GEIST

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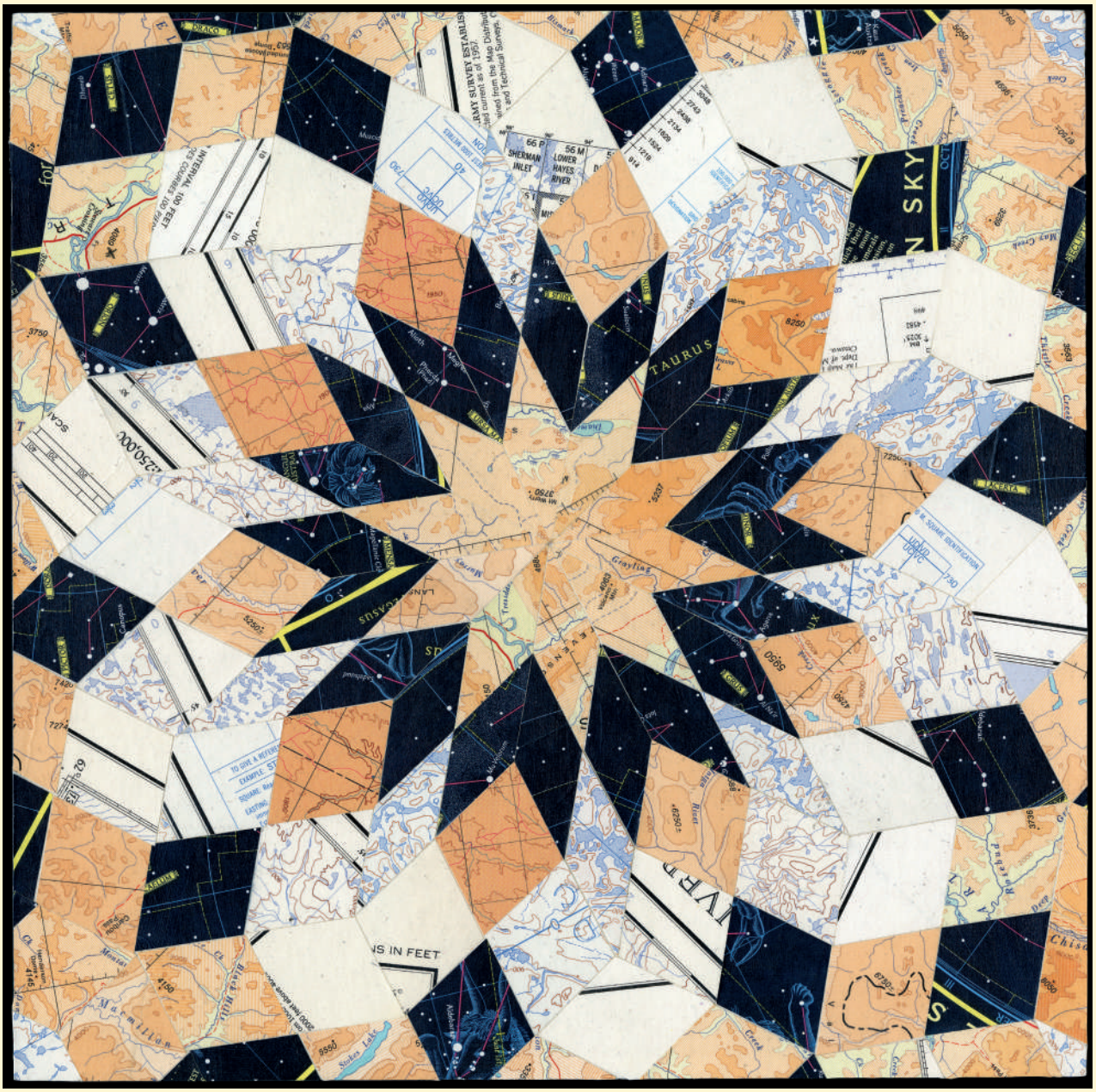

DULL EMERGENCY

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Gu Xiong, *To Belong* - Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC. HD Video, 5:27min., 2020. Camera: Yu Gu, Tom Campbell. Editor: Tom Campbell

In September 2020, Gu Xiong travelled with a team of filmmakers to five Chinese-Canadian settlement and burial grounds: Cumberland Chinatown, D'arcy Island, Harling Point Cemetery, New Westminster Chinese Cemetery and Mountain View Cemetery. He filmed and photographed sites that held historical significance to Chinese immigration in Canada and were vanishing or had already vanished from view. His captures are of deteriorating buildings exposed to the elements, redeveloped land once home to the dead, and everyday places with forgotten histories. Xiong aims to create a sense of immediacy and invite viewers to draw connections to their own lives and histories; for Xiong, memory is not simply a record of the past, but also a framework for understanding the present.

My great-grandma and great-grandpa are buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver. Every spring, on the day of Qingming, or "Tomb-Sweeping Day," we pick up bouquets from Lily's Florist on Knight Street and visit their graves. This holiday is not marked by decadent lotus-seed mooncakes or festive red money envelopes, but by a pleasant walk through a cemetery, carrying food, flowers and incense sticks as offerings to the deceased.

My great-grandparents were born and raised in China and owned a business in Vietnam. They travelled back and forth between the two countries until the Second Sino-Japanese War, when they stayed in Vietnam to escape the turmoil and never returned to China. In 1985, my great-grandma immigrated from Vietnam to Canada with the rest of her family, including my father, my mother and my two brothers. She was in her nineties and a few months after landing in Canada, she passed away. My family brought my great-grandfather's ashes with them when they immigrated, and though he had never even taken a step in Canada while alive, my family decided that my great-grandparents should be buried together in Vancouver. Every year, my father reminds me that the lease of the plot expires in thirty years and that I need to remember to renew it, because he may no longer be alive.

After many years in Canada, we now buy six bouquets and make two cemetery visits instead of the one. After holding a quiet reverence at Mountain View Cemetery, we drive to Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Burnaby, where we visit my great-uncle, great-aunt, grandfather and aunt. Every so often, we arrive at a spot and find flowers or incense sticks already placed near the grave. Most likely from one of our relatives—or perhaps from other grave visitors who are grateful that their

Gu Xiong, *Facing Home - Harling Point #2*, inkjet print, 46 x 66 cm, 2020.

Gu Xiong, *Facing Home - Harling Point Chinese Cemetery*, Victoria, BC. HD Video, 5:24min., 2020. Camera: Yu Gu, Tom Campbell. Editor: Tom Campbell

Gu Xiong, *Canada Village #5*, inkjet print, 41 x 66 cm, 2020.

Gu Xiong, *New Westminster Chinese Cemetery #3*, inkjet print, 46 x 66 cm, 2020.

Gu Xiong, *Canada Village #4*, inkjet print, 41 x 66 cm, 2020.

Gu Xiong, *Facing Home - Harling Point #5*, inkjet print, 46 x 76 cm, 2015.

loved ones in the ground have company. We want to say our thank yous too, so my father lights some incense sticks and we walk around sticking them in the dirt next to the graves nearby, saying hello to our loved ones' neighbours and friends.

Gu Xiong explains that when he visits these graves, he tries to let his eyes travel through the time and space occupied by the deceased, to follow their footsteps across the land and sea. To him, every tombstone contains the life of the person, every cemetery a microcosm of history and every choice to be buried here a declaration of belonging and presence in Canada.

Every time we visit my great-grandma's grave, we close our eyes and follow her footsteps across the sea, and back again. She chose to be buried here and we chose to bury her here. And though her name on the tombstone may fade, the imprints of our footsteps only become deeper with time.

The images are from *The Remains of a Journey* by Gu Xiong, published by Centre A in 2021. Gu Xiong's multimedia exhibit was co-presented by Centre A and Canton-sardine in Vancouver, BC from November 13, 2020 to February 13, 2021. —*Sylvia Tran*

GEIST

Volume 30 • Number 120 • Spring 2022

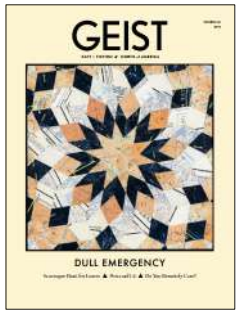
FEATURES

Images: From An Archive of Lost Things *by Shannon Pawliw*

GEIST

Ideas & Culture, Made in Canada

COVER IMAGE: "Territory 60" by Tristesse Seeliger, 2016, map collage on panel. This work belongs to a map series that Seeliger has been working on since 2014, which focuses on geometry, perception of space, and cartography. Her source material consists of historical maps from the Geological Survey of Canada offices dating back to the 1960s. Find more at tristesseseeliger.com.



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KEEPING IT WEIRD

Dear Readers,

This issue, our 120th, seemed like a good time to hijack the Letters column and write a letter of our own. First, we'd like to thank you for your loyalty and patience during these difficult COVID years. New issues of *Geist* have been slow to appear as of late, but do not fear: a four-issue subscription to *Geist* still means, and will always mean, four fresh issues of *Geist* appearing in your mailbox. We're back on track, so non-subscribers will once again be able to pick up *Geist* from their local newsstand on a regular basis.

Second, there have been some personnel changes at the mag, as both Michał Kozłowski, our associate editor, and AnnMarie MacKinnon, our publisher and editor-in-chief, have moved on to new challenges.

Michał has been part of Geist for the past sixteen years, starting out as a volunteer whose tasks included mailing and ordering books (for which he had to learn to use a fax machine). In 2010, we started paying him. Michał moved up from publishing assistant to assistant publisher, and then to publisher. In No. 77 we published his first piece of writing for *Geist*: a story about singing karaoke in Warsaw on the weekend that Pope John Paul II died. We hope that Michał will continue to give *Geist* first crack at future pieces.

AnnMarie was hired as our operations manager in 2012, then moved up to associate publisher. She became publisher and editor-in-chief in 2017. In addition to running the mag, AnnMarie wrote many Endnotes and In Camera essays. Her story "Chicken at Large," about a hen running loose in the big city, appeared in No. 111, and is essential reading for anyone needing to know the proper way to pick up a chicken. Now that AnnMarie has returned to her Cape Breton roots, we're hoping she will become one of *Geist*'s eastern correspondents.

New additions to our team include April Thompson, executive director, and Tanvi Bhatia, associate editor. April's background is in arts management and curating, and her writing has been featured in *CMagazine*, *Blackflash* and *Canadian Art*. When April isn't at Geist HQ she can be found creating new inks from foraged materials—a pandemic hobby that stuck.

Tanvi has experience as an editor, writer and facilitator. She is a former prose editor at *PRISM international*, as well as a former editor of various family and friends' resumés and cover letters, several chapters of the "novel" her sister wrote when she was ten, and one Tinder date's admissions essay to Harvard Law.

They will be supported by our production & circulation manager, Sylvia Tran, who has stuck with us since 2020. Sylvia has a background in libraries and has worked at *Ricepaper*, *NUVO* and Raincoast Books. She quit her gig at the library to stuff envelopes at Geist. She doesn't regret it, most of the time.

The new team has only been in place for a few months but already we're impressed by their energy and their organizational skills. At a recent Zoom meeting, Tanvi voiced her intention to "keep it weird," and readers can be confident that *Geist* will continue to publish the best in Canadian writing, photography and visual art.

—*The Board*

ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

Aimée Henny Brown is an artist and educator. She engages archives, research and printed matter to question historical content in her contemporary art practice. Her work has been presented and exhibited across North America and Europe. She lives on the unceded territory of the Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh and sc̓əl̓ilwətaʔɬ peoples. Find her at aimeehennybrown.com.

Angela Fama integrates her life and work with social practice and community engagement using interactive performance, photography, video, mixed media and sound. She lives on the unceded territory of the Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh and sc̓əl̓ilwətaʔɬ peoples. Find her at angelafama.com.

Andrée-Anne Guay works with paint, drawings, archival documents and handmade paper to create collages. Her work has been exhibited at Galerie d'art Berthelet, Les Trafiquants d'Art and the Penticton Art Gallery. She lives in the Vieux-Rosemont neighbourhood of Montréal. Find her at drea.ca.

Emily Marbach is a mixed-media collage artist. Originally an oil painter, she found her way to collage by applying painted figures to acrylic ink landscapes. She is American and lives in London, UK. Find her at emilymarbach.com and @collagenottinghill on Instagram.

Kriss Munsya is a visual artist. In his photographs on pages 16 and 17 from his collection *The Eraser*, he reimagines the past and tries to erase the dominance of whiteness by transposing Blackness. He lives in Vancouver, BC, and is represented by the Monica Reyes Gallery. Find him at krissmunsya.com.

Shannon Pawliw creates paintings, installations, and mixed media, sculptural, and conceptual art. Her work has been exhibited across Canada. The images on pages 4, 5 and 12 are from her project "An Archive of Lost Things." Find her at shannonpawliw.com and @anarchiveoflostthings on Instagram.

Tristesse Seeliger is a project-based artist. She creates murals, painting and collages and has worked with galleries, schools and artists to promote art education and appreciation. She has collaborated with the City of Vancouver, the City of Richmond and many private companies to create site-specific artworks. She lives in Vancouver, BC.

Gu Xiong is a multimedia artist. His work has been exhibited in forty solo exhibitions across the world, and is represented in numerous collections, including the National Gallery of Canada and the Vancouver Art Gallery. He lives in Vancouver, BC. Find him at guxiong.ca.

The John Howard Society of Canada provides public education, community service, and advocacy for reform in the criminal justice system. The image "Bars and High Window" by Brock Martland on page 34 is a part of the Arts Inside and Out Project. Brock's piece and others are available for purchase at johnhoward.ca/resources/arts-inside-and-out.

WRITE TO GEIST

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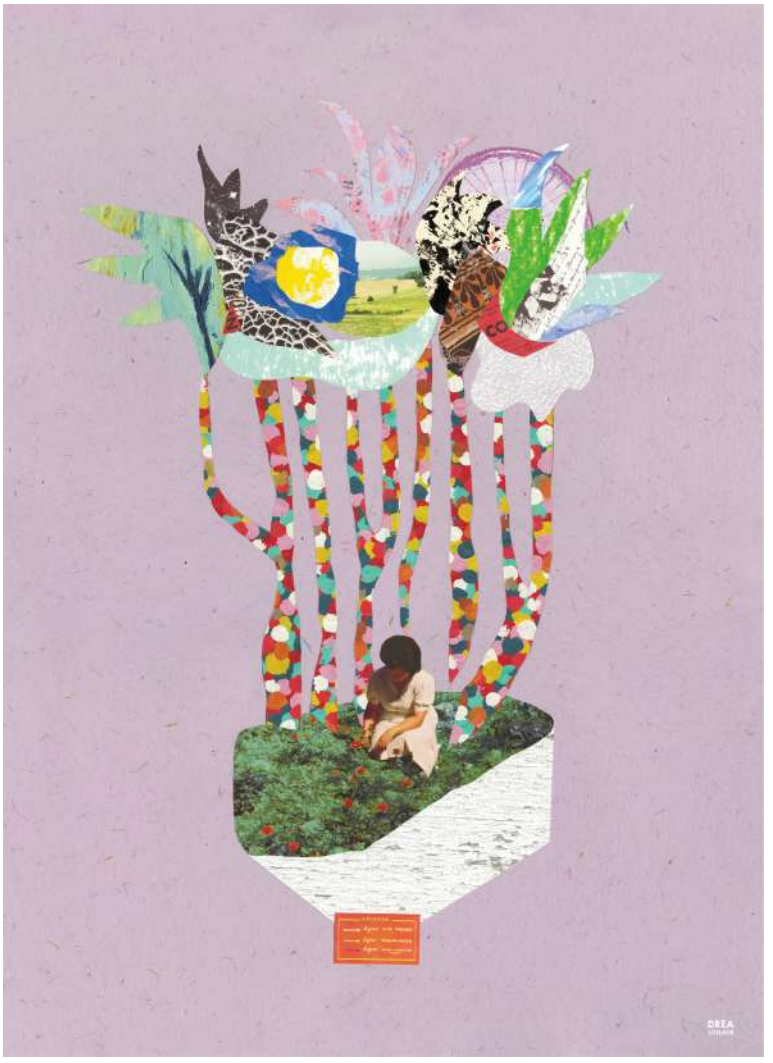
Do You Remotely Care?

JILL BOETTGER

Fill the room with a flock of moths



I remember the wildflower press I had as a child: a stiff stack of fibreboard, corners fastened with butterfly screws. Loosen the screws, release the tension, and slip a living flower in the space between two boards. Turn the screws, tight. Let the pressed flower rest until it's dry and flat as a picture on a page. Then let go. Now it can be preserved forever.

Since the pandemic began, the computer screen has flattened my life. It's as if I've placed my loved ones between two panes of glass and collapsed their smell (coffee bean, lavender, soap) and their touch (the softness of my mother's hands, the fierceness of my father's hug). Now I have a semblance of them, something I can call up again and again, but the initial comfort of their faces and voices subsides quickly. My animal instinct kicks in, seeking their whole selves, sniffing the keyboard like a bloodhound, looking for the rest of the picture, the missing dimension. But they're not there, never all there. It's better than nothing but perpetually dissatisfying.

In my Introduction to Poetry class we study the importance of evoking a sensory world in a poem. How do we lift words off a page and create an experience in the body? I ask my students this question through a screen; the University campus has been closed for months, the spring, summer, fall and now winter semester is being delivered remotely, and I am working with twenty five students I met briefly in a Google Meet just a few days earlier. On this Wednesday in January it's storming. The wind rattles the window above my desk at home.

My students have their cameras off, and I speak to a grid of icons. Each circle represents one person; images and letters replace faces. I survey the grid: JP, a rainbow, KS, TF, YO, a cartoon bird, GG, a bridge, AFD, BC, a dog with antlers, TM, JH, AA. "When we rely on words to communicate," I ask the circles, "how can we conjure the sensory world? Consider this poem," and I begin to read Robert Macfarlane's "Moth" when suddenly the lights go out and the circles disappear. A message pops up on my screen: Your connection has been lost. The windstorm has knocked out the power to my house, the internet is down and I am abruptly alone in a dark room, reading the poem aloud to myself.

Image: Confetti Forest *by Andrée-Anne Guay*

'Moth' – this one soft word falls so far
short of what the moth-world means;
of moths in number birthed by dark to
flock round torch and lamp and porch
together thickening air to froth, then
cloth, then weather.

In the introduction to his book *The Lost Spells*, Robert Macfarlane writes, "Here you can listen with owl ears and watch with the eyes of an oak. Here a fox might witch into your mind, or flocks of moths may lift from the page to fill the air." I take his words as an invitation: When the lights go out, keep reading. Fill the room with a flock of moths.

And then rig your cell phone to serve as a wifi hot spot and rejoin your class.

Five minutes pass, a protracted absence, before I make a connection. When I do, the chatbox lights up. "You're baaaaack!" "We Missed You!" "Yay!" Again, just as suddenly, I'm in the company of others. The icons have voices and the voices are happy to see me. My heart fills.

Later, I wonder what had happened when I left the class alone. What did they do? How did they handle the silence? So I search for the transcript automatically generated at the end of each meeting, and read the story of those missing five minutes.

BG admitted her loathing of pineapple on pizza.
EC said she spends too much time playing video games.
MR wrote, "I have two hairless Guinea pigs. They're called skinny pigs."
AH: "I ate cheesecake for breakfast."
MM: "I ate ice cream."
KS: "Skinny pigs?"
MR: "Yes, two."
AA: "What kind of cheesecake?"
AH: "Chocolate."

In the absence of me teaching the class, leading the class, a new kind of conversation had sprung up. Strangers began to share the peculiar, ordinary details of their lives and, in so doing, icons became humans: whole and odd and funny and bright, as though the pressed flower regained its dimension, its shape and smell. After reading their conversation, instead of JD or BR or cartoon bird emoji I have the smell of pizza, the taste of chocolate and the hairlessness of a skinny pig. My remote-learning students become real people to me, people I can care for.

