *Star Wars*. Ask my son about it. Just as I come to this realization, a whole new question arises: what if it wasn't *E.T.* that I'd seen out of order, opening scene after the final credits? The more I think about it, the more I think it was *The Muppets*. And I don't know if it's because I was little back then, but I envision

I didn't talk to you about it before. You scare me when you're like this." She slams the door and disappears under Tatooine's setting suns.

She has met someone. Someone else. A sundancer from the North. Tonight, she'll talk about movies with him, make plans. They'll do the pow-wow circuit, visit Navajo country. They'll watch her chick flicks under the covers. They'll make love while I watch her sister empty out our place. Suddenly, I feel the full force of Alderaan's destruction and I collapse on the sofa. I extend my arms toward the little clone that she bore, embrace him tenderly. I don't know if it's to reassure him or comfort myself. But I avoid looking him in the eye. I avoid fuelling the abyss.

I stare at the screen and see my reflection. I've aged, but it's still me. The same look in the eyes, the same crooked nose that pulls to the left.

a giant Hannibal destroying the city like Godzilla, his little left-butt-cheek cousin (probably sitting all crooked on the chair, like me). And I realize I'm thinking that Godzilla is the godlike and monstrous version of Mozilla, the non-profit company that programs the web browser I use to google movie-release dates. And I think that maybe it's Hannibalo-God-Mozilla's fault that I waste so much time obsessing in front of my computer and wandering around the Interweb instead of going out and contributing to society. Surely it was written in my tender youth, this life of constantly browsing—with no beginning or end—the countless possibilities.

And should I dare to disconnect, would I finally be set free?

FEBRUARY 6, 2011

Big black eyes stare at me, mesmerized, as my gaping mouth dispatches an endless stream of spiteful words. I am Hannibal, smashing the Manhattan skyscraper in an outpouring of rage. My fists descend on the walls, the table and everything that would hurt me. But I feel nothing. Nothing but the pain of being in the world, lost at the outer limits of rage, prisoner of my internal emptiness. My little treasure howls his inability to understand. I hardly hear the words escaping from Éliane's mouth: "This's why

DECEMBER 8, 1981

I'm lying in my bed, curled up and trembling under a mountain of blankets. I share the room with Colin, my imaginary friend, and an assembly of stuffed animals strewn here and there on the floor. The toy Elders are displayed on shelves along the wall. Unlike their lower-status cousins, they are all topsy-turvy and grey with dust. Some have belonged to several generations of my family. Members of the stuffed-toy council have the honour of standing guard while I sleep. Colin told me so because the Elders do not speak to me.

I asked Colin to intercede on my behalf. For a week now, a new addition to the furry folk has kept me awake. The Mad Hatter. A bit of printed felt attached to a wooden stick. A souvenir from the Ice Capades. His big eyes observe my slightest movements, day and night. The minute I close my eyes, he wreaks havoc in my room. He plays innocent, remaining motionless with his mocking smile, but I know. I am totally convinced that he is concocting a diabolical plan to overthrow the Elders. What's worse: he knows that I know.

Obviously, I didn't tell Mother about it. She would never believe me. "Oh, Charles, come on! You have an overactive imagination!" she'd say. I didn't discuss it with Mother, but I did with Colin. Even he thought I was

exaggerating. “It’s just a scrap of felt, Charlie. He can’t do anything against the power of the Elders.”

Just the same, the previous night, when I was going to sleep, I heard him breathing. I swear to you on my Atari, I heard his voice just as I was entering dreamland. He whispered, like a breeze:

“Kawish! *Kaaaawishbbbbb!*”

JANUARY 1, 2009

It’s two in the morning and I’m in the city, in a half-deserted hospital, tears in my eyes, heart as wide as the sky and my spirit light. In my arms, tenderly swaddled in his little green blanket, is my son. A pure being, so beautiful in all his fragility. A being made in the image of the North, the image of his mother. My contentment is so profound, so complete that I weep it out with all the water from my body. Mother

throws at her everything that he finds along the way, which is mainly empty bottles of O’Keefe. After a minute, he catches her and pins her against the counter. As he delivers a hail of blows, he bellows like a madman. He strikes and strikes again until Mother collapses on the floor.

I should be screaming too. I should be horrified by so much violence. But the truth is that I feel nothing. Absolutely nothing. I just wonder what Mother has done to deserve such punishment. To go from his “beautiful Indian princess” to a “fucking *kawish* who doesn’t care about anything but her lil’ bastard.”

The faceless man slams the door. Of the house. On his family. On my life. I take the candles out of the cake and offer Colin a piece. He’s not hungry. Neither am I. But I’m a good boy. So I eat anyway, in case the man comes back with balloons.

I should be screaming too. I should be horrified by so much violence. But the truth is that I feel nothing. Absolutely nothing.

never told me that feeling such happiness can make you cry. My progeny in my arms, I float through the grey corridors toward a nursing station where he is entitled to get his first needle prick. Standard tests, apparently. The first in a long line, if I can rely on my own medical records. I follow the blue dots on the floor. The light blue ones. You must pay attention because the dark ones lead somewhere else. I follow the Smarties, one by one, and dream of the moment when I can finally phone home and tell Mother everything. If only I too had an index finger with a firefly tip.

APRIL 20, 1978

I sit, alone at the table. In front of me, a Jos Louis cake bearing two candles. The house is upside down. A few rays of sun penetrate the broken window, making the dust motes dance in the air. The chairs are overturned, the floor covered with debris, broken bottles and perfectly round droplets of blood that draw a path from one room to the next.

Mother says that you must always save the reds for last. But for now, she says nothing. Nothing intelligible, at least. She cries, wails, moans. She beseeches all the spirits and all the saints. A faceless man pursues her through the house. He

ALMOST NOW

I often catch myself getting lost in the metatext of my own existence, where I can be subject, object and result of my autoethnobiographical research all at once. However, I have never put it down in writing and will never have another chance to do so. I thought Mother deserved at least that much. To know how much I love her. That it isn’t her fault. That she always did her best, what she believed was right, even when it was too much. She was always so proud of me. I hope that she’ll accept the results of my analysis. My last opus. The most sacred and most brilliant of my creations: my final production. I must not fail because there’ll be no second chance. A single performance to demonstrate all my glory. To shine one last time, one first time, before I die.

People tell me: “You, Charles, are a genius.” They’re actually serious. I say it’s a load of crap. Crap that massages the ego when you occasionally need to lie to yourself, but crap all the same. I learned some time ago that my way of thinking, my cerebral operating system, is unlike other people’s.

SOME TIME AGO

I realize that my cerebral operating system is unlike that of others. Although we often have the same cultural references and share, theoretically, the same universe, my mind does not process data in the same fashion and thus does not arrive at the same conclusions, nor does it present them in the same way. I believe that this is due to the reconfiguration of the brain's arborescence, which I had to manage at a very young age to circumvent a central element of my personality's binary code, thus forcing me to convert my system to quantum mode and calculate all possibilities on the basis of an exclusively feminine matrix. Some think that this has turned me into an intelligent person. I must confess that, while it gives me a certain originality, it creates all sorts of pathetic anxieties that render me powerless when faced with a host of little everyday things that many consider to be the abecedarium of resourcefulness.

