

GEIST

NUMBER 123

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FACT FICTION ✨ NORTH of AMERICA



THE LOWEST TIDE

My Summer Behind the Iron Curtain
Everything As It Was / On Lake Saiko
Erasure Contest Winners / Main Character



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GEIST

Volume 31 • Number 123 • Spring 2023

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Fact + Fiction, North of America

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COVER: *It's a Different Kind of Cold*, 2021,
digital collage by Nicole Holloway.

GEIST

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MISCELLANY



INTO ORBIT

We continue the *On Dek* series with a comic by our new editor-in-chief, Emma Cleary. While putting together issue 123, we talked a lot about *Geist* of the past, present and future: turns out there are no normal years at *Geist*.

The shape of this comic is inspired by cartoonist Lynda Barry's spiral-drawing exercise, from her book *Syllabus* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2014)—great for focus and filling up notebooks! Here's an adaptation:

1. Slowly draw a spiral. Mark your lines as close as you can to the previous layer, or widen the space between lines with each orbit.
2. Decoratively embellish and/or annotate your spiral with notes about what's on your mind.
3. Repeat, making spirals until you fill a page.

We invite you to try it out and send us your creations. —The Editors

ECLECTIC TO THE MAX

Geist recently conducted a reader survey for the first time in seven years. We received responses from across Canada and the world, including all

thirteen provinces and seven different countries. For the question “How did you initially hear about *Geist*?” we received the following responses:

“Lost in the mists of time.” —*M.P. from AB*

“My mother suggested the magazine.” —*N.G. from BC*

“Osmosis.” —*J.M. from BC*

Thanks to everyone who completed the survey.

POPULAR PHRASES

The excerpt for the 2022 *Geist* Erasure Poetry Contest came from *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery (L.C. Page & Co., 1908). Here's a list of some of the most popular phrases lovingly lifted from the original text, compiled by Helen Godolphin and the *Geist* team:

- filmy [tissues of] moonshine
- silverly sweet
- pink blossom
- cracked/cracked blue/cracked blue jug
- fire/lamb of fire

You can read the winning entries on pages 31–33 of this issue.

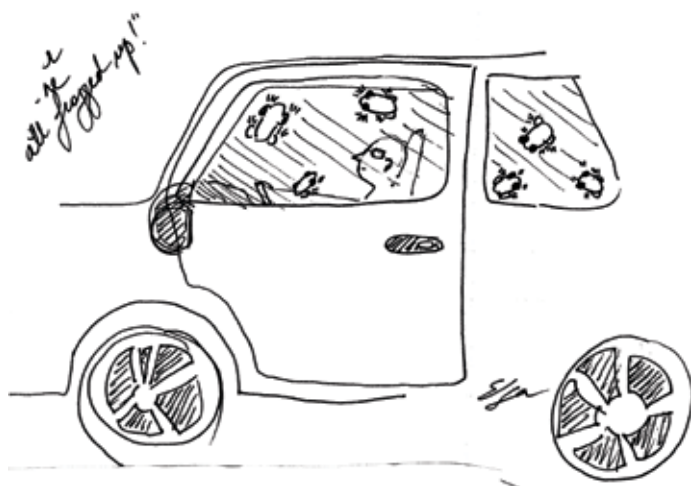
GEIST IN JAIPUR

No. 121 spotted on the road and amid the scarves at Babu Bazar in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Sent to us by Tanvi Bhatia and Raina Bhatia.



OVERHEARD BY GEIST

Send us the best one-liners you've overheard—on the street, in the park, in line at the grocery store—and you might see them in our next issue! geist.com/overheard



"My windows are all frogged up!" Words and comix by Elsa Chesnel: elsachesnel.com

WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

A big thank-you to Christine Lai, who was our winter Writer-in-Residence. During her residency Christine led two sold-out workshops on vintage picture postcards, examining the history of these material objects. She also developed an essay that explores the history of the picture postcard—keep an eye out for it in *Geist* 124! Congrats to Christine on the launch of her debut novel, *Landscapes*, published on May 23 by Doubleday Canada.

WRITE TO GEIST

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

The Editor, *Geist*
letters@geist.com

Snailmail:
#210 – 111 West Hastings St.
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Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum.

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Canada

Shary Boyle is a Canadian visual artist and performer. Her works include sculpture, drawing, and installation. She has been exhibited and collected internationally. You can find her on Instagram @magiclanters and at sharyboyle.com.

Jupiter Brahm's "Vancouver Postcard Paintings" can be found throughout the issue. These small-scale works in watercolour document the city as it changes with redevelopment and gentrification. Jupiter works with painting as a form of séance, creating a conduit between the past and the present. He lives and works in Vancouver, BC. Find him on Instagram @jupiterbrahms.

Rydel Cerezo's work investigates the spaces between sexuality, religion and race. He is interested in how these disparate themes metaphorically and visually coalesce. He has been exhibited at the Aperture Foundation, the Vogue Italia Festival, and the Polygon Gallery. He was shortlisted for the Philip B. Lind Emerging Artist Prize in 2020 and longlisted for the Sobey Art Award 2022. Find him @rydelc on Instagram and at rydelcerezo.com.

Nicole Holloway has called Western Newfoundland home since completing her BFA at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in 2008. Her work transitioned from traditional painting to collage in 2020. Find her on Instagram @hollowhillstudio.

Sarah Anne Johnson uses photography as a base for manipulation to fabricate an image that expresses a moment in time. Adding materials such as paints, retouching inks and

glitter, as well as incorporating burning, scratching and gouging, each photograph is a unique attempt to make visual what is felt by the artist about each work. Johnson has created six major bodies of work, all of which have been exhibited broadly. She lives in Winnipeg, MB.

Meryl McMaster is known for her self-portraits that have a distinct performative quality. She creates handcrafted materials and transports them to specific locations for photographic performances. Many of her works are focused on the tensions of mixing and transforming her bi-cultural identity of nêhiyaw (Plains Cree), British, and Dutch and the conflict found at the intersection

of self-exploration and heritage. She lives in Québec. Find her on Instagram @meryl_mcmaster and at merylmcmaster.com.

Sean William Randall is a visual artist. He studied architecture at the University of Manitoba and has worked as a designer and illustrator at various architecture firms in Canada. He left the architectural profession to devote himself to painting. His works have been exhibited in public and private galleries and can be found in corporate, private and public collections across North America. He lives in Winnipeg, MB. Find him on Instagram @seanwilliamrandall and at seanwilliamrandall.com.



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The Lowest Tide

SARA CASSIDY

Nature's sanctity is the only portal to the future



Many people at a certain time of life wake at 3:00 a.m. for an hour or two, to stare into the dark. It's an odd stasis where the known world has ebbed and tossed you up like detritus. You learn to wait it out, to say *there, there—use this time, do some reading, catch up on correspondence.*

Last night during those wakeful hours, an email pinged. It was from my friend Kelsey in the next neighbourhood over, where presumably she was staring into the barren dark too. Well, into a rectangle of light in the barren dark.

She'd sent me a link to a news story. Just a link. No hello or hope

you're well. Only a code to open a window to information I am deeply interested in. She knows I am writing a collection of essays about the shoreline. Again, I count my lucky stars—my good friends.

Kelsey and I live on a burl of land hanging off a large island in the Salish Sea. If you walk in nearly any direction, you soon bump into ocean. Our city is a sack of coastline. Bakers here do not worry about cakes over-rising. The air is dense with oxygen and nitrogen molecules.

Kelsey's link led to a news story titled, "Victoria will have its lowest tides in a generation this week." The

reporter offered this wishy-washy explanation: "Tides change on a few time scales based on where the moon is and how near it is to the Earth." He quoted a research scientist of near-shore ecology who spoke of "cycles of cycles of cycles." I sat up and started to Google.

There would be a supermoon, meaning the moon would be both full (tide magnet #1) and as close to Earth as it gets during its orbit (tide magnet #2). And this would all happen when the sun, earth and moon were aligned (tide magnet #3). In syzygy, the astronomers call it. Pull plus pull plus pull! Wow! The triple threat happens only once every nineteen years—the "generation" of the headline.

It would mercifully not coincide with a heat dome, as a very low tide did in the summer of 2021, an event that killed at least one billion barnacles alone in intertidal areas of the Salish Sea. The quickness with which barnacles regenerated has been called a "silver lining" by marine ecologists.

The other day, my thirty-two-year-old friend Georgia, who is one generation (it's a loose term) younger than me, mentioned she often had coffee with the women in her YMCA exercise class. "You're so cool, always hanging out with older women," I teased. She answered: "Everyone my age talks about jobs and apartments—and that's it. Older women are a lot more fun."

It could be we're more fun because we know life comes in cycles, in spirals and waves, which Georgia's pals envision from their vantage point as a straight line. They are in for a ride!

An hour into the workday, after my night Googling moon cycles, I

told my boss I had a dental appointment. It wasn't entirely a lie—there is a huge hole in one of my teeth that I needed to seriously think about. I said *dental* appointment, not dentist.

I had the windows down and the radio on for my drive along the coast—as I flew outside the radar, as it were, beyond the regular 9 to 5. The CBC was interviewing Tony Charlie, a Penelakut Elder and survivor of Kuper Island Residential School. His voice filled the waves with chisel-clear details of the horrible arrivals of priests after dark. Part of his story is a moment of power when he moved to an empty upper bunk, out of reach. Tony Charlie spoke with such precision and gravity, his words filling the interior space of the car, it felt like the entire world had stopped.

The road dipped and curved in parallel to the coastline.

Then the CBC news. The first, astonishing photos from the James Webb Space Telescope had been released, showing galaxies clashing, stars forming—stars we never even knew of, dying. We can now see twelve times farther than ever before, a scientist explained, nearly to the edge of time. What the antiquated Hubble could only show as darkness was now filled with stars and their whirling planets.

I've been swimming in the ocean most evenings. Recently I cradled a bull kelp's gas-filled float in my hand. I whispered "I love you" to the alga—which grows as quickly as bamboo—a species in decline in a warming ocean. I feel pain these days, in my long spine, my gas-ball stomach, and a kind of dissonance, a radical disbelief, watching motorboats cruise through bull kelp beds.

So I was feeling out of sorts, cranky, as I drove along the coast. *The lowest tide in a generation*. At a time when nature's sanctity is the only portal to the future, the article had *publicized* the low tide, and urged people to

witness it, like a midway show. It had invited thousands to trample and poke around in the tidal pools, disturbing sea stars and sponges and cucumbers that would already be in shock from a kind of birth—their first exposure to air. It went so far as to recommend sunscreen. I saw oil slicks on the tidal pools, like fingerprints on an iPhone screen. Of course, there I was, barreling toward the beach myself.

It was not as bad as I'd feared. Lots of people were out, yes. But nature educators should be proud: no one was crashing around in the pools. People pointed rather than poked. Children kept the distance their parents modelled. The children were excited by what they saw, calling "Look at this!"

I crouched at the edge of a tidal pool and stared. As always when tidal pools are gazed into, the pool incrementally revealed its depths, changing from lifeless puddle to miniature sea, streaked with movement, even of struggle and desire. Tadpole-like sculpins darted, hermit crabs ventured, and limpets gathered algae with their tiny teeth—nature's strongest

material, designed for a lifetime of being scraped across stone.

Crows turned over rocks. Once in a while, they pinned something alive and wriggling under their feet to stab at with their beaks. I could never make out what they found. I craved a backpack filled with binoculars, magnifying glasses, a microscope. I stood in a netherworld, up to my knees in rare air, and wanted to witness every revealed thing. Before gravity pulled and sloshed and covered it all up again.

Dental appointments must come to an end. I got back into my car and returned to my desk, my mouth filled with barnacles, and the blue sky beyond the window thick with stars and their swirling planets.

Sara Cassidy writes on the land of the lək'wəḡən People, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, in the city of Victoria. Her children's books have been nominated for a Governor General's Literary Award and won a BC and Yukon Book Prize. Her short essay "Flying the Coop" appeared in Geist 119.

A Love Poem, Also a Physics Poem

SNEHA SUBRAMANIAN KANTA

for Harsh

There is no exact phenomenon. Inside the bookstore, we move past tangible metals, materiality one acquaints with our reflections in motion. Time is pulled away as shadows begin to decline. You gravitate toward the science section—I try finding poetry in nooks. Your hands reach toward a book by Stephen Hawking. You tell me how physics has somehow not been the same for you after his passing. You read a passage aloud about all resonances between the psychological and thermodynamic

arrow of time. Entropy also means the disorder of a system, which can only increase. You tell me how it is rare for a physicist to be an expert on time. I say that it is fundamental to understand time and space to be an active participant of history or the future. You speak of how time is an emergent property woven into the fabric of reality. I bring emphasis to tenses. I ask you about the final book where Hawking reflects that time travel cannot be ruled out, how he believed research grant applicants for the study would be dismissed.

We recollect a time when we were in different countries: I showed you a video of faint sunsets dawning from Ochil Hills, and my momentum when travelling upward, against gravity. We remember how you carried food for birds onto our terrace in India when I was away, and the finite time it took those signals of messages to reach us. We spend another evening, this time in one country, and discuss how moving clocks tick slower than stationary clocks, how gravity, time,

and distance intermingle, like love, in constancy and surges of continuum.