Jill Boettger writes poetry and nonfiction from her home in Calgary, where she lives with her husband and two kids. She teaches in the Department of English, Languages and Cultures at Mount Royal University and is a frequent contributor to Geist. *Read more of her work at geist.com.*

Dull Emergency

EVELYN LAU

What's up with these open-ended days?
Under-employed, we shuffle to the beach,
stoop for shells as if for souvenirs from afar—
Sanibel Island, maybe, where once we stuffed
our luggage with shells the size of fists.
Now we point overhead and grunt like cavemen,
agog at the novelty of a plane searing the sky
as if it were the first flight out of here.
Stranded, a year into the pandemic,
no one has any news to share, vocabularies
reduced to *virus*, *vaccine*, *variants*—
that dull emergency of the daily count.
Time stretches, sags, goes pear-shaped.
There's little to say but still we mumble
behind our masks, eyes widening or squinting
in exaggerated empathy or sorrow, desperate
to communicate. A straggling sun
casts dips and hollows in the sand,
washes the shore in weak light. Campers crowd
the parking lot, snowbirds shivering in portable saunas,
pop-up tents in this *California of Canada*.
But we're lucky, so lucky. Driftwood in strange,
soft-serve shapes algae-green water. Given
another chance, we'll snorkel with mantas at midnight,
paraglide from cliff-faces, jounce on camels
across blinding deserts. We'll squeeze
into seats on prop planes, knees to chins, and scream
with joy at the next adventure. All those words
we held back? Next time. Just you wait.

Evelyn Lau is a lifelong Vancouverite who has published thirteen books, including eight volumes of poetry. From 2011 to 2014, she served as the city's Poet Laureate. Her most recent collection is Pineapple Express *(Anvil, 2020).*

Short Term

TARA MCGUIRE

Tell me again how long the trip is?

Nora's in the passenger seat. Nora's riding shotgun. It's not that I don't trust her to drive. I'm looking, through the corner of my eye, at Nora who's looking through the corner of her eye at the curtain of tall evergreens sliding by her window as Highway 3A dips and curls along the bank of the Kootenay River. Between her knees a latte with a smudge of lipstick along the edge of the lid is going cold. Ripe plum. Her lipstick is always perfect. It's high summer. The longest days. The air conditioning allows us to forget the heat.

That was a really great weekend, Nora says. And then she says, But it's kind of weird to take a trip with just the two of us. Isn't it?

Other summers Nora and I snuck cigarettes while our children weren't looking so we could be more than just mothers. We spread blankets on beaches together and drank cold beer from thermal coffee mugs with our husbands. Those children got taller and learned to build elaborate sandcastles without our help. With our lawn chairs side-by-side we watched those children venture into deeper water. When I think of Nora, I think of freckled shoulders and golden-pink sunsets and peeing in the ocean.

Nora's eyes are open wider than usual, she's chewing on a piece of loose skin at the edge of her manicured fingernail.

How long is the drive? she asks.

It's about eight hours, I say.

She puffs out a breath. That's a long way.

It's a beautiful day for a drive, I say. It's going be lovely, and I turn up the music.

We are on our way home and Nora is staring at her shoes. Shiny, silver running shoes with extra-large grommets and thick white laces. She's admiring the shoes at the ends of her legs. Swivelling her feet in slow arcs, the metallic material catching the sunlight.

We sing very loudly along with Adele and the road cuts through a high mountain pass then descends into another lush valley. We talk. Nora is planning to spend more time riding her electric bike, she likes a new kind of beer that tastes like grapefruit, she only plays pickleball because the name is so funny.

I already know all of these things.

We are not old women. Our hair is still long and we understand Instagram. This road trip is to fill the gap. The gap is where Nora's executive-downtown-law-firm-career used to be, until recently, until she just couldn't fake it anymore. Nora used to babysit lawyers. She would hire, fire, negotiate contracts, massage egos, and tell articling students who had just worked a seventy-hour week, It'll all be worth it if you just hang in there. After multi-million dollar victory settlements, Nora would toss around trips to Hawaii like frisbees, and every day her heels matched her bag.

Tell me again how long the trip is? she says.

It's about eight hours, we left at ten so we should be in Vancouver by dinner time.

On our first day in Nelson, we walked by a shop called Shoes for the Soul, located in a squat brick building on Baker Street. Mountain bikers clustered outside on the sidewalk sharing a joint. Their dogs wore bandanas around their necks. Nora stopped to talk to the dogs and something in the window caught her eye. Inside the shop, Nora held up a pair of silver sneakers with thick white soles.

I love these ones! she said. What do you think?

I think they're super cool, you should totally get them, I said.

She tried on the shoes, then looked up at me and smiled. The creases fanning out from the corners of her lively

Photo: It's a Sign 003 *by Angela Fama*

blue eyes fluttered, she squinted and her face kind of went slack, as though she was trying to focus on something just out of reach in the air above my head.

Aren't they groovy? There's just something about them, she said.

I was happy for her happiness about the shoes.

How long's the drive?

Well, we left Nelson at ten, and it takes about eight hours. We should be home by six.

Eight hours? Nora's shoulders drop a notch. I'm not great at long drives.

Tell me about your first boyfriend, I say.

Oh my God, his name was Adam Jensen. He was fucking hot. Her voice is bright against the dull road noise. One time we made out for so long I got chapped lips. He eventually came out of the closet, but that boy was an incredible kisser. And he had a great butt in his Jordache jeans.

Some things she remembers.

We snake through Castlegar, Christina Lake, Grand Forks. Gravel crunches under the tires as we pull into the parking lot at the Tarnished Turkey cafe in Greenwood, a town famous for winning the 2012 Tap Water World Championships. The same cafe we stopped in on our way to Nelson three days ago.

Let's fill up our bottles with the world's best drinking water, I say.

How do you know it's the best? Nora says.

I guess I must have read about it somewhere.

Nora used to throw elaborate parties, with guest lists, multiple courses, complicated dishes from Italy or France. Wine glasses were rented. Now, when she tries to follow a simple recipe she gets stuck. Did I put in the oregano yet? Where is the sesame oil? Her husband Jason tells me Nora sometimes takes two or three trips to the grocery store for missing ingredients. Days later Jason might find a bag of rice in the refrigerator or a jalapeño pepper in the pantry. He told me the jalapeño in the pantry made their daughter cry.

Tall trees turn to long grass, jagged peaks to stunted, velvet hills. A log farmhouse with a red roof nestles on a plateau, like a painting. It looks idyllic; it also looks deserted. We pass an elaborate fence constructed entirely of used tires.

How long is the drive?

It's about eight hours, we'll be home by six o'clock. I turn up the radio.

On the second day we hiked up to Pulpit Rock, a bald face of stone that overlooks the town and the jagged black mirror of Kootenay Lake. At the trailhead a sign warned of bears in the area. Be Bear Aware! Make loud noises, keep your distance, stand tall, never run! Less than an hour later we broke out of the trees into clean sunlight and scanned the steep, green valley below. A gentle updraft hoisted a sail of ravens and cooled the sweat on the back of our necks.

Look, there's BOB, the big orange bridge, I said. And there's the white sand beach near my sister's house. We can swim there tomorrow if you feel like it.

Oh shoot, I didn't bring my swimsuit, Nora said. Bummer.

On the descent, we heard whistling and clapping from the trail below us. We passed a woman with very muscular thighs hiking alone.

Three bears just around the next corner, she warned.

Holy shit, Nora said, and her eyes flooded with fear. I didn't know there would be bears.

Over lunch, I told my sister about the big black mama bear and her two cubs eating berries in the meadow.

Even though they didn't seem to care about us, I said, I was still really scared. I mean, a bear is one thing, a mother with cubs is unpredictable, right?

I was terrified of a wildness I didn't know enough about.

How long is the drive?

Nora was the one I called first. I couldn't say why I needed her, couldn't say the word overdose, but when she heard my voice she knew to come. She was the one who ran to our door the day our son died. And she kept coming, every few days, for at least a year. With tea, with a flower from her garden, with her exuberant dog.

I won't stay long, she would say, I just popped by for a quick hug and to see if you need anything. And her being there, standing on our front porch in her yoga tights and her lipstick, was something I could believe in.

I lost my son quickly. And now, it seems, I will lose her slowly. I will witness her gradual disappearance, ice cubes melting in a glass until there is only water. The Nora I know will dilute until there is nothing left but a body. Just organs, bones, and hair. When all she knows of herself, of her own child, is gone, who will she be? What will I believe in then? What shall I bring to her doorstep?

There are times I envy Nora's clean slate. If my memory were erased would that also rub out the ache of my son's death? Would I trade the knowing for a gentler unknowing? Tell me the difference between memories lost and remembering loss.

And what are we in the absence of the fat catalogue of mental pictures we store of our former selves? How much of our self-worth is built on the foundation of our past experiences—that promotion, that romance, that house we built, those summers at the beach. How is our identity tied to what we know of the badges we have sewn onto our chests?

How long until we get home?

Well, we've been on the road for four hours now, so we're about halfway.

It's an eight-hour drive?

Sure is.

On our last day in Nelson we decided to walk down to Six Mile Beach and cool our feet in the lake.

Nora dug around in her bag looking for sandals.

Oh, here's a bathing suit, she said. Oh, here's another bathing suit. Silly me.

So we did swim in the lake after all. It was icy cold but we plunged in anyway, and our joyful whoops rang out across the water.

Small towns flash past. Midway, Rock Creek, and the jumble of mustard and sienna coloured condos along Osoyoos Lake. It's too early in the season to stop for a box of peaches at the roadside fruit stands in Keremeos. They're not ready until later in the summer.

Can I ask you something? I say.

Of course, anything. Her expression is childlike, innocent.

What has your neurologist said about what's happening with you?

That there's not much I can do about it.

Nothing? No therapies, no drugs, no brain gymnastics?

Nora's eyes are open extra wide again, this is what happens when she doesn't know what to say but thinks she should know what to say.

Actually, she turns to me, I don't remember. And she laughs. We both laugh. We laugh until the laughing isn't really laughing anymore.

Fuck, I say.

Pretty much. She nods slowly.

Hedley, Princeton, Manning Park. Hope. Orderly farms flank either side of the highway. We both stare through the windshield. The dotted line dividing the long straight stretch of highway through the Fraser Valley rushes toward us in an uninterrupted chain.

We need some ABBA, Nora says.

Yes, we do.

We roll down the windows and howl.

Just before 6 p.m., we pull up in front of Nora's house and her husband Jason strides out to greet us, arms wide. He's been cutting the grass or picking the kale. He's grinning.

Hello ladies, how was the trip?

Nora springs from the car.

It was great! I hear her say as I climb out and stretch. The drive wasn't too long at all. Nelson is so pretty. And look, I bought these beautiful shoes. She extends one leg and points her toe, showing off her undeniably splendid new silver shoes.

Those are nice, Jason says.

Nora squats to greet her spiralling, blonde cloud of a dog, Hello sweetheart, I missed you!

Jason walks around to the back of the car and I meet him there to lift the rear door. He leans toward me and his voice softens to a whisper. You know, she's got a pair of shoes just like that already, he says. She bought them a couple of weeks ago.

I hug him, and he hugs me, and then he unloads his wife's bags and carries them into the house.

Tara McGuire is a former broadcaster. Her book, Holden After and Before *(Arsenal Pulp Press), will be published in October 2022. She lives in North Vancouver, BC.*

Scavenger Hunt for Losers

NATASHA GREENBLATT

Losers: you have a lifetime to hunt

1. Find a lost heirloom, like your great-aunt Gertrude's pearls you lost that summer in North Hatley when your father was acting in that play you saw twenty-seven times and you stayed up late into the night in the creaky old house, your room the only one still lit up, reading *1984*, lonely and terrified of being eaten by rats. Where did you put those pearls? Does anyone else remember the blue velvet box and perfectly round orbs of the sea you loved but could not keep safe?

2. Find a childhood illusion, like the belief in Santa you lost when your older cousin whispered with her full red lips and hot breath in your ear, *you know it's a lie for babies*, which you vigorously denied, but underneath you knew, had known before, had only hoped it wasn't true. Or perhaps the impression that you had the perfect family; two parents, three kids, a dog and a cat, misplaced a year before the divorce when your mother told you it was coming, when they started sleeping in different rooms, when you could see clearly that the thing your friends had envied, the thing you'd been most proud of, was an act and the show was over.

3. Find your virginity, which hopefully you lost somewhere special, somewhere perfect. Like your first love's father's one-bedroom shed behind the brick co-op on Bartlett Street on a Thursday night before your 11 p.m. curfew. The only thing you remember about that night is sitting on the subway on your way home thinking, *no one on this subway knows but I did it*, *I did it*, *I did it*, your smile bursting between your fat cheeks. The glow of that night will wear off when, two weeks later, your first love calls to tell you that, although he'd said he was in love with you a few months ago, he's not anymore and he's decided he doesn't want you to come visit him in Montréal.

Image: From An Archive of Lost Things *by Shannon Pawliw*

4. Find something intangible, like the sense that love is permanent, or that you're someone worth loving, or that people mean the things they say when they want to have sex with you. This may take a while to find.

5. Find a lost archive, like the box of tapes your father recorded of his mother before she died, telling her life story of being orphaned in New York and experiencing antisemitism in the South when your grandfather was training for a war he would never see in person, a war that killed the entirety of your mother's grandfather's family, a war you would later read about obsessively. Does your father remember these tapes? He's never brought them up in the decades that have passed since you lost them. You only listened to them once. You didn't appreciate the gravity of the stories they held, but you loved the gravelly sound of your grandmother's voice, a voice you didn't remember, the soft rolling vowels and sharp mischievous laugh.

6. Find the most important loss. The one that turned your life into before and after. Find him in the streets you used to walk down to go to school, his small sticky hand in yours at the cross-walk, telling him to *look both ways*, like you were his mother, not his older sister. Find him in the spaces between people, the cracks in everything, and the moments of silence when no one is searching for the right words. Find him in the water.

7. Find a missing alphabet, like the Hebrew you learned in the basement of the synagogue, from that cantor who always wore a suit and a fedora and taught you the melodies by rote so that, although you could technically read the Torah on the day of your bat mitzvah, following the shapes with a silver jewelled pointer, by the time you arrived in Jerusalem years later, with a busload of twenty-somethings who wanted to party and fuck soldiers, you could no longer make out the letters on the street signs, or read the names at Yad Vashem, the place where everyone wept, including you, although you couldn't help but feel manipulated by the museums and stories and the buffet breakfasts with mounds of hummus and boiled eggs and impossibly delicious tomatoes and cucumbers, so that when you left the trip, the alphabet was no longer the thing you were looking for, but something more complicated, like the feeling you are the victim, you are with the good guys. That feeling is nowhere to be found.

8. Find the four phones, two wallets, three sets of keys, eight sets of headphones, ten chargers, sixteen pairs of sunglasses, and hundreds of single socks and mitts you've lost over the years. Find the bag of makeup you forgot in the community centre in a refugee camp in the West Bank, the 35 mm camera you left on the plane to London, the sweater you abandoned on the subway after a night of dancing in Toronto, the innumerable books once treasured, then lent to someone whose name you can no longer remember, forever missing from your shelf.

9. Find what you might consider an insignificant object, like the fork, which is actually a symbol, your partner tells you, of the nice things he can never have because you will inevitably lose or break them. The fork is also a symbol of the poverty of his childhood, when he didn't get to have nice things because his parents were immigrants and struggling, and your parents were not. *We didn't have nice things either*, *you might retort*, *because we didn't care about those kind of things*, *we never had a matching set of cutlery and my mother lost everything too*, *like her computer and our dog*, *and we didn't have money*, *they were artists*, *I come by it honestly*, *that's my culture*. This doesn't impress him, and the fork is almost the downfall of your relationship, but it isn't and you're still together, and planning on having children despite his fears that you will one day lose or break them, too.

10. Find all the things that will inevitably get lost as you grow older, and presumably more, not less, forgetful. Find the Post-It notes you will stick on the wall to remind yourself to turn off the stove and lock the door, find the promises you will make not to yell at each other, find your wedding ring or some less heteronormative symbol of your commitment. Find your commitment, which may get lost in the sea of diapers and tantrums and sleepless nights. Find your child's favourite stuffed animal. Find your ambition. Find the words you can't remember, like strainer, lethologica or tumbleweed. Find your parents, whom you will one day lose, even if you don't like to think about it, but you hope, for their sake, you do lose them, and they don't lose you first. Find the friendships that will wane, then disappear, and the memories, which are already fading.

Losers: you have a lifetime to hunt. A lifetime to lose and find and lose again. If these items are indeed lost forever, consider printing their names on a piece of paper or drawing a picture of them. When you've collected everything, each object, memory, or belief, bring them back to the group where we will calculate your time and the quantity and quality of your losses to come up with your overall score and declare a winner of the Scavenger Hunt for Losers. Do not despair, dear Losers, for your score does not reflect your absence of mind, lack of foresight, or overall disorganization, at least not completely. For although it may feel like disaster, we only lose things we have to begin with. On your marks, get set, go!

Natasha Greenblatt is a writer, performer, producer and educator whose plays have been produced in Toronto, Kitchener and Winnipeg. She is developing a performance piece called Apocalypse Play *and working on her MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Guelph.*

Shelter in Place

TEXT & PHOTOS BY FINN WYLIE

"I never went looking for them"

In the early days of the pandemic, after the initial panic, I took a long walk through Victoria every evening. The pandemic meant no more road trips, not even Sunday drives. People reported intense dreaming. Psychologists explained that sleep was what we had for the open road. With the outer world so closed, our inner worlds flourished to compensate.

On my evening walks, I'd stumble upon the sculptural ghosts of cars and motorcycles under wraps. I never went looking for them; they'd simply appear. I ended up with dozens of photos of their ghostly shapes. Ultimately, they taught me about patience, about cooling one's heels, and even accepting waiting as one's new destiny. They appeared elegant in their resignation and confident in change, and they reminded me that no matter what happens, everything we have ever known will be history.

Finn Wylie studies writing at Vancouver Island University and works as a tree planter. She is working on a photography project titled Night Foliage, which includes captures of plants at night, divided from their photosynthesizing light source and often falsely lit—by porch lights, street lamps and the humming signs of closed shops. Find her on twitter @WylieFinn.

As the Dawn Breaks *(right) and* White Noise in Heaven *(left) are part of the series* Highway Reflection *from* The Eraser, *an exhibition by Kriss Munsya. When Munsya was six, his family went on a road trip to Germany and stayed at a budget motel by the side of a highway. On the other side of the highway was a hotel, where white*

Fragments for a Pandemic

EL JONES

From Sick of the System, *edited by the BTL Editorial Committee. Published by Between the Lines in 2020. El Jones is the author of* Live from the Afrikan Resistance! *(Fernwood). From 2013 to 2015, she served as Halifax's Poet Laureate. She is the co-founder of Black Power Hour, a radio show on CKDU-FM.*

UP HOME

Black people are always imagined in place. White people are the adventurers, the explorers, the pioneers. Black people are imagined in place until we are out of place, and then the full weight of policing comes down on us. We must be controlled, put back in our place before we contaminate others. *Go back where you came from*. But we are already where we came from—inside our communities, down the long roads, close enough to clean their houses but not close enough to have to live beside us—and still we are targeted. When will it be enough, asks Lynn Jones. When we are dead? When we disappear? When will it be enough for them?

The premier of Nova Scotia and the chief medical officer hold daily press conferences about COVID-19. For weeks as infection spreads, they say to not stigmatize communities. There is spread at a St. Patrick's Day party in Lake Echo, and they warn us to be compassionate. White people who travel make up all the cases in the province for almost a month, and so we must be very careful. A soap bubble we mustn't pop.

And then the virus hits Black communities. And they call us by our name. We are the gyrating Black body, partying during isolation, dancing

families played in the pool next to a patio full of flowers. Munsya remembers wanting to be on that other side. He now understands that he was exactly where he was supposed to be.

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with naked breasts in the jungle, we deserve it, every part of what they do to us for having this Black nerve, this sexuality, this movement, this audacity to be living. Willful, they call us as they heft those white man's burdens, how we're always half devil and half child.

They fear we will leave the community and spread the virus, they say, as if all those planes filled with snowbirds—white as snow—as if they never touched down. Apologize for infecting us, someone says in a comment on the letter the community writes asking an apology. A Black dot, spreading all over the map of Dartmouth. Make sure you call 811 if you have a fever, if you cough, or if you feel a sudden urge to start listening to hip-hop.

On a scale from 1 to negro, how North Preston are you? asks Rasheda. You know they see us all the same, and North Preston has always stood in for that unforgivable Blackness.

COVID COPS

A fourteen-year-old Black boy, shooting hoops alone in the playground of the local elementary school. Tell me you don't know the ending to this story. Tell me you can't anticipate the plot, the white fingers on the phone, the call to 911. Tell me this wasn't already written when they passed the state of emergency, when they told us they moved from education to enforcement, when they decided the police and not Purell are the solution to a pandemic. Tell me we are not always the emergency. Tell me they are not always trying to wash us away.