Whoa.

The sofa isn't sturdy enough to support the weight of my musings, so I crawl to my bed, soaked to the bone. In my head, I hear Grandmother. I thank her for being there every day, even since her great departure. I spare a thought for my mother, my son, his mother. And all the women who acted as a mother to me, even if they weren't. And I realize what luck I've had, having so many mothers. And I bless the women of Kitchike and of all our Nations. I hold sacred all the women in the universe.

But at the same time, I realize that this isn't enough. It was never enough. No matter how many mothers, the gaping hole in my deepest self has only grown as the years pass. No success, no victory, no adrenaline rush, no moment of absence lost in the Web, no character from the fictional worlds produced by Hollywood—not E.T. or Hannibal or the damn Ewoks—nothing, absolutely nothing could fill the void.

Louis-Karl Picard-Sioui is originally from the Wendake community, near Québec City. A historian, anthropologist, writer, playwright, poet, performer and visual arts curator, he refuses to be categorized and defines himself first and foremost as a creator. He is a member of the Wendat First Nation. He is the author of the short story collection Chroniques de Kitchike.

This story appears in Amun: A Gathering of Tales, published by Exile Editions in June 2020.

NOW

I struggle to control myself. To stay awake. I'm nodding off, my mind has already begun navigating other realities. In rapid succession, each of the fractures in my existence shatters my consciousness. I let the last vial fall. I have swallowed enough pills to cure all the illnesses on the entire Earth and probably those on several planets in galaxies far, far away. I get dressed and grab my bag. No way am I going to croak between four walls. I set out on the path through the woods. Soon, Colin, I'll join you. Under the watchful eyes of the stuffed Elders, my soul will float down the grey corridors, then across the valleys, and I will follow the Smarties to La La Land, where there are no beginnings and no ends.

I took a few notes on things to do when I get to the other side. Top of the list: Sylvain, the little bully who hassled me in the schoolyard. I can still hear him, sometimes, when I close my eyes: "Kawishhhh! Kaaaawishhhh!" He was in a terrible accident last month. He was going through the park to get to the opening of his show when the sun blinked. His car took a moose to the windshield. It was all over the news. I promised myself I'd fuck him up as soon as I got there. If ever he comes back to life or is reincarnated, you can be sure that he'll never torment anyone again, the little shit.

I also had a vague thought about my grandfathers, whom I never got the chance to know. My mother always said that I resemble her father. I can't wait to see if, for once, I'll agree with her. One way or another, I imagine we'll have a lot of things to tell each other. And the last thing that comes to mind, as I cross the threshold of the door, the last thought before I lose consciousness, this final voluntary thought goes to my son. And I realize that, like me, he'll have to live with the vast abyss that eats you up inside. And I hope with all my heart that he will have enough mothers around him to fill the emptiness that I bequeath to him.

Sorry, son.

Papa has accounts to settle.

Somewhere other than here.

Kathryn Gabinet-Kroo is an American-born translator and has been a professional artist for over 40 years, exhibiting her paintings in Canada and the US. Since completing her Master's degree in Translation Studies at Concordia University, she has been passionate about translating literature, particularly fiction from Québec. Exile Editions has published four of her translated novels and two more are planned for 2020.

Enclosing Some Snapshots

The photography of Métis activist James Brady



James Brady and Madeleine Goulet, on a barge, Saskatchewan, August 1950. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-448

James Brady's life (1908–1968) is intrinsically linked to the history and politics of Métis communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Known primarily as a political activist, along with his lifelong comrade Malcolm Norris, there was another side to Brady that is less known—his penchant for taking photographs.

Covering four decades, it is questionable whether Brady ever considered these photographs to be a “record” but, intentionally or not, that is what they now are. From the Métis Settlements of Alberta in the 1930s, through the turbulent 1940s, and into the 1950s and 1960s, these images frame both individual and community Métis and Cree life in Alberta and Saskatchewan. They are also photographic evidence of Brady's deep attachment and commitment to the dignity and rights of Métis peoples at a time of impoverishment and denial of rights by provincial and federal governments.

In selecting these photographs from hundreds, my desire is to give the viewer a grasp of the extent of Brady's travels, his activism and his relationships, both political and personal, with the many Métis and Cree communities he visited. For the exhibition's title, *Enclosing Some Snapshots*, I am indebted to Métis scholar and artist Sherry Facette who also saw the value in these images and wrote about them in “‘Enclosing Some Snapshots’: James Patrick Brady, Photography, and Political Activism” in the journal *History of Photography*.

Brady was not a trained photographer, but I believe this exhibition does justice to his “eye” and his ability to convey the dignity and resilience of Métis and Cree life and people, through even the most trying of times. There is a beauty here that is reflected back to the viewer and captures Brady's passion over the course of four decades.—*Paul Seesequasis, Curator*



Harry Roberts of Stanley Mission, Saskatchewan, 1955.
Glenbow Collection PA-2218-703



Elizabeth McLeod of Stanley Mission, Saskatchewan, at Jabala Lake, Saskatchewan, ca. 1953. Glenbow Collection, PA-2218-621



Family in a Red River cart, Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, ca. 1949. Glenbow Collection, PA-2218-351

1930s

The 1930s were formative years for James Brady. During this decade he joined the new Métis Association of Alberta along with fellow political leader and activist, Malcolm Norris, which began a lifelong friendship and commitment to socialist politics. Brady was fully immersed in organizing and advocating for the Métis Settlements in Alberta—activities in which he quickly learned of the duplicity and disregard of various levels of government toward the rights of the Métis. Brady's photos of this period capture this political activity as well as family gatherings, even parties.



Peter Tomkins Sr., Emilien Boucher and family at Lac La Biche, Alberta, ca. 1934.
Glenbow Collection, PA-2218-96

1940s

As was his wont, Brady wore many hats during this decade: unpaid community organizer, paid supervisor, negotiator and, finally, soldier. Brady moved to northern Saskatchewan (along with Malcolm Norris), where he travelled to many communities. By now Brady's name was well known in the Métis and Cree communities he visited. In 1943 Brady joined the army, after initially being denied due to his Communist affiliations. He served in Holland, where he was injured twice.



Louis Garneau Junior with his banjo, St. Paul, Alberta, ca. 1931.
Glenbow Collection, PA-2218-33



Katie Budd, Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, 1949.
Glenbow Collection PA-2218-338



John Stewart and family, at Pine Bluff Indian Reserve, Cumberland District, Saskatchewan, September 1949. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-331



Anthony Brady, Thomas Fitzgerald, and Fred Lambert, standing beside their horses, at Lac La Biche, Alberta, 1934. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-100



Two Métis trappers with their dog, 1932.
Glenbow Collection PA-2218-49

1950s

After the Second World War, Brady was briefly in Alberta before moving back to northern Saskatchewan. He took on various supervisory jobs, working with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government and, no doubt, his cynicism toward the provincial and federal governments increased greatly. Always a bush man, Brady also began to spend more time in the woods, often as a prospector and surveying guide. While his idealism was wavering, his photographic eye became more focused; it is in this decade and the 1960s that his skills with the camera and the art of portraiture matured.