Sneha Subramanian Kanta is an academician and writer from the Greater Toronto Area. She is the author of Ghost Tracks (Louisiana Literature Press, 2020). Her work has appeared in Room Magazine, PRISM international, Vallum and elsewhere. She is the founding editor of Parentheses Journal. Visit her website: snehasubramaniankanta.com

My Summer Behind the Iron Curtain

SARA GRAEFE

No Skylab buzz in East Germany



We played under smoggy skies. Soot dusted everything—the cement-slab yard, Manfred’s white Trabant. I remember East Germany in drab grey tones: the fortified border, watchtowers with searchlights, concrete walls, barbed wire. Khakied

Grenztruppen with machine guns at the checkpoint—haggling over documents, rifling through possessions, scouring for western contraband. Fear seized my ten-year-old self as they ripped apart our rental Ford, rough hands assessing my Malibu Barbie, my

brother’s glossy NHL paperback. Dad not quite my age when he’d escaped. *How could I ever be half as brave?*

July 1979. Donna Summer’s “Hot Stuff” topped the dance charts, Martina Navratilova defeated Chris Evert at Wimbledon. But my anxious brain fixated on Skylab, the American space station fallen from orbit and hurtling toward Earth. Nine storeys tall, weighing 77.5 tons, its fiery impact was anticipated smash-bang in the middle of our trip. No one knew exactly when or where the decaying space station would crash, not even NASA, who’d determined risk of human injury from falling debris was one in 152. Skylab’s final orbit was projected over parts of central and eastern Canada, where we lived. *What if it destroyed our house while we were away?*

Entire East German villages were disappearing, razed for crappy brown coal. Houses on quaint cobblestone streets, centuries-old, bulldozed by the communist government. Whole communities shoehorned into brutalist plattenbauten, concrete tower blocks overlooking desolate open-pit coal mines. Roitzsch, Dad’s childhood home, was next. Word reached us through the family grapevine. If he wanted to see his village again, place flowers on his grandparents’ grave, it was now or never.

East Germany had its own distinct stench: oily Trabi fumes, burnt brown coal, chemicals belched from Bitterfeld factories. In the dismal bathroom at the border, wafts of industrial-grade Wofasept assaulted my nostrils, Lysol gone wrong. I’d needed to pee, clenched my legs as the Ford idled in the snake of cars down the autobahn, inching toward the crossing. “You’ve got to hold it,” Dad warned. Checkpoint Grenztruppen were Stasi, secret police, drunk on power. Dad flagged one, explained my predicament. Through the windshield, we spied him pointing at us, exchanging terse words with comrades. “Uh oh,” said Dad. “Are we in trouble?” But

no, they just grudgingly hurried their checks of cars ahead. Air charged as Mom and I walked the gauntlet to the ladies' room—stupid Canadians who'd violated protocol. *Dad and his sister had slipped out on the interzonal train, without proper papers, hiding when the Soviet guards had passed through. I couldn't even hold my own pee.*

So many rules: Obtain entry permit. Register with police within twenty-four hours. Stay at authorized hotels or with family, provide names and details of each East German citizen in the household. Remain within your designated zone; special permission required for travel elsewhere. Exchange copious amounts of western currency daily. Report back to police for permit to leave.

Americans held Skylab watch parties; guests brought binoculars, telescopes, crash helmets. Jokesters donned Chicken Little outfits, T-shirts with bull's eyes. Other nations were on high alert: Canada reeling from the flaming crash of a Soviet satellite up north the previous year; Belgium poised to sound over a thousand air-raid sirens. No Skylab buzz in East Germany, though. Stasi controlled all media; western newspapers and broadcasts were verboten. Radio silence fuelled my anxiety.

We stayed with Dad's cousins, Isolde and Manfred, while my parents registered with police. Ran our cheery blue Smurfs over dark furniture, whispered secret passwords through the wooden gate. Gaped in wonder when Isolde offered us a banana in English; we'd had no idea she could speak anything but German. Oblivious, too, to demeaning communist officials, the harassment my parents faced at the police station.

In every photo, my brother struck a rigid military pose, channelling the Grenztruppen, the tension that hung over everything. I lay awake at night on the sagging mattress, bracing myself for Skylab's impact.

We visited relatives I'd never met.

They pinched our cheeks, showered us with treats. Chocolate that tasted like chalk; communist Club Cola, flat and medicinal to our western palates. We'd never eaten so much pork schnitzel, spicy sausage that made us gag. We missed Coke and Maple Leaf hot dogs, but knew better than to complain.

Dad stayed up late with Manfred, drinking grainy beer. German chatter down the hall as I tossed under sheets, the faint murmur of TV voices. Most East Germans watched West German news in secret, but nobody dared admit it. Over breakfast, Dad shared an update: Skylab had dropped to about 120 miles above earth; NASA was declaring July 11 as the re-entry date, around 3:30 p.m. European time. Just over forty-eight hours away.

We drove to Roitzsch, plattenbauen jutting into the sky like giant gravestones, grim reminders of the village's future. Walked the cobbled streets of Dad's childhood. Langestraße now Leninstraße, but everything else much as it was. His grandfather's red-bricked general store, threshold sagging from decades of foot traffic; lace curtains fluttering in windows upstairs where Dad had lived. The stone church with its squat tower housing bells that had once been condemned to the foundry, precious metal to support Hitler's war effort. They'd been removed for melting down when Germany surrendered. The air clearer in the churchyard; poppies and geraniums blooming on the family plot, bursts of red offsetting the solemn black headstone. We pulled errant weeds, Dad clicked photos, and we all just stood for a moment. A silent goodbye.

At Schloss Mosigkau we played tourist, weaving through grand halls with rococo flourishes. Amazed this castle had been but a summer residence for local royalty, and survived both world wars and communism. We slid over marble in oversized, plushy shoe covers, Dad cracking a joke about visitors polishing the floors.

So different than busy West German tourist spots, with oppressive crowds and multilingual tours. Just us and an earnest East German scholar, skimming along after the greying tour guide. I pretended I was Janet Morrissey, Canadian figure skating champion. So caught up in gliding through the glorious surroundings, I almost forgot the date and time. Checked my watch in a panic, nearly smacking myself in the face: 3:35. Five minutes too late! Disaster images flooded my mind: a bird's-eye view of Skylab plunging into our '60s suburban split-level, the house exploding upon impact, debris flying everywhere.

I must have gasped aloud. The group paused, all eyes on me. "Skylab," I said. Dad laughed, murmured an explanation in German; the adults chuckled. I don't know what embarrassed me more: my crushing anxiety exposed, or that I must have looked like some bored, western brat, feigning I had somewhere better to be.

Back in West Germany, we learned Skylab had indeed crashed on July 11, plunging into the Indian Ocean. Parts of it showering down over populated areas of Western Australia, but no injuries. *Why wasn't I more relieved?*

East Germany haunts me. A dull, heavy ache I carried through my teens, marching against nukes as the Cold War escalated, listening to "Heroes" on repeat. Bowie's brooding vocals conjuring the Berlin Wall, defiant lovers kissing under a gun turret. I didn't yet know reunification would save Dad's village, that in ten years the Berlin Wall would fall. Only decades later do I understand my angst wasn't really about Skylab, but all of it.

Sara Graefe is a playwright, screenwriter and editor of Swelling with Pride: Queer Conception and Adoption Stories (Dagger Editions, Caitlin Press). She is currently working on an essay collection about growing up as a Kriegsenkel ("war grandchild"). Originally from Ottawa, she lives in Vancouver, BC.

The Gravedigger

SARAH WOLFSON

It went like this: I looked through the dream window and
remembered remembering a salamander,
the one from childhood I always moved from road to ditch,
the one and only, though I did so daily
for the length of someone's mating season. I remembered
the week the fireflies dissolved into crickets.
We'd just lived through the big thing, which had destroyed
our brains. You couldn't lick the screens,
couldn't see the shy way they almost wanted to speak. My skull
felt empty which meant I lacked the words
to describe such emptiness. I remembered the day
I broke a perfect spider web. Silk to hand
as the garbage bag bombed its perfect arc through everything.
I thought of getting a life coach, a career coach, a person
to help me deal with this recent bout of vocal fry,
a lavender oil specialist. Then one day I simply did it,
that thing I'd always looked for through the dream window,
spurred on by the neighbour's cat who left small offerings,
each dead mouse a small kangaroo with its hands.
In the space between, I heard my skull
holding what it holds, wanting to speak. A shy person
from behind the screen. I knew then the real me
was made from bone and impulse for worm and clay.
I left everything and ran away to earth,
to bury the dead and help them stay there. I fought off
curious groundhogs, jewel thieves. I whistled to birds,
counted stars. Sometimes the dead climbed out,
to check the time or see that they'd remembered
to turn off the stove, sign the divorce papers. I took them
by their brittle elbows and said *come, now*. I settled into
my calling, shushing the dead as you would a dog or toddler,
saying *ab-ab-ab: stay right where you are, you're fine now, stay.*

Sarah Wolfson is the author of A Common Name for Everything, which won the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry from the Quebec Writers' Federation. Her poems have appeared in journals such as the Walrus, the Fiddlehead, AGNI, TriQuarterly and PRISM international. Originally from Vermont, she now lives in Tiobtià:ke/Montreal.

She Came In through the Window

LUCA CARA SECCAFIEN





Luca Cara Seccafien is an artist and facilitator. They are a settler on the stolen ancestral territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh people. They were a Geist Writer-in-Residence in 2022. Find Luca on Instagram @Luca.secca.art or at luca.caraseccafien.com.

FINDINGS



Cartography of the Unseen, 2019, Digital C-Print and On the Edge of This Immensity, 2019, Digital C-Print by Meryl McMaster. Courtesy of the artist, the Stephen Bulger Gallery, and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain. On the Edge

Writing a Disabled Future, in Progress

LEAH LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA

From The Future Is Disabled by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2022. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha is the author or co-editor of ten books, including Beyond Survival (AK Press), Care Work (Arsenal Pulp Press) and Tonguebreaker (Arsenal Pulp Press).

Some people have scoffed at me when I broached the idea of a majority disabled future—surely I don’t mean this literally? But I kind of do. The climate crisis, pandemics, and the ongoing ecocide of settler colonialism and extractive capitalism are already creating the conditions for more people

to get sick and disabled from viruses, heat waves, and wildfire smoke. I finished this book in winter/spring 2022, while the world was enduring the Omicron variants of the COVID-19 pandemic, going into its third calendar year. In early January 2022, Dr. Katelyn Jetelina,¹ the creator of the blog *Your Local Epidemiologist*, wrote, “Dr. Trevor Bedford, a brilliant computational epidemiologist and scientist, estimated that as of January 17, 4.5% of the US population recorded a confirmed case. After accounting for under-reporting, we should expect 36–46% of the US population² to have been infected by Omicron by mid-February.”³ By April, the CDC’s Dr. Kristie Clarke reported that almost 60% of everyone in the US caught Omicron in winter 2022, and in children eleven and younger, almost 75% had antibodies to the virus.⁴ As of July 2022, we live in a world where government abandonment and ever-evolving viruses



of *This Immensity* was taken near the home of the artist's great Grandmother on the cliffs of Gore Bay on Manitoulin Island. *Cartography of the Unseen* was taken on the Great Sandhills of Saskatchewan, the second largest active sand dune in Canada.

have made many people resigned to inevitably getting COVID.

We are in the third year of a global mass disabling event—the COVID-19 pandemic—where, as I and many other disabled activists and people have noticed and stated, *the world has been crippled*: The entire world has been immersed in a disabled reality for the past two years. Masking, handwashing, long-term isolation, awareness of viruses and immune vulnerability, the need for disabled skills of care, adaptivity, and virtual community-building are just a few of the disabled ways of being that everyone, disabled and not, have been forced to reckon with.

The COVID-19 virus and the failure to create a just global public health and economic response to support people undergoing it is also creating a disabled world in that mass numbers of people are becoming newly or differently disabled because

of getting COVID, long COVID, and/or long-term CPTSD and other mental disabilities from the grief, loss, and stress of the pandemic. As Dr. Sami Schalk, author of *Black Disabled History* and a brilliant Black queer disabled scholar, tweeted in January 2022:

It won't be long before basically a majority of adults in the US are disabled by long COVID and/or lack of access to healthcare because of COVID destroying our systems & the people who run it. So start listening to disabled people about how to make more accessible worlds. And by long, I mean a generation or two. All these kids with long COVID, diabetes developed due to COVID, plus all the mental health effects of living among so much death & fear & callousness ... they will all be disabled adults. And maybe our understanding of disability will change when the majority of people are dealing with PTSD and fatigue & such, but the fact remains that the bodyminds of this country are being

*disabled & debilitated at varying rates & only a disability justice approach will work.*⁵

Some readers responded with outrage, calling Dr. Schalk's tweet "catastrophizing," to which she replied, "Disability is not a catastrophe to me. It's just a fact of life,"⁶ which I witness as a very Black queer disabled femme way of understanding disability. And disability *is* a fact of life, now more than ever, in the midst of year three of a global disablement.

And that's just talking about the pandemic as a source of mass disability. There are also many other, non-pandemic ways the world is getting

more disabled. More and more people are locked in prisons, both the regular kind and immigration detention, especially as the climate crisis pushes masses of people to flee land they can't live on anymore, because it's too hot or too flooded or too politically unstable because of the famine and stress caused by these things. Prisons are spaces where people get disabled, or more disabled. Wars continue, as does settler colonial displacement in Palestine and global Indigenous communities, the wages of which are disabled conditions from amputation to PTSD.

We know the often-cited (by crips, anyway)

WHEN TWO FUNNY WOMEN DIED IN ONE MONTH

By Dona Sturmanis. From Words We Call Home: Celebrating Creative Writing at UBC, edited by Linda Svendsen. Published by UBC Press in 1990. Dona Sturmanis (1955–2016) was a journalist, editor, teacher, and publisher of Orca Sound Publishing.

When I-Love-Lucy died
there was a federal budget leak
and I constructed progress charts
for the annual report
of a stock exchange about to fall

When Saturday-Night-Live-Gilda expired
Chinese students staged a hunger strike
and with my son I watched Japanese
drum dancers at a children's festival
while the sun leapt in the sky

When I realized something funny was missing
the evening news was boring
the rain pelted ferocious
and I was doing nothing

Comics to the end,
these gals of the guffaw.
After the unsuccessful heart operation,
Lucy sat up and asked
if the dog had been fed.
In her last interview, before she was dead,
Gilda told husband Gene,
When I'm gone those ladies are going to beat down
your door
you could really make it fun and obscene.

Lucy was my titter lady
when I was a little kid,
and lay with the measles in bed.
Gilda made me lighten up
when I was a teenager
and thought everyone
was sick in the head.