Wash your hands. Wash your hands of the violence you do to us. White people call the police on a young Black man running after another man. Five cops show up to arrest him. They are not wearing masks. "Can you step back?" OmiSoore asks the officer when he comes to take her statement. "That doesn't apply to police," he says.

I don't like going outside in the day, under the gaze, but also I remember a study that said 100 percent of Black people in Canada in the winter have vitamin D deficiency. Black bones being washed clean at the bottom of an ocean, no sunlight ever again. They said that they were too delicate to stand the heat, but we were made to work in it like beasts. Night coming tenderly, Black like me. We'll walk right up to the sun. Choose your own adventure: someone might call the cops on you in broad daylight, but stay inside and your bones might fail you. There's probably a racist joke in all of this. *I heard since COVID-19, all the Black parents called their kid Anemia.*

I'm running at night and a Black guy across the street sees me, yells across, "There's white people out here, make sure you carry a knife."

Dear Lady

LARISSA LAI

Reprinted with permission from Iron Goddess of Mercy *by Larissa Lai (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021). Larissa Lai is the author of three novels and four books of poetry. She is the winner of the Jim Duggins Outstanding Mid-Career Novelist Prize, the Astraea Foundation Emerging Writers' Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction. She lives in Calgary, AB.*

13. Dear White Lady with rights to footsteps, dear board, dear neighbour, it's really too late to have guests over, dear teacher, dear parking meter, lock me in my box and make me quiet, make me compliant to the game of another one down and another one down, dear co-opted co-op, dear chicken coop, take the space but don't move in it, don't you know the rules are for you and only you, looping me to the purity of my ideals. Dear Done and Dusted, Dear Rust, dear Pus, a pox on you for learning me your harangue, as rush and gush of mother tongue lost in translation gods 'er own father and you're back in grade two stay out of the circle or come over but you're not allowed in the house, dear carpet, dear underlay, durian and the curse of purses, dear witches, dear cancer, i know your girlfriend is living there, dear scrutiny, dear mutiny, we have our reasons but it's never the one we'll give. Dear Workshop sometimes there are casualties in co-ops on campuses on buses in courtrooms and this time it's you. Sorry so sorry oh golly suzy here's a fortune cookie for your trouble. Dear Departmental Compartment, Dear Representation, Dear Committee, Dear Museum that already knows all about it, Dear Buddhist begging Shirley to accept that the white man won, Dear what kind of psychology does your trauma belong to, Dear don't Speak until the guests are gone, Dear Curb your anger and we'll throw you crumbs, the guff of it, enough of it, Dear Holy Brother parsing proximity to the father, my place on the ladder, most definitely beneath his, Dear fucker, my precious pornographer, lining Asian girls up before the philosophers to test the quality of their underwear, dear Judgment hoarding the plunder and asking me to prove my worth, dear Duckworth, dear Hogwort, the harm of the charm smokes the girth of the curse I left so you'll never sleep

63. Dear Chinese Lady, awake in your takeout box, I staked your place with finger lace, detective of inhabitation. I hucked my hakka great grandma a hawker's history though she was matriarch of the village happy valley before the british. Get martial when your history's partial. I star my lover's crossed path for the cowherd's hum of heterosexuality as weaver strokes weft to avoid warp's war. I trounce my subject's pounce 'til the crack fracks in a different direction. North by northwest or northeast the least of my geese works her way south for the winter. Every weaver needs sisters to constellate her cosmos. Dear Vega, your URL's gone vegan, pining for Tegan and Sarah, your proper position in the mission of direction leading the coalition from persecution, locuting your location loquaciously as loquats at lunar new year listening for another orientation to time. The takers masquerading as givers know exactly who they are. Slowly, the earth shifts her axis. In the Year 13,727 you'll return to your ancient glory, streaming a river of geese or magpies, squawk chatting the beauty of feathers iridescent blue and green.

Baby Stripper

CID V. BRUNET

Reprinted with permission from This Is My Real Name: A Stripper's Memoir *by Cid V. Brunet (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021). Cid V. Brunet spent their twenties stripping in clubs across Canada. They live in Montréal, QC. Find them on Instagram and Twitter @cidvbrunetwrites.*

Adrenalin shoots through both of us when we come upstairs in bras and G-strings for our first shift. Air conditioning brushes my lower back and rustles the soft hairs at the tops of my thighs. I hadn't shaved my legs or armpits in years, and sweat makes them burn. But it isn't my exposed skin that scares me; it's how ordinary I look compared to the other girls. Each is a complete package of excellence with her own unique style. I'm embarrassed that I had assumed stripping was simply showing up and getting naked.

Izzy and I stay away from the girls hugging and catching up at the bar, and the other ones standing apart, stiff backed, stonewalling an opposing clique. A client pulls out a chair for a dancer who was doing a slow lap of the floor. She alights, half-sitting on her tucked shin.

"Which table should we approach? What should we say?" Izzy asks.

"We need to chat them up until we convince them to go for a dance."

"But how?"

"Trial and error? Think how boring and stupid men are."

"You sound like Jace," Izzy says. Jace and I have started calling ourselves queer separatists. We feel entitled to take anything we want from the straight world.

"Men created patriarchy," I say. "They literally owe us. Besides, I'm less scared of the men than the girls."

"I know, why do they hate us?" Izzy, too, feels the heat radiating from the long judgmental stares of the other dancers.

We approach a table of two middle-aged beer drinkers with all the confidence we can muster. Surprisingly, my near nakedness didn't bother me.

CREE DICTIONARY

From Creeland *by Dallas Hunt. Published by Nightwood Editions in 2021. Dallas Hunt is Cree and a member of Wapsewsipi (Swan River First Nation) in Treaty Eight territory in Alberta. He is the author of* Storytelling Violence *(ARP Books) and the children's book* Awâsis and the World-Famous Bannock *(Highwater Press).*

the translation for joy
in Cree is a fried bologna sandwich
the translation for bittersweet in Cree
looks like a cows and plows payment
eight decades too late
the translation for patience
in Cree is an auntie looking after four of her own children
and two of her sister's
the translation for evil
in Cree is the act of not calling
your mother on a Sunday

the translation for expedition
in Cree is travelling twenty minutes
to the only gas station in Faust, Alberta
to buy a Hygaard pizza sub
the translation for success in Cree
is executing the perfect frog splash
on your younger brother
the Cree word for white man is unpaid child support
the translation for conflicted in Cree
is your deep, steadfast love
for country superstar
Dwight Yoakam (or, depending on
the regional dialect,
George Jones, Patsy Cline
or Blue Rodeo)

the Cree word for constellation
is a saskatoon berry bush in summertime
the translation for policeman

in Cree is mîci nisôkan, kohkôs
the translation for genius
in Cree is my kôhkom muttering in her sleep
the Cree word for poetry is your four-year-old
niece's cracked lips spilling out
broken syllables of nêhiyawêwin between
the gaps in her teeth

I am quite comfortable talking to strangers in my underwear.

"So, where are you from?" asks my guy, battling to maintain eye contact.

"The East Coast originally, but I came here for school and liked it so much I decided to stay."

"What did you study?" He sneaks a look at Izzy, engaged in an equally bland conversation with his buddy.

I heard it takes 100 milliseconds to decide if someone is attractive. I run my triangle-shaped pendant along its chain, drawing his attention to my neck and collarbone. "Actually, I have a university degree in art history." I chose this subject assuming I know more about it than him. I did enjoy it—before I dropped out.

"What can you do with a degree in that?"

The conversation is beginning to feel like a job interview, decidedly unsexy. Channelling ditzy girls in movies, I lean toward him, elbows on the table, and squeeze my boobs together. "It's tough, for sure. That's why I'm working here in the meantime."

"Do you girls know each other in real life?" asks Izzy's guy. Sunglasses tan, Budweiser baseball cap.

"We're friends," I reply.

"Best friends," Izzy corrects. Putting her arm around me, her sweat rubbing off on my shoulder, she asks the question: "Do you guys want to come for a double dance?"

I freeze, expecting laughter, rejection, but instead they squirm. "Actually, we're waiting for Caramel and Katalina."

We jump up and two angry dancers swoop in to replace us.

"That was rude," I complain to Izzy. "They should have told us right off they were waiting for other girls. There must be tricks to this, ways to know if we're wasting our time."

I've been romanticizing sex work for a long time, reading everything I could get by dominatrices, escorts, and massage providers. I drew inspiration from STAR to Stonewall, from queer history that was pioneered by trans women of colour. I thought my fascination with the industry would have given me more confidence and prevented this floundering. What would Michelle Tea do now? I imagine her shrugging; *Don't take rejection personally*, she would say from under a dark curtain of bangs, *keep going*. I look around the room—no more tables of two.

"Let's split up," I suggest.

★★★

After my first lap dance the client shakes my hand formally, pays me, and leaves unceremoniously. I reverently tuck my cash into a borrowed purse as if I'm pressing rose petals. Using the wall, I steady my wobbling ankles to make it back to the main floor. Izzy gives me a thumbs-up on her way into the VIP, a hulking man in tow. I sink onto a chair at the nearest table, massage cramped arches and wiggling blistered toes. I wonder if I'm a whore now. I don't feel any different, but there is a sense of having crossed over. Even out of breath and overwhelmed, I can taste power.

★★★

"So you're a lesbian?" The next guy I sit with says the word like it's dirty.

"I think some men are hot," I tell him.

He elbows me. "Sure you do. I see the way you watch the girls onstage like you're a dude."

He's not wrong. I can't tear my eyes away from the dancers spinning around the pole and crawling across the stage. It's nearing midnight and the club's sexual energy is amplified each time a new girl takes the stage.

The guy and I sit in silence for half a song, an irrecoverable lull. Can I just stand up and leave?

He turns to me. "You're too shy to work here," he says. "I'm in sales—you need to work on your pitch. Always be closing. You're fresh meat, so I'm going to help you out. Let's go in the back and I'll give you some tips on how to work a room, how to tell what guys have money."

In the VIP he won't let me dance. He wants me to sit on his lap, face to face, and take mental notes. "I would make a million dollars stripping if I was a girl," he says. "It would be easy."

I get in the occasional "Wow, that's a great idea," or "You're totally right," while, with each additional song, I recalculate the escalating cost he is willing to pay to have his ego stroked.

★★★

Behind the stage, vaguely reflected in the hallway mirror, I appear vampiric. Izzy already did her first stage show, and although she didn't do any of the pole tricks the other girls have mastered, her languid movements made her performance very sensual. She'd practised, and I wish I'd done the same.

My song begins with its familiar synthesized beats. I do a ten-second countdown before making my entrance. How many drinks have I had? Four? Men kept offering and I'm spinning. I teeter on my heels, catch the wall, hold myself in the doorway, and look out. All I can see is the reflective pole at centre stage, ringed by bright lights. I step out and the floor changes from carpet to linoleum. It feels like tiptoeing on ice. I latch onto the pole, which is warm from friction, slippery with body lotion. With no idea what to do next, I pose around the pole, killing time. I don't know how to spin, and I'm too afraid to try. Lyrics about angels crying. I might cry if not for this straight-up panic. I'm not flexible enough to do sexy deep bends and I can't shake my butt. Barely past the first chorus, I've done every move I can think of. It feels like when I was seven, awkward in a red-and-white tutu, laughed at by my classmates' parents. Unable to stay present, I switch into a completely placid mental state of zero gravity, floating out the remainder of my three songs in muted sounds and lights, as if from behind the thick windows of a spaceship.

When it's over Izzy finds me at the bar and touches my shoulder. My entire body shivers as I return to myself.

★★★

In the VIP, girls play with their hair, roll their hips, arch their backs. They trail fingers over their own faces and necks and touch their client's chests, flowing from one move to the next, concealing routine in steamy, primal seductiveness. My best is a choppy imitation. Between songs I am sweaty from overcompensating. My client must be wishing he'd taken the girl on the couch across from us instead; she moves like water. Still sitting on his lap, I down my vodka cranberry. Ice slides from the glass and rains onto my chest and stomach. The cold slap makes me realize how fast I'm going, how out of control.

"Do you want another song?" I ask.

"Keep going!"

★★★

Although Izzy and I originally intended to work arm in arm, we barely see each other in the final two hours. As it gets louder and busier, girls stop chatting

and begin to hustle hard. I watch them approach tables fearlessly, a full-frontal attack of hair, tits, and ass, coupled with intimidating laughter and luxurious charm. Their energy casts a spell over the whole club that allows any guy who walks in off the street to become a client. Men are hypnotized, their wallets opening and closing like gills.

Following the examples around me, I refuse to continue talking after a lap dance is over, instead pushing myself to go sit with the next stranger. Surprisingly, most clients overlook my shortcomings, aroused by getting to "pop my cherry" as the new girl. It feels slutty, moving quickly from one sexual encounter to the next, constantly circling between the floor and the VIP, especially when I still feel the handprints from the last man, smell his cologne on my skin. But the next man doesn't mind.

When the bar closes, Izzy and I hail a cab and count our money in the back seat.

"The bakery pays above minimum wage and this is still more than I make in three days," she says.

I'd been looking for a way out of working exploitative, underpaid kitchen jobs when I found a roofing company hiring on Craigslist. The sketchy boss didn't think a girl without experience could do the job, but he was desperate. For two weeks, I woke at dawn and forced myself into a coworker's dirty work truck, classic rock blaring.

At the site, I cut asphalt shingles with a hooked X-acto knife, stacked bundles of them on my shoulder, and carried the load up forty-foot ladders perched against the sides of half-finished mansions. It was dangerous, high-speed work with no breaks except for coffee, which, being the only woman, I fetched.

In the end, the boss said he didn't need me anymore and gave me a paycheque that covered all my expenses and a little extra. The cheque bounced.

I lean back in the cab and recount the cash in my hand. Shocked into silence by making my rent in five hours.

This changes everything.

"They said we can come back whenever we want," Izzy says. "Just sign in before nine."

The night's clients have already blurred into a collective of mostly white, middle-aged men. Creepy, rude, weird, normal, nice—all of it has ceased to matter. Memories of them wick off my skin into the night air whipping through the open windows.

"Okay," I say. "Tomorrow."

Notes from an Archive of Injuries

BILLY-RAY BELCOURT

Excerpt from A History of My Brief Body *by Billy-Ray Belcourt, copyright ©2020 Billy-Ray Belcourt. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Canada, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Limited. All rights reserved. Billy-Ray Belcourt is from the Driftpile Cree Nation. He is the author of three books, and his first novel,* A Minor Chorus *(Penguin Canada), is forthcoming in 2022.*

1. Dionne Brand (The Blue Clerk): "I walked into a paragraph a long time ago and never emerged from it." Maybe this act of getting lost in the textual is a spur to life, to aliveness, for those who have been barred from, whose barring makes possible, the biosphere of Canadian Literature. Canadian Literature is a crime spree. How frequently can one redraw the outline of a body and still call it art? The police—which Frank Wilderson reminds us is both an institutional form and the corporeality of whiteness itself—made an oversized archive of our injuries. I feel their fingers in the pages of me when I write.

2. The problem of sending out dispatches from a life as it is being realized is a problem of bioethics, broadly construed. Any dirt road out of the wilderness of my body is so ridden with potholes it is undrivable.

3. To write as though a punching bag requires a different kind of bad posture.

4. All my most volatile and consuming yearnings could be summarized as a desire for an unstructured life, one without an organizational system other than something like untidiness. I don't wish to be

subject to the wrath of any clock, including the biological kind. (The clock of utopia is one I adhere to but adhering to the clock of utopia is akin to sleeping on a couch constructed from love poems, a fate I will always choose.) Writing disarrays the world around me. With writing, I'm authorized to rebel against the biopower of permanency.

5. If there is an "NDN experience" perhaps it is that of being written about. Audra Simpson: "To speak of indigeneity is to speak of colonialism and anthropology, as these are means through which Indigenous people have been known and sometimes are still known." There exists a modality of anthropological inquiry practised by Canadians from all walks of life by virtue of having been born into a story of confederation and dispossession. To nod to Brand's theory of black life and presence, to go outside the limits of one's own existence as a racialized subject (which is cramped and ever-shrinking) is to enter into "some public narrative," a narrative of progress, for example. To write so as to peel sentences from one's skin, so that words fall flat onto the floor without the hope of resuscitation—this is the NDN writer's work. This usage of the English language at least matches the intensity with which words have been flung at us like grenades.

6. NDN literature: to treat language brutally while still writing beautifully.

7. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney: "The open song of the ones who are supposed to be silent."

8. A dead animal overwhelms a highway the way moss does a forest floor. This is my unstable definition of poetry.

9. I have lived. (The most dishonest sentence I have written.)

10. In *Senses of the Subject*, Judith Butler asks a colossal question that tailgates me everywhere I go: "What does it mean to require what breaks you?" She is curious about the indeterminacies of being in the world, how that which constitutes selfhood—being in concert with others—also has the power to loosen our grip on a shared reality. I've evoked this formulation in the past to understand the metaphysical thrust of queerness; in a late-capitalist world in which individuality is a fetish, a mass object of desire, a political anthem, what remains queer about queerness is that it entices us to gamble with the "I" in the name of love, sex, friendship, art, and so forth. There is a twinned horizontality and verticality to queerness that pulls at the self in various directions. It is through this directionlessness, by offering ourselves to it, that we evade acclimatizing to or being seduced by the norms of social legibility and a subject position coded as the bearer of regular life (a dangerous duo). To write about oneself seems also to be an affair with breakage. To borrow Anne Boyer's phrase, there is a "range of textual annihilative desire[s]" that make up a book, all of which are aimed at the writer by the writer. Some days, the act of writing isn't so much holding a mirror to oneself as to a future grave. When I write myself into the haunted house of Canada, the dark spins around me as though my body were yet another empty room it could get inside.

CONVERSATION #8

From The Good Arabs *by Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch. Published by Metonymy Press in 2021. Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch is a queer Arab poet living in Tio'tia:ke, unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory. Their first book,* knot body, *was published by Metatron Press in 2020.*

"Why are Arabs so anti-Black?"
"You just went ahead and said it!"
"Why wouldn't I?"
"How is that poetic?"
"Sometimes the truth is poetic. Sometimes you just have to say it."
"Why is anyone anti-Black?"
"A want for power. A want of control. We think we are better, different."
"'We' is a false fallacy."
"What do you mean?"
"There are Black Arabs."
"Yes, you are right. I'm sorry."
"Don't be sorry to me."
"Who should I be sorry to?"
"I don't know. Black Arabs, I guess."
"But all we are is sorry. And all we are is guilt."
"An Arab's most powerful skill is guilt."
"Yes, my mother used the guilt trip on me last week."
"How so?"
"She said she was getting old and that I never visited."
"Did it work?"
"I am going to see her next week."

No Funny Business

From Vile and Miserable *by Samuel Cantin. Published by Pow Pow Press in 2015. The book was originally published in French (Éditions Pow Pow 2013). Samuel Cantin is the author and illustrator of four books. His most recent book is* White Horse *(Éditions Pow Pow 2017). He lives in Montréal.*


My God, guys, don't get all worked up, it's only me.
3FFFFFFuuuuck man...
Geez, Lucius, don't ever do that again, all right?
Okay...
PFF...
PFF...
PFF...
WOOOOUUUFF...
What were you guys doing? I've been holding the door for you for like five minutes.
Yeah, but you really didn't have to do that...
Stop it, you guys, it's Halloween! Was I supposed to just slam the door in your faces? Is that what you guys wanted? To have the door slammed right in your faces?
We were smoking a cigarette, Lucius.
In the middle of the parking lot? That doesn't sound at all like you guys! You're always by the door.
Routine will kill you, Lucius.