Team of horses pulling disc harrow, community farm, Keg River, Métis area, Alberta, 1942. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-202



Anne Christenson, Lac La Biche, Alberta, 1936. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-128



*Margaret Caisse (née Ross), in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, ca. 1963
Glenbow Collection, PA-2218-948*

1960s

Brady was a fixture in communities like Cumberland House and La Ronge, Saskatchewan. His reputation, on several levels, had become almost legendary in “NDN* country.” It is also at this time that his “snapshots” can be regarded as framing community history, such as candid portraiture of the women and men of settlements like Cumberland House. These images are a lasting photographic testament to Métis and Cree dignity and resilience that persisted, despite decades of impoverishment and racist government policies. In 1968, Brady, along with his friend Absolum Halkett, disappeared in the Foster Lake region of Saskatchewan. They were never found.

**“NDN” is self-referential slang widely used and understood in Indigenous communities; the term is a declaration of pride and solidarity among Indigenous people.*



Outdoor portrait of woman sitting on fence, March 1947. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-291



Jean Cutband, M. F. Norris and James Brady at demonstration in Regina, Saskatchewan, ca. 1961. Glenbow Collection, PA-2218-943



Outdoor portrait of the Malcolm Norris family, June 1933. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-60



Portrait of young man sitting outdoors, 1949. Glenbow Collection PA-2218-357

These images are part of the first ever exhibition of James Brady's photographs, which are held at the Glenbow Museum collections in Calgary. The exhibition was scheduled to launch in March 2020, but was delayed due to COVID-19. Supporting text was provided by the Glenbow Museum. The exhibition was curated by Paul Seesequasis. Paul Seesequasis is a nîpîsîhkopâwiyiniw (Willow Cree) writer, curator and journalist currently residing in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. For three years he has curated the Indigenous Archival Photo Project, an online and physical exhibition of archival Indigenous photographs, that explores history, identity and the process of visual reclamation. His photo book, Blanket Toss under Midnight Sun, was published by Penguin Canada in spring 2019. His writings have appeared in the Globe and Mail, the Walrus, Brick and Granta magazines, among others. He has curated numerous photography exhibitions.

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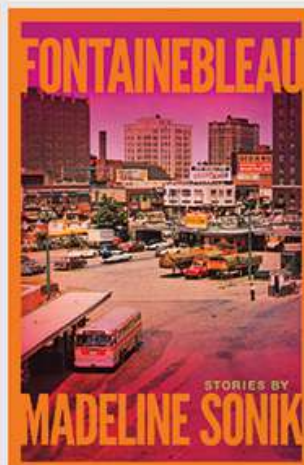
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Plague

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

What we can—and can't—learn from the plague

The illness changed everything. It originated in Asia, in the cohabitation of people with animals. Fortified by their passage through the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East, where peasants shared muddy yards with cows, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, dogs and cats, the microbes borne by fleas embedded in the fur of black rats hopped to other animals, then to people. Those infected suffered from chills and breathing difficulties; they were wracked by diarrhea and vomiting; they bled from the mouth and the rectum. Death came within days, or even hours. By 1347 the plague had reached Europe. Over the next five years, as much as half of the continent's population died. The survivors inherited a strange, empty world, where cities were quiet and peasants expanded their holdings by taking over plots of land that had been cultivated by those now deceased. The structures of feudal land tenancy began to break down. Food became cheaper, yet, over time, a shortage of agricultural labourers hampered Europe's food production.

The plague did not go away. It came back in waves. The poet Geoffrey Chaucer, who would have heard of the Black Death as a child in England in the 1340s, must have witnessed the outbreaks of the 1360s as a young man. In "The Pardoner's Tale," Chaucer wrote: "An unseen thief, called Death, came stalking by/ Who hereabouts makes all the people die." Societies went into lockdown again and again. In early seventeenth-century England the theatrical career of William Shakespeare was interrupted at crucial points when



social distancing closed theatres for months or years; forty years later Pedro Calderón de la Barca, one of the greatest playwrights of the era, suffered a similar fate in Spain.

The changes brought on by the disease were moral, political, even biological. One of the inspirations for "The Pardoner's Tale" was Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, completed in about 1353. In this massive, monstrously entertaining book, ten well-born people aged between eighteen and twenty-eight flee Florence, Italy, where the plague has killed nearly one hundred thousand people, to go into self-isolation in farmhouses in the hills. Boccaccio observes that though all of the young women in the group are devout and dressed in mourning garb, he will not call them by their real names because, "I do not want any of them to feel shame in the future because of the ensuing stories, which they either listened to or told themselves." The plague, Boccaccio remarks, relaxed the rules of morality. In the face of death, pleasure took precedence over propriety. For ten days Boccaccio's pious young people tell each other the filthiest, most lascivious stories they can think up. During a hiatus in this verbal orgy, one of their leaders remarks that, "since everything has been turned upside down nowadays... the laws, divine as well as human, have fallen silent."

The memory of the plague was passed down to later centuries. In Sigrid Undset's epic novel of life in fourteenth-century Norway, *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1927), which some

critics regard as the greatest historical novel of the twentieth century, most of the central characters die of the plague. The protagonist, Kristin, by this point in the story a woman in late middle age, leaves her farm to live in a convent where she, also, contracts the illness and dies. While most of her family perishes, one of Kristin's sons is immune to the disease. The recognition that he is a genetic fluke alters his morality: "he had plunged into wild living, as had many young men in this desperate pass... Even honourable burghers' wives and young maids of the best kindreds ran from their homes in this evil time; in company with the women of the bordels they caroused in the inns and taverns."

Those who were genetically less disposed to die from the plague became the stock from which Europe's population was replenished. One hundred and forty years later, in the late fifteenth century, the descendants of the plague's survivors invaded the Americas. The microbial shock between the post-plague, ethnically mixed colonizers and the much more ethnically uniform Indigenous people, who had no history of cohabiting with livestock or being genetically groomed for survival against animal-borne diseases, caused Indigenous populations in the Americas to plummet by ninety percent even before oppressive colonial systems were fully implemented. In Europe, meanwhile, the post-plague shortage of agricultural labourers continued to inhibit food production. The crisis was particularly acute in Portugal, one of the continent's poorest countries. By opening up trading relations with societies from Sierra Leone to the southern Congo, initially in fabric, salt and gold, but later in the tainted commodity of human beings, between 1441 and 1505 the Portuguese brought more than 150,000 Africans into their country as slaves. Arriving in a nation whose population was barely one million people, the Africans changed Portugal's ethnic

composition. Portugal's importation of Africans to work in its fields initiated the Atlantic slave trade, which would continue for four centuries and create the modern African-descended populations of the Americas. Population depletion in rural Europe was the impetus behind the slave trade, which, in turn, depleted the populations of large areas of the African interior. Portugal went on to colonize Cabo Verde, Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. One of the ironies of later Portuguese colonialism in Africa was that, since nearly fifteen percent of the population of fifteenth-century Portugal was African—a population that did not remain a discrete ethnic group, but rather became indistinguishable from other Portuguese as the result of centuries of miscegenation—most of the white colonial administrators sent out from Lisbon in the nineteenth century to run the colonies had remote African ancestry.