If Lucy could chuckle
through hiroshimas, macarthyisms,
bays of pigs, luthermurders,

If Gilda could giggle
through mylais and watergates
ayatollahs and oil spills,

What woman will come forward to laugh
when the greenhouse effect
has blocked out the sun?

To make jokes and throw pies
when the nuclear stores
of the world go off all at once?

Will it be God as a woman
amused for a moment in the darkness
as she spies the tiny exploding light
called Earth and whispers
to some universal companion,
"I told you so?"

statistic that 26 percent of United Statesians are disabled (according to the CDC), and that 1 billion people, or 15 percent of the world's population, are (according to the WHO). We also often say the actual figures are probably higher, but people are afraid to disclose or were like, *I don't know if what I have counts* or *Oh, I'm not disabled, I just have a condition*. The real numbers of disabled people in the world are already probably a lot higher than the abled mainstream thinks, and those numbers are just going to keep getting higher.

Then there's the joyful parts of why the world is becoming more and more disabled. Fueled by the bold work of neurodivergent people, *especially* BIPOC neurodivergent people, more and more people are joyfully coming out as neurodivergent and/or autistic every day. Many of us are self-diagnosing, moving away from the gatekeeping of the medical establishment, with its insurance hoops, high up-front costs, and limited and outdated white cis-male MIC (medical-industrial complex) imaginings of what autism and other forms of neurodivergence are.

I often correct people when they ask me “when I was diagnosed with autism,” to let them know that I use the phrase *when I came home / when I figured it out*, instead. I was doula'd and supported by autistic Black, Indigenous, and POC friends in recognizing that I have been autistic all my life, the child of two neurodivergent, probably autistic parents, and that the shame I carried from allistic abuse all my life was not because I was inherently bad or wrong, but something I could set down. They, not a doctor, are the people who helped me figure out my neurodivergence. I'm not shaming anyone for going after diagnosis for any reason, including of course the need for accommodations, but I am sharing this story to name a way of knowing ourselves that breaks from the MIC. I now have a starter pack I send to welcome BIPOC people, especially femmes, who are questioning whether they might be autistic, filled with essays, memes, hashtags, and online assessment tools. Many people with all kinds of disabilities are doing the same thing, even when we also pursue an official diagnosis—the first hints we had POTS or EDS or fibro or Chiari formation or OCD often came from other disabled people with those body/mind conditions.

Because of the work of disability justice, more and more people are coming out as disabled earlier, saving us years of denial, isolation, and shame. All of this joyful, complicated claiming of names

we call home as disabled people breaks with the MIC's chokehold on who gets to identify as disabled and who doesn't, on a strict medical diagnosis as equalling identity. I see masses of people claiming names and identities and communities on their own terms and without waiting for permission, because they feel like they have something to gain. This joyful, self-determined claiming of disabled cultures changes how many of us we think we are.

How does it change everything, to imagine and plan for a future where we are the majority—and not a terrible thing, but a source of possibility and power?



1. For more of Katelyn Jetelina, *Your Local Epidemiologist*, see <https://substack.com/profile/27227002-katelyn-jetelina>.
2. Trevor Bedford (@trvrbr), Twitter, January 19, 2022, <https://twitter.com/trvrbr/status/1483996723458445319>.
3. Katelyn Jetelina, “State of Affairs: Jan 24,” *Your Local Epidemiologist* (blog), January 24, 2022, <https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/state-of-affairs-jan-24>.
4. Joe Neel, “Most Americans have been infected with the COVID-19 virus, the CDC reports,” *NPR*, April 26, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/26/1094817774/covid-19-infections-us-most-americans>.
5. Dr. Sami Schalk (@DrSamiSchalk), Twitter, January 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DrSamiSchalk/status/1480612339472912394>.
6. Dr. Sami Schalk (@DrSamiSchalk), Twitter, January 12, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DrSamiSchalk/status/1481248719970394117>.



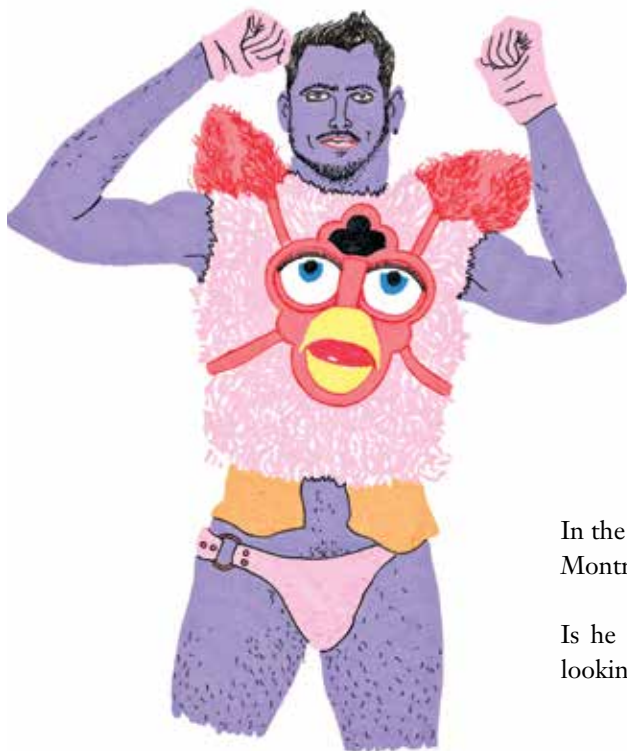
Glitterbomb
Montreal, Quebec

Fall asleep naked glitter on the face and all over the covers around six or seven in the morning.

Be woken barely a few hours later by the cries of a little girl eight years of age max: Mommy, there's a naked man in the bed!

Fuck. We were renting our apartment out on Airbnb and my roomie forgot to tell me.

Allô, petite fille.



In the Metro
Montreal, Quebec

Is he gay because he's looking at me or is he looking at me because I'm gay?

By Gabriel Cholette and Jacob Pyne, translated by Elina Taillon. "In the Metro" and "Glitterbomb" from Scenes from the Underground copyright © 2021. Triptyque reproduced with permission from House of Anansi, Toronto. Text copyright © 2021 by Gabriel Cholette, illustrations copyright © 2021 by Jacob Pyne, English translation copyright © 2022 by Elina Taillon. More info at houseofanansi.com. Find Gabriel Cholette @gab.cho and Jacob Pyne @cumpug on Instagram.

Nervous Breakdown

TRACEY LINDEMAN

Excerpt from Bleed by Tracey Lindeman. Copyright © by Tracey Lindeman, 2023. Published by ECW Press Ltd. Find more info at ecwpress.com. Tracey Lindeman is a freelance journalist. She has been published in the Guardian, the Atlantic, Al Jazeera, Maclean's, the Walrus and the Globe and Mail.

Just six weeks after having the IUD inserted, I had a total meltdown.

I smashed into my mental rock bottom at high velocity just a couple weeks after I made up that song in the woods. By then, I'd been bleeding and having horrible cramps for forty-two days straight. An insurmountable sadness enveloped me and I thought about dying all the time. My resolve to stay alive was tested every time I left the house and had to be *out there*, in the world. My mind was screaming, but I constantly felt at a loss for words. This was *worse* than I imagined. How could the gynecologist have shrugged off the links between the IUD and depression? She worked as a gynecologist in a hospital *pain* clinic. How could she *not* know? Clearly, she believed I was already neurotic to begin with—but even if I was a difficult patient, I couldn't understand her need to circumvent valid concerns and good evidence about the IUD's correlation to depression in order to teach me a lesson in power dynamics. I felt like I'd been set up to fail.

All this was rolling around in my head on the day I decided to get the IUD removed. I remember it was a warm, sunny June day. That morning I woke to a panic attack, one of the worst I'd ever had. I know I biked to the sexual health clinic and back home, but I have absolutely no recollection of my journey. I don't remember what I told the receptionist when I got there, or if I sat in the waiting room or was immediately let into an exam room. It was as if my brain had thrown me into some kind of state of automatism to get me through this. I became wholly focused on one task, and one task only: getting this IUD out of me.

I do, however, remember the dog poster. Taped to the dingy foam ceiling tiles of the exam room was an incredible montage of dogs wearing insane hats. I was completely transfixed. I stared at each dog intently, studying their faces for signs of distress. They were forced to pose for these photos,

but they don't seem upset about it, I thought. I assume they got a ton of treats to do it. I scanned the dog poster for at least a dozen minutes while waiting for the doctor to enter the room. In the middle of a panic attack, the dog poster was a strange, soothing balm.

In the middle of my canine meditation, a doctor with a stern and concerned expression entered. Her red hair was pulled back into a ponytail so tight it looked painful. I sat up and blinked, my eyes filmy with tears and puffed up like sad little half-inflated balloons. It felt like I had dozens of sharp little splinters lost under my eyelids, and I desperately and unsuccessfully blinked to focus my gaze and mind. How could I have possibly biked through traffic in this state?

The doctor was a woman I had never met before and have never seen since. I told her I wanted the IUD removed immediately, that it was making me the most depressed and suicidal I'd ever been. She was skeptical. She'd never heard of an IUD causing such intense depression; after all, she said, it only works locally in the uterus without systemic effects. Maybe my IUD had secreted too much hormone at once, she posited.

Or maybe, I could hear her thinking, you were fucking crazy to begin with.

She yanked out the IUD and my chest heaved with relief.

Then she jotted down the name and number of a local gynecologist, Dr. Kapper, and handed me the yellow sticky note. A new person to beg for a hysterectomy. "Try her," she told me.



Me, the Joshua Tree

JOSHUA WHITEHEAD

Excerpt from Making Love with the Land by Joshua Whitehead, Copyright © Joshua Whitehead. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf Canada, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Limited. All rights reserved. Joshua Whitehead is Two-Spirit, Oji-nèhiyaw member of Peguis First Nation (Treaty 1).

You and I share a secret place in Calgary, the Inglewood irrigation canal that is a few kilometres from our home. I show you this place one day when we go for a walk, tell you how I would run through the dog park and down along the canal while exercising, often stopping to wade my hands through the cold waters. In turn, you show me a place beyond the canal, where the railroads cut across Bow sîpîy1.

After the annihilation leading to the death of our relationship has begun, we walk down to the canal after a weekend of stewing in depression. It's a beautiful Sunday; pîsim² is there above us, massaging our shoulders until they brown. As we stride along a path, I stop and ask, "Do you hear that?" and you say, "It must be from the golf course nearby." I have stopped us because I hear voices, almost from beneath, as if they were in the catacombs of the canal—a whimpering, maybe; an exultation? What are the trees whispering to us in this moment, what of the water, what of the rocks? We continue on this path you have walked many times, a handful of them to escape me after I have hurt you through words weaponized, and you take me to the clearing.

As we continue through the clearing, we come across a jutting of land and openness of water: Bow sîpîy is here, greets us through its steady rocking. Sometimes a wave is a wave. There are duck feathers strewn about, a carcass, and a firepit here on this little outcrop of land that believes it is a cliff. You say, "Someone has been here, caught a duck looks like," and I think, "I'm so happy they used everything."

We sit on the edge smoking cigarettes. You skip rocks across the lake, and I run my hands through the water, sift my fingers through silt. This whole journey reminds me of the film *Stand by Me*, which is one of my favourites; I feel like I am Gordie Lachance, and here you are Chris Chambers. In this vignette I play in my head, I imagine us having started that fire, roasted that duck, slept here in the tall grasses, let sîpîy sing us to sleep. I'll ask, "Do you think I'm weird?" and you'll say, "Definitely, but so what? Everybody's weird." And in that moment my belly will bloom because this is a moment I have craved since I was a child, latched on to the ghost of Lachance; I live through the intimacy I share with characters whose lives I have imagined. We'll talk into the night, that kind of talk that seems important until, as Lachance narrates, you discover girls. Of course, we have discovered girls—but in this moment, we are also just two queer boys discovering one another, and the landscape around us, and how our bodies are now braids separated, culled for the smudging. How easy is intimacy, honesty, truth, when imagined in a dream or when we are apart? How we grind into one another, spark flints for the fire we let die, and feast through the blaze we create now, here, in this moment, as individuals. In this vignette, I hear you say—by which I mean I hear myself say—"I wish that I could go someplace where nobody knows me." We have come here to see a body—which doesn't exist, because this is a vignette; but we have come nonetheless. And so what I offer up is bodies in multiplicity: the river body, the earthen body, a pocket of air, a breast of rock, bicep of branch, me, you, us. We witness death here too, though in a different fashion from the film, more holistic than nihilistic, that continuum where death kisses birth—and is there even a concept such as division?

I come back into myself, having lived a full life in the briefest of moments while that rock skipped across the lake and your forehead pores swelled so much they began to sweat and your index finger, with its scythe-shaped scar, uncurled from the hook you bent it into—you and me, we have our own sense of time.



You smile at me, I giggle back, and we sit side by side. Across the river, a man fly-fishes. We watch him catch a fish and then leave, climbing back up the hill on the other side. There, a cyclist passes by, singing along to a song he intimately knows. *sîsîp*³, *niska*⁴, and *ayîk*⁵ come to visit us as we sit together, kneecaps buckling, maybe even aching to hold one another, and *pîsim* beats time into our backs, which form continents of sweat. *kâhkâkiwak*⁶ land in the middle of *sîpiy*, which is disturbed by the leg of a railway. There atop the railings they meet, cawing at one another, feathers extended into hands, greetings; they talk with one another, and we listen, smiling. What are these *kâhkâkiwak* talking about? Boisterously, they chat as if at a reunion or a send-off—and what’s the difference anyway? We sit silently, witnessing *askiy*⁷ talk all around us, a pair of ravens saying, “I love you,” in a language not our own—yet maybe also one we know intimately? Raven is a sign, I think;

these ones are here to demonstrate the ravenous appetite of finality.

Finality is a horrendous word; it eats, you know? It has teeth. I thought and still think of finality a lot, especially during that final weekend when we decided to sever and then spent every waking moment together healing. Finality—as severity—is a word that I need to erase from my vocabulary. It’s too linear, too colonial. We, of course, as Indigenous peoples, know that finality is simply an opening into continuity. But during that weekend I plagued myself with the word, I swallowed it whole and squawked up a stomachful of knots—meaning, there were continuums there too. My body rejects finality as an end-stop; my own cells fight against this invasion.