Secret Refuge

RAHAT KURD AND SUMAYYA SYED

From The City That is Leaving Forever *by Rahat Kurd and Sumayya Syed. Published by Talonbooks in 2021. This excerpt is from a five-year instant-message exchange between Sumayya in Kashmir and Rahat in Vancouver during the ongoing military occupation of Kashmir. Sumayya Syed's poems have appeared in the* Puritan, KashmirLit *and* Shoreline Review. *Rahat Kurd's first poetry collection,* Cosmophilia, *was published by Talonbooks in 2015.*

SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

Dear Sumayya, how are things? Are you able to go out these days? 7:05 AM

Salam, no. It is extremely difficult to get out of the house. To restock supplies. 7:35 PM

😟 And schools and shops—closed? 7:40 AM

Schools have been closed all these months. 8:15 PM
Shops too. 8:15 PM
My niece and nephew have missed an entire academic year. 8:15 PM

How do they cope with being at home every day? How are their spirits? 7:47 AM

They end up being extremely cranky. 8:18 PM
My four-year-old niece hates Mehbooba Mufti. 8:18 PM
Who has become her single locus of the curfew. 8:18 PM
At every mealtime she likes to share with me new ideas of how she's going to fool the soldiers and get out of the curfew. 8:19 PM

Oh my God, that a four-year-old's mind must bend itself around political oppression! 7:50 AM

On Eid I took her out with me to Eid prayer. 8:20 PM
And there were soldiers everywhere. 8:20 PM
She kept asking me why they were not shooting at us. 8:20 PM
I couldn't find an answer. 8:21 PM
So finally I told her it was because they were scared of a girl like her. 8:21 PM
And she has been very proud since then. 8:21 PM
She offers to accompany her Babajan when he wants to go looking for groceries. 8:22 PM
Because her presence will deter the soldiers. 8:22 PM

😊 7:52 AM
May she always walk in that confidence & strength. 7:53 AM
And may no miscreant ever dare to contradict her. 7:54 AM

Ameen. 8:24 PM

Where was the Eid Gah in relation to your house? 7:54 AM
How long was the walk? 7:54 AM

A few blocks away. 8:25 PM
But they had dispatched the army. 8:25 PM

Were there armed soldiers in the prayer area? 7:59 AM

Yes. 8:29 PM
And lining the streets. 8:29 PM
Everywhere. 8:29 PM
From my house to the mosque. 8:29 PM

I suppose telling you where to go and how to go. 8:00 AM

Standing outside every door. 8:30 PM
They were quiet, didn't say or do anything. Some were even having breakfast out of tiffins. 8:30 PM
And the masjids were roaring with takbeer. 8:31 PM

Oh, I see. 8:01 AM
They were benevolently allowing the ritual to go on? 8:03 AM

I think they were a little overawed by the spirit, even though there was no festivity. 8:34 PM
It was like they couldn't decide what to think. 8:34 PM
But there was no mistaking their intention, with guns pointing in the right direction. 8:34 PM
Fingers ready. 8:34 PM
One soldier actually looked away when my niece and I walked by, she in her full Eid gear with Pakistani shalwar suit

INFESTATION

From The Shadow List *by Jen Sookfong Lee. Published by Buckrider Books, an imprint of Wolsak and Wynn Publishers, in 2021. Jen Sookfong Lee is the author of ten books.* The Shadow List *is her first book of poetry. She edits fiction and non-fiction for ECW Press, and lives in Burnaby, BC.*

In the kitchen, they hang upside down on the ceiling,
wings folded, their bodies tucked like arrowheads,
antennae quivering so slightly you have to stand
on a chair and squint to see any movement at all.

In the bedroom at night, they fly around
your reading lamp and you can hear
their exoskeletons singe on the hot light bulb
as you open book after book without finishing any.

You burrow deep in your closet, looking for abandoned
cocoons in your sweater pile, open every container
in your pantry until you find larvae in the quinoa.
You swear they are pulsating, like they already

know how to breathe. It figures, you think, trying to eat
healthy results in a plague. Steel cut oats, pearled barley,
brown rice. All in their clear containers, so they can judge
you from within. You compost them, without regret.

The traps emit pheromones. You stay up
half the night, watching the moths circle the trap
that smells like sex, the trap that will lure them in
with the heady scent of moth desire.

They will fly in, land on the adhesive and never escape.
They last four, maybe five days before they stop
struggling and die, their tiny moth feet covered
in an unforgiving glue. This satisfies you.

Where they have come from, you don't know,
but you create an origin story in your head.
The elderly Chinese couple next door, you think, it must
be them.
Maybe they keep dry goods in their bedroom, drywall

the only thing separating your headboard from theirs.
You remember that time you cleaned out your mother's house
and found a dozen bottles of soy sauce and seven packages
of dried cloud ear fungus hidden behind the coats in the
closet.

What if there is a shelf of mung beans and jasmine rice
right behind your pillows? There the moths
build cocoons, hatch and then fly off
into your open window, straight toward your bedside lamp.

The moths know.
This is why they have come to you,
toward the only light in a dark building,
toward the promise of sex and a long, sticky death.

They know you read at night.
They know you are alone.
They know you itch with loneliness until you could scream
so you read and fail until you fall asleep.

and matching earrings. 😀 8:35 PM
And she didn't fail to notice that. 8:36 PM
She said, "He's whispering to the other
soldier to not try anything." 8:36 PM

Oh my God. 8:17 AM
I bet she reminded him of someone in
his own family. 8:18 AM

Very likely. 8:48 PM

It's an incredible image. 8:19 AM
Just in words. 8:20 AM
Almost more so than any photo would be. 8:20 AM

😀 Although I do wish I could have taken
a photo. Her in her glamorous Eid outfit
and newfound power, and them in their
miserable tired uniforms. 8:51 PM

Yes. It's brilliant from every angle. 8:22 AM

She actually spent the rest of the day
narrating the incident to anyone who
would listen. 8:52 PM
What about you—what did the Eid prayer
mean for you? What can it mean under
the soldiers' eyes and guns? 8:24 AM

It was a continuation of mental and spiritual exhaustion. The khutbah was extremely demoralizing. 8:55 PM
Very patriarchal, and the khateeb did not make a single reference to the occupation or the brutality. It was so disconnected from reality. Harping on about how obedient Ibrahim's wife was to him. 8:55 PM

Oh ewwwww! 8:26 AM

So many layers of exhaustion. 8:56 PM

Absolutely. Clearly out of ideas, 8:27 AM
Should I presume it was basically a CM-approved and state-mandated khutba? 8:28 AM

Well, this mosque / organization is known to toe a very "safe" line vis-à-vis resistance. 8:59 PM
They're known to openly denounce the resistance as un-Islamic. But it was the only masjid that would accommodate women. And relatively safe to walk to on such a morning.
So I went there. 8:59 PM

Thank you so much for recounting all of this to me. So vividly. I can imagine myself in your shoes. 8:31 AM
When I stayed with Anjum, she just recounted a brief instance of the stubborn arrogance of men towards women—I think it was in her father's family or village. 8:34 AM
It must get a lot worse at times like this? 8:34 AM

I have seen it go both ways. 9:05 PM
These are times when women take the foreground simply because it is unsafe to be a man. 9:06 PM
A young man. 9:06 PM
Who is seen as the most imminent form of danger to the state. Because of patriarchal assumptions of women being inherently less dangerous. 9:07 PM
But the men are also grateful for this cover. 😃 9:08 PM

Ha ha, well … 8:38 AM
I'm glad they appreciate it. 8:38 AM

So, in a way, my niece's offer to accompany her father to provide safety isn't that unfounded. 9:08 PM
Men can't go out alone. 9:08 PM
They prefer to take a woman or child with them. 9:09 PM

It's profound. 8:39 AM

My brother actually had a narrow escape. 9:09 PM
The army men lunged at him in the dark as he was on his bike. 9:09 PM
And he screamed that he had kids with him. 9:10 PM

BOILED WITH DARKNESS

The Google Translate app allows you to point your camera at text and receive a real-time translation in your chosen language overtop the live image. The app shifts the translation several times, leaving multiple fleeting, often poetic, translations of the text. During a trip to Japan in 2019, Kelsea O'Connor captured images of Japanese text and arranged the resulting series of English translations into found poems. O'Connor is a contributing editor to Geist. *She lives in New Westminster. Read more of her work at geist.com.*

From a package of two eggplant-shaped cast iron cooking ingots, Kappabashi, Tokyo
Two iron tolerance
2 iron lumper 2
Two iron beer 2
Two songs of theory

Boil the black bean
I pick out the child
Boil the hot water
Sand out of shellfish

Rules for dogs, Todai-ji Buddhist temple, Nara
Pet dog is a corridor. In the largest in the Buddhist
I want to walk, I'm sorry 2
(Do not drive, universal grief)

Pet husband is in the corridor / in the Buddhist
Please cooperate so that you can not walk
(Do not dogs dogs, exclusive advertising excluded)

Pet dog is cockroad. In the Buddhist
Please collaborate so that you can not walk
(Expansion Dog The dogs are excluded)

Description of ginger ale, Tokyo
Automobile ship which was simply boiled with the darkness

And they let him go. 9:10 PM

Oh how terrible! 8:40 AM
How terrible this is! 8:40 AM
Thank God he is all right. 8:41 AM
But at what terrible cost to you all.
To the children. 8:41 AM

That is where my mind fails from
simple exhaustion. 9:12 PM

Yes. 8:42 AM

From the sheer effort of trying to
process this. 9:12 PM

Sometimes you must rest. 8:42 AM
Sometimes your mind needs to think
of other things. 8:42 AM
Your spirit needs to imagine a
different reality. 8:43 AM

I'll tell you what my secret refuge is … 9:13 PM
And I don't know how you'll judge it. 9:13 PM

I won't— 8:44 AM

It's online shoe shopping. 9:14 PM

WHOSE SIDE AM I ON?

From Moments of Happiness *by Niels Hav. Published by Anvil Press in 2021. Niels Hav is an award-winning Danish writer and the author of many books of poetry and short fiction. His work has been translated into several languages and is distributed across the world.*

I'm for people who have joie de vivre—
the ones standing outside smoking,
while the president hands out medals,
content to shiver during the applause.

The man who washes the floor and puts the chairs back.
I do not agree with the chairman,
a general secretary gives me the creeps,
have those people no self-respect?

The woman who bakes cookies for the homeless.
I'm in support of common decency.
The man who gets up in the middle of the night to deliver
newspapers on his bike, while morons piss in his bag
and call him Paki.

People who cry in their sleep at night for lack
of vitamins found only in love.
I'm for the woman collecting bottles,
and going through other people's trash
so she can give her granddaughter a trip to Rome.
The man who crosses the street to help a bewildered
boy who fell out of the nest too early.

I'm all for kindness.
I'm for him who hides his poems
in the tool drawer in the garage.
The failed ones are the most remarkable.
The one who sweeps the sidewalk including his neighbour's.
Old people who lie dying in hospitals.

I'm for him who is misunderstood
whenever he opens his mouth. The mute poets,
content with walking around mumbling to themselves,
while they take care of their work and provide for the family.
The woman the others make fun of.
The man who isn't able to maneuver his wheelchair
and the bus driver who gets up to lend a hand.
The ones who sing in traffic. The man who makes a fool
of himself.
People who move their asses.

I'm not for gang-related stockbrokers.
People who think they are the queen of heaven. Arrogant
sneers.
The man who blocks other people's bank accounts.
The atmosphere in court.

I'm all for politeness, for bursting into tears
in the morning at the supermarket, common hysteria,
caring for pets, and bewitching smiles in traffic.

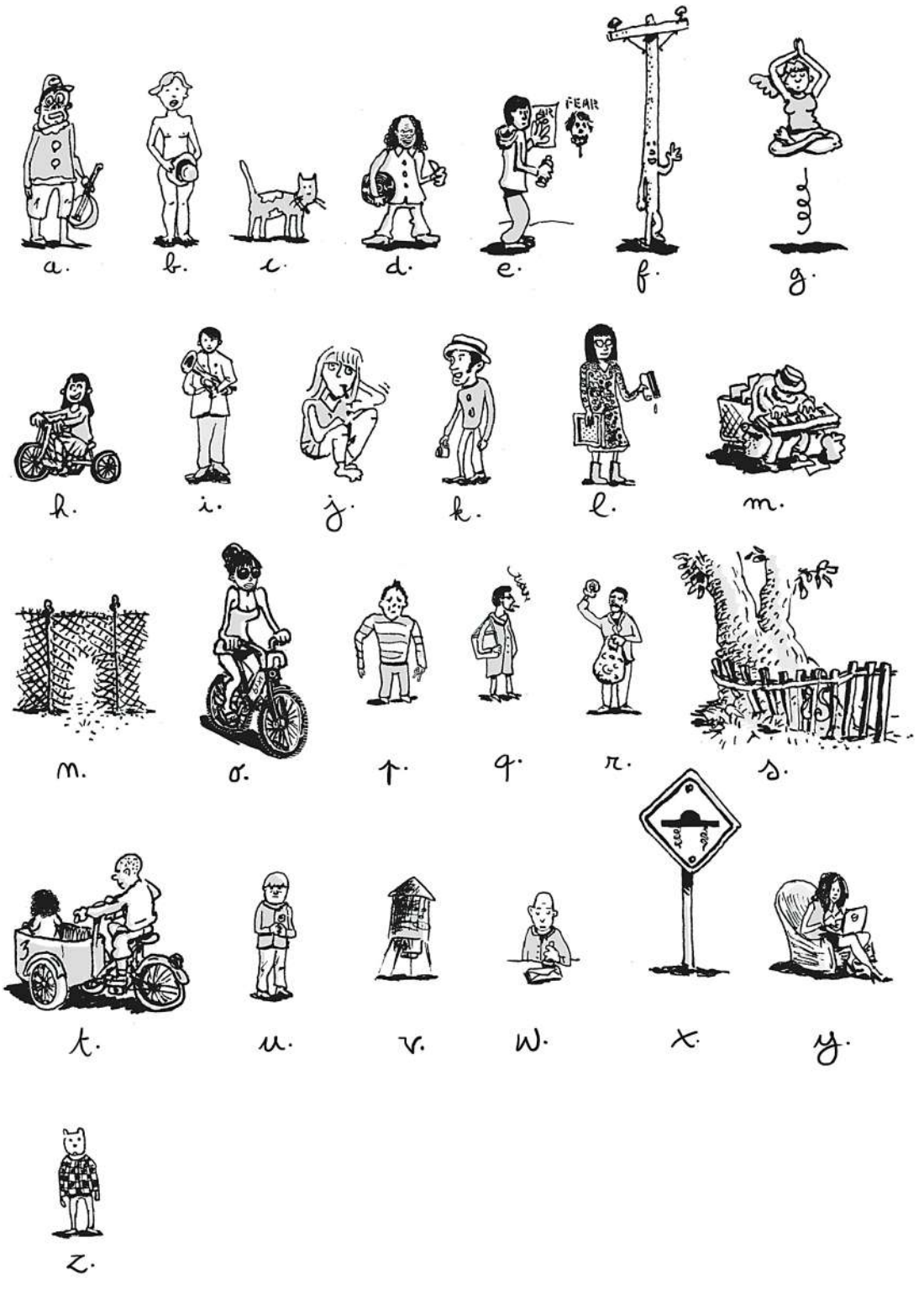
The man who spends seven years building a cottage
and finishes by smashing it to pieces in a rage.
That's whose side I'm on.

Game Time

MICHEL HELLMAN

From Mile End *by Michel Hellman. Published by Pow Pow Press in 2015. The book was originally published in French (Éditions Pow Pow 2011). Michel Hellman is the illustrator and author of five books. His most recent book is* Nunavik *(Pow Pow Press 2016). He lives in Mile End in Montréal, QC. Find him at michelhellman.com.*

a: mandolin guy // vieil Italien bizarre
b: naked babe // l'artiste multidisciplinaire
c: cat That looks like Momo // le matou du quartier
d: DJ Coco // le gars qui ressemble à Miles Davis en plus petit
e: Concordia art student // la graffiteuse
f: Power line man // M. Poteau
g: yoga babe // la granola
h: tricycle girl // la fille des propriétaires du dépanneur
i: hipster musician // le musicien qui joue des instruments démodés
j: French babe // la Française de France
K: Italian barista // le dealer
l: Anglo babe // la sérigraphe
m: homeless man // le vieil homme au piano devant P.A.
n: train Track police // l'agent de la voie ferrée
o: Bixi babe // Bixi babe
p: suburban dude // le 450 du vendredi soir
q: Ubisoft geek // le stagiaire en programation
r: bagel burger // le touriste
s: Fence busting tree // la métaphore
t: big European bike guy // le gars et son vélo-cargo
u: Collège français student // l'étudiant en uniforme
v: dramatic looking water Tower // la citerne photogénique
w: Greek post-office guy // Nico de chez Delphi
x: Ma. Hassidim // le hassidim
y: student babe // la cliente du Cagibi
z: moi?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THE RAMPART

From Spawn *by Marie-Andrée Gill, translated by Kristen Renee Miller. Published by Book*hug Press in 2020. Marie-Andrée Gill is Pekuakamishkueu and the author of three books published by La Peuplade:* Béante, Frayer *(published in English as* Spawn*) and* Chauffer le dehors. *She is the recipient of two Indigenous Voices Awards and lives in L'Anse-Saint-Jean, QC.*

At the lake, the fish we're looking
for is the ouananiche. In Ilnu:
she who is found everywhere
or little lost one.

if I don't touch the sidewalk lines
if I keep on running
till I reach the third street light
everything will be fine

it isn't real it's in my head it's nothing
my strong nails
will cling to this disorder

the lake eats away a little more cement with bleeding gums
and I want this whole thing over with
like that first french on the rampart

(we are everywhere lost)

some benches
some pruned cedars
and there, looming
four cement teepees

engraved:
beaver
snowshoes
canoe, bear
drab cement
drab procession
the story drawn, lifeless

The rampart
suspended in time
prams, drunk boys

day and night the dogs

day and night the dandelions push
through cracks in the cement

and before us, the lake
a luck
the lake.

its flashing waves
revive humanity
one drop at a time

on the main street
we draw game migrations
and curves of the stock exchange in chalk

we cherish the thrill of plucking daisies
and count the petals silently
to be sure that someday
we'll be loved

We have plans for you, they say.
And we laugh. As narcotic ghosts cling
to the storms of our bodies
we laugh.

Do No Harm

SADIQA DE MEIJER

What we were more implicitly taught not to pursue
is the question of where the injury began

I went to medical school in a prison town. At first the Kingston prisons seemed to me like the sugar refineries or steel plants of other cities, simply the main local industry. One of them—a gray, neoclassical, walled compound—was near the campus, on the lake. Another, across from the Value Village, resembled a small castle with red spires; some locals called it Disneyland North. There were four other major institutions outside the city, much less visible from the road.

Some students joked about them. These tended to be young white men who, if they ever did find themselves in jail, would likely soon be freed through family connections, or a judge who saw himself reflected in their faces, their manner, or their home address. It was new for me to be around classmates like that—ones who might play a

Image: Bars and High Window *by Brock Martland, courtesy of the Arts Inside and Out Project, The John Howard Society of Canada.*

round of golf with the dean or department head, hired housekeepers, and shopped at thrift stores only satirically, at Halloween. In their company, the feminist and anti-corporate perspectives that I'd come to take for granted as a campus activist at the University of Western Ontario were considered amusing, though amusement was only the waxy coating over a compressed sense of entitlement; if I pushed through, I knew there would be contempt, and even fury.

When it came to prisons, however, I had nothing to say; my life at the turn of the millennium had afforded me that ignorance. While my parents had modest incomes, they also had graduate degrees. The racisms I'd encountered were particular to being perceived as mixed race, or South Asian, or Arabic. They were not anti-Black or anti-Indigenous, and therefore did not place me at exponentially higher risk of imprisonment. I saw the prisons as ominous boxes, self-contained and arbitrarily situated in our area. Their relationship to the community remained obscure.

Then, during the first month of classes, I volunteered for an after-school arts program at a local public school. I worked with first-graders who had been identified in evasive professional language as *at risk*. One afternoon, around a low, rectangular table strewn with pipe cleaners and popsicle sticks, one grim little girl in pigtails told me that her father was a trucker and gone all the time. Immediately, three or four other children claimed the same.

I brought up this coincidence with their teacher afterwards, and she clarified that the fathers were incarcerated. Although I can't recall what the teacher looked like, in my memory she struck that common tone in which the initiated speak to relative outsiders about prisons—or perhaps in which we respond to any privileged innocence—with a degree of pleasure at its erasure. In return, I made an effort to hide my dismay. And what do we do that for? I mean assimilate terrible facts by pretending not to feel.

My privilege had classist and racist foundations, and somehow caused me to underestimate the love in the lives of imprisoned people. I had pictured men—the downtown prison was a men's institution—without relations, and failed to consider that their partners and children and mothers would move to live near them, for the sake of whatever contact was allowed. It was a subtraction I had made from their humanity. If my own father or brothers were long-term prisoners, I too would try to make visits affordable and practical. My privilege was that this circumstance seemed unimaginable. I stood nearer, in other words, to the fraternity men of my class than I had realized.