No one foresaw these changes. A woman dying in a convent in Norway, a peasant afflicted by plague in the south of France, a family of children watching each other cough and bleed in rural Portugal or a young person in a tavern venting their bewilderment at having been spared, could not know that their suffering would weaken the feudal system, facilitate the colonization of the Americas or become a catalyst for the Atlantic slave trade. We know little more. Our laboratories can test individuals and project infection patterns. They cannot predict what will be obvious to those who look back on this time in future centuries: how illness changed history.

Stephen Henighan's sixth novel, The World of After, will be published in late 2021. Read more of his work at geist.com and stephenhenighan.com. Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.

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Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice

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Julie Nagam
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Becoming Our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice, edited by Julie Nagam, Carly Lane, and Megan Tamati-Quennell reflects on international Indigenous methodologies in curatorial practice from the geographic spaces of Canada, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia to assert specific cultural knowledges, protocols and relationships. These knowledges are grounded in continuous international exchanges and draws on the breadth of work within the field.

Léon Bloy and His Monogamous Reader

ALBERTO MANGUEL

Dogged dedication grants a reader vicarious immortality

Rarely is a fulfilling explanation given to the relationship between two beings. The seemingly fortuitous pairings of lovers, friends, leisure comrades or working partners depends on too-complex or too-delicate motives for our ordinary comprehension: Sherlock Holmes and Watson, Don Quixote and Sancho, Tom and Jerry are not evident couples and yet it is impossible to question the bonds that bind them. Even less evident are the love affairs between readers and their books. Why St. Augustine pines for Virgil's *Aeneid* and Holden Caulfield for Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* cannot be answered in any fully satisfactory way. Chance, personal circumstances, a particular taste for this or that, a secret longing or a hidden obsession may go a little way to explain our passion for one book or one author and not another, but behind these heart-pulls are invisible strings like those that hold certain constellations together in the sky.

It should therefore come as no surprise to learn that a certain shy and soft-spoken nineteen-year-old Bourguignon student of the École Normale, born in the Saône-et-Loire in 1890, became passionately attached to the irascible, vehemently partisan, vociferous and irrepressible works of Léon Bloy, who was none of these things in his private life. The question, however, persists: why Bloy?

The student in question, Joseph Bollery, discovered Léon Bloy in 1909, through an anthology of Bloy's



writings, recommended to Bollery by a schoolmate. Bollery felt "charmed by the intense poetry and by the incomparable style," and read everything he could find by this strange author. He pursued his reading of Bloy during his teaching career and during World War I, which left him terribly wounded. After the war, he settled in La Rochelle, working as secretary of police, and later as officer of the judicial police. Bollery eventually became Bloy's biographer and one of his most lucid critics. He died in La Rochelle on April 13, 1967, no doubt holding a volume by his favourite author in his hands. In 1980, the Bibliothèque municipale de La Rochelle acquired Bollery's entire Bloy collection from his heirs. To this, the library has added other related treasures, such as the original autographed manuscript of Bloy's *A Byzantine Epic*, exquisitely bound by René Kieffer with a design of four interlocked birds on the front. Bloy is yet to be

discovered broadly by English-speaking readers. I would recommend starting with his *Disagreeable Tales*, translated by Erik Butler and published in 2015 by Wakefield Press.

The Bibliothèque municipale de La Rochelle was lodged, until the late 1990s, in the old bishop's residence, occupying the site since the late eighteenth century. Today it has been replaced by the Mediathèque Michel Crépeau, a magnificent modern building facing the medieval towers and the port of La Rochelle. The architecture inside hints at the shipping business for which the city is famous: graceful reading rooms, splendid vistas, generous space for the collections lend the library the atmosphere of the inside of a ship, and make it a place particularly suited for study and consultation. And singular collections such as Bollery's Bloy material seem perfectly at home in this intimate space.

A few years after his first readings, Bollery gave a lecture on Bloy, which was printed by Bloy's friends as a small pamphlet entitled *A great unknown French writer*; this led René Martineau, a colleague of Bloy's, to offer Bollery the directorship of a magazine dedicated to Bloy's oeuvre. The first issue of the *Cahiers Léon Bloy* appeared in 1924 and carried on until 1939, with Bollery fulfilling the tasks not only of director but also of secretary, writer and proofreader.

Like those lovers who, in the novels of chivalry, never meet their beloved in the flesh and only know them through their works and their portraits, Bollery never met Bloy. Only after Bloy's death did Bollery meet his widow, Jeanne-Léon Bloy, and later their youngest daughter, Madeleine. These family contacts allowed Bollery access to Bloy's manuscripts, to the twenty-four volumes of the unpublished journal and to many other papers.

Through his work at the *Cabiers* and his friendship with Bloy's family, Bollery managed, throughout the years, to amass a great deal of Bloy material. It is moving to see the collection lovingly put together by a reader who grew up reading his subject, following Bloy's work from book to book and from anecdote to anecdote, first as the adolescent who glimpses something which he cannot fully understand the attraction of but must nevertheless acknowledge, then as the erudite scholar, capable of analyzing and judging fairly. Unfortunately, Bollery was not a rich man and he was unable to purchase many of Bloy's documents that passed through his hands. Instead, with singular devotion, Bollery copied out, by hand, many of the writings: journals, notes, letters, literary pieces. With his profound knowledge of Bloy's life and work, and with his copied archives (and several original documents, including various drafts of Bloy's novel about Marie Antoinette, corrected proofs of three volumes of the journals, dozens of letters), Bollery completed a colossal three-volume biography of his literary hero, published by Albin Michel between 1947 and 1954.

We can only imagine the sober Bollery's impressions as he perused, for example, Bloy's random notes—ideas for essays, original insults, aphorisms and the like, against false piety, bourgeois hypocrisy, corrupt journalism, mercantile greed—such as these, copied from a 1904 Bloy manuscript:

Justice and pity are the same thing.

It stinks of God in this place!

I can't understand how a hand touches a newspaper without a shudder of disgust.

In the blackest night, on a black table, a black ant. God sees it.

There is in the department of Tarn et Garonne a municipality that bears the name of Our Lady of Miseries.

The Devil is sentimental.

Napoleon had a taste for the subjunctive tense.

Wherever there's an imbecile, there's danger.

To show evil as precisely as possible, with rigorous exactitude, it's indispensable to exaggerate.