1. river; 2. sun; 3. duck; 4. goose; 5. frog; 6. ravens; 7. the land

HOW TO OVERTHROW CANADA VIA INFOGRAPHIC

From The Big Melt by Emily Riddle. Published by Nightwood Editions in 2022. Emily Riddle is Nehiyaw and a member of the Alexander First Nation (Kipobtakaw). A writer, editor, policy analyst, language learner and visual artist, she lives in Amiskwaciwâskabikan (Edmonton).

prince philip died
and i wish i could celebrate
but my teachings don't allow me
to find joy in the death of an old man
the treaty six confederacy sends condolences to the queen
on the passing of her husband
as one should do
when your mother's husband dies
i eat a pint of ice cream
with the acknowledgement
that i will never live to be ninety-nine
due to factors beyond my control
the queen seems immortal
while my ndn friend group faces tragedies
despite experiencing an ongoing genocide
we have a healthier relationship to death
the queen sends my chief a pastel pantsuit that matches one of hers
he is supposed to receive a new outfit every three years as per our treaty
inside the package, a letter reads
*i'm sorry i can't
don't hate!*

1. real ones will understand this reference.

Burn Barrel

EMILY UTTER

From This Will Only Take a Minute, edited by Bruce Meyer & Michael Mirolla. Published by Guernica Editions in 2022. Emily Utter has been published in Gutter, Causeway/Cabhsair and numerous other publications. She lives in Aberdeen, Scotland. Find her at emilykutter.com.

I come from a long line of women who compose letters in their heads. Women who bite back then swallow whole the things they want to say. We do not like confrontation—prefer to play back an episode of discomfort or disagreement later, in the shower maybe, when we can imagine we had all the power.

We suffer from trembles and migraines and bellyaches. When we swallow our words they travel through us, trying to break out in other ways—through the skin like sweat. Sometimes the words go to our wombs and take our babies, other times they bubble up as tumours that grow, then shrink, then kill us anyway.

I spit out my words so they don't make me sick. Tell my brother he is being an idiot. Tell the dog he is being a toenail. Tell Dad he doesn't know *everything* and Mum that I will *not* practice piano.

When Joe, the farm hand, tries to tell me what to do I remind him that I don't have to because my Dad is the boss. Loudly announce to anyone who will listen that I'm a boy so I don't have to wear a shirt if I don't want to.

My grandma is so old and has had time to swallow so many words that she can't keep hold of them anymore. They clog up her brain then spill out of her mouth and she calls my dad five different names before she finally lands on his.

It doesn't matter, he'll respond to any of them. Dad doesn't soak in words like the rest of us. Instead of swallowing his words Dad gathers up the spare junk in the farmyard, rotting chicken carcasses the raccoons have abandoned, and split 6-quart baskets, then lights up a fire in the burn barrel. He'll stand there for hours, stoking the embers, then bringing the flames back up to a roar with a bit of pitch pine.

When he comes back to the house he stinks of smoke and his face is drawn but we know his belly is aching with hunger, not words, because he cracks a beer and says, 'starvin' Marvin,' as he leans over whatever is bubbling on the stove. Lately I've been dreaming of a fire raging through the orchards, smothering the sky in black smoke, and sucking everything—the trees, the house, the barn—up as it goes.



Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

NORMA DUNNING

From Kinavit? by Dr. Norma Dunning. Published by Douglas & McIntyre in 2022. Dr. Norma Dunning is the author of Tainna: The Unseen Ones (Douglas & McIntyre) and Annie Muktuk and Other Stories (University of Alberta Press). She lives in Edmonton, AB.

Translated into English those two words mean “that which Inuit have long known” and it is the way that Inuit are born into the world, and it is within this value system they are raised. It involves the concept of blood memory and how our ancestors pass onto us their own understandings and memories. As Inuit and as Indigenous Canadians we have to recognize that not all of

the memories of our ancestors were bad memories, and we are still standing when in theory we should not be. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is a part of how every Inuk is, and it lies inside of us waiting to be put to use.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit are the Inuit values and ways of knowing and being.⁶ IQ can be used to understand how Inuit thought of the Eskimo Identification Canada system. The following are a few of the values:

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq—showing respect and caring for one another. When we work together, we build relationships that matter. When the non-Inuit came into the Arctic and started to remove Inuit names and replaced names with a number, Inuit appeared to have been in agreement because we did not outwardly fight back. That attitude does

not lie within Inuit. It is more important to be respectful toward those who do not understand us and if what the white man wanted was to have a numbered necklace to be on our person—who would that hurt?

Tunnaganarniq—being welcoming to others. Ajua Peter explained the welcoming to shore of those who did not look like Inuit and I have spoken many times about my mom taking care of people who came into our home no matter the time of day or night. Being welcoming is essential to Inuit because we can not turn people away. All of our relationships should be positive. Inuit would have never turned the non-Inuit administrators away from their homes.

Piliriqatigiingniq—working together for a common purpose or consensus. For Inuit, working together is not about forcing anyone into doing something or changing their mind but about reaching a common goal on which everyone agreed. If the non-Inuit wanted to try to understand the Inuit through the use of a number, then so be it. An Inuk Elder once said to me, “We just wore them for the government,” meaning that if this is what helped the government people, then Inuit helped.

Qanuqtuurunnarniq—being resourceful to solve problems. Inuit would have recognized that the non-Inuit had a problem. They did not understand Inuit names. Therefore if wearing a necklace with a number on it helped non-Inuit then the problem would be solved. I think this demonstrates how Inuit were firstly not aggressive and secondly not self-seeking.

Pijitsirniq—the concept of serving. Idlout and Aglukark each served their people by writing and putting onto the airwaves songs that spoke of the Eskimo Identification Canada system. Inuit will always serve one another and also serve those who are non-Inuit. This is a part of how we function in the world. Life is not about self. Life is about others.

When the values are added up and the wonderful qualities that Inuit adhere to are taken into consideration it becomes clearer to see how Inuit may have welcomed non-Inuit. They would have helped them to understand the tundra environment. How to handle the cold. How to hunt the

local wildlife. What to do with animal hides and skins. How to piece together clothing to keep warm. How to store food.

What Inuit would not have expected was the interference that resulted later. The intrusive barging in and taking over of their daily lives by non-Inuit and the constant oppression.



6. Morgan Bentham, “Guiding Principles and Values of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ),” Teacher as Researcher, 2016. <https://leapintothevoidwithme.wordpress.com/2016/04/09/principles-of-inuit-qaujimagatuqangit/#more-314>.

UNUSUAL SUBJECT MATTER

A selection of book titles awarded the Diagram Prize for Oddest Title of the Year, an annual award that has recognized books with unusual titles since 1978. Organized by The Bookseller, the winning title has been chosen by the public via an online poll since the year 2000. Compiled by Kelsea O'Connor.

- *Proceedings of the Second International Workshop on Nude Mice* by various authors (1978)
- *The Book of Marmalade: Its Antecedents, Its History, and Its Role in the World Today* by Anne Wilson (1984)
- *Reusing Old Graves: A Report on Popular British Attitudes* by Douglas Davies and Alastair Shaw (1995)
- *Greek Rural Postmen and Their Cancellation Numbers* by Derek Willan (1996)
- *People Who Don't Know They're Dead: How They Attach Themselves to Unsuspecting Bystanders and What to Do About It* by Gary Leon Hill (2005)
- *The Stray Shopping Carts of Eastern North America: A Guide to Field Identification* by Julian Montague (2006)
- *The 2009–2014 World Outlook for 60-milligram Containers of Fromage Frais* by Philip M. Parker (2008)
- *Managing a Dental Practice: The Genghis Khan Way* by Michael R. Young (2010)
- *Goblinproofing One's Chicken Coop* by Reginald Bakeley (2012)
- *The Commuter Pig Keeper: A Comprehensive Guide to Keeping Pigs When Time Is Your Most Precious Commodity* by Michaela Giles (2016)
- *The Dirt Hole and Its Variations* by Charles L. Dobbins (2019)

Here Is Where You Can Find Me

HUGH BRODY

Extract from Landscapes of Silence by Hugh Brody. Published by Faber & Faber in 2022. Hugh Brody is the author of ten books. In the 1970s, he worked with the Canadian Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and then with Inuit and Indigenous organizations, mapping hunter-gatherer territories and researching land claims and indigenous rights in many parts of Canada.

The community that I was welcomed into was small—no more than 500 people lived at the north tip of Baffin Island. Over the three years that I spent time there I came to know just about every family, and visited most homes many times. But the land that they travelled, and knew in extraordinary detail, was immense. After working in the Arctic for three years, I became one of a team that had the job of mapping Inuit relationships to their environment. The Canadian government had agreed to negotiate indigenous claims to their lands, and the Inuit were among the very first to look for a way to make these claims visible. Maps were a device for achieving this.

From the very beginning I was uneasy about it being called a ‘claim’—after all, it is colonists and settlers who lay claim to the lands of others. Nonetheless, this was a chance for the Inuit to establish beyond any doubt or question that the Arctic was indeed theirs. Prior to this mapping work, the Inuit had never spoken to me in terms of ‘owning’ their land—rather, it was the setting in which they lived, hunted, travelled, and, as the elders kept pointing out to me, this land was given its life by their knowledge. So the mapping may have changed forever the way that the land was seen, by both the Inuit and government: it now became a contested zone, an arena of possession and, therefore, potential dispossession. I had the job of building with the people the maps that would show their rights to the eastern high Arctic, with all the places that I had been taken to by dog-team, skidoo and innumerable stories.

I knew it was a large area; when I came to put the topographical sheets together, I discovered that we would have to map onto a base that extended over 450 miles from east to west, and 400 miles from north to south. This large

area was made all the more extensive by its fractured topography: the multitude of bays, inlets, islands and mountains meant that those who used this land travelled along routes that twisted and turned, headed out across spans of open water and far inland along dramatic fjords and long river valleys. I knew that many families had often travelled to hunt or visit with relatives and neighbouring settlements that were 150 miles away; one family I knew had made an extended journey of over a thousand miles, moving from one Inuit community to another, all the way to the tree line, far to the southwest. Putting together all the map sheets for this extent of land use meant making a set of base maps that was five feet across.

In house after house, people squatted and crouched around this great area of virtual territory. We went through the list. Mark all the places you have hunted for ring seal, bearded seal, harp seal, walrus, narwhal ... And the places you hunted for caribou, hare, polar bears ... And trapped foxes ... And fished for Arctic char, trout, cod, sculpin ... And gathered mussels, sea urchins ... And hunted eider ducks, snow geese, tundra swans ... And collected the eggs of Arctic terns, murre, gulls, black guillemots ... And picked blueberries, cranberries ... Show all this for when you were living out on the land before the school was set up. Now all the places since the school. And where were the graves of your ancestors, the campsites you used, the places you put your tents? Then the ecological knowledge: the bears’ dens; the way cracks formed in the ice in spring and meant that seals and narwhal could be hunted in the open water; which way the caribou moved in spring and autumn; where they had their calves; where their favourite summer grazing was. Someone mentioned spiders—were there many in this particular place? And butterflies. Someone had picked mushrooms—where were they usually found? And journeys to trade one year, to visit a sick relative another, to travel for the fun of travelling. Along this shoreline, across that mountain pass, then down the coastline there. These were the places we stopped. Here there was a bad storm, and across that headland the ice was always piled high in early spring so it was slow and difficult to use that route ... And here is where you can find the bones of my grandparents, and here is the grave of a southerner who came there to trade, and the wreck of an old whaling ship ...

One map biography could take two days, and then be added to during extra visits, more stories, another layer of memories. We worked and worked, all of every day, for weeks on end. The maps became filled with circles, lines, notes, and the maps piled up. Everyone was able to find themselves on these maps. They could see their world in these representations from above, as with a bird's eye view, which they could never have had; it was as easy for them as any other, more usual way of seeing their lands. The laying out of all this experience and knowledge was to reveal what it had meant to be a hunter and gatherer in these territories. For all their clutter of information, crossings out and corrections, lines going in all directions in many different colours, the maps were compelling and beautiful creations. They showed just how intense, extensive and rich the Inuit relationship to their world had been, and still was.

They showed this to me, the outsider who had brought this inquiry into their homes. They also showed it to one another. No one did their mapping in solitude; members of the family sat and watched, neighbours who were visiting joined in. This was work that celebrated Inuit experience and skill. Everyone was delighted to show, tell, share. Everyone took pride in what was being revealed. They also found a new appreciation for their system: a pattern of land use and harvests that depended on extended family groups. Each group had its set of hunting, fishing, trapping and living sites. Inuit life depended on a seasonal round, with winter seal hunting areas out on the sea-ice where a number of households would gather; then a spreading out to spring hunting places; a further scatter to summer caribou hunting inland or coastal hunting where kayaks and skin boats could be used; then a move to autumn fishing places at a river where the char were migrating upstream; and back to the winter seal hunting. Each group had a set of such places. In winter some groups might overlap; for much of the year each group would move among its particular series of living sites and territories, along its distinctive seasonal round. As we made the maps, the shapes of these seasonal movements emerged—everyone could see that between them they had created a large and widespread system of interconnected patterns of hunting, fishing, gathering and trapping. Each family spoke only for its particular part of the large pattern, but to see it as a whole was to understand the brilliance

and completeness of Inuit use of their lands and their stories about their lives. When all the maps were put together, every possible harvesting area and living site had been used; everywhere and everything was known and understood. Stories became maps; maps turned into a new kind of story.

I never thought to myself that this was the way I had needed my family in England to share their history, to pass on their stories. At the time I was not aware of how vital the building of memory is for wellbeing, but I would feel surges of energy, of strange happiness, as I was taken into the sophistication of the hunting life and this immense encyclopaedia of Inuit knowledge.