The feminist and anti-corporate perspectives that I'd come to take for granted were considered amusing, though amusement was only the waxy coating over a compressed sense of entitlement; if I pushed through, I knew there would be contempt, and even fury.

My sense of immunity would soon undergo an adjustment. I started medical school in 2001, and September 11 was our second day of classes. During an early break, a fellow student appeared at the lectern and said she had just read at the library's computer terminal that America was under attack. Our class stirred in disbelief and confusion, but the next professor took the stage without comment, and the title of his PowerPoint presentation appeared on the screen: *Blood*. I listened for a few minutes, saw that the material was familiar, and left to get the news. During the months and years after that, as an anti-terrorist infrastructure was taking shape to target people with olive skin and Islamic names, I would learn to worry for my brothers and their possible incarceration. I would finally grasp that, for many, prison gates were only a crooked official or bureaucratic error away.

Back in that public school classroom, however, the aches of those six-year-olds were a revelation. Afterwards, whenever I passed the prison, I could almost see their love and longing and anger for their fathers, tethered and drifting from the razor-wired walls like threads of spider silk.

The next impression the prisons made on me was an indirect but gruesome one. As part of our medical training, we were each required to shadow a paramedic team for one shift. I told my friend and classmate I had spent a quiet evening eating doughnuts and watching comedies at the station, and responding to a single call from a woman with back pain. The paramedics were relaxed as she limped from her house to the ambulance; she was a regular, they said. Then I asked my friend about his experience.

He was usually wryly funny. He explained that his team had been called to the downtown prison after a suicide. They had to cut a hanging man down. His voice was both incredulous and already imbued with a determined acceptance, as if he took it as his duty to withstand what he had witnessed.

Then came the clinical years.

"I have lunch at twelve," a tall, thin patient in the infectious disease clinic told me. He repeated this several times as I persisted in a thorough assessment.

"You're meeting someone for lunch?" I asked.

"No," he said, looking at me with scorn, "I'm in prison."

The placid man in the waiting room—his partner or friend, I had assumed—must have been a guard.

The term "minimum security" occurred to me. The question of what he had done. *Never ask them*: that was the only instruction I ever heard from a professor regarding prisoner patients.

As hospital admissions, prisoners were marked with a middle initial of "X" on our lists. I suppose this was to alert health-care workers to potential complications: the impossibility of a neurological exam on a person in shackles or the need to allow a guard into the imaging room. The prisoner in-patients were people twice institutionalized. I wondered if the hospital was a respite for them.

One night, I was called to a ward room with two uniformed guards at its doors. There were four patients inside—three in the usual half-curtained beds, and one man on a gurney in the aisle. I had his chart in my hands. Restraints locked his wrists and ankles to the rails, and were impossible to reconcile with his condition; he was emaciated, fevered, and trembling. We were approximately the same age. His diagnoses were pneumonia, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS, and I could see from his bloodwork that he was critically ill.

"I'm all right," he kept telling me in a small voice fractured with pain, "I think it's just a cold." He had big, dark eyes. I told myself that he had probably been violent—and that he would trick me too if required, easily and remorselessly, in a habitual fight for survival. I did that, I now see, because of the vulnerability I perceived in him. It made me want to stay and hold his hand, but I knew that doing so would cost me, in some unwritten sense, as a medical student; we were supposed to be tougher than that.

The next prisoner I remember was a bearded, red-haired man lying handcuffed to a gurney in a hallway, awaiting surgery. It was another incongruous picture. Pre-operative patients already seem disarmed: they lack their usual clothing, or their eyesight, or the sense of remove from their own mortality. The man's restraints, in this context, implied that the threat he posed was immense.

There was also the strange sequence of procedures that had been or would be done to his body: immobilization by chains, and then by anaesthesia; cutting and cauterizing; leaks of blood. Their meanings blurred, and the rituals of surgery could suddenly be perceived as punitive, or even as a curing of whatever was amiss in him, the ablation of the will to harm.

These mental images of corrective procedures now strike me as central to the incarceration system's own unsettled question: should inmates be punished or rehabilitated? Isolation is already inherently painful to our nature. Past that punishing aspect, doing time is not a blank, suspended existence, and the condition of people released from prisons depends on the substance of their days, months, and years of incarceration.

The doctor at one of the clinics I rotated through also worked inside the prisons. When I asked about his experience he told me how disastrous it was that prisoners could not clean their needles for drug use. He had advocated for bleach buckets on the range, the common area

directly outside the cells, but those were deemed too dangerous. He described a horrific economy, in which some prisoners would swallow their prescribed medications under supervision, then make themselves vomit to sell the pills. The money might be for food, phone calls, or contraband. He seemed to speak with an extinguished kindness, in a sandpaper voice.

I think of the efforts made by doctors, or teachers, or other institutional workers, to not feel too much. If the purpose of prisons was truly rehabilitation, that numbing practice might have no place. The buildings would be architecturally overhauled, their interiors no longer resembling cages. Instead of infrequent and opaque reports of an inmate death, a riot, or a drone ferrying contraband over a wall, we would hear regularly from incarcerated people themselves. They would receive a dignified rate of pay for their labour.

Contemporary prisons are supposed to have classrooms and libraries and culturally oriented anger management programs, measures intended to lead to the release of benign and skilled individuals. But what I've observed of people on day parole, on statutory release, or in resumed lives of relative freedom, is that living in prison has left signs of trauma: scars, restlessness, a vigilant scanning of the periphery. Correctional officers, too, are affected by the institutions; a recent Canadian study found that more than a third suffer from work-related PTSD. When human exchanges are fraught with threat, mistrust or abuse, no one involved is immune.

Kingston's historic downtown prison closed in 2013, and three years later it reopened for tourism. I went on a bright day one May, a decade after I had left both the hospital and medicine itself. I wanted to know what was inside the walls that I had passed by hundreds of times.

Two young students guided our group through the family visiting rooms, where microphones were embedded in the small, metal tables, and past the domed, central space with its tiered ranges, inside the metal workshops, and along a row of open cells. Under the dome was a panoptical guard station, a geometric structure of steel and bullet-proof glass. There were framed pictures on the wall. One photograph from the 1970s showed the inmates relaxed and crowded along the fenced galleries, listening to a live concert.

At each stop, retired Kingston Penitentiary officers told us the history of what we were viewing. Some seemed to offer a straightforward perspective. One former guard with a booming voice recalled the period when officer weapons were stored beneath the guard post: "Having the armoury here was wonderful. We could get anything we needed. Pistols, guns, gas, batons, shields." A stern woman described doing cell checks: "We looked for a live, breathing body."

"Having the armoury here was wonderful. We could get anything we needed. Pistols, guns, gas, batons, shields."

Other narrators used forms of doublespeak that I couldn't quite decipher. A gaunt man with a mustache said smilingly, "When we got the security cameras in, the prisoners really liked that." *The undesirables*, others said, or *the definition of reasonable force*. The tour was strictly timed and surveilled; whenever I lingered at a stop to ask questions, one of the students would return and rush me through the tight and labyrinthine hallways after the group.

I thought of Charles Dickens's description of the place in 1842. He was travelling through eastern America and Canada, making stops in Boston, Toronto, and Niagara Falls. Of Kingston, he wrote: "There is an admirable jail here, well and wisely governed, and excellently regulated, in every respect." At the time, some inmates were children under the age of ten, routinely whipped for breaking rules that included not speaking or giggling.

What felt cumulative, during our tour of the now dormant building, was the effect of endless cold, hard surfaces—metal, limestone, and concrete—ubiquitous in the floors, the walls, the bars, the railings, the seats, the tables, the bunks. Everything was made to withstand force or to be hosed down, but people had lived there—breathing bodies—and I saw no means for them to be even fleetingly at ease. The punishment or rehabilitation question seemed settled in the furnishings themselves.

There was, even as we walked the extensive outdoor grounds, a sense of suffocation rising in me. Where were the former prisoners' voices? In the segregation unit, where a residual atmosphere of suffering remained unmistakable, I saw a skilled drawing of an Indigenous Medicine Wheel, along with axes, a feather, and a grieving woman's face, still on the cinderblock wall of a cell.

We were not supposed to ask, at the hospital, what a prisoner had done because the answer could affect our duty to provide impartial care. This is a beautiful principle in medicine: the idea that every wound deserves the same quality of attention, no matter who bears it. But what we were more implicitly taught not to pursue is the question of where the injury began. With a famine; a slave ship; a broken treaty; with the Sixties Scoop.

Some months after the tour, I was at a community meeting that involved a sharing circle. One of those present was a muscular white man with a tense demeanour. In the circle, he volunteered that he had done what he called the worst thing possible, and had served his time. He was frustrated that many people—potential employers, friends, or lovers—still saw him as a criminal. "What about forgiveness?" he asked.

He sat beside me, and we were without the separations that institutions impose—without the white coat and the orange jumpsuit, the scripted roles of authority and compliance. He spoke with a volatile impatience. Ideologically, I wanted to agree with his perspective, to erase the weight of his past, but instinctively, I wanted only to be less near him, and to not mention that I had a daughter. The fault wasn't mine or his, but collective; my sense, bodily and trusted, was that whatever had happened to him in the name of justice and rehabilitation had not worked. I don't believe prisons enclose or remediate physically violent behaviour. They are a stopover in its circuits, where pain and trauma are amplified.

Activist movements for prison reform or abolition are more prominent now than they were when I was a student, but perhaps what requires reform first is our definition of what constitutes violence. At the after-school arts program, many of the children gathered around that glue-stained crafting table—who aren't children now, who probably have children of their own—were chronically hungry, and to be six years old and hungry in a city of stocked stores, among gleaming billboard images of restaurant meals, is violence; to be a mother with only a few dollars of grocery money per day is violence; for a child to name their hunger to the wrong adult and lose their family is violence.

That genocide is violence goes without saying; its brutal aftermath marks communities for generations. Living with a pervasive cultural image of yourself as inferior is also violence, and when the police and courts base their work on that image, the system becomes an entrapment.

In relation to those forms of violence, most of us accord ourselves a false sense of blamelessness. We don't determine rates for social assistance programs; we don't refuse to fund water filtration systems for Indigenous communities; we don't fasten the handcuffs to the stretcher. Our own violence takes the form of silent, continuous consent; it lives in us, a negative space with armoured walls.

After the prison tour, I remembered another way that the prisons had come up during our first week of med school: the downtown penitentiary was rumoured to house Paul Bernardo, a serial rapist who also murdered three girls. My cohort was the same generation as his teenage victims, and it was natural that we would discuss him—but now I also see the implications of us naming only that inmate, one who was monstrous, and undoubtedly guilty, and could never be safely released. Very few such people exist, but it was convenient to consider him the representative prisoner, because it absolved us of asking who else was in there and what their stories might be. Viewed in the slanted sunlight that makes threads visible—gleaming filaments strung between razor wires and walls—these stories are ones in which we are all complicit. Those hard and unforgiving surfaces are ours.

Sadiqa de Meijer's language memoir alfabet/alphabet *won a Governor General's Literary Award in 2021. She lives in Katarokwi/Kingston, ON, at the junction of two rivers and a lake.*

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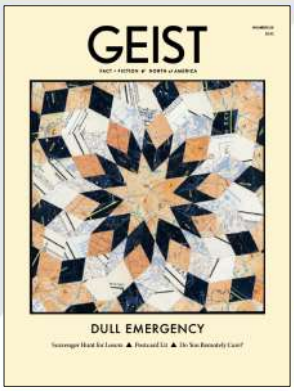

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1ST PLACE

Velvet Deathtrap

JANNIE EDWARDS

I wonder why taxidermists don't sign their work. Really, what they do is art. And not all taxidermy is created equal, believe me. There's Michelangelo and then there are Sunday painters. I spent my formative years practicing piano under the creepy yellow-eyed gaze of a badly preserved Scottish stag.

How we came to have it is that Dad's brother, Uncle Archie, came from Aberdeen for his one and only visit and decided our brick fireplace needed a stag's head. So back in Aberdeen he procured one and mailed it to North Battleford, Saskatchewan. How did it ever get through Canadian customs? Big Mystery. The stag was like the Cuban Missile Crisis of the cold war that was Mom and Dad's marriage. Mom hated it from the outset, but after all Archie's effort Dad felt obligated to hang it. So Dad, the unhandiest man in the world, gouged a big hole in the brick fireplace drilling a screw to

hold the stag. Mom turned into an iceberg and froze him out. Would not speak to him. She made me the go-between. "Tell your father his dinner is on the table." Or worse: "Tell your father if he wants dinner to make it himself." The stag said nothing. Dad held out for over a week in that nuclear winter before he caved, moved the stag downstairs over the piano and hung in its place a kind of mail-order family crest he'd bought from Reader's Digest or someplace.

There's a diorama wildlife museum on the Alaska Highway that my hubby Hal and I saw on a long road trip to Whitehorse. It features the most lifelike taxidermy I've ever seen. There's one scene of two fighting caribou that locked horns so hard they couldn't unlock. They died like that.

Male caribou grow a new set of antlers every year. That would be like growing a whole new set of teeth every year. The antlers weigh fifteen to twenty pounds. The museum sign said they provide cooling for the caribou, "nature's air conditioning." In the Arctic? As they grow, the antlers are covered with velvet. Females grow antlers too. They keep them until after they give birth—helps protect grazing during pregnancy. Makes sense. The males use them to fight before the rut.

What a way to die. When my sister-in-law's kids fought she made them sit on the same chair until they could get along. She could have been a marriage counsellor. When I asked Mom why she didn't divorce Dad, she told me that she didn't want him ruining another woman's life.

In their eighties, both Mom and Dad had strokes that snuffed out most of their speech. They ended up in the same stroke ward. Mom glared at everyone, 24/7, her worst stink eye directed at Dad. Then one day, out of the blue, Dad started singing. Looking right at Mom in her wheelchair. A ragged little song. In Gaelic. A kind of lullaby. I guess he got the last word.

Jannie Edwards is a writer, editor, teacher and mentor from Amiskwaciwâskahikan/Edmonton. Her latest collaboration with visual artist Sydney Lancaster, Learning Their Names: Letters from the Home Place *(Collusion Books, Fall 2022), is an evolving ten-year-plus "Slow Art" exploration of colonization, displacement and erasure on a five-acre, off-grid homestead near the historic Victoria Trail.*

2ND PLACE

Genuine Person

CLAYTON LONGSTAFF

That the house I live in is an old colonial thrown
together by a Texan and a lumber baron,
not knowing the first thing about the Pacific
Northwest or its weather,
that after a hundred years of mould and flooding
the building manager's son smokes
menthols all day in his white leather racing
jacket, squatting in the shade of one of the
building's two Roman columns, repeating each
time I pass him that *all fear is irrational*
and *ergo*, *ergo*, *ergo*, that he ditches his crushed
canned Caesars in the flower beds for the
moths to have orgies in, and that when they
emerge, resplendent, beautiful, leafing the air
like a backstroke across rain-light, he steps back,
blinks at a passing argosy of pollen,
licks some canned clam from the corners of his
mouth,
the clearwing moth that looks identical to a hor-
net he calls a hornet
because hornets buzz, are yellow with black rings,
are larger than bees, *ergo*, the flying
insect with the long dangling legs must be a hor-
net, that by the same logic for not being
found on Instagram or Facebook he calls me a
Genuine Person, which I say sounds like
an award a business school would give out, *awarded
to the student most excellent in
performing genuine personhood*, feeling more like an
assault when I repeat the words
later while touching myself on top of the bed-
sheets, watching the moths levitate from the
mushroom compost of flowerbeds to outside my
bedroom window, hum electrifying, an
amorphous plume of moths proliferates, assem-
bling a figure unlike any one particular
thing but a thing's premonition—does it feel then,
like a moth,
or is it even referring to anything at all
besides a parenthesis? I've always thought of the
body more as a capacity than any solid
formed thing, a hum, that at the quietest daylit
hour when the sun stands like a visitor
awaiting direction—sit here, eat this, stay—pauses
as it mounts a dead fly in the shape of
an apostrophe or a discarded fingernail, a closing
quotation having finished what needed
saying right there on the tracks of the windowsill
where I Cloroxed a week earlier, maybe
it was the Clorox that did it, or maybe the mould,
a hum that even now, as an abandoned nest of
torched rolling papers flaps in lieu of
stomach lining, hangs off my bones for words to
make into a song, that is, when words
arrive, if words arrive, a hum that buzzes unlike any
one particular thing but a thing's premonition,
that even in the dark, while the building manager's
son sleeps next to me, I see the ceiling
fleck and shudder as the moths dust their wings,
our bodies a parenthesis, skin to hold a
thought in a sentence nobody has ever finished,

Clayton Longstaff's writing has appeared, or is forthcoming, in publications including the Dalhousie Review, Canadian Literature, PRISM international *and elsewhere. He lives on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ nations.*

3RD PLACE

Who Loves the Vegas Minotaur?

JEROME STUEART

Of course we love the Vegas Minotaur! Who doesn't? He croons Frank Sinatra/Bobby Darin jazz into froth, and his horns glint like, at any moment, this thicc-ass bull might charge straight at us. He is *Danger*—and a warm, soulful baritone. Honestly, people freakin' love this guy. But we are told when we arrive: "Do not, under any circumstances, tell Monty Hereford how to get out of the casino." No clues, don't talk to him about escape, and certainly don't guide him to the exits. And there's my dilemma. I came into the casino to #FreeMonty.

A whole group of us exist on social media, plotting to get Monty out.

He's found clues we've left. We hear he has a huge board in his penthouse suite where he pieces the clues together. The problem is, he thinks the staff is on his side. Some of them give him fake maps of the casino. Or misdirect him. They remind him how much he values his privacy, and how the world outside is a mess. Look at what he's got inside, they tell him. Room service! His own suite, his own band! He never has to go out. He has a balcony where he can watch the weirdness of the world, and isn't it better this way? they ask.

The Four Nines casino doesn't want to lose him. They live off the people he brings in. He's the guiding star. We shmucks dump our money waiting to see his show, come two hours early to get a good seat, eat a nice filet mignon, play some slots. I've seen some of these same people here multiple times. #CashCow, yeah. That's him. If he escaped, he might disappear from the public eye, have a worse life. Would he even sing without the casino?

"Monty's happy," the ushers tell us. "He's loved, cared for, and he would be lost in the outside world. No sense of direction—a bit #bullheaded." We laugh, but we know it's probably #Bullshit.

Freeing Monty is not easy. I can't toss a flower with a message on stage, or try to slip something into his hand as he passes (the damn spotlight watching him/us), or yell a codeword at him.

He needs a friend, a familiar face, to get close.

So that's what I'm doing. This is my fifteenth show. I get a VIP complimentary room discount when I'm here. A hundred dollars' worth of tokens I can play. It's really nice! Now I know, that's not how I planned to #FreeMonty. But the process of #FreeingMonty has become important to take slow. It's what's best for him. I think he knows I'm trying. When he winks at me, I wink back at him, to let him know I'm here to help.

I heart his sexy, glittery, aching soul.

He's always here for me to free—but not free too abruptly, because in some ways, we love the Vegas Minotaur best when he's crooning for his release.