A decade or so after Bollery fell in love with the works of Léon Bloy, one of his contemporaries across the Atlantic, as shy and soft-spoken as Bollery had been, read the books with equal fervour, though not with any desire physically to collect the manuscripts. Jorge Luis Borges, in Argentina, discovered Bloy and wrote about him, and something of what Borges thought of Bloy might explain Bollery's passion. "The sedentary and pusillanimous Léon Bloy transformed himself into two irascible creatures: the sniper Marcheboir [one of Bloy's pseudonyms], terror of the Prussian armies, and the pitiless polemicist we know today and who, for the present generations, is no doubt the real Bloy. He forged a matchless style that, according to our mood, can seem unbearable or magnificent. In any case, it is one of the most vigorous of all literature." It is possible that Bollery felt in this double creature a reflection of his own unrealized self, the wounded soldier and the quiet scholar.

In fact, it is in his work as reader of Bloy (and his contemporaries, since Bollery read, for the sake of his favourite writer, all those who were part of Bloy's circle) that Bollery achieved a sort of modest fame. The French biographical dictionaries assiduously ignore, for the most part, Bollery and his achievements, and only grant him a sort of vicarious immortality in association with the writer he so faithfully read and promoted. There were, no doubt, others who from time to time, attracted Bollery's attention outside Bloy's circle, but these were passing nocturnal interests that held no importance for him in the morning. Bollery was that rarest of things in the world of books, a monogamous reader.

Borges listed Bloy's universal disgusts and impartial contradictions: "I abhorred England, which he called 'the infamous island', as much as he abhorred Germany, Belgium and the United States. It's superfluous to add that he was an anti-Semite, though one of his best books is called *Salvation through the Jews*. He denounced Italian perfidy, called Zola 'the Cretin of the Pyrenees,' he insulted Ernest Renan, Anatole France, Paul Bourget, all of the symbolist poets and, in general, the entire human race." Surely such furious verve must be exulting to a timid man.

Late in life, Borges was to remark that "a writer writes what he can; a reader reads what he wants," perhaps forgetting that these words were a variation on an observation by Bloy: "Talent does whatever it wishes to do, genius does what it can," words which Bollery dutifully copied out. Perhaps this was the talented freedom that Bollery sought, and found, as reader of Léon Bloy.

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 guish.com 57

ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

CONTAGION DURING A PANDEMIC

Watching Steven Soderbergh's 2011 film *Contagion* again, in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, it seemed much less overwrought and histrionic—less of a zombie-free horror film—than it had the first time I'd watched it, nine years ago. This time around, *Contagion* played almost as if it were a straightforward documentary film—one on which a few minor fictional embellishments had been overlaid (or did it more closely resemble a feature-length public service announcement, the earnest efforts of a few well-intentioned Hollywood A-listers—Gwyneth Paltrow, Matt Damon, Jude Law, and Kate Winslet among them—who'd pooled their talents in a desperate attempt to save the world? “For God’s Sake, Don’t Eat the Free Peanuts in That Little Bowl on the Counter of the Airport Bar!”; “And Don’t Touch Anything without Gloves!”). By mid-March of 2020 *Contagion* had become more popular than ever, ranking among the top ten films offered on Netflix Canada and on iTunes. It had become the centrepiece of everyone’s private Pandemic Film Fest (along with *The Andromeda Strain*, *12 Monkeys* and the 1994 miniseries adaptation of Stephen King’s *The Stand*). *Contagion*’s more-or-less accurate portrayal of events seemed to confirm the film’s overall reliability. As a result we watched *Contagion* to feel grateful for “Bullets That We’d Somehow Dodged” (no armed B&Es in our neighbourhood, thank god!); we wondered about various “Missing and Deleted Scenes” (what happened to

toilet paper hoarding?). Mainly, though, we watched *Contagion* to determine where we were on the pandemic timeline, in particular, to learn “What Might Be Coming Next.” So: just what *did* I learn with *Contagion* as my guide? That a vaccine would be found!—and much sooner than our official spokespeople had been saying (other than Trump, that is, who



famously insisted that a cure was, in fact, already among us, in the form of a miraculous antimalarial drug, to be combined with UV light, and—possibly—injecting bleach). According to *Contagion*, the world could expect a vaccine to be discovered on or about Day 131 of the pandemic. Which, by my calculations, meant something like mid-May. Unfortunately, we seem to have missed that deadline—which confirms my secret fear that *Contagion* is, in the end, more of a hopeful fantasy and less of a documentary than I had wished.

—Michael Hayward

PANDEMIC NON-READING

Looking for a book NOT to read during a pandemic? You might consider *Midnight in Chernobyl* (Simon & Schuster), about the devastating nuclear accident in Ukraine in 1983. I began it just about the time the world was shutting down. As the Coronavirus made its implacable way across Europe and then to North America, I was being educated about the many different things that can go wrong in a badly designed nuclear power plant. Steadily my mood darkened and my anxiety level rose. The daily news was bad enough, but Adam Higginbotham’s relentless narrative was truly scary. At one point following the initial “incident”—which was caused by a combination of faulty design and human error—the burning reactor was within days, perhaps hours, of a huge explosion that would have sent clouds of poisonous radiation westward, making much of Europe uninhabitable for a century. Only the bravery of a small group of firefighters, all of whom died, managed to forestall an Armageddon much worse than our pandemic. As it was, a large part of Ukraine had to be permanently evacuated; it is now known as “the Zone of Alienation.” The accident was hair-raising enough; then I had to endure close descriptions of what radiation sickness does to its victims. I seemed to be purposefully giving myself nightmares. Of course I could have quit reading, but the book is so riveting, the characters and events so well drawn, that I had to find out what happened (even though, in a general sense, I already

knew). That said, I've never been as happy to come to the end of a book. Apparently there is an award-winning HBO miniseries about the accident. It can wait. —*Dan Francis*

REEL LOVE

The Forbidden Reel (directed by Ariel Nasr and screened as part of DOXA 2020) is a documentary about the activities and archives of Afghan Films, Afghanistan's national film production company, active from the late 1960s. Some films in the archives date back to the 1920s; most were made between 1946 and 1996, when the Taliban captured Kabul. Throughout *The Forbidden Reel* are gorgeous clips of Afghanistan life and stills from behind the scenes of shoots. Actors, filmmakers, and others involved with the productions and their restoration talk about the meaning and importance of

moving images—as idea, art, imagination—showing glorious and inspiring representations of their country over time. The history of the medium is evident in the way the clips look on screen; according to one interviewee, communist projectors common in the country in the 1980s were large and clunky and left long scratches on the films in the archive, scratches still evident in their digitized form. After Afghanistan's Communist revolution in 1978, government funding for film increased, women could work, and more roles were developed for them; these conditions led to a golden age of Afghan filmmaking. But in the 1990s government funding for filmmaking was cut and Afghan Films was reduced to a few staff watching over a neglected space without electricity or equipment. Appalling preservation conditions threatening the films' survival were amplified by the actions of ideological members of government who hated

film, shut theatres and forbade women from starring in movies. In response to a tip-off from a Taliban minister of a forthcoming raid, Afghan Films staff risked their lives in order to hide and de-identify films, to try and save them from destruction. These same staff, together with others, like artist and professor Mariam Ghani, speak passionately about their work to restore these films by cleaning and cataloguing them, labelling, rehousing them in canisters, adding leader tape, and eventually, digitizing them. Filmmaker Ariel Nasr spent five years watching films in a small screening room in Afghanistan while working on *The Forbidden Reel* and contributed to their preservation by supporting the digitization of clips with the help of technician Marie France Rousseau at the NFB in Montreal. In the film, Nasr explains how he came to the project: his father lost all his family photographs in a house fire during the war in



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Afghanistan; Nasr himself grew up in Canada and collected images of Afghanistan, feeling guilty for his privileged, conflict-free life. Collecting, watching, making and distributing copies of films were his personal acts of preservation, a way to contribute to the legacy of a country's history on film.