Not just knowledge, not only an array of facts, but also a way of having and sharing what is in the mind. The telling of stories, the sharing of memories, the drawing of others into a circle of knowledge, all that is achieved in oral culture—these too showed me what it can mean to be an adult in relation to the natural world, alive to the environment in order to be alive in all ways. This made every kind of sense to me. Through this discovery of Inuit ways of knowing, teaching and learning, I was learning about their complex of achievements and discovering a good deal about what it meant to be a coherent human being. They were parents to me; I grew up under their tutelage to a realisation of what it can mean to be human. I was being shown that the version of human nature I had been urged to accept by my anxious parents and the justifications of greed and the market economy offered by European philosophers was neither natural nor inevitable.



Everything As It Was

CHRISTINA WONG AND DANIEL INNES

Excerpt from Denison Avenue by Christina Wong and Daniel Innes. Copyright © by Christina Wong and Daniel Innes, 2023. Published by ECW Press Ltd. More info at ecwpress.com. Christina Wong is a playwright, prose writer and a multidisciplinary artist. She has been published in TOK Magazine and the Toronto Star. She lives in Toronto. Daniel Innes was born in the north end of Toronto and has lived in the Spadina-Chinatown neighbourhood for over 20 years. Find him at danielinnes.com.

The daily wall calendar that we bought from Sun Wah every year hung just above the phone in the hallway.

Its pages felt like thin rice paper.

The monthly calendar from Kyu Shon Hong hung on the wall over two nails.

The year of the snake.

The vegetable oil, the used vegetable oil, the sesame oil, and two soy sauce bottles—light, dark, stained on the outside—all on a styrofoam plate wrapped in foil sat on the counter next to the stove. Oil-stained sheets of newspaper folded to the side of stove that were placed on the floor when we cooked.

The stovetop rusted and chipped. The oven used as storage for other pots and pans.

Coffee, jam, pickle, and roasted peanut jars repurposed to hold black and white pepper, corn starch, five spice, star anise, dried orange peels, and slabs of brown sugar cane.

New jar labels written on scrap pieces of paper taped over the old labels.

The sixteen-ounce container of chicken broth granules next to a small plastic container of white sugar, with a white plastic spoon inside.

The metal spatula, ladle, and bamboo strainer hung off white plastic hooks above the sink.

The five-cup National rice cooker sat on the counter. Its cord wrapped with electrical tape.

The kitchen table always covered, never bare. Flyers from Metro, Canadian Tire, No Frills, Price Chopper, Shoppers Drug Mart, the Brick mixed in with old issues of *Ming Pao* and *Sing Tao* and their weekend supplements that the library saved for us, *Shing Wah Daily News*, the *Toronto Sun*, and the *Kensington Market Drum* all piled on top of one another, edges discolouring.

Next to them, a phone book from 2010, a Yellow Pages from 2012, a *New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary* stacked.

Receipts from Hua Foong, Hua Long, Hua Sheng, Hong Fatt became scraps of paper for me to write grocery lists on the back.

Pencils too short all lined up with the receipts in an old Ferrero Rocher box. I'd protest when I saw your hand reach for the stubs to throw them out. "Eh, eh, eh, joong yoong duck ah!" (You can still use them!)

A small pile of notebooks I used to write down recipes from the library cookbooks.

A mooncake tin from Kim Moon filled with loose change; pins; a couple of dollar bills; staples; grease pencils; old Christmas cards from the Kwans, the Takedas, and the Greens; an old pair of eyeglasses; a commemorative TTC token from the opening

FLORAL ARRANGEMENT I

By Kai Cheng Thom. From Queer Little Nightmares, edited by David Ly & Daniel Zomparelli. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2022. Kai Cheng Thom is the author of Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars (Metonymy Press), I Hope We Choose Love (Arsenal Pulp Press), and a place called No Homeland (Arsenal Pulp Press).

I am the venus flytrap femme, the snapback femme, the carniflora amora devora femme. the femme with open jaw and gaping maw, drooling perfumed psychotropic saliva. i am that femme of fleshy petals and hothouse clime, i am a climbing femme with strangling vines. the clinging femme, the singing femme, the femme who eats her lovers to stay alive. i am the thriving femme—you call me conniving femme, but i call myself the girl who gets what she wants. i am the femme who loves her teeth, and i've got meals to hunt, so let's keep this brief: i am the femme who stays alive.

of the Bloor-Danforth subway line in 1966; your old bank book from Imperial Bank of Canada on Elizabeth and Dundas; a flyer from Chinese Printing & Advertising that used to be on Brunswick Avenue; two old catalogues from Y.Y. Company in San Francisco from February 1965 and June 1966; an instruction manual for the Seabreeze Stereo 720; and a manual for the Kodak Pocket Instamatic camera.

A crystal bowl meant for serving punch now used to hold elastics, a handful of paperclips, shoelaces, batteries, a few blue medium-point Bic pens, a letter opener, my change purse, and a Ziploc bag filled with old keys.

The old cardboard barrel of Ajinomoto MSG tucked in the pantry to hold the rice, always a full cup ready to be taken out.

Drawers filled with coupons; napkins from McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken; packets of ketchup; packets of sugar; packets of moist towelettes; and disposable spoons and forks.

Cupboards lined with calendar pages from 1993 from Lien Phong Trading and Hong Fat Seafood Market. Also yellowing at the edges.

And on the side of one of the cupboards, I maintained your habit of collecting the stickers from the fruits. Just as you got annoyed with my too short pencils, I got annoyed with your fruit stickers every time I found them stuck on the kitchen sink, on the faucet, on the counter, on the table, and sometimes on the side of the fridge.

The popular ones:

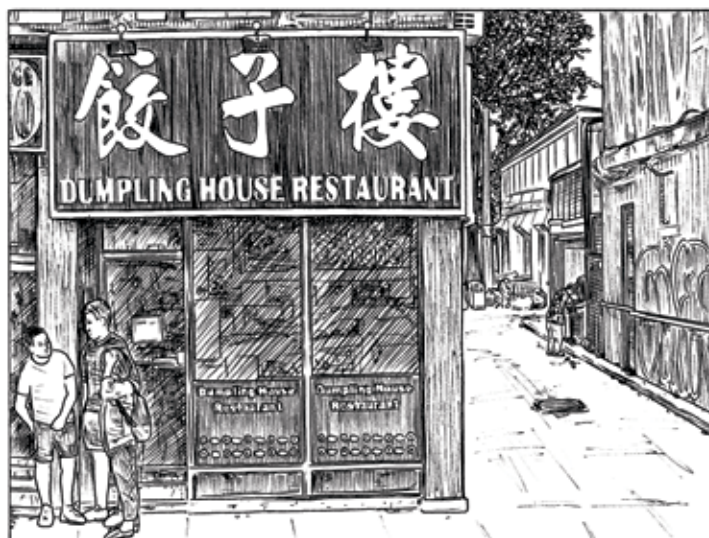
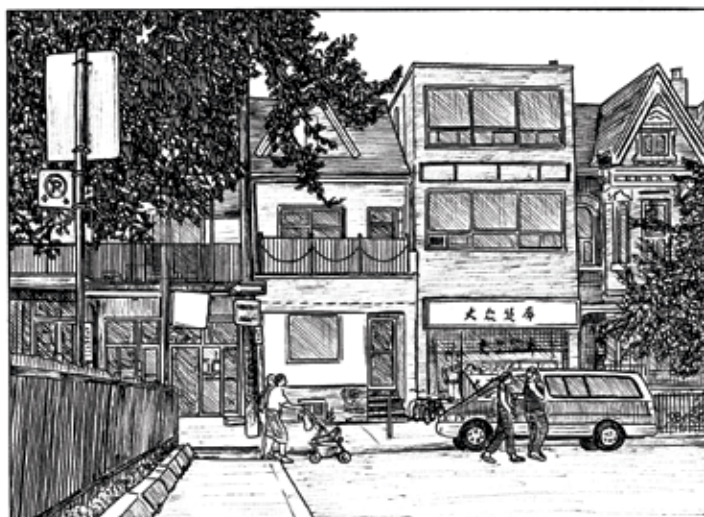
- #4167, red delicious apples
- #4428, Fuyu persimmons
- #4011, bananas
- #4133, gala apples
- #4013, navel oranges
- #4021, golden delicious apples
- #4046, avocados
- #4022, seedless green grapes
- #4407, Asian pears

You said the stickers brought colour to the kitchen and that it was interesting to see where our fruits and vegetables had come from and how they were grown.

How far they travelled and the journey they endured to get here.

Mexico, South Africa, China, California, and Ontario.

Like stamps on a passport.



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 by L.M. Montgomery (L.C. Page & Co., 1908)*

FIRST PRIZE

Return to the Lake of Shining Waters

ANDREA SCOTT

When frogs sing—fat and wide-eyed—look
 at the essential, pulsing, cracked moonshine

of it all. With eyes limpid and joyful, rest
 your exacting plans. Imagine your hands in a brook

as not-real hands. Do you remember a special
 green life? Webbed. No troubles. Are you sorry

to have lived as a human? Sunrise will be wasted
 on whispered confessions, on romantic bunglings.

Why not head to the woods, the water,
 the dumb amazement of your first home?

Know the rise and fall of your old skin,
 as it breathes for you, slow, in the grove.

Writer and teacher Andrea Scott grew up in Regina, SK, and now lives in Victoria, BC, with her kids and cats. She is currently writing a collection of poems about mothering in a changing climate. Publications include Arc Poetry Magazine, the Humber Literary Review and the Antigonish Review.

SECOND PRIZE

June Cleaver Lies in Bed

K.R. SEGRIFF

Pink blossomed again,
white, pincushion hard, upright as ever;
a cracked jug full of dreams,
sleeping in unmaterial form.

Ward, I wish I could endure it
for your sake.

I resolve not to imagine anything;
keep my thoughts shut up in starched handkerchiefs,
all the time ironing right around them.

Do you remember what happened this day last year?
I can't think of anything special.

The days turn unopposed,
but one can live down troubles.

I can't.
Sorry, not sorry.

It's only twilight
and I already want to cut you.

The ghost of a little murdered soul creeps
behind you, lays its cold fingers
on your hardened heart
and grabs.

All that wicked nonsense of imagination
I don't believe in daylight
but after dark, it's different.

That is when ghosts walk;
when respectable people
can unbury their dreams.

K.R. Segriff is a Canadian writer and filmmaker. Her work has appeared in Atlanta Review, Greensboro Review, Best Canadian Poetry and PRISM international, among others. She won Space and Time Magazine's 2021 Iron Writer competition and the London Independent Story Prize. She is working on her debut poetry collection.

THIRD PRIZE

Ghosting

KERRY DOYLE

Savour her,
fallen wide-eyed past all
essential change.
 Still,
she's altered—

cracked resewn tissue broken
anatomy mistaken.

You are penitently resolved
not to imagine anything.

 This is how to forget a name:

 brook no loyalty;
 turn;
 go over, *no*
 go around, reluctantly,
 the common ground.

Oh, but her hands utter,
sigh wild fingers, shudder
between the boughs
oh ache and listen.

The respectable night buried, you hear
her body,
a word haunted again.

kerry doyle teaches writing at York University. After years preoccupied with her students' writing, she is now finding time to think about her own. She lives in Toronto with her daughter, her partner and a bevy of cats.

FICTION

SATELLITE

TOBY SHARPE



I don't know where a person can go when they disappear, apart from underwater



A bad dream brought him back to me. Michael teaching me how to skate. Michael giggling, effervescent. Michael breathing on my neck. Michael in the smog, snot dripping, eyes hollow. Michael. Michael. A good dream.



The shiksa is twirling chopsticks, looking outside, waiting for Michael. I sit on a bench opposite, waiting too. That cat (you know the one) waves its arm. Michael is late. Winter in Vancouver. I eat gyoza whole, one at a time, while I flutter my eyelashes, practising for when Michael arrives. The shiksa makes conversation. I dodge it, and then relent. I spent all day choosing my outfit and have already spilled vinegar on my shirt. I can see myself half-reflected in the tiling above her head. I am waiting for Michael and I feel like I have been waiting for Michael since I was born. I am an Ashkenazi mess of an undergraduate in a pan-Asian restaurant in the middle of the most expensive city in North America. My head hurts.

The shiksa grew up in Grande Prairie and is taking our Jewish Studies class to broaden her metaphorical horizons. I picture Albertan skies stretching out forever, something frosty and balletic about her childhood, so far from my own. She loves lacrosse. She is thrilled to get to know “people” like Michael, like me. We will only know if Michael likes lacrosse if he ever arrives. I see curls by the window, eyebrows across the street. On the way over, I saw the promise of him glinting in a puddle. I want him to make me glint too.



I was already familiar with the idea that friends can vanish, simply disappear. My friend Jeremy evaporated when we were teenagers, into dark water after a house party. His parents never believed he just slipped. They preferred the idea that one of us had killed him rather than believe that Jeremy was just very, very drunk, and very, very unhappy, and that the canal’s depths were deceptively hungry. The night Jeremy died, he had reached for me in the kitchen, reached out as if to take something from me, but then decided not to.

Jeremy doesn’t matter much to me now, but sometimes I think about him when I’m dicing vegetables, throwing the compost away. It was one of the first anecdotes I told my now ex-boyfriend Deon, the story of the party, the story of the drowning. I showed him Jeremy’s memorial page, still online, and then regretted it immediately, wincing at my cruelty and how keen I was to pimp out my dead friend for profit. I wanted Deon to think I’d had it rough, that I knew what life was like, that I was deeply deep. I didn’t tell him much else about other men I’d had feelings for. I never mentioned Michael.



There is an abundance of tea lights and the floor is sticky. I am here! With Michael! Only days after our dinner date, Michael is leaning against a counter, beer in his hand. The beer sparkles. Michael sparkles. I am sparkling too, because I am determined to sparkle.

Tim is staring. I am beginning to realize that I live in a world in which Michael exudes a certain gravitational pull. Tim is captivated and jealous. Michael has offered to drive me home.

It is only my fifth party in this city and I am impressing even myself—I am making an impression, growing roots. Michael is my soil; I want him to nourish me. A redhead is from Ottawa and likes horror movies. She and Tim are going to travel around Eastern Europe this summer. Then there is a time limit to Tim, with his bad hair and bad vibes. A Tim limit! I will be nice to him—I can be kind to him as I watch him drift out of orbit, into the darkness of space.