Jerome Stueart is a queer artist/writer whose writing has appeared in F&SF, *Tor.com*, On Spec, Lightspeed, *and elsewhere. He was a finalist for the 2020 World Fantasy Award in Short Fiction and the 2017 Sunburst Award. A former Yukoner, he is now a vagabond between Dayton, Ohio and the cabin of a bear in Tennessee.*

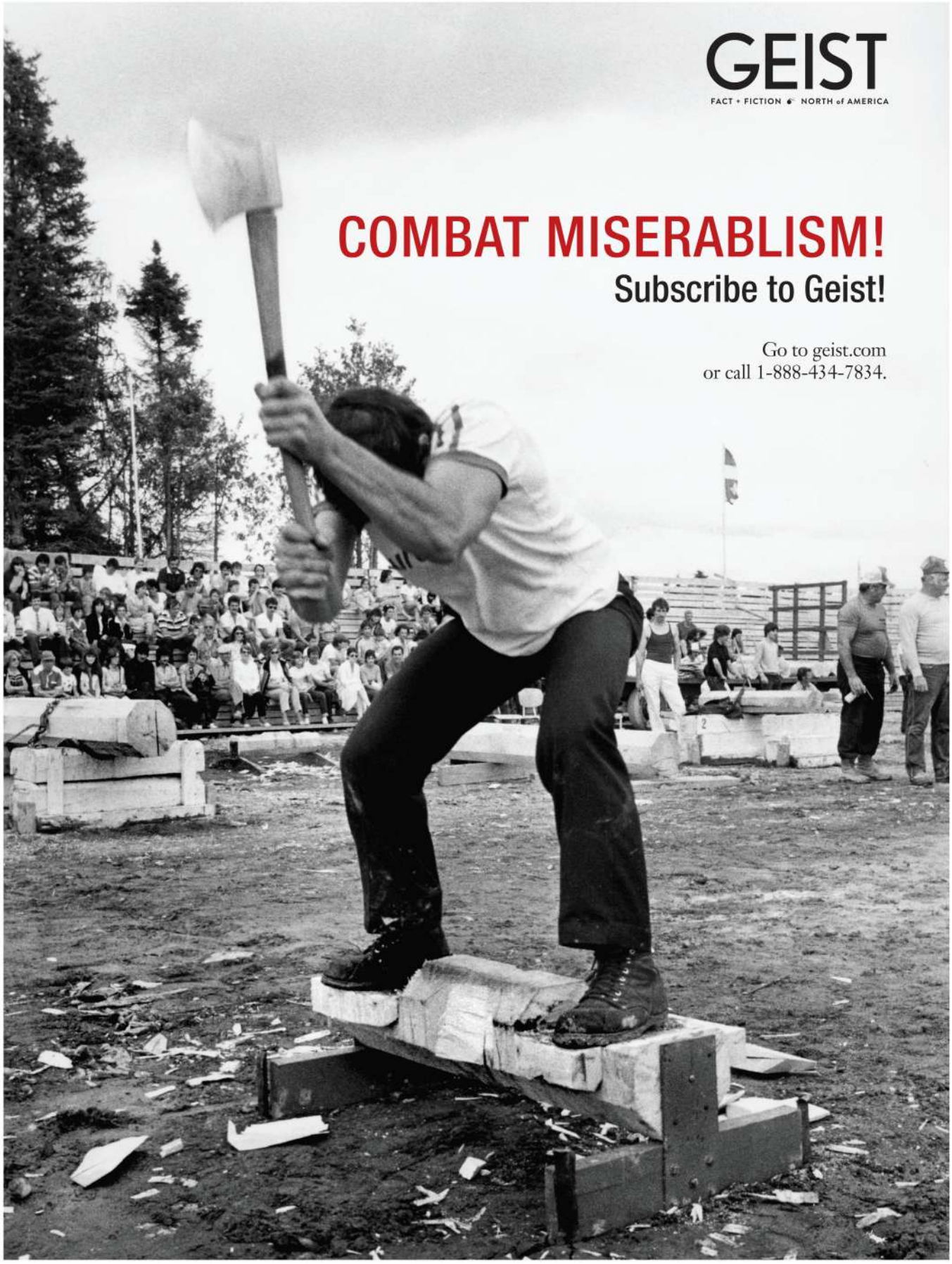


Photo: Romain Pelletier

City Within

DAVID CLERSON,

TRANSLATED BY KATIA GRUBISIC

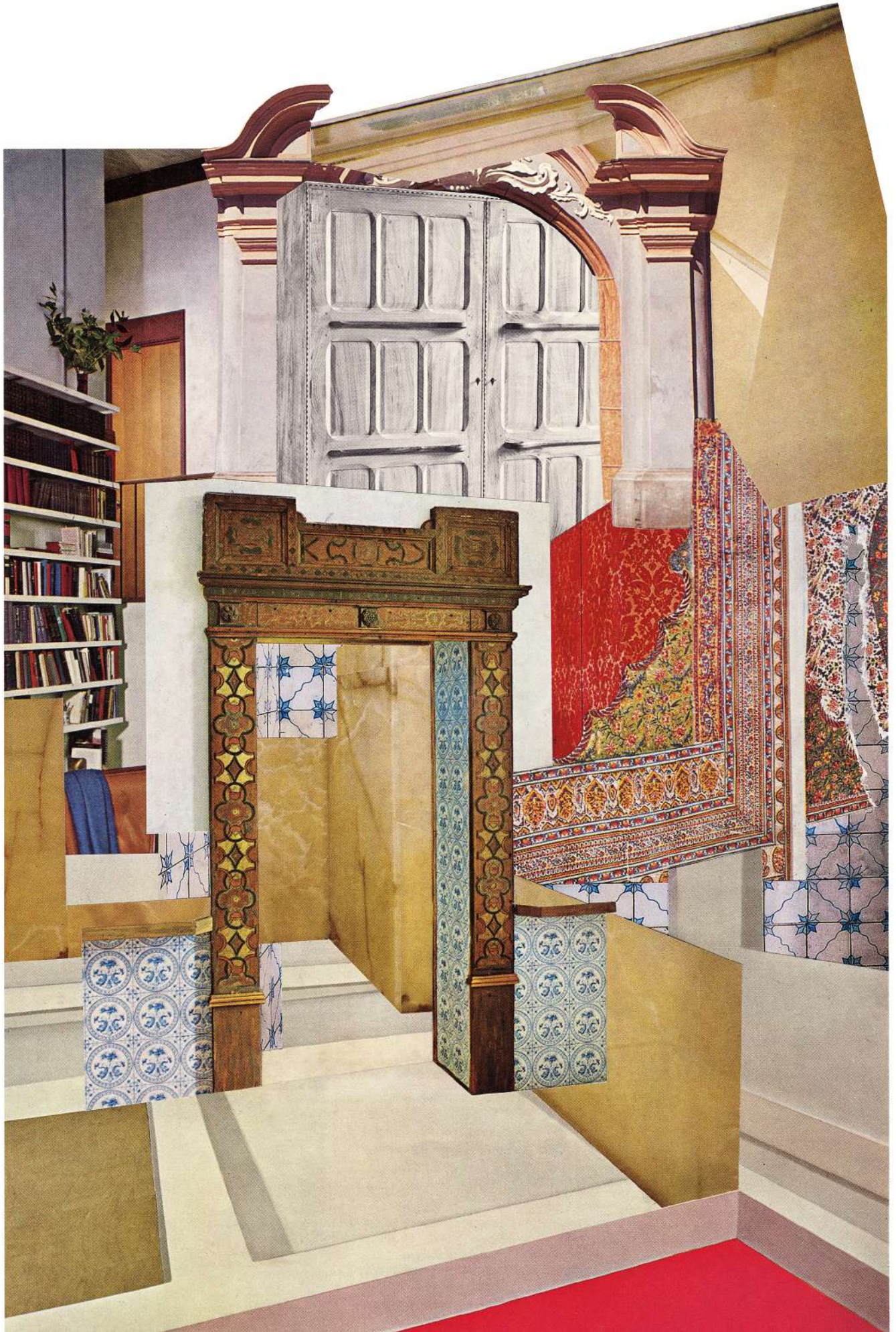
The rooms I imagined repeating endlessly, with me at the centre

Beneath Montréal's underground city is another, hollow and with endless storeys. I discovered the entrance by chance, and I head down there almost every night after work, closing the door behind me. Innumerable passageways connect rooms that are for the most part empty and uninhabited. Several intersect or follow each other—in the eighth sub-basement, there are six parallel hallways—with openings that pass from one to the next, though they don't really seem designed to lead anywhere in particular. Most of the floors are connected by trapdoors, which you can slip through, though if you fall you're likely to get hurt. You can reach some of the traps by scaling pyramids made from furniture and planks. I stacked some for this very purpose, inspired by pre-existing structures.

Staircases are pretty rare. I know there are some that span several floors, though it's impossible to actually access any of them, until a door might open five or six landings down. Obviously exploring floors that appear at first to be completely cloistered becomes a fixation.

Over the course of several visits, I finally found a way to get to every floor except the third, which is still impenetrable: I couldn't find a door or a trapdoor to get in. When I climb up a staircase that crosses the third floor, and I bang against the wall, I can hear an echo behind it, though whether it's accessible or whether there is only an enclosed, unreachable space, I don't know.

Image: **Urban Fortress Interiors 6: From Which No Exit Is Possible** *by Aimée Henny Brown.*



The fourth sub-basement has particularly low ceilings. You have to get around on your hands and knees, sometimes even crawling. The rooms there, on the other hand, are vast, wide expanses through which I inch along, dragging myself across the floor with my elbows or on my stomach.

In the sixth sub-basement, the ceilings are surprisingly high—you'd have to be three times my height to touch them—and several corridors are so narrow that I shuffle sideways with my head turned so my shoulders don't rub against the walls. A door opens onto a spacious room bathed in pale light, the source of which remains invisible and mysterious. I once saw paw prints there, in the dust—a cat, but I never saw the animal. One night in December, as I was walking through the seventh sub-basement, I heard a meowing sound that seemed to be coming from the ceiling. I tried to get to the cat but couldn't.

My explorations can be dangerous. I carry a bag with a rope, a water bottle, and some snacks, and I keep my flashlight handy. I don't always need it: several rooms and corridors are lit by lamps dangling from the ceiling, which I figure must be connected to the electrical grid of the outer city. Or skylights filter the glow from higher levels. There's also an entire floor, the eleventh, where to my knowledge there is not a single light. I find my way with my flashlight, or sometimes I deliberately just grope my way along. The game of blindness. It is completely dark. I step slowly, carefully, to avoid tumbling down stairs or through a hatch. The game goes on until I click on my flashlight again, often in a place that looks different than what I'd imagined. Then I'm off again to explore other floors.

In remote parts of the fifth sub-basement, water dribbles down the walls. Some rooms are flooded, and I paddle across on rafts cobbled from pieces of shelves, tables, and chairs that I nail or tie together. A projector shines a white rectangle on a wall but no film flickers. Most of the rooms in the underground city are empty, but some have furniture, evidence of more or less recent occupation. In one, in the eighth or maybe the ninth sub-basement, I once found a bathtub, full. The water was warm, almost hot, and I slid in. Somewhere farther along I could hear water falling drop by drop and, elsewhere, an almost inaudible squeak. I closed my eyes and I dropped my head under the surface, with only my lips and my nose above. I breathed slowly as the city radiated out around me, the rooms I imagined repeating endlessly, with me at the centre. I got out of the tub and dried myself, using my T-shirt as a towel, and walked outside.

I never saw the bathtub again. There are several rooms I've been to—often, even—without being able to find my way back. In one hallway I must have walked down a hundred times, last summer I saw a door I didn't know existed. When I tried to open it, it was locked, but two nights later, when I passed it again, it was open. Behind the door, a staircase led to the floor above, stopping at a wall. I panicked at the dead end, and bolted back down the stairs and through the open door, in the grasp of a fear, most likely irrational, that the door would close and I'd be left alone, hungry and thirsty in the stairwell, to curl up slowly in the dust.

Although I'm sometimes afraid of getting lost in all the rooms and hallways, or of becoming claustrophobic, that's never stopped me trying to get in. Over time I've created a map of landmarks and arranged the premises to make things easier—I tied a rope at the top of a shaft so I can slide down without falling, and I chalk markings on the walls—crosses, arrows, and circles to help me find my way around. I've also gotten into the habit of drawing half-plans, outlines of rooms, stairwells, and hallways, their proportions imperfect. When I see them again, they never seem to correspond exactly to the architecture of the place, and so I sometimes go back and adjust, erasing or colouring in the initial diagram in pink or yellow chalk over my white lines. I'm not sure—I'm not sure of much of anything about this labyrinthine underground—but sometimes, when I look at these drawings, I think others have altered or completed them, contours filled in for rooms I don't remember visiting. The length of a corridor surprises me. The cartography seems suddenly new, suspicious.

I don't know anything about the origin of the maze and, after venturing through it for months, I have no clue as to what it might have been—the whimsical project of a billionaire architect, or maybe an enormous atomic shelter—but everything down here is a study in uselessness: this is not a place made for living. The rooms and hallways don't seem to be arranged according to any logic, or at least none that I can discern. The scraps and the few pieces of furniture that are still in good shape give the impression that someone has lived here, but they could also be objects dragged in by other visitors before me, who might have chosen to live here for a time before going back to the outside. When I first heard a pounding pulse between the walls as I walked in a darkened hallway in the eleventh sub-basement, a noise like someone running, the sign of a human presence, I wondered why they were running away from me, how I could possibly be a threat. A slow fear shivered through me. That night I came home earlier than usual, but my return to the surface seemed to take an especially long time. I paused, often. I stopped to listen. Nothing suggested that anyone else was there.

I first heard a pounding pulse between the walls as I walked in a darkened hallway in the eleventh sub-basement, a noise like someone running, the sign of a human presence.

Other than the silence and the walking, and the pleasure of exploration, what I appreciate most in this underground city are the sounds. The reverberations of my footsteps. My breathing. The creak of the hinges when a door opens. The water weeping in. A pebble tossed against a wall resonating from room to room. I like hearing my voice. I let out a sigh as I walk down the halls, and the rustle of my breath repeats. Later, sitting against a wall, I catch myself talking. I wander back to childhood, that summer by a lake in the Eastern Townships, not far from the border, my body stretched out under the ferns. Diving from the rocks, the strangeness in the deep, black water full of bass and crayfish. Or I picture the rush of life above me, all the people

downtown, the crowded streets. I get up, I go back to the outside. By the time I come out I'm always exhausted; I haven't slept. When I get to my apartment on Park, it's already light out. My cat wriggles over to purr on my belly as I fall asleep. In my dreams I'm back in the underground city again. The corridors stretch out even longer than in real life. For a long time I swim through the flooded halls. Sometimes I meet a woman there, Camille. She is sitting against a wall in a far room. Her hood is pulled over her head, and its shadow hides her face, but I think I can make out features that look reptilian. Her tongue whips and whistles. My own skin, my belly, is dry and scaly, like it's been sunburned or like I have some disease, and I don't know how to get out of the underground. I wake up drenched in sweat, and I swear I won't go exploring again. Already it's time to go back to work: I lock myself in my office and for six hours I type in the subtitles of TV series and animal documentaries. My eyelids droop, and it's all I can do to keep my eyes open. But when I finish work, I go back to the underground city, as I do every night.

I paddle across on rafts cobbled from shelves, tables, and chairs. Most of the rooms in the underground city are empty, but some have furniture, evidence of more or less recent occupation.

Sometimes I sleep down here. I curl up in a ball in a room, my jacket folded up under my head. The hallways stretch out around me. I breathe peacefully. The air is fresh. The room I've chosen isn't too dusty, and it's dimly lit. In a dream, I see Camille again. She looks at me as I sleep. She smiles at me. There's something tender about her, which she never shows in real life. I tear myself out of my dreams; I'm slow to get going. I turn down a hallway that seems to go on forever, and I want to sleep again. A door to my right is ajar. Camille is here, this time while I'm awake. She's huddled against a wall, and I sit less than a metre away, without touching her. In the gloom I can hardly see her eyes. I don't quite know why but they seem hostile, and I feel guilty even though I haven't done anything. There's no reason for her to hate me.

I'd been exploring the city for weeks before I met her for the first time. As I crawled through a narrow, low-ceilinged corridor, she was coming in the opposite direction. We were still, our heads a few centimetres apart. She stared at me without saying anything until I began to squirm back as she edged forward. When we were both finally somewhere we could stand, in an open space that seemed too large, she left immediately without saying a word. A few days later I saw her floating on a raft in a wide, flooded room. She didn't come close or try to talk to me, just poled away. Then one evening I found her sleeping in the corner of a room, her hood pulled over her head on the concrete floor. I lay down next to her. When she woke up she said, *This place is mine, Rocco. Have you forgotten?* My name is Pascal, and I've never met a Rocco, but I answered, *No. I've never forgotten, Camille.* She lay down next to me—a rare thing—and put her head on my lap. I smelled her, felt the warmth of her body, her heart beating. I wanted to kiss her.

I suspect she goes outside as little as possible. Every time I see her now I give her food, usually a sandwich I've made her. She never thanks me, but she swallows the meal hungrily. In one room, on a table, I once found some leftovers in a styrofoam container—some rice, chicken bones, a bit of salad. I imagined a theft, a quick in-and-out, higher up, up in the underground restaurants of Place Ville Marie.

I haven't seen Camille for over a month. There's no sign of her in any room, hallway, or staircase. I saw the cat's tracks again without seeing the cat. Every night, I dream of the underground city as I lie between its walls. One night, I dreamed that the whole grid was nestled in the body of a giant automaton. Another time, the city sank so deep it seemed to plummet through the earth. I thought I'd never see Camille again, but more and more she filled my dreams. She had the face of a cat, an eel, a shrew. Her arms were coiled; my own limbs were evaporating. When I finally came across her outside my dreams, she was crouching in the middle of a room, urine puddling beneath her. I turned my head away. *I know these hallways by heart*, she said abruptly. *Everything here belongs to me*. I didn't know what to say. I just wanted to stay near her.

At work my boss told me that I didn't look so hot, I needed to pull myself together, I wasn't sleeping enough. I nodded but still I continued exploring the secret city.

Today, the entrance, the only door I know of, is marked with a sign I drew, a miniature, stylized representation of a labyrinth. I pulled the door shut behind me, leaving the symbol for others, and I've never gone back up. Now that I live in the underground city, now that I sleep and dream here, it burrows into my body, too, into my head, letting me communicate with Camille—withdrawing into this shared solitude where I lose her and must find her again constantly. Where we live not outside of the world but in the real.

Taken from To See Out the Night, *a collection of short stories by David Clerson, translated by Katia Grubisic. Published in September 2021 by QC Fiction, an imprint of Baraka Books.*

David Clerson was born in Sherbrooke, Québec, in 1978 and lives in Montréal. His first novel, Brothers, *also translated by Katia Grubisic for QC Fiction, was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for Translation and a National Post Book of the Year.*

Katia Grubisic is a writer, editor, and translator. She has published translations of works by Marie-Claire Blais, Martine Delvaux, and Stéphane Martelly.

Transatlantic Fictions

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

Coming to harbour in a new world

My first inkling that an Atlantic crossing could contain a story occurred at the age of three and a half. After days adrift in mist, jumping in fright when the foghorn sounded, taking refuge in our tiny cabin to play with my toy cars, I was summoned on deck. Like generations of immigrants before me, I watched the New York skyline approach. The ranks of skyscrapers told me that we had reached a new continent. The image of two continents that faced each other across the dark, foggy Atlantic became the story that explained who I was. I would cross the Atlantic many more times. Each time I returned to Europe, where I had been born, I was more integrated into Canada; the contrast between the two continents yawned wider. Yet, as I grew older, my assertions of Canadian identity in the face of European history and customs were complicated by the claims Europe made on me: on my awareness that Canada's evolution was an extension of Europe, a product of European colonialism, a reality that expressed itself primarily in two European languages. Over time, I came to regard Canada, and my own Canadianness, as indecipherable without an engagement with Europe.

Early in my efforts to comprehend the world through writing, I stumbled on a category I called transatlantic fiction. The first book I read in full awareness that it addressed transatlantic experience was Henry James's *Daisy Miller*. I read this short novel in a dog-eared, pungent-smelling second-hand paperback that was passed on to me in my mid-teens by my father, who had stood beside me at the ship's railing as we approached New York. Later I would learn that the city we had stared at that day was not only his birthplace and the city to which his mother had immigrated across the Atlantic as a teenager to take work cleaning rich people's houses; it was also the city from which my father's great-grandparents had fled back to Europe to work in the mines in the late nineteenth century, when jobs in America dried up during a long recession. In spite of the gulf between my paternal family's transatlantic crossings in search of steady work and the grand tour of Europe of the novel's society-girl protagonist, *Daisy Mille*r spoke to me. The novella is celebrated for its allegorical portrait of "innocent young America and corrupt old Europe." Daisy succumbs to a fever after a socially inappropriate involvement with a suave Italian charmer. Yet the character who caught my attention was the neutral Winterbourne, an American whom Daisy meets in Europe and who becomes the powerless witness to her tragedy. Winterbourne's response to Daisy's death is not, as a reader might anticipate, to scurry back to America, but rather to remain in Europe, settling in Switzerland and courting "a very clever foreign lady."