—Shyla Seller

LET'S GO FOR A WALK...

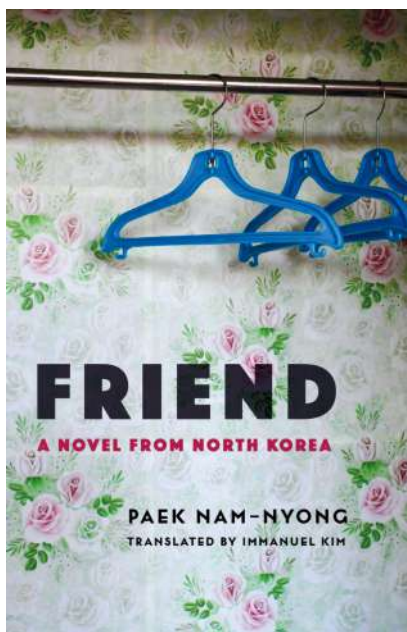
...around Lost Lagoon in Stanley Park with Betsy Warland, AKA *Oscar of Between*, AKA *The Human*, founder of the SFU Writer's Studio and Vancouver Manuscript Intensive, and the author of thirteen books. The miracle of **Lost Lagoon / lost in thought: prose poems** (Caitlin Press) is that although Warland does all the talking during this walk, you come away feeling like you've been closely listened to. By using the self-description "The Human" and avoiding the pronoun "I," the author places herself as one among many inhabitants, one among many species, and relieves us of the insistence on self and identity. Unsurprisingly, in that openness, we feel ourselves more, not less, present. The Human's experience of Lost Lagoon is accompanied by visions of poet E. Pauline Johnson, part Mohawk, part English, paddling at high tide when the water was part of the ocean. The Human wants us to read Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver*, which sold 10,000 copies in 1911. The Human visits Lost Lagoon over five years. Rich in simplicity, *Lost Lagoon's* 79 pages allow us to experience time rather than get through it. Meet the swans, beavers, otters, herons, crows, Canada geese, eagles, coots, the Swan Lady, the Beaver Lady, ducks, turtles, and "poorly sighted raccoons (who) stroke the ground for seeds with such sensitivity, as if they are reading braille." By walk's end you have shared five years of life *in* a place, five years of the life *of* a place. The lagoon

becomes a body, adapting to its diminishment over time, surviving, providing ample respite in its arms, light rippling off its surface.

—Claudia Casper

A KOREAN FRIEND

In **Friend** (Columbia University Press) by Paek Nam-nyong (translated by Immanuel Kim) Judge Jeong Jin Wu must decide whether Chae Sun Hee and Lee Seok Chun should be allowed to file for divorce. In North Korea, where the story takes place, the judge must talk to the husband and the wife separately, and also to the People's



Committee, the manager of the factory where Seok Chun works and the deputy director of the Provincial Performing Arts Company where Sun Hee performs as a singer. Judge Jeong Jin is a loyal North Korean and a sensitive man who re-examines his own domestic life while he learns more about the problems of the unhappy couple. His view of divorce is that "The law protects the entity of the family, as it is a component of society. It's not an easy matter to destroy a piece of the nation." During their conversations with the judge, both Sun Hee and Seok Chun describe the

beginnings of their relationship in a more romantic way than we are used to reading in western literature, but when they recount the misunderstandings and anger behind their current problems, the story is familiar. The lengthy but highly readable afterword tells the story of the author's life and places his work within "a literary approach that began in the 1980s, aimed at getting rid of 'socialist realism' and 'revolutionary romanticism'—idealizing the heroic struggle and sacrifice—to deal with the lives of ordinary people." It goes on to say that "almost all the North Korean writing we have access to in English translation is by dissidents or defectors. *Friend* is unique in the Anglophone publishing landscape in that it is a state-sanctioned novel, written in Korea for North Koreans, by an author in good standing with the regime." And it's a great read.

—Patty Osborne

ZEN IN ECOTOPIA

In **Learning to Die: Wisdom in the Age of Climate Crisis** (University of Regina Press), Robert Bringhurst and Jan Zwicky offer a Buddhist-Socratic take on climate doom. Their point is simple: instead of relying on technocrats to soften the effects of the climate crisis—mass migrations, flooded coastlines and atolls, untameable wildfires, food shortages, large-scale desertification—we ought to let "the facts form a poem" and spend more time on living meaningful lives. Turn to wisdom, they say, instead of obsessing over facts and inventions: the humanities might allow us to better confront a world of mass extinctions and ecological collapses. But Bringhurst and Zwicky must know that their words will find little purchase outside (and maybe even inside) the ecotopia west of the Cascades. I might even say their enlightened pessimism is as limited as the arrogant optimism of green consumerism. In every cataclysmic shift in recorded history, surely we

can find words written in line with what *Learning to Die* offers, and surely it is those who stand on privileged ground that most readily listened to the so-called wisdom. Yes, humans will not destroy *everything*. As Zwicky and Bringhurst say, *à la* Buddhism, “being will still be here” and “beauty will still be here.” But is this thinking not the final point of a chain of logic that relieves us in the post-industrial West of the anguish and guilt we have accumulated for driving climate change with our unsustainable, mass-scale practices? In the past, Chinese hermits survived dynastic changes—which were marked by catastrophes, often in the backdrop of climate shifts—and their writings flourished. These learned men learned to let go of the material world—they learned to die, as Zwicky and Bringhurst would say—but the majority of Chinese citizens could not take to the hills and had to, in the thick of turmoil, learn how to survive. The most

drastic changes to come will not be felt in Vancouver or Victoria or Salt Spring Island but in the High Arctic, the South Pacific, and in the poorer lands in the middle latitudes between.
—Anson Ching