I considered messaging Annabelle early on a Thursday morning, still awake from the night before, my stomach roiling, sitting on the toilet, scrolling through the cosmos on my phone. I'd been sleeping poorly since my breakup with Deon. And then the memories of Michael swam back to me through dream, brackish and wet.

Something had gone wrong in that year in Vancouver, something went off course, and in the small hours of blue nights, I ruminated. I stalked myself, my own online past, and that's how I remembered the people I'd spent time with back then, more than a decade ago: Michael, the academic; Tim, the dweeb; and Annabelle, the shiksa.

I wasn't sure if she still counted as a shiksa, given that she'd likely converted. I hadn't been invited to the wedding, but the photos made their way onto my feed and into my stories, and her husband was unsurprisingly one of us, a dudebro with big teeth, bad facial hair, and an ass that rivalled mine. I bet his parents were horrified when he brought home a blond from Alberta, one who didn't even have oil money to keep their nebbish son safe and warm.

I'd always figured she had a reason for hanging out with Michael and me so often, but I hadn't thought too much about how maybe she'd wanted some aspect of us. I hadn't considered why she'd let us sit on her bed and cuddle, how she'd found a way to follow us from date to date.

I sent her an emoji at first. She called me a few minutes after my message was delivered, surprised to hear from me and eager to catch up immediately. Across the continent, I told her that I regretted calling her "the shiksa"—was it goyphobic? misogynistic?—back in the day. She laughed, but only for a moment, enough to smooth things over without explicitly offering forgiveness. We talked for a little while, and I could hear children bickering in the background, fighting over carrot sticks and bagel bites. She told me about her wedding (big), her parents-in-law (tiring) and the family's synagogue (big and tiring). Seeing a segue, I leapt on it. Speaking of tiring Jews: had she kept in touch with Michael?

I BET HIS PARENTS WERE HORRIFIED WHEN HE
BROUGHT HOME A BLOND FROM ALBERTA, ONE
WHO DIDN'T EVEN HAVE OIL MONEY TO KEEP
THEIR NEBBISH SON SAFE AND WARM.



Michael, the shiksa and I are walking down the hall in Buchanan, talking about nothing in particular. Our meals, our little parties, have gone well. We are a unit now, and I am eager to keep that going. Tim is trailing behind us, slime on my heel. I wish he would hurry up and go abroad already, or at least walk from campus into the ocean.

Michael looks handsome. I am stuck talking about nothing because I have very little on my mind apart from him. I like the way his head bobs when he speaks. The shiksa asks us if we

want to get dinner again sometime, carefully not including Tim in the invitation, and Michael says he'd love to come, but only if it's not too early, as he wants to get some work done first. He's researching a new project, he says, an essay about kabbalah, about forgotten secrets and old magic. I make a joke about how I only know about kabbalah from reading about Madonna and Britney Spears on gossip websites. His lips purse. I have somehow fucked up.



Annabelle asked me about Deon, said she'd seen photos of me looking happy, and that she was surprised to see that I hadn't ended up with a Jewish guy (like she had!). I told her the phone line was breaking up, and that I had to go.

I thought about the collapse of me and Deon, and then about what Annabelle had said about Michael, about the religious heights he'd climbed, the hands of God that may have met him there. I was alone in a bathroom, hundreds of miles from anyone who cared about me. I did not feel heavenly. I stared at the bathroom light, almost hoping it would shatter.



Chairs squeak against linoleum. We are watching Michael talk. The professor has asked him here to speak to our class. Michael is one year and one month older than me and ten years younger than my professor. I am preening, even though it's not me who is speaking, and Michael does not belong to me. I should not be preening. Michael is talking about a third-century religious tract found in a cave, remarkably well-preserved. He likes this text. His enthusiasm is contagious, or at least it is for me. I didn't know anything found deep in a cave could give someone so much joy.

The professor will recommend Michael for his scholarship, of this I am sure. I take Michael's hand at the end of class and he is grinning, and he lets me hold it for a second, two, a whole minute, before pulling it away. I ask him if he likes teaching and he says yes. He is throbbing. He takes my hand again, and says, directly at me, almost into my eyes, "I am never happier than when I am talking to people about the divine."



Over the phone Annabelle had spoken with a note of incredulity untarnished by the years. Not long after my own furtive departure from Vancouver, Michael had told her that he would no longer engage in the secular academe. He wanted to break free from their toxic and godless sphere. She had thought it was a joke at first, albeit a bad one, but then Michael had shown her the emails he'd sent to the head of department, explaining how he didn't belong amongst non-believers, how he wished to be scrubbed from their list of students as if with bleach. After he told her and Tim to repent, he got on a plane and left the city. She didn't know where he went. New York, maybe, or Berlin. So, no. She didn't keep in touch with him. She'd assumed, instead, and despite everything, that I had.

Alone, still on the toilet, this news made me feel strange and sour, my stomach wobbling again, the last drunk on the dancefloor. When Michael and I first met outside Koerner, he went to gay bars all the time, he'd told me, showing off a little. He was a sweaty little insect at the clubs, I later discovered, but still I wanted him, yearned even.

Outside the pub that day, he'd been wearing pink jeans, of all things, and there was a rainbow pin on his hoodie. He had seemed like a prouder version of me. I don't know where that person went. I don't know where a person can go when they disappear, apart from underwater.



Richard Gere is flickering on pause. We are on the shiksa's bed. She is in the bathroom—she's been in there for a while. We had been watching a movie. Michael smells like juniper: an autumnal scent that doesn't match the blossom outside. His hand creeps onto my shoulder, my bicep, my elbow. Since Michael said we'd be better as friends, he has been very careful not to touch me. I hope the shiksa stays in the bathroom.

Recently, I've been looking at myself in the mirror and trying to see myself the way Michael sees me, sucking in my gut and flexing my arms. There must be something very wrong about me, with me, in me, to make him suddenly bend away from me. Just last month, on Wreck Beach, I'd leaned in for a kiss and he obliged me, but only briefly. There'd been a hint of tongue; I noticed a bead of sweat on his forehead.

The shiksa comes back in, after a flush and running of water. Michael moves his hand. I am alone in the universe.

DEON SAID THAT I WAS TOO NARCISSISTIC
TO BE IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP. I
REPLIED THAT ONLY GORGEOUS PEOPLE
CAN ACTUALLY BE VAIN, AND I WAS SIMPLY
MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION



Last week, Deon said that I was too narcissistic to be in a committed relationship. I replied that only gorgeous people can actually be vain, and I was simply making the best of a bad situation, but he'd already left the apartment with his keys in one hand and his toothbrush in the other. He left his toothpaste, but I threw it into the trash in an act of defiance, before fishing it out and putting it back on the sink's rim. The whole place felt dead without Deon in it, but he was already feeling foggy, as if we had never dated, as if we had never spoken. There were too many men in my life.



Forest fires. Smoke rolling in from Washington each morning. We sit on the see-saw, at either end. I am heavier. I eat my chicken in its sweat as Michael is knocked off the earth by my bulk. He says he's sad to see me flee the city, that he feels glad to have spent precious moments with me, that I've touched his life more than I know. I scoff at that, spraying the air with poultry juices. I feel gnawed at by the triteness of his words: his sadness, his gladness.

There's so much to say and I don't know how to say it. Am I meant to bend down on my knees in supplication, beg him to make me stay? Am I meant to reach for him with my mouth? Am I meant to tell him that this is entirely and yet totally not about him, that I'm giving up my life for no reason at all?

"You barely made it here today, Mike. I don't want to—let's not pretend I'm a priority, okay? I don't want to leave things on a shitty note."

"I hate it when you call me Mike."

“All right, Michael.”

We chew. Silence. I can't decide if I am giving into something or condemning something. His feet are like little see-saws themselves, dangling and rearranging themselves. I resolve to never speak again. Until he tries to affirm that we're still friends. That we've had good times, especially with the shiksa, and that he'll always treasure knowing me. He's even told his new boyfriend all about me.

“Your new what?”

“Aaron? He lives in Bellingham. I had to set my JSwipe search pretty wide to find someone compatible. He works for a travel company. You'd like him. I mean: I like him.”

“Did you seriously come here to tell me that you have a boyfriend now? The day before I leave?”

“I figured Tim had told you.”

“Tim hates me, Michael. He thinks that you and I are, were, going to fuck and get hitched. Move to San Fran or something equally gay and dreamy. He thought I'd take you away from him, like you were in love with me or something.”

“Well, that tracks, I guess.”

“What? Mike.”

“It's Michael. And it would never have worked. You don't, you aren't, you're—you're irreligious. You would have been a...”

“What? A distraction?”

“A kind of temptation. We would have been great, but I could never have married someone like you.”

I picture a chuppah laden with jasmine, locks of hair intertwining as we bend toward one another to kiss. I hear the sound of shattering glass under foot, the sound of something ended, a single life wounded and left to rot. I want to take my fist and make my way inside his entrails. I want everything and nothing. I want him to kiss me.

“Fuck you, Mike. Manipulative... fuck. Fuck you. Eat my whole stinking ass.”

I leave my chicken on the see-saw. I see Michael shiver, empty, trying to regain his balance. He calls after me but I leave anyway, pushing through the smoke-streaked air. Back to my studio. I look around at the brick walls, my suitcases, the gilded mirror too heavy and fragile to take to Toronto, and think about how ugly he makes me feel.



All I do these days is stare at myself in my front camera and compulsively tweet. And reminisce, but privately. I don't tell the world my memories. I just share my thirst traps, mostly without captions. Annabelle sometimes likes them; Deon seems to have me muted on socials. I am wasting my time on the planet, bit by bit.

It took a day or two to cleanse Deon from my apartment, return it to its default settings, make it a sad bachelor pad once again. It shocked me how quickly he'd seeded himself about the place: his expensive lube, which didn't irritate his crotch, was still hidden under my bed, and the quilt his grandmother made him hugged my sofa. I put it all in boxes, all of it, even the books he'd bought me: I taped them up, and I texted Deon to tell him to collect them whenever he wanted.

Once I'd packed everything that smelled even slightly of him, except his toothpaste, I ordered takeout and stared at the wall. I lit up a cigarette, my first in months, and opened my laptop. I went to Jeremy's memorial page, as if by habit. His mother had updated it: she was going to plant a tree for him, in the town where we grew up, the town I'd never go back to. I paused for a moment, then hit the like button. And then I went looking for another ghost.



Michael twirling down a staircase, smirking. Michael frowning at me, exhaling smoke. Michael twisting linguine around a fork. Michael proofreading my essay, a pencil between his teeth.



I am at the airport looking at my overpriced sandwich in its six layers of packaging when Michael sends me a message. I picture him still on the see-saw, covered in forest ash. I delete the message instead of reading it and block his account. Eight seconds later, I want to take back my decision, but I do nothing. The gate brightens, a steward's voice crackles. It's time to board.



Yesterday, I found a person online. Same surname, different first name. No mutual friends. Michael? A photo that could be him, just older. The more I look, the surer I am.

The posts are strange. Jagged and ugly words, often tagging celebrities' profiles. He'll demand a pop star grant him an audience, beg a comedian to spread the good word, ask an athlete to convince his fans to give up their mortal belongings and walk into the mountains. I am reminded of him telling me that Britney was a moron for wearing a crimson string. I messaged Annabelle again ("this him? weird statuses: breakdown or performance art?") but this time she did not reply.

I keep looking at his profile. This Michael has grown a beard. This Michael likes golf, fears chemtrails, and runs, of all things, a tinfoil business. This Michael has a wife. In his profile picture, they are holding hands—almost. There's a slight gap between their fingers. I find myself zooming in on it. I have done that a lot. Does the empty space speak volumes? Or am I just lonely? I move over the button to add him as a friend. I hover.



My first week in Toronto I pause as I walk by a synagogue. I shake my head, as if disagreeing with no one in particular. A woman in a sheitel glares at me. She hurries her children along. I want to reach out, beg for forgiveness, but I don't. I think about texting Michael. I don't. I try to push the memory of him out, so hard that it takes me a second to notice I'm digging my nails into my palms.

If you're going to be rejected because of anyone, it may as well be God. How could one compete against God? This is what I tell myself. It isn't a comfort. It doesn't work.

I pass the synagogue again years later and want to vomit. Looking for something, anything, I meet Deon in a bar on Church. I enjoy his shoulders, his kiss. That night he tells me that I'm the first Jewish guy he's ever had sex with, that he'd always wondered what it would be like. I take it as a compliment. I feel guilty the next morning. It should not have been taken as a compliment.



I think about Michael ranting online, telling us that we're all going to burn, telling us who to vote for to prevent the end times, telling us to root out the sinners in our own communities. I think about our time together in Vancouver. I think about holding his hand, leading him astray. I think about how we could have been happy.



When Deon asks me what it was like to go to school somewhere so beautiful, the city framed by mountains and that cold sky that yawned pink each night, I tell him nothing transcendent happened there. It was just a place, a place I barely knew. I change the subject.



I could have made him happy. Here on Earth.