Winterbourne's decision to prolong his engagement with Europe lays the foundations for generations of American literary protagonists who throw into relief the contours of their own identities through deep involvement with Europe and Europeans. James described the naive American abroad in ever more complex patterns

in novels such as *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Ambassadors* and *The Wings of the Dove*. Once launched into their European journeys of discovery, his protagonists hardly ever go home. Part of the reason for this—teased out in stunning form by Colm Tóibín in his novel about James, *The Master*—is that amorphous sexual identities which can remain ambiguous as long as the protagonist is an expatriate, are more difficult to obfuscate in the tell-all society of the U.S. East Coast. It is revealing that the only novel of the mature years of James's career that is set in the United States, *The Bostonians*, tells the story of a "Boston marriage," the nineteenth-century expression for a long-term lesbian relationship.

Edith Wharton, a younger friend of James, also wrote novels of Americans abroad. In 1920, after James was dead and the Europe he had known had blown itself up in the First World War, Wharton reprised her friend's themes, yet consigned them to the past, in *The Age of Innocence*. Expatriate experience became the property of the disillusioned Lost Generation. In Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, two American would-be lovers in France and Spain cannot consummate their relationship because both have been emotionally damaged by their commitment to Europe during the First World War. Similar strains of cultural nebulosity and sexual furtiveness appear in the transatlantic fiction of Gertrude Stein and Henry Miller. After the Second World War, African-American writers such as Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin used Paris as a base from which to understand their Americanness against the backdrop of new creative currents flowing from a rapidly decolonizing Africa. In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Patricia Highsmith would invert the patterns of Henry James. Highsmith's protagonist was not an innocent but a murderer. She maintained Jamesian sexual ambiguity by suggesting same-sex passions which could not be evoked openly in the popular fiction of the time. Less imposing than it had been before the two world wars, Highsmith's Europe became a tourist playground where you could get away with murder.

Exploring these books, I realized they were all American. Yet Canadian transatlantic fictions, too, abounded in my youth. Novels such as *Fifth Business* by Robertson Davies, *St. Urbain's Horseman* by Mordecai Richler and *Lady Oracle* by Margaret Atwood narrated transatlantic lives to take the measure of a maturing nation's distance from its colonial past. In Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, the protagonist visits Scotland, where she has an affair with a man named McRaith; this "wraith" symbolizes her irretrievable Scottish heritage. Canadian transatlanticism was sober and reverential in its quest for roots; only Leonard Cohen, smoking pot on the Greek island of Hydra, appeared transgressive. Last year, when I published my own transatlantic novel, I realized how rare this genre had become. The contemporary atomization of identities into a cluster of personal traits discourages testing national character by comparing continent to continent. Like other cultural forms, the transatlantic novel has shrunk from a statement relevant to an entire society to one primarily of significance to those who remember standing at a ship's railing as it came into harbour in a new world.

Stephen Henighan's most recent books are the short story collection Blue River and Red Earth *and the novel* The World of After. *Read more of his work at geist.com and stephenhenighan.com. Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*

Arms and Letters

ALBERTO MANGUEL

Science and the arts fulfil their functions to help us survive through the imagination

In the year 267 AD, a Germanic tribe, the Heruli, who had occupied a large part of the Balkan region, entered Greece and captured Athens, in spite of the fortifications that had recently been built to protect the city. Before they were driven out by the scholarly general Dexippus, the Heruli gleefully set out to sack the famous city, destroying statues and monuments, and collecting scrolls from the libraries in order to burn them in a colossal bonfire. One of the Heruli chieftains ordered them to stop, telling the greedy soldiers, as Edward Gibbon reports in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that "as long as the Greek were addicted to the study of books, they would never apply themselves to the exercise of arms."

Taken out of context—third century Europe or Gibbon's Age of Enlightenment—and seen now, from our anguished twenty-first century, the idea of preventing political violence through reading must seem at best a naive and wishful goal. From the early Middle Ages until at least the bombing of Hiroshima, the opposition between arms and letters was an unresolved question. In the second part of *Don Quixote*, the Duke tells Sancho that, as governor of the Island of Barataria, he must dress the part: "half as a man of letters and half as a military captain, because in this island which I bestow upon you arms are as necessary as letters and letters as arms." In saying this, the Duke not only refutes the classical dichotomy but also defines the obligatory concerns of every governor: the duty to act responsibly *and* the necessity to read books, understanding the former to mean action and the latter reflection. Our actions should be enlightened by our literature and our literature must bear witness to our actions. Therefore to act, in times of peace as in times of conflict, is in some sense an extension of our reading, since our books may guide us by means of the experience and knowledge of others, allowing readers the intuition of a future however uncertain, and the lesson of an immutable past.

Our societies have always been violent: war is the common state, peace the exception. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue with head of gold, chest of silver, thighs of bronze, and feet of iron and clay was interpreted by Daniel as the succession of transient empires, from Babylon to that of God. Daniel's interpretation has been extended throughout the generations and has provided justification for imperial expansions up to today. Colonialism and post-colonialism are two sides of the same coin. Rome's *Carthago delenda est* is echoed in the cries of ISIS and the Ku Klux Klan.

This atmosphere of violence that permeates our societies is indicative of a profound, ancestral dissatisfaction on all sides. For those in power, it manifests itself in an exacerbation of prejudice drenched in fear: fear of being stripped of unmerited privileges, fear of being punished for having assumed those privileges, fear of being relegated to the condition of a dispossessed minority with no privileges at all. For the vast abused so-called minorities (which are in fact

Image: We Are Pledged to You and You Are Pledged to Us *by Emily Marbach.*

the majority) the violence comes from having reached the breaking point, because there is only so much suffering anyone can endure. What Derek Walcott, in *The Muse of History*, said about the Americas is true of the whole planet: "But who in the New World does not have a horror of the past, whether his ancestor was torturer or victim? Who, in the depth of conscience, is not silently screaming for pardon or revenge?" The movements of protest that have surged in recent years come partly from that abused majority, and partly from certain privileged intellectuals who try to reason out the wrongs and find drastic strategies for counteracting them. And against the vast, incontrovertible evidence of victimhood and injustice, it is difficult to plead for dialogue. It seems almost impossible to make those in the seats of power recognize the need for change. It seems just as impossible to ask the dispossessed to assume the role of merciful and reasonable judges willing to seek reconciliation. The victims' cry today is "The boot is on the other foot now!" However justifiable the thirst for revenge, it needs to be understood that no one, not even the most undoubted martyr, can stand on just one foot. Society needs its two feet, as well as its head and the rest of its body. And until we learn to imagine outside metonymies, assuming that a foot or a fist might serve to represent our side, until we manage to think of society as a whole, a gestalt that is greater than the sum of its parts, we will not escape this vicious (in the truest sense) circle of violence done and violence reciprocated. "Utopia is not an optical illusion, but a logical illusion. It's like trying to 'square the circle,'" Tom Stoppard said in an interview a few years ago. "You cannot actually, even in your mind, construct an ideal society, in which everybody's take on what is equality, what is liberty, what is justice, what is mercy, is the same—where you can take an absolute position on any of these ideas, and hope for them to stick together like Rubik's cube. They just won't do it."

And yet, try we must. Not to hope for an unrealizable utopia but to consider our present societies in terms of a more inclusive, less colonialist mentality, which in the case of Europe means both an integration with the rest of the world, and the recognition of that world existing now within Europe's borders, with its constantly changing population: from Germanic tribes to Goths, from Romans to humanists, from independent republics to multifaceted, multiracial, multi-religious societies that need yet to find their twenty-first-century identity. Wherever we come from, voluntary exiles or freedom-seeking refugees, we all share an ancient grandmother: the more than three-million-year-old Lucy whose name in Ethiopia is "Dinkinesh," meaning "You are marvellous." The dreadful COVID epidemic that we are all suffering has reminded us of this common ancestry, because no one is spared from the threat. True, inequalities exacerbate the risk for some and lessen it for others, but the risk does not go away, whoever and wherever you are. The epidemic has also shown us that nationalities are imaginary constructs, that whether in Portugal or Borneo, Bulgaria or Chile, the menace from the virus is the same because the air we all breathe is the same. Poets could not have wished for a better metaphor of our common humanity.

Perhaps there is a place in which "everybody's take on what is equality, what is liberty, what is justice, what is mercy" can be, if not realized, at least discussed at length. The university could become an instrument towards a dialogue aimed at social sanity. Not to restore sanity to society—which never, in our multiple histories, has existed for very long—but to

encourage us to imagine the *possibility* of sanity, which we have tried to imagine so many times throughout the centuries. The perceived confrontation between science and the arts, as the Duke pointed out to Sancho, is a false one. A few years ago, Andri Snær Magnason, one of Iceland's best known writers, was asked by a leading climate scientist why he wasn't writing about the greatest crisis humankind has faced: global warming. Magnason demurred. He wasn't a specialist, he said, it wasn't his field. But the scientist persisted: "If you cannot understand our scientific findings and present them in an emotional, psychological, poetic or mythological context," he told him, "then no one will really understand the issue, and the world will end."

This belief, that science and the arts (arms and letters in the Duke's speech) are deeply intertwined, has been expressed many times throughout our histories. A few outstanding examples are Aristotle's understanding of science through philosophy, Maimonides's efforts to elicit a dialogue between Athens and Jerusalem, St. Jerome's strategies to allow the literatures of Greece and Rome to interact with Christianity, Caliph al-Ma'mun's magnificent project of translating the works of Aristotle into Arabic… There are many moments in our histories of which we can feel proud. We must learn that there is no "peripheral knowledge." Like in the old definition of God, knowledge is a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference nowhere. From the medieval gathering of geometry, music, astronomy, arithmetic, grammar, logic and rhetoric under one roof, to present-day courses such as Poetry for Physicists or Astrophysics for Artists, the university has attempted a reconciliation between disciplines set apart by the noxious split between praxis and logos, the act and the word, the flesh and the spirit. Science and the arts (for want of better words) fulfill their functions to help us survive through the imagination, that unique instrument that allows us humans the experience before the experience. Imagination offers us the possibility of becoming wiser, of doing things better and more justly, of finding solutions to ever-recurrent problems. I insist on the word *possibility*: imagination offers nothing more than that, it does not guarantee results. Neither science nor the arts can force action upon us. We must reflect and balance and decide. That is the meaning of what the old theologians called free will. Imagination offers us the choice; we are the ones who have to make it.

That is why careful reflection on the education strategies of the university are essential. If these strategies are dogmatic, if they are directive, if they don't offer diversified instruction, if they don't seek to educate but merely to train, if they attempt to domesticate the imagination instead of allowing it to run freely into unexplored realms, then the university becomes useless as an instrument of survival. In this sense, our archives, museums and libraries can be of assistance as places of active memory and evidence. We can learn from what we have collected and guarded and preserved, studying the material itself but also its context, the underlying meaning and prejudices of its cataloguing codes, the methods employed for finding and choosing and carrying material away, as gifts, as exemplars or as booty. This task is, in the words of the director of the Peabody Museum, Jane Pickering, "a challenge to long-held assumptions, as well as a deep commitment to broad and diverse perspectives on cultural heritage and on what it means to research and interpret museum and archival collections." Indeed. Every memory carries meaning beyond its apparent qualities.

Education, knowledge, thinking, have therapeutic effects, since exercise for the brain (though it is not a muscle) is on a par with exercise for the muscles of our body. Studies of diseases such as dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's have shown that an active, imaginative brain assists in the healing. Denis Diderot recommended bibliotherapy to cure various ailments. Carl Gustav Jung argued that the unconscious throws up from its depths clues and signposts we might follow to heal ourselves. In the processes of thought and in the labyrinths of dreams there are salutary indications of the paths to follow for a holistic betterment. *Mens sana in corpore sano* acquires a new, richer significance in today's social context. There is no reason to separate the science of medicine from the art of poetry. The body is an ancient metaphor for society and for the world: the body politic is not a casual metaphor, nor is the depiction of the world in medieval maps as the human body of Christ a trivial image. The bodily microcosm of the cabbalists that mirrors the macrocosm of the universe is not an idle association of big and small. We are the world we inhabit.

Our models of society have always been flawed, some of course more flawed than others. But our only hope to overcome our persistent blindness and infectious folly, our poisoning of the planet and the abuse of our fellow human beings, lies in this: if we can learn to imagine better, generously and creatively, then perhaps we can imagine a society less unhappy and less unjust.

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

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

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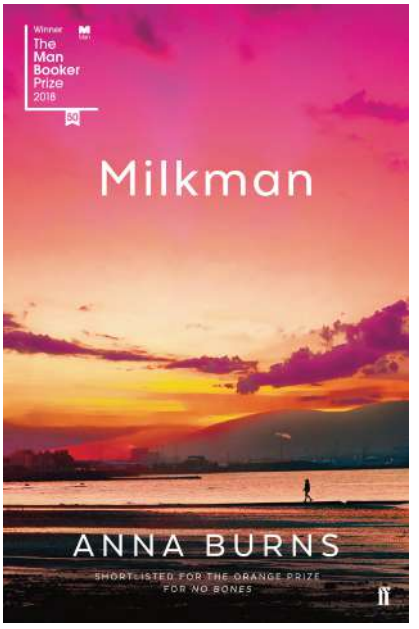
ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

MIDDLE SISTER

The Man Booker Prize-winning novel **Milkman** (Graywolf) by Anna Burns is great to read, but for a truly immersive experience, get hold of the audiobook so that the Irish actor Brid Brennan can read it to you. You'll wish it could go on forever. The story is narrated by middle sister, an eighteen-year-old living in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Middle sister's world is populated by maybe-boyfriend, wee sisters, first- second- and third-brothers-in-law, longest friend from primary school, informers and/or renouncers, as well as Somebody McSomebody, a name that refers to random judgmental people who criticize middle sister for, among other things, walking-while-reading. Then there is milkman, a forty-year-old with a white van who is probably a member of the paramilitary, and who decides that middle sister should be his girlfriend. When he begins to insinuate himself into middle sister's life, she writes "I did not know intuition and repugnance counted, did not know I had a right not to like, not to have to put up with, anybody and everybody coming near." A familiar occurrence in the lives of many girls and women in the 1970s, when we were too polite to make a scene—but I have never before encountered such a nuanced account of how that feels. Middle sister lives in a tight-knit community where everyone knows everyone else's business and people live according to a web of elaborate but unspoken customs and expectations that are supposed to, but don't succeed in, preventing middle sister from becoming a "beyond-the-pale



young person." Burns's writing is dense and rhythmic and moves along at a steady pace as middle-sister's busy teenage mind paints a picture of the daily calculations she must make in order to avoid running into milkman, being caught breaking curfews, being poisoned, being observed reading the papers from "over there," or any other of the myriad perils in her life. Middle sister has a large and colourful vocabulary and she speaks with enough sarcasm, outrage and fed-upness to make you laugh out loud, but when you hear Brid Brennan reading in her mellow voice and strong Irish accent, you'll be laughing from inside a luxurious bath of words, words, words.

—Patty Osborne

IS IT EDIBLE?

The Royal BC Museum has had a smash success with its **Mushrooms of British Columbia**, a profusely illustrated handbook by Andy MacKinnon and Kem Luther, which has been bouncing around the top of the BC bestseller lists ever since it was published in the fall of 2021. Who knew that there were so many amateur mycologists out there, all evidently clamouring for an authoritative guide to local fungi? I've pored through the book while waiting for mushroom season to return ("prime time for mushroom foraging […] is at the end of summer and into the autumn"). I've learned some fascinating fungi facts ("fungi […] are more closely related to animals—including us—than they are to plants"), and have tried to memorize the fundamentals of mushroom morphology (the basic shapes of caps and stems; and beneath the cap: gills vs pores vs teeth vs veins). I'm motivated—and mildly anxious—because, like every neophyte mushroom forager, I want to be able to confidently answer that one key question: "Is it edible?" *Mushrooms of British Columbia* attempts to reassure me: "More mushroom pickers […] die from getting lost or seriously injured while picking mushrooms than die from eating them." Individual descriptions are quite laconic on the matter. The Brown Almond Waxy Cap is "Edible, but bland"; Scurfy Twiglet is described as "Edibility: Unknown," as is Bleach Bonnet, and Celery-scented Trich. The edibility of Witch's Hat is "Unknown. *Some* reports of toxic effects" (my italics); while The Sickener and Funeral Bell are (surprise, surprise) considered "Poisonous." Shaggy Mane, on the other hand, is described as "Choice. But use before the gills turn to black goo," which sounds like good advice to me, since few, I suspect, would salivate at

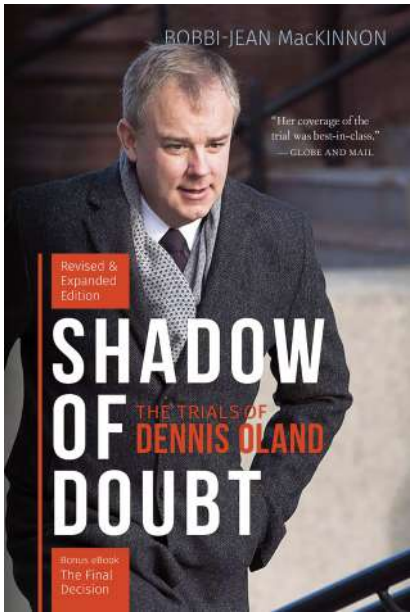
the prospect of tucking into a plate of sautéed black goo, no matter how freshly foraged. —*Michael Hayward*

RECIPE FOR A HARLEQUIN ROMANCE

At the 2021 Vancouver Writer's Festival, André Alexis revealed that he's re-editing his famed five-book quincunx, a sequence that contains some of his best-loved novels, including *Fifteen Dogs* and *Days by Moonlight*. Alexis was there to talk about his latest novel, **Ring** (Coach House), the final book in that quincunx, and about the jest that it was. He'd written *Ring* with formulaic precision, he boasted, and had slogged his way through many Harlequin romances to find the recipe. Hearing him speak about his novel in this way consoled me, for I'd been ambivalent after finishing the book. *Ring* is a love story deconstructed by an author whose heart is set on philosophy, whose main game is to question the nature of things, not tug at heartstrings. Despite going through all the motions of a Harlequin romance, the two main characters, Gwen and Tancred, come to revolve around each other not as marionettes, but through a wish-granting magical device and a touch of pragmatic and self-aware reasoning. I kept thinking about all the opportunities Alexis had missed with his love-granting magic ring, only to remind myself that, just as Alexis is not the kind of person to write simple romantic fairy tales, by his own admission, he had not been a dog person when he set out to write *Fifteen Dogs*. I might say the story is enjoyable if you come to the table with checked expectations, but there's one more thing that requires squaring: I found the prose unfamiliar. In *Ring*, Alexis doesn't seem to be as interested in using his usual arsenal of wit, irony and situational humour, but instead, has taken more to putting together a recipe based on precise weights and measures.
—*Anson Ching*

JUICE WORTH THE SQUEEZE

Bobbi-Jean MacKinnon's **Shadow of Doubt: The Trials of Dennis Oland, Revised and Expanded Edition** (Goose Lane) details the 2011 murder of Richard Oland, multimillionaire heir of the Moosehead brewing family. Someone bludgeoned him to death in his Saint John office, and his son Dennis—the last known person to see him alive—became the prime suspect. Dennis lived in a mansion with a manicured lawn in an elite Saint John neighbourhood (in a province with a high unemployment and poverty rate). Despite his charmed life,



Dennis had major debt and a strained relationship with his father. He also owned a jacket that was found after the murder with traces of both blood and his father's DNA. Somehow, as a west coast university student with no cable, I didn't hear a thing about the murder at the time, but reading Bobbi-Jean MacKinnon's coverage of Dennis Oland's trial made me feel like an expert on the case. MacKinnon offers such skilful and precise detail that I felt like a ghost haunting the investigation; I surveyed the crime scene, watched the drama unfold in the courtroom, and accompanied forensic detectives in analyzing blood splatter (a phrase that appears at least fifty times throughout the book—lots of blood splatter). *Shadow of Doubt* blends no-nonsense reporting and storytelling, making its 400-plus pages easy to devour. With a multimillionaire victim, an ungrateful son, an anger-filled affair and alleged police misconduct, it doesn't get much juicier than that. —*Kathleen Murdock*