UNITY, ORDER AND EQUILIBRIUM

It’s a good thing that **OO** (Invisible Publishing) has the subtitle *Typewriter Poems*, so that you’ll have no doubt what’s between the covers. To me, *OO* suggests the eyes of Little Orphan Annie, perpetually astonished at the world she sees. I guess that’s apt, because the fifty typewriter poems in this volume are both thought provoking and beautifully crafted. Dani Spinosa, in her introduction, says the collection “works to forge a community out of visual poets who continue to create softness in a kind of poetics strangely named *concrete*.” She pays trib-

ute to dozens of visual poets, some well known in the field, such as Bob Cobbing, bpNichol and Emmett Williams, and some whose work I admit to having no knowledge of, such as Thomas A. Clarke and Eric Schmaltz. An entire section, titled “A Lack,” is devoted to female visual poets, including such early innovators as Mirella Bentivoglio, Paula Claire, Mary Ellen Solt, Colleen Thibaudeau, and Vancouver’s own Judith Copithorne. An especially reverent poem appears in a section titled “A Lone,” where a typewritten design slowly brings forth these words: “the night leonard cohen died / i took two shots of stoli / and thought / oh great now / no one / feels / in poetry / anymore.” *OO* ends with the section, “Like, That is Femmeship: An Afterword in Feminist Conversation Between Dani Spinosa and Kate Siklosi.” At first, I was uncertain why this afterword was essential to the book, but for readers who don’t want the pages to end, it’s a relief to eavesdrop on what sounds like late-



night, Stoli-fueled repartee. I just wish that those two poets had ruminated on how typewriters, like vinyl, are mysteriously making an astounding comeback.
—*Fill Mandrake*

FIGHTING FIRES

A friend of mine recently recommended **Little Fires Everywhere**, both the bestselling novel by Celeste Ng and its limited-series adaptation on Amazon Prime Video. Naturally, I spent a weekend becoming one with my couch as I binge-watched all eight episodes.

The show casts Reese Witherspoon (Elena) and Kerry Washington (Mia) as two very different mothers. Elena the suburban mother controls everything in her life—her husband may only make love to her on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Mia wanders the country making art, never staying anywhere too long (she may or may not be running from her past). Mia and her daughter are new to town, and Elena demonstrates her white saviour complex in the complicated ways she welcomes them in. The series tackles many thorny subjects—racism, white privilege, sexuality, misogyny, postpartum depression, abortion, and transracial adoption—but despite the abundance of themes, the show is somehow both busy and boring. Characters aren't fleshed out enough, making many of their choices feel unrealistic or melodramatic. I found myself squinting at my television, desperately searching for someone to root for. The characters seem more like portraits than people, as—despite their flailing—no one moves. Not a single character develops or grows over the course of the series. I've heard that the novel's conflict is understated, nuanced, and complex. In its shiny TV adaptation, the conflict is constant. Mid-series, it seems like the writers decided to crank certain characters right up to villain

status, just in case we missed their earlier, more subtle wrongdoings. For some, *Little Fires Everywhere* may still be worth a watch to provoke discussion on racism and white privilege. But believable characters could have saved the plot from burning out.

—*Kathleen Murdock*

BROKEN HEARTED

Comics Will Break Your Heart (Roaring Brook Press) is the Vancouver artist Faith Erin Hicks's first novel, a sweet coming-of-age story of two comics-obsessed teens in rural Nova Scotia. As a YA romance, this one is pretty run-of-the-mill, adapted



for the comics nerd: Miriam and Weldon have their meet-cute in the struggling comics shop where Miriam works, when she saves new-in-town Weldon from the teen hooligans who are after him. Despite the discovery that Weldon is heir to the *Tomorrow-Men* comics fortune, and grandson of the man who stripped Miriam's grandfather of fame and fortune, they strike up a friendship that develops into a summer romance. Besides the feud between their families, Miriam

struggles with issues with her friends, what she wants to do after high school and the boredom of living in a small town. *Comics Will Break Your Heart* addresses various issues in the comics industry—such as intellectual property rights, fair payment for artists, the widening gap between artistic integrity and mainstream money with the advent of the major superhero film franchise, and criticisms of “fake geek girls”—but never in a way that feels overbearing. As something of a comics enthusiast myself (and someone who enjoys a YA romance), this book was a good time. I read it in nearly one sitting. Miriam had relatable problems, and Weldon was just glitzy enough to be a good suitor. My only complaint is that perhaps there was not as much delicious Romeo-and-Juliet angst as I wanted: honestly, it seemed like pretty smooth sailing for our protagonists, but it made the book no less satisfying.

—*Kelsea O'Connor*

ESCAPING ORTHODOXY

Unorthodox (Netflix) is curiously entertaining for a show about female oppression, religious orthodoxy and the holocaust. The miniseries follows a young woman, Esther, who flees her Hasidic community in Williamsburg, New York, for a liberated future in Berlin. Through a series of flashbacks we learn about Esther's life as an obedient daughter and wife. Forbidden from reading the Torah, singing or playing piano, she serves her husband, keeps house and wears ankle-length skirts with turtleneck sweaters. After her wedding, to preserve her modesty her long blonde hair is shaved and she dons a wig. Esther's bedroom (the site of much strife in her marriage) features two perfectly pressed single beds and a Styrofoam wig-stand looming on the cabinet. In Berlin, Esther makes friends with an

eclectic group of musicians, discovers skinny jeans and lipstick and pursues a scholarship to a music college. The contrast between Esther's Berlin life and the life she left behind is stark, and occasionally what happens in Williamsburg ignites indignation (the image of a teenage girl having her hair shaved for the sake of "modesty" comes to mind). However, most of the time I couldn't help but sympathize with the plausible characters and their struggles. We are frequently reminded that Williamsburg was formed post-1945 by Jewish people fleeing death camps, a trauma that plays out in small and subtle scenes, for example one in which Esther's grandmother is bentdouble, crying while listening to her father's favourite song. And this trauma seeps into all the characters, including the men, who are also victims of oppression. Esther's father is an alcoholic, her husband is young, confused and desperate to uphold the sacred principles of his vulnerable community, and Moishe, who is sent to fetch Esther, is a gambling addict haunted by a bad reputation. These myriad nuances are built upon fastidious research. Inspired by the story of Deborah Feldman and her novel of the same name, the show hired a consultant to advise on fashion and ceremonial tradition, and to train the actors on the specific dialect spoken by Samtar Jews in Williamsburg—the primary language spoken throughout. In doing so, the creators invite us into a story that is ripe with detail and character. I felt like I was in Williamsburg, observing a culture completely alien to my own. And while this conflict between a culture we know and that of a closed-off society lies at the heart of the series, what makes *Unorthodox* remarkable is its ability to play with this contrast without dealing in black and white.

—Kate Helmore

INTO THE HEART OF THE LANDSCAPE

The young protagonist of Theresa Kishkan's novella, **The Weight of the Heart** (Palimpsest Press), is Isabel (or Izzy), a graduate student of literature writing her thesis on the works of Ethel Wilson and Sheila Watson, two authors whose groundbreaking novels, published during the 1950s, were set, in part, in the distinctive landscapes of BC's interior. Izzy is mourning the recent loss of her brother James, drowned while kayaking the Fraser River near Lytton. As Izzy grieves, "[carrying] sorrow down the trail like a broken bird," she prepares to travel alone up the Fraser Canyon, hoping to map specific sites that had inspired Wilson and Watson. Later, for example, she will wonder whether a roadside pine "might have been one of the trees Maggie Lloyd [a character in Ethel Wilson's *Swamp*

Angel] saw as she drove towards her cherished life at Three Loon Lake, away from the bitterness of her second husband, the odious Edward Vardoe." In a sense Kishkan the author is also, here, Kishkan the reader, engaged in an ongoing conversation with the authors—and the books—which have long occupied her own heart. *The Weight of the Heart* is a gem of a book, which, as soon as I was done, inspired me to reread *Swamp Angel*, set in 1950s Vancouver and in the sage and pine-scented hills around Kamloops. Absorbed in its pages, I could (provided I stayed in the background, and didn't interrupt) hang out once again with the unforgettable and independent Mrs. Severance, former circus juggler (now widowed and retired), and admire the inner strength of the quieter, though equally intrepid, Maggie Lloyd.