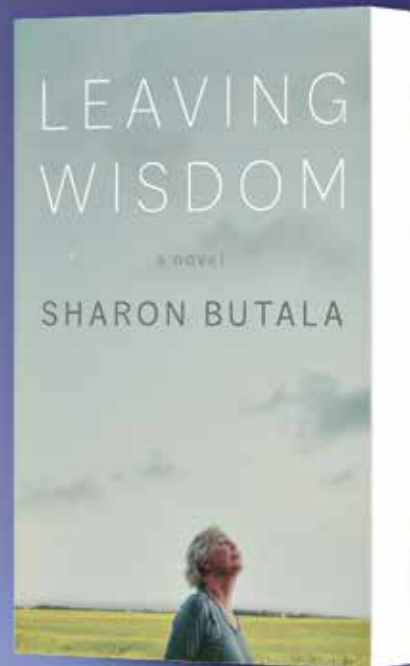
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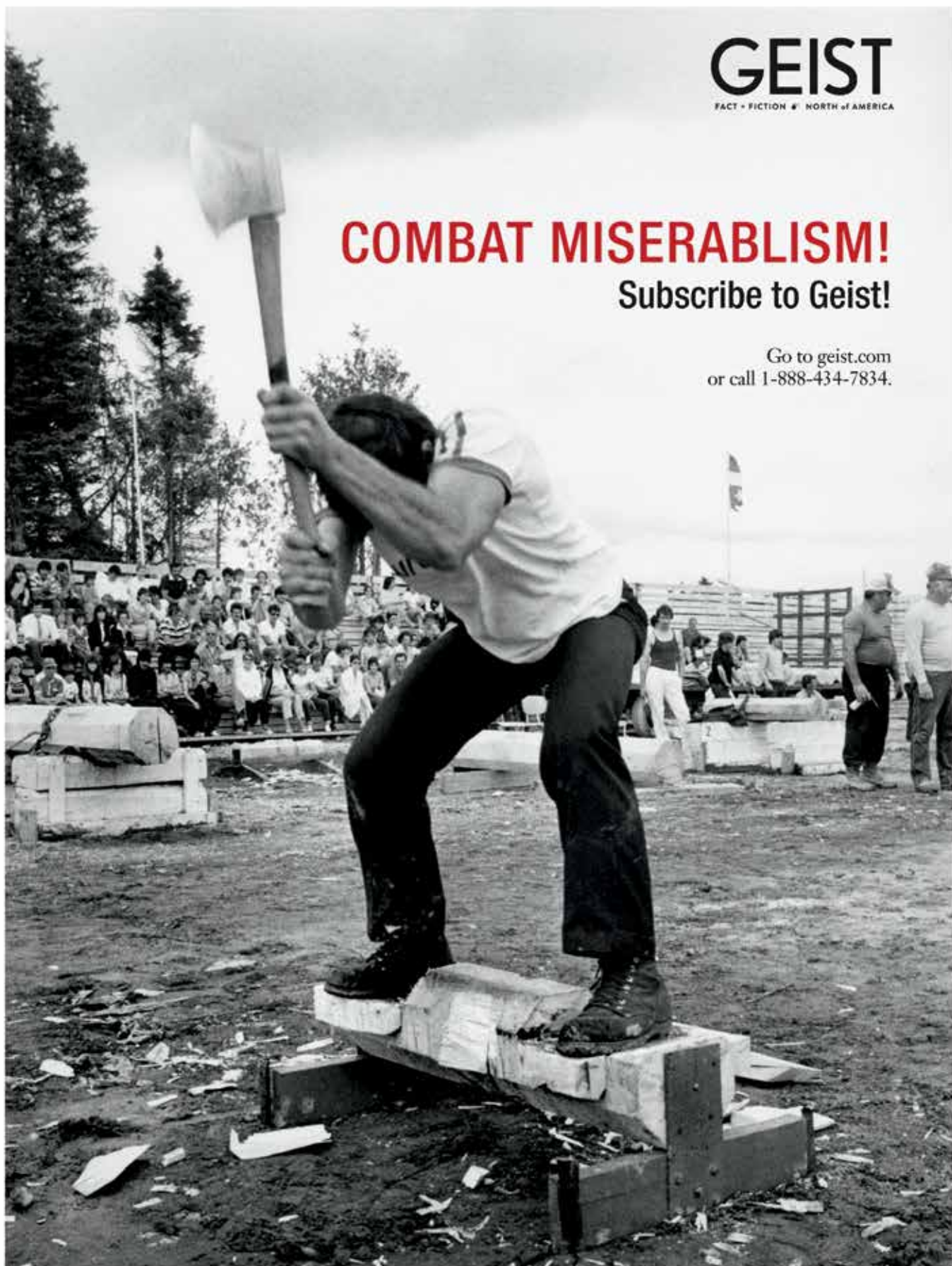
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ON LAKE SAIKO

LEANNE DUNIC

At the edge of Japan's super natural forest

It's my first time in Japan after nearly three years. I'm here to work on creative projects—photography, films, and writing—at an artist residency located on the picturesque shoreline of Lake Saiko at the foot of Mt. Fuji. Most North American homes are so hermetically sealed that we suffocate ourselves trying to keep the natural world from getting in, but here, rooms are divided by *shoji*—sliding doors with translucent paper between wood frames. This house by the lake is porous. Insects, seeds, vapours, sunshine and bird calls pass through the membrane of these thin walls.

The residency manager tells me that the bus comes only four times a day, and it's a twenty-minute walk to the stop. The nearest grocery store is one and a half hours away by foot. No phone reception, but there's internet, and I'm grateful. I look forward to this change of pace.

I send a message to my friend to tell her I've arrived safely.

Are you scared of being there all alone?

I'm not. The manager mentioned the area was home to mostly deer and *tanuki* (Japanese raccoon dog)—no animals to raise concern, unlike at my previous residencies, where I've had to worry about bears, aggressive monkeys, and wild boars.

My friend asks me a second time if I'm scared. Her insistence makes me wonder if there *is* something I should be scared of that I'm somehow missing. Is it that the pronunciation of *Saiko* sounds like *psycho*?

Since I have no access to a car, I spend the evening Googling places I can walk to. No shops. The odd restaurant. Lake Saiko Bat Cave. Fugaku Wind Cave. Narusawa Ice Cave. Wild Bird Forest. Aokigahara Jukai Forest.

Over a thousand years ago, Mt. Fuji had its largest eruption, pouring lava down the northwest slope and forming

three lakes where there once was one. One of those newly formed lakes was Lake Saiko. The 3,000 hectares of scorching lava hardened and became a bed for lichen and moss. The area is named Aokigahara Jukai—sea of trees. Eventually, other types of vegetation emerged from the lava plateau. Now, the region is full of unique wildlife and flora and, most importantly for me, photographic opportunities. Aokigahara is said to be unusually quiet due to the forest’s floor of volcanic rock absorbing much of the sound. The area is greatly associated with yokai—supernatural beings—and is said to be haunted by those who’ve died there. Local officials have ceased publication of the number of bodies found in Aokigahara each year in an attempt to decrease the forest’s association with suicide.

I don’t tell my friend about the forest. I fall asleep to the unfamiliar chirps and barks of deer outside.

When the sun rises the next morning, I wake up with it. The paper in the shoji rattles slightly with my every step. Outside, a single fisherman walks to his rowboat on the lakeshore. I stumble bleary-eyed down the hall to use the toilet, where I find a hand-sized huntsman spider on the floor. I use another toilet instead and find a stinkbug floating in the bowl.

After a session of wake-up yoga, I make a bowl of steel-cut oats and take my breakfast to the tatami-floored room

next to the kitchen. Only a short time after spotting the spider in the bathroom, I encounter the infamous mukade—otherwise known as a giant centipede (*Scolopendra japonica*).

The mukade explores the tatami under the tripod I set up the night before. I’ve heard about their venomous bites and irritating secretions, though I’m not sure whether those bites are fatal in addition to being incredibly painful. Looks like I didn’t need the “wake-up” yoga after all.

Normally, I leave organisms alone or take them outside, but this time I stand without fight or flight. Nikki Giovanni’s poem “Allowables” comes to mind. I take note of my apprehension and remind myself not to kill because I’m afraid. But how to relocate the mukade outside and keep myself protected?

I don’t know what tools are available to usher this creature elsewhere. Instead, I grab my camera. As I take the photographs, I’m unsure how close I can safely get to the mukade. The centipede moves surprisingly fast. I send a photo to my brother: *This one chased after me!*

You’re screwed, he types. *Come home now or be eaten alive by these nightmare creatures.*

Is this a nightmare creature? I back off when the mukade lifts the front half of their segmented body in what I interpret to be a threatening stance. The centipede scuttles on top of a floor cushion, so I grab the cushion and quickly and cautiously carry the creature outside.





I return to my now-cold breakfast, my heart working overtime.

Who am I to decide that the mukade shouldn't live in this house? The entitlement humans have to space is something I struggle with. Of course, I'm not exempt from this behaviour. I'm pretty good with bugs and reptiles, but I hate the sound of rodents in my home. Still, I don't want to have them killed for merely existing.

I look out the window to see a black kite dive to the lake's surface in search of breakfast. A beeping version of "Love Me Tender" plays unexpectedly from the space heater, disrupting the moment, making me jump. Perhaps I'm out of kerosene. I brew a bag of licorice tea to try to lower the adrenaline in my system.

While the tea brews, I debate whether I should venture solo deep into Aokigahara for a photo session this week. Numerous books, plays, and movies have featured the forest as a site of solitude and mystery—*The Sea of Trees* starring Matthew McConaughey and the horror flick *The Forest* to name a couple of American forays. Most literature I've read about the forest mentions ghost sightings, and part of me believes this to be true.

I don't want to contribute to sensationalizing the struggle of so many who have taken their lives in the forest. My mind is flooded with considerations about ethics, curiosities, and, notably, fear. I'm not sure how I'd handle the discovery of a human body, especially alone and without a

working phone. If something happened to me, would the volcanic floor absorb my calls for help?

Maybe I *am* scared.

I suspect the mukade was scared, as well.

Before organizing my new bedroom, I stand at the window to take in the lakeview. On the other side of the glass, a freshly emerged insect rests beside their exoskeleton. Transformation must be exhausting.

The translucent shell remains stuck to the glass, with a backdrop of the slate-blue lake and verdant mountains enveloped by clouds. I can only imagine how this beauty extends to the neighbouring forest.

At next daybreak, I enter Aokigahara for the first time. Soft pattering of rain. A butterfly circles me as soon as I dismount from my bike, and it's hard not to see this as a welcome. I find fungi on the forest floor, and the clouds part just enough for a sunbeam to become the perfect, gentle spotlight. I accept this offering and take a photo; I feel nothing but joy and gratitude to be in this space.

We live here together.

Leanne Dunic is the fiction editor at Tahoma Literary Review and the leader of the band The Deep Cove. Her book of lyric prose and photographs, Wet, is forthcoming with Talonbooks in 2024. Leanne lives on the unceded and occupied traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

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MAIN CHARACTER

GABRIELLE MARCEAU

I always longed to be the falling woman—impelled by unruly passion, driven by beauty and desire, turned into stone, drowned in flowers

The television lived on top of a pine cabinet in the basement of the house I grew up in. It was small and placed out of my reach, but as a child I imagined I could climb inside it, crossing through the glass into the image. We'd play the same handful of videocassettes over and over—the beginnings of an obsessive habit—and I would often yell for someone to stop and rewind the cassette so I could watch the scene again. I wanted to get closer to the image, to step inside it: a brown-haired girl spinning on the grass as the wind kicks up dandelions, animated deer galloping through a looping purple forest. I'm not sure at what age you learn that the image on screen is separate from you—like some kind of second mirror stage—but maybe I knew, even then, that an essential part of me was being built in this impossible-to-breach distance.



Years later, and now the owner of my own small screen, I kept coming across the same series of images on Tumblr: a woman appears out of the darkness through a carved wooden door flung open with uncommon strength. Her dress is dark eggplant, her hair is unkempt, and her face is pale and gleaming with sweat. Her eyes are wild and bulging, rimmed in black and red. The wind picks up her hair, splaying it out Medusa-like as her gaze fixes on her rival.

When I finally saw Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *Black Narcissus* (1947), a film about two nuns whose lives are disturbed when a man enters their sanctuary, I was distracted, waiting for the moment I had seen so often, the image I couldn't scrub from my mind. Despite the number of times I'd seen it on my computer screen, it still jolted me—like when you miss the bottom stair and think some trap door has opened—to see her eyes, the heat of her hatred. Although I've seen the film twice now, this is the one scene I remember clearly. It eclipses the rest. Only moments later, the woman falls to her death from a vertiginous cliff in the Himalayan mountains to the booming sound of a church bell.

Over the years I've become a kind of scavenger of these moments, thinking of them as marbled versions of cinema, emblematic of the overwhelming and inarticulate way that a moving image can affect us. Think of the first time you saw sex on screen, or death; the first time you related, the first time you felt longing.

Becoming fixated by a film fragment until it becomes more significant than the film itself is a hallmark of cinephilia. But what is this attraction? A Freudian fetish, a phenomenological event, or an effect of the indexicality of the photographic image—the way an image, as the product of light reacting to physical presence, carries some existential trace of its subject, like a footprint or a shadow? I found none of these answers satisfactory, perhaps because I resented that there was so much documentation of an experience that I felt was mine alone. This fragment was unique and uniquely mysterious, possible only because of the deep currents of feeling singular to me.

Most of my reactions to film fragments weren't all that mysterious when prodded for long enough. If I traced them back, the sources of their effects aligned, like pearls being strung one by one. I remember myself at fifteen, flipping through channels on the television and stopping on an image of a girl. She looked to be around my own age, naked and standing in a large basin. She is being bathed by an older man. They are in a large ground-floor bedroom with paper-thin walls, the sounds of a busy market street leaking in from outside. I knew they would have sex and so I quickly changed the channel, afraid my mother would walk into the room.

The image faded, but it must have lodged somewhere, filed in my long-term memory. Over a decade later, reading Marguerite Duras's *L'Amant* (1984), I came across the

same scene and felt a shock of recognition. The man, a wealthy businessman Duras names Le Chinois, makes love to a young French girl in colonial-era Vietnam. The book describes the event in the ground floor room in detail, but to me, it seemed like a pale prefiguration of the image I'd passed over and then obsessed over. This orphaned image from the 1992 adaptation *The Lover*, deprived of the context of narrative and sequence, had worked its way under my skin as a template for sexuality, drama, space and mood, even though I had all but forgotten it. The details of the scene—like the sweat on the actor's brow and the creases in the knees of his suit, which made him look dishevelled by desire—were more poignant than the whole.

I also became obsessed with imagined scenes of my own. As I grew older I wanted to make films to exorcise the scenes that had taken possession of my mind. Once I got to film school I wrote frail scripts to contain these potent images and felt the fragment held enough meaning to fill an entire film. I was uninterested in characters or plot, which seemed like prosaic, middle-class distractions from the immediacy and drama of the fragment.

Ideas for films:

A woman chases another woman through the woods, up a hill.

A wife in her kitchen touches the frost on the window when her husband's body falls in front of her eyes, having slipped off the roof.

A woman walks up a staircase with no railing, looking over her shoulder repeatedly.

A woman cuts a vine on the wall with scissors.

A woman pours the contents of a martini glass onto a sheepskin rug; another woman kneels and starts dabbing at the stain with the hem of her A-line skirt, her hair coming steadily undone.

A woman...[blank]. The construction of my images, my precious fragments, where a woman does... something. A woman *doing*, often alone, often inexplicable. A hint of dread or danger, as if suspended at the moment before an attack, as if she may spiral at any moment—cut herself with the scissors, have her nemesis catch up with her, fall from the stairs. I liked the unfinished story, the half-phrase, and the wandering camera. I think I wanted to be a woman doing, not just a woman thinking—to be the protagonist of a potent fragment. In film school I was also profoundly unwell, sometimes unable to get out of bed; certainly unable to pay bills, do my readings, and keep my life in order. I felt like my life was a staircase with no railing. These women, about to slip, were my fragile effigies.

I used to long to understand the dark pull of an image and, later, to recreate the image in my films. But I found the finished product hollow and the precious scene sapped

dry. Now I consume as much as I can, sometimes late into the night while fighting off sleep, and feel very little longing. Every image is immediately replaced by a new one, every fragment fades into another, ideas appear and wither, clothes go out of style, opinions become boring, and eager reviews sour once the film reaches the screen. Every image seems to have a dozen frames until frames dominate the image, become overburdened by context, by someone else's take.

Only my window brings some peace. A frame, yes, but one that gives me no control over the unfolding scene. Just painted white, the same alley and trees, the same broken gutters the landlord hasn't replaced, dogs on their walks. I take walks too, trying to think only about the flowers I pass and how they pass, throughout the spring and summer, from one bloom to another. Imagine a plot filled with bulbs and roots, each one getting its turn to flower: the tulips in April, irises in May, the alliums in June and the roses almost through the fall. Transitory flowers, falling into the end of their season.

I think of the spring a few years ago when a friend drove us three hours to the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York, the birthplace of Kodak film, for a festival of films screened on nitrate prints. This type of film has been out of use since the 1950s because of the extreme flammability of its chemical composition. The stock is appealing because of this frisson of danger but also because it is gorgeous with vibrant colour, silvery black and white and incredibly clear depth of field. The last film of the festival was a print of a 1950 Powell and Pressburger film, *Gone to Earth*, about Hazel, a young woman in the English countryside in the late nineteenth century who is torn between her two lovers and her wild nature.

In one scene, Hazel runs barefoot through the mud in a scarlet gown. As she approaches the castle belonging to her wealthy, fox-hunting lover, she stops to wipe her feet on another gown (daisy yellow) which has been left in the middle of the dirt road. The motion is childlike and feral, made more poignant by the grandeur of the dresses and by the adult task she is rushing to do. In another scene, when Hazel meets her lover for the first time, she is gripping a bouquet of red carnations which she drops to the ground when he kisses her, his boot crushing the blooms. But the image seared in my mind is from the ending, when the wild-hearted protagonist, fleeing the forces that wish to contain her, falls suddenly, howling and clutching her beloved fox, into a sinkhole and to her certain death.

Outside the theatre, while my friends deliberated over which restaurant to go to, I ducked into the museum's garden and cried. Even years later I find it difficult to describe the film's impact, the moments still hot in my mind. After the festival, watching films felt cursory, like a habit, and I

grew hesitant to watch them at all. It was as if I was desperate to protect some piece of that clarifying feeling in the garden. I realized I had become estranged from myself or any true desire, that I was sure to die without fiercely pursuing true passion, settling instead for a shrunken, desaturated version of my own life.

Later that night, at a barbecue place off the highway, someone mentioned that the print of *Gone to Earth* we had seen (which shrinks microscopically every time it is screened) had shrunken to the point that it may no longer be able to fit through the projector. We could have been the last audience to see that print. I thought of the film receding into the distance, the image shrinking like a sponge being wrung out, and I felt again like I might cry.

Sometimes I pass by a thumbnail of *Gone to Earth* when I'm trying to choose something to watch on a streaming service. It pains me to remember that moment of clarity in the garden when I am still waiting for some kind of revelation.

In the months following the festival, Hazel's fall pursued me and I began to think of other falling women. Alice hurtling down a rabbit hole in a prolonged fall, one that warps her sense of time and space. Frida Kahlo's 1938 painting, *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, which depicts each stage of the society woman's jump from her Manhattan apartment, unfurling before us in its unstoppable tragedy, the end foretold by the beginning: one fateful step. Tolstoy's Anna Karenina at the train station, catching a glimpse of a way out. I don't even have to look very far from *Gone to Earth* to find more falling women; Powell and Pressburger are fond of them. There is, of course, Sister Ruth's fall in *Black Narcissus* (1947). And in *The Red Shoes* (1948), a ballerina is forced to choose between her lover and her great love: dance. In a fugue, while the opening coda of her signature ballet plays, she performs her own dance, the steps of which lead her off a balcony and into the path of a moving train.

It occurred to me later that the image of Hazel's crushed red carnations reminds me of another falling woman. In a picture from Ana Mendieta's series of photographs *Siluetas* (1973–80), the artist lies naked in a body-shaped hole, covered in flowers. It's one among a series of silhouettes of female bodies dug into earth, made from bent wire or frozen in ice, their animating absence the woman who once was or never was, elemental but elusive. The silhouettes are on the verge of collapse, turning to ash, washed away by the tide, or filled up by animals and dirt. (Idea for a film: A woman walks through the woods, digs a her-shaped hole, lies down and dissolves.)

I saw Mendieta's *Siluetas* series at the Guggenheim, on the spiral staircase. All I could think about was the scene from Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000) where Ophelia drifts down those same stairs, gripping the railing and

dropping Polaroids of flowers onto the ground. She's a maiden of the new millennium who knows flowers only through pictures. Rosemary for remembrance, pansies for thoughts. The violets have died, Ophelia says, and the only flowers left for her are the ones that have fallen on her father's white shroud. Women are perpetually associated with flowers, even—or especially—in death. In Mendieta's works, the woman becomes stone and flower and fire: "Through my earth/body sculptures, I become one with the earth... I become an extension of nature and nature becomes an extension of my body."

Ana Mendieta was also famous for falling to her death, from her Greenwich Village apartment in 1985. In a 911 call after her fall, her husband, the sculptor Carl Andre, claimed they had argued because he was more famous than her. "She went out of the window," he said. Andre was arrested for her murder and later acquitted. The mystery of that moment at the window keeps Mendieta's public persona in a kind of stasis, never able to fully rest. In the world of falling women, perhaps the key is perpetuity, a moment with a strange nature: a suspension of self, stillness, velocity, final words elided, slipping through, slipping away.

In the moments before Anna Karenina's death, she feels the world spilling in as an uncontrollable influx of image and sound. From her carriage she hears snippets of conversations and menacing laughter, and she starts to imagine the laughter is directed at her. The world becomes overwhelming and suddenly she is in front of the train: "Where am I? What am I doing? Why?" The world closes in, loses coherence, and she cannot bear it.

I had always assumed that Anna's death would come at the very end of the novel, that we would see the blinding light, feel the impact, and the story would stop with her. But following her death are almost sixty pages about the other characters, Kitty and Levin, now married and happy in the countryside. It felt like a betrayal—to Anna, who is barely mentioned in these last pages, but also to falling women and their cinematic endings. Powell and Pressburger always ended right on their heroine's fall, with only a few moments given to the dumbstruck witnesses. As Levin sits in his field, pondering faith and goodness, he concludes that life cannot be lived solely to satisfy our desires. Anna had pursued her passions to the end, destroying herself, her lover and her family in a moment. Kitty had settled for the stable (perhaps uninspiring) Levin, but she could continue to live.

Cinema is about death too. The material image is fragile: film can be scratched from the moment it is lifted into someone's hands; it fades every time it is shot through with light; it decomposes, burns, or languishes in storage, unwatched. In films, the falling woman makes herself the main character by the force of her final act. She is the

dramatic locus, the black hole of narrative. I always longed to be the protagonist, the falling woman—impelled by unruly passion, driven by beauty and desire, turned into stone, drowned in flowers. I pursued her through films, museums and books and in the halting, reckless frames of my own life.

But I grew older. And lately I've been watching films with fewer opportunities for the divine, closer to my actual life. Ones that involve waking, getting dressed, making breakfast; the textures of daily life, the habits, disappointments and revelations. In the space of the day—while picking up a book from the library, feeding the cats, folding laundry, hanging up my jacket, lining up our shoes by the door, slipping my subway card back into my wallet as I step through the train and try to find a seat—I catch myself imagining what these everyday details would look like as a film. I want to sink into those moments and let them expand instead of clacking through them like turnstiles. I'd like to give them the close reading I give scenes from a film. At home, I start to fall asleep, remembering I forgot to take my pills or turn off the light in the kitchen. I remember. The things that line up in our world, that keep us from falling through the cracks—picking up shoes, pulling scarves out of coat sleeves, stretching in the morning—these have become the things I want to watch.

Scene from a film:

A woman wakes up and looks through her closet for something to wear, wishing she owned something in dark pink. She's hungry but it's too late for breakfast. The flowers are still in good shape; she notes she'll need to change the water soon. She walks along the sidewalk, holding a coffee cup in her hand. She steps onto a streetcar, zips up her wallet and sits at the window. The storefronts pass by. She knows this is the last still part of her day. She watches things rush, a flux of images like the shuffling of tarot cards. She thinks again about how many films feature women looking out of the window of a vehicle—women who don't drive. She doesn't resent it. She likes to think of herself as a woman in a film, but only when the women have nothing to do. In the evening after work, she sits in the lobby. She is meeting her lover but he is late. She notices a chip in her nail polish and thinks about how this will look to others, how this will unbalance her appearance. If this were a film, he would never show up and this would be a defining moment in her character arc. As he walks through the revolving door of the lobby, she's grateful that she is not in a film, that this moment will be no more and no less defining than any other, and that it will belong to her. Nobody is watching. It is nobody's image.

Gabrielle Marceau is a writer, film critic, and editor based in Toronto. Her work has appeared in Cinemascope, Sight and Sound, Arc Poetry and Sharp Magazine. She is the founding editor of In the Mood Magazine and is currently writing a collection of personal essays on film.

ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

A HOLIDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS (WITH PIE)

On the hiking trails that thread through the upper reaches of Vancouver's North Shore mountains, you will sometimes stumble on the decaying traces left by the industrial activities of an earlier era: remnants of an old cedar skid road, the planks like weathered corduroy; rusted pieces from an old camp stove, long abandoned. Land now zoned for our recreation was once busy with logging camps and mine sites. The text of **Holiday, 1909** (Garibaldi Publishing) comes from journals kept by Charles "Chappy" Chapman, his record of the two-week hiking and camping trip that he and three friends took that year, up into the mountains "north of Vancouver." To start their trek, the four met up "in a tailor's shop on Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C. and shouldering heavy and bulky packs, made their way to the ferry which crosses Burrard Inlet to North Vancouver." On the other side of the inlet they caught the streetcar to the end of the line and started hiking, first following "the Burrard-Lillooet Trail, an old and rundown cattle trail," then along trails and skid roads used mainly by those early loggers and miners. All four were members of the British



Columbia Mountaineering Club (BCMC), founded just two years prior. Chappy lists their supplies, which included: "8 lbs Butter \$2; One Ham (10 lbs); 20 lbs Sugar; 10 lbs Beans; Bottle of Vanilla Flavoring." Also: "four billie cans, a Dutch oven, a frying pan, an axe, a rifle, two cameras." Plus an entire fruit pie in "a plate [...] of graniteware," the parting gift of "one of our lady friends." The book includes a generous selection of Chappy's photographs, plus a few hand-drawn maps showing their route, and some useful footnotes. During their mountain "holiday" the four friends: chatted with miners (working the Vancouver Group Copper Mine); fought off mosquitoes and sandflies; killed a young deer (out of season!); and made first ascents of Ben Lomond and Mount Shear/Sheer. It appears to have been a grand adventure, brought back to life from Chappy's original notebooks, which had been tucked away and half-forgotten for more than a century.—*Michael Hayward*

A BACKWARD GLANCE OR TWO

Mikko Harvey's poetry might be described as experiential stand-up comedy. In fact, it was a stand-up comic who introduced me to Harvey's first collection of poems, *Unstable Neighbourhood Rabbit*. It's the sort of collection you read through and then hope a sequel is soon in the works. And it is: Harvey's second collection, **Let the World Have You** (Anansi), picks up where *Rabbit* left off. The title poem consists of five segments that at first seem disconnected, but upon closer reading you find they flow together seamlessly, not to mention comically. At one point, a joke is wondering how it feels to be a joke that doesn't work: "Knock knock. / Who's—help, please, / I'm trapped inside / a script I wrote / for myself." A shorter poem, "Personhood," beckons us to make peace with our past before we are doomed to repeat it: "I regret / 96% of my backward glances, / but to regret is to glance backward / and thus we proceed toward 97." In "The Best Bread in the World," a self-promoting baker at the farmers' market brings to mind this minuscule poem by Richard Brautigan, from Brautigan's mid-1970s work, *Loading Mercury with a Pitchfork*: "I wonder if

eighty-four-year-old Colonel Sanders / ever gets tired of traveling all around America / talking about fried chicken.” Smack-dab in the centre of *Let the World Have You* is “Fly Flying into a Mirror,” with its atmospheric finale: “when you fall / asleep is when / I need you / most desperately, because / without your eyes on it this / whole town disappears.” In both poetry and stand-up, the catch is to use as few words as feasible to deliver an ultimate punch; in Harvey’s case, a punch both astonishing and mirthful. —*Jill Mandrake*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF ART FORGERY