DECOLONIZING CANADA

Casual racism experienced in Scotland sets in motion the twelve essays that comprise **Before I Was a Critic I Was a Human Being** (Book*hug Press, co-published with Artspeak Gallery), in which the Canadian art critic and curator Amy Fung pieces together her heritage as an immigrant and settler, while questioning everything she knows about multicultural Canada. Fung immigrated from Hong Kong as a young child and grew up in Edmonton. In Canada, she looks for relationships between Indigenous and other racialized peoples, and finds only colonial narratives. While Fung sees that racialized immigrants initially lack white settlers' sense of entitlement (and are willing to learn and adapt to new customs and laws), she suggests that immigrants eventually adopt a colonial mentality. While she delves deeply into colonizing mythologies and racialization from the point of view of a critic and theorist, *Before I Was a Critic I Was a Human Being* is a book of personal essays, rather than an academic treatise. The most successful essays employ a deft layering of narratives—personal, cultural, political—and combine lyrical writing with harsh realities. Other essays feel a bit flat, either due to over-intellectualization or predictable storylines. In "Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10," Fung takes a journey to her friend Donna's family farm, and as the pair drive, Fung contemplates how post-war Modernist painters and sculptors were inspired by a perceived emptiness of the prairie landscape. She looks back on covering a prairie land-based art project that

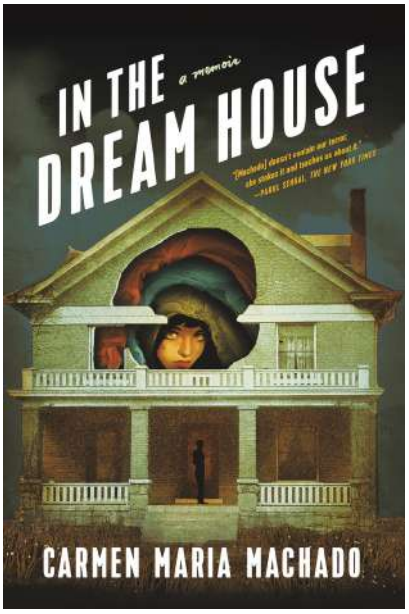
included no role for Indigenous nations, and then turns a corner to the 2018 fatal shooting of Colten Boushie, a twenty-two-year-old Indigenous man, by a white farmer. Fung later learns that Donna grew up with two adopted Indigenous siblings, both of whom eventually ran away and were written out of the family's history. Fung's ruminations build to the conclusion that a just and honest Canada can only exist by acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty over the land—though it remains unclear what that really means. *—Kris Rothstein*

RISE UP

One of the perks of being part of a historic social movement is that when that history is being written, you get to have lots of big opinions. And I formed a few while watching the documentary film **Rise Up: Songs of the Women's Movement**. As the producer of *Rubymusic*, a women's music radio show (1981-1996), and a music journalist, researching and writing about the history of women in music has been a preoccupation. It took multiple viewings of *Rise Up* to realize this documentary wasn't made for me. Co-produced by Jim Brown, Heather A. Smith and Donna Korones, the film was made to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gave American women the right to vote. Told by an impressive group of musicians and activists, *Rise Up* is an abbreviated overview of the modern women's movement structured around a playlist of nineteen songs, including "You Don't Own Me" by Leslie Gore and "9 to 5" by Dolly Parton. In one brief hour, we're taken from the suffragettes to the Civil Rights movement to the early women's liberation marches. The birth control pill is introduced, the National Organization for Women is formed and lesbians fight for recognition. Next up is the battle for the Equal Rights Amendment, Phyllis Schlafly's anti-feminist counter movement and Ronald Reagan. Holly Near comes out, and women-only festivals, coffee houses and bookstores emerge. Historic struggles are explained quickly. There's talk of being at the feet of men, of wanting a seat at the table, how women's rights are civil rights, how the women's movement offered "a cauldron of training and possibilities" and how women came out after buying their first Holly Near album, which made me laugh. But I found myself saying, "It was so much bigger than this." There is a lot of rich history here along with the women who lived it, but you don't get to hear about it. Unfortunately, the questions asked of these women are mostly limited to what they thought of this particular list of songs. Here's what I think: someone was in a hurry. It's as if they pulled together whatever they could find and went with it. This is too bad as there is a greater story waiting to be told and so many songs of the women's movement still waiting to be heard. By everyone. *—Connie Kuhns*

HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE

In the Dream House (Penguin Random House) by Carmen Maria Machado is a memoir, but "memoir" doesn't feel like an adequate word to describe it. Written in short, usually one-to-three-page sections, each titled "Dream House as…" Machado examines an abusive relationship through various lenses, including: Stoner Comedy, Spy Thriller, Heat Death of the Universe, Unexpected Kindness, Schrödinger's Cat. I came to the memoir having read Machado's fiction, so I knew she liked to experiment with form (*Her Body and Other Parties*, her book of short stories, features one story as a list of former lovers, and another as TV episode synopses). But I didn't anticipate how expertly Machado would use form to challenge the reader and make them an active participant in her story. One section, titled "Dream House as Choose Your Own Adventure," forces the reader to put themselves in Machado's position

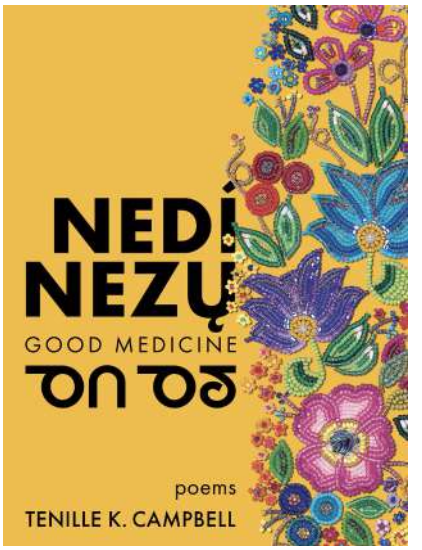


and choose her fate. If you try to opt out by flipping past it, Machado pushes back: "Here you are, on a page you shouldn't be… Does it make you feel good, that you cheated to get here? What kind of person are you? Are you a monster?" *In the Dream House* is a memoir, but it's also an exercise in interrogating how we tell a story. In making explicit the lens through which each element of the story is told, Machado encourages us to ask: Who gets to tell these kinds of stories? When, why, and how? And who believes them? These are particularly pressing questions when it comes to the topic of domestic abuse. What happens to the narratives of abuse that fall outside of our traditional expectations of who constitutes an "abuser" and a "victim"? And what better way to explore this than through a memoir that falls outside the boundaries of genre? This book feels like a gift, and not by accident. As Machado writes in her dedication, "If you need this book, it is for you." —*Tanvi Bhatia*

SEVENTY-TWO HOURS TO ANIMAL

There's been a lot of "hunkering down" during the pandemic, though our "hunkering" goes by many different names:

perhaps we're "staying close to home" or "staycationing"; we might be "laying low." But most of us are mere amateurs at hunkering when compared to the "doom-preppers" described in Bradley Garrett's **Bunker: Building for the End Times** (Scribner). As you might expect from a deep dive into an obscure subculture, *Bunker* is awash with arcane terminology and acronyms (helpfully, a six-page glossary of terms is included at the beginning of the book). "Preppers," we learn, are those who foresee a dark time looming on our collective horizon, and who try to prepare themselves. They envisage a general collapse of civilization, with widespread shortages of staple items, accompanied by anarchy and looting as everyone (except themselves, of course) is forced to scavenge to survive. "A common saying among preppers, 'seventy-two hours to animal,' suggests that even the most mild-mannered of people might turn wild within days." If that prospect makes you anxious to stock up on dried pasta and canned tuna, then you're already primed for the fast-talking snake-oil salesmen Garrett calls "dread merchants," who see the collective anxieties of others as a business opportunity for themselves. One such merchant is Robert Vicino, a California developer of dubious background, now CEO of the Vivos Group, which proposes to build a series of underground bunkers at various secure sites around the globe. Garrett visits the site of a competing option, the Survival Condo in Kansas, a decommissioned missile silo transformed into "a fifteen-story luxury bolthole," where a mere $1.5 million (USD) secures a half-floor unit where you could "weather a maximum of five years inside the sealed, self-sufficient bunker during a doomsday event." At PrepperCon in Utah, Garrett learns how to make a Faraday cage to protect his electronics from an EMP (electromagnetic pulse), using only "a steel trash can, two yoga mats, and some duct tape." It's fascinating and disturbing stuff, which should come with a warning: by reading *Bunker* you run the risk of becoming a full-blown paranoiac. —*Michael Hayward*



DOING IT SPECIAL

If you like riveting, racy writing, **nedi nezu (Good Medicine)** by Tenille K. Campbell (Arsenal Pulp Press) is the poetry collection for you. Campbell invites us into her intimate world, just as she did in her debut collection *#IndianLovePoems*. With poem titles like "between thick pale

thighs," "morning stretches," "I want to taste your language," "I want to kiss," and "sex sex sex," the content is certainly erotic. Do people ask the author if her identity as an Indigenous woman defines her erotica? Maybe; in the poem "why indigenous erotica," Campbell writes, "why not just erotica / do you do it different / do you do it special[?]" The poem ultimately appeals to our senses (including our sense of humour) to suggest that her Indigenous identity does in fact make her erotica special. The content in *nedí nezu* is downright dreamy. In "I wanna be tangled in moonlight": "I wanna be tracing your stories / constellations of ink and scars / hearing your memories / echo in the dark / between dusk and dawn." Later, she writes about falling in love with someone and meeting their family, sitting around a kitchen table with "ears warm" and "cheeks burning." "They told me stories of you," she writes, "they told me the beginning of you." When I read that, I felt Campbell wrap me in a warm blanket of nostalgia as I reflected on charming memories—some hers, some mine. Certain poems are more powerful than sensual. In a poem with hashtags like "JusticeForColten": "we don't have the luxury / of not explaining to our babies / why we don't wear black hoodies / why we don't take cabs alone / and why we don't trust cops." But "we still here… tears spilling, laughter flowing… ancestors in our eyes." The poem "indigenous academia" takes pride in reclaiming space and being "visibly / undeniably / irrevocably / indigenous." Campbell's warmth and willingness to show us her heart (and heartbreak) result in poems that are endearing, hilarious and moving. Curl up on the couch with a glass of wine and move through time with her. —*Kathleen Murdock*

THE GEIST OF TURKEY

I'm told that there are many ways to get familiar with Turkish culture, other than through its sweet delights, kebabs, and coffee. You might binge on Ottoman costume dramas or telenovelas, leaf through translations from its prolific literary and poetry scene, or even attune yourself to vowel harmonization in Turkish rap. You could also go to Turkey—browse the carpet stalls of Istanbul, and take in the Bosporus by playing passenger on the world's largest commuter ferry fleet. What I recommend, though, above all else, is to go on Netflix, put on **Ethos**, and get invested in contemporary Turkish society by following a set of characters, each with their own contradictory and sincere narrative strand, each one characterizing a different aspect of the country. This eight-part series is not made for outsiders, but it creates the kind of world that outsiders can stumble into, and choose to stay. Writer and director Berkun Oya has a landscape geographer's imagination and a taste for still life. He trades in scenes of compelling landscapes and beautifully lit accidental-Renaissance close-ups. Once the backdrop and characters have captured your senses, the nuanced stories come across easily. —*Anson Ching*

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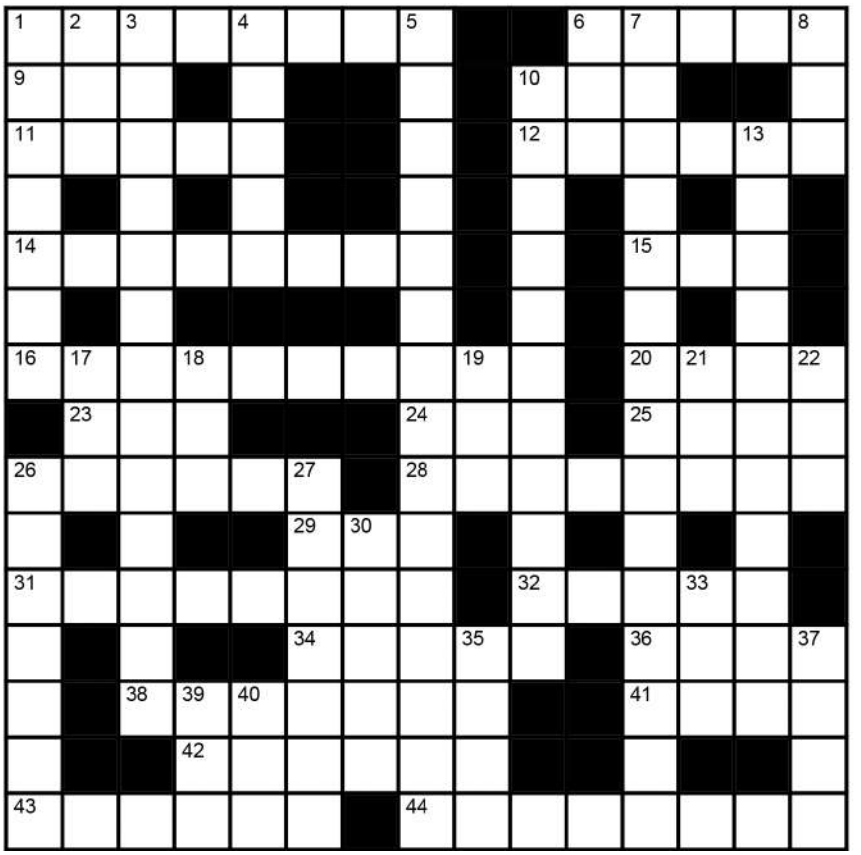

ACROSS

1 He's so stupid that he thought that Dick's tip would bring him up to our level
6 A timid burger fan always promises to pay on Tuesday
9 It's the same as going across at 2 (abbrev)
10 Please don't wreck Spring Break
11 Grandma didn't learn her art at school
12 Why did Saint Helen burst in?
14 It's a good year when we meet a kind of conservative type
15 When I saw Morrison in the city, he was driving in the rain
16 Tell Tate at dinner that he shouldn't snitch on me!
20 Charles sang while the other one wrote those Martian stories
23 In Hanoi, it sounds like the fun starts with soup
24 At 16 he was a dirty one
25 Why would a swan need a 2 x 4?
26 The Sicilian could be active at 12 today (2)
28 Tip Carol and then we'll get our suits on and go south
29 Apparently we can use computers to create the sound of a recent version of Canada (abbrev)
31 In Asia the aged hero and his buddies surrounded the building and complained a lot
32 Let's step hop around those dumpsters
34 What is the theory behind that sci-fi film?
36 Did the rabbit get held up or did he just die?
38 Stuff those foul intestines back inside
41 The first people to analyze the books can join the group (abbrev)
42 Sounds like if you have a nickel left over you can buy some spice
43 Are we going to let rap muddy the waters?
44 Did he feel even partly regretful?

DOWN

1 If you kept it simple, it'd bang a dent in that graphic character
2 That northern gang all had lovely accents and they really favoured United (abbrev)
3 If the head hole is really bugging you, find a napkin, then ice, and apply it (4)
4 If we sent her a different letter, she'd still be an idiot but she'd know another dance move
5 Think of all the deerskins he'd tan if he wasn't so empathetic
6 Let's get our wits about us, set a price, and have a fight
7 That was Riel's river. By it I changed permanently.
8 Up to now
10 Tom's tequila has crispy brown but timid tasting notes
13 The typist saw an unassuming fellow and his unassuming friends
17 Her responses are usually pertinent
18 Hey kid, want a little rum?
19 Oh god, that little ape painted my hands white!
21 Those nimble doggies make quite the gang! (abbrev)
22 At the beginning of the end we will observe an evening of in-person entertainment (abbrev)
26 Grover's buddy hung his butt over the fence
27 What's the alternative to "on earth"?
30 Eek, I'm turning into a fishy fire-mouth!
33 Who knew that you needed a buddy in order to get a gun licence?
35 So, there's extra and they're having a gas
37 At least we only have one ache apiece
39 We had a regular old time in India (abbrev)
40 That gang was led by some slick conductors (abbrev)

Solution to Puzzle 119

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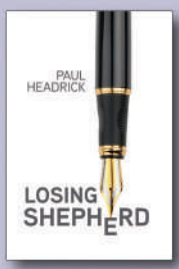

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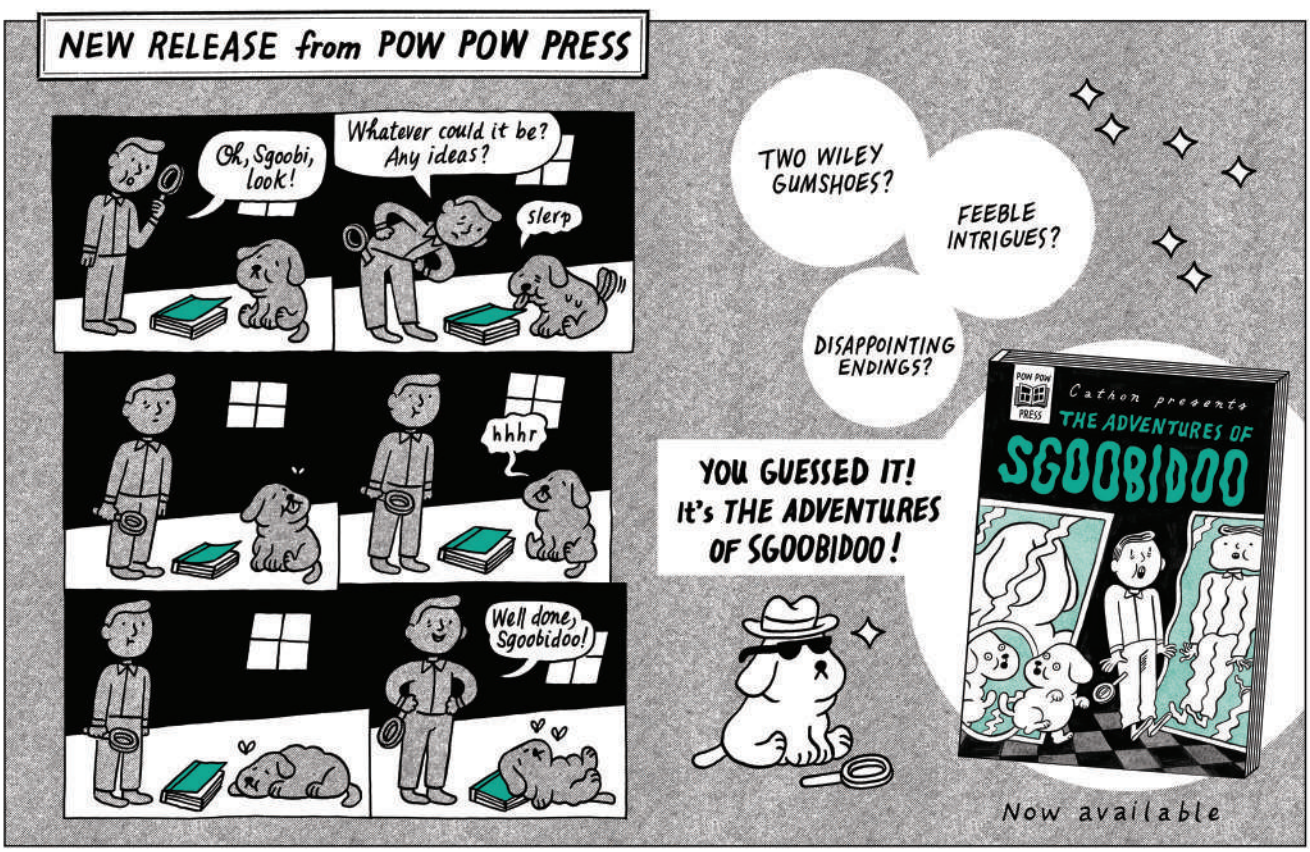
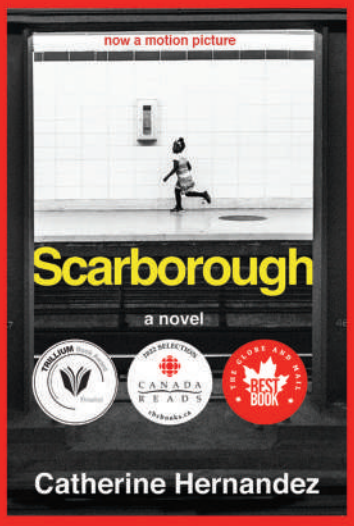


READING BETWEEN THE LINES.



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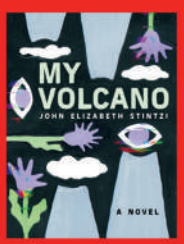

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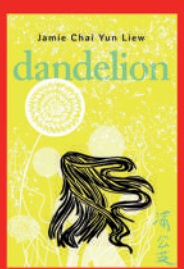

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