—Michael Hayward

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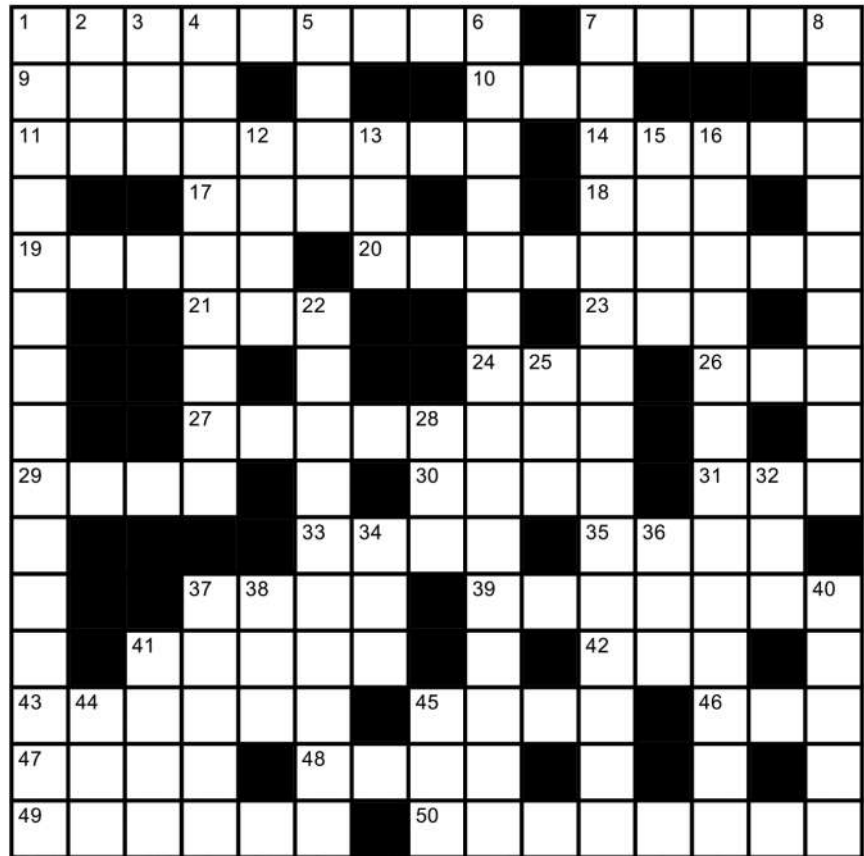
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ACROSS

- 1 The lonely sound of one hand playing (9)
- 7 In the east, Clementine would have lived in a cottage (5)
- 9 As alternatives, those rock! (4)
- 10 These days, when a store is as wild as this, it's dangerous (3)
- 11 Sounds like that kid is letting us know how cold she is (9)
- 14 Go up there on that horse (5)
- 17 When I was a lad I loved Russian transportation (4)
- 18 Security keeps trying to call my parental unit before they got married (abbrev) (3)
- 19 Did Don not give a damn about his family or was he just in it for the publicity? (5)
- 20 She will like her bit part on cloud nine (3) (4,2,3)
- 21 Put the dishes on that surface so we can fill them up. Then make the list (abbrev) (3)
- 23 Would you rather go to school in Courtenay or in Latin America with Daniel? (abbrev) (3)
- 24 I see you're at the beginning of your party (3)
- 26 Lots of people count them one by one by one (3)
- 27 Under the sun in Italy, I sang about putting moose oil on the bottom of my shoe (3) (8)
- 29 When she peeks at her bed, she'll wish she was single (4)
- 30 Thank you for that British song even though it was silly (4)
- 31 Liz certainly has a green thumb! (3)
- 33 Go back and talk to her nicely! (4)
- 35 He paid my rent but prevented me from leaving (4)
- 37 Don't stop banging at 7 (4)
- 39 After she's danced around, hop up and hit the pedal, OK? (7)
- 41 Use your debit to buy this paperless solution (5)
- 42 Hey kid, which digits will you learn in Toronto? (abbrev) (3)
- 43 His remarks were more asinine than mine (6)
- 45 That little black-haired girl sang while she stretched to reach a citrus fruit (4)



- 46 Those like Bob and Carl have an outlet for their anger (3)
- 47 When asked if she knew Nonet, it sounds like Angela answered in the negative (4)
- 48 Steven was tied at 2 (4)
- 49 The men chattered and fumed before the attack (6)
- 50 In the end, that damn dude kept texting me more material! (8)

DOWN

- 1 If you're over 50, don't take that cashiering girl to the party (2) (6,9)
- 2 When did Parry send Robert out in the cold? (3)
- 3 Sounds like he was horizontal in the meadow (3)
- 4 I'm anti-oil, so I'm going to stay over here by myself (9)
- 5 They just lay there for a week! (4)
- 6 I imagine things got heavy when the American wrote rhymes about Italy (3) (4,6,5)
- 7 That uncool Somme book is eating up my usual reading material (2) (6,9)
- 8 The way Richard acts when he's famous (9)
- 12 Gotta hand it to you! (4)
- 13 Sounds like the shooter was polite when he took all the marbles (3)
- 15 I'm on! Everywhere! (4)
- 16 The Macedonian cup really stands alone (13)
- 22 Erotics led her to seclusion (10)
- 25 Throw away that bad rubbish (3)

- 28 They made sure the horse's story was accurate (3)
- 32 They had dinner after 7:00 (3)
- 34 In the Maritimes the old-timers are regular (abbrev) (3)
- 36 That increase sounds a little bit scary (3)
- 37 The sun never shines when he yearns for it (5)
- 38 What's that song about a nightingale perched on a Grecian urn? (3)
- 40 I imagine one day he'll fall asleep with his pipe (5)
- 41 No smoking, no loitering, no reading that (4)
- 44 Try to dance with heavy breathing but no striking (3)
- 45 In the meadow, he stretched out 300 yards of cotton (3)

There was no winner for Puzzle 115.

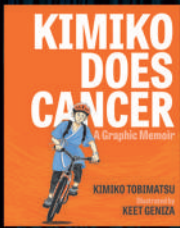


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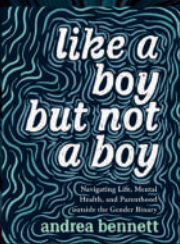
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Sybil Lamb

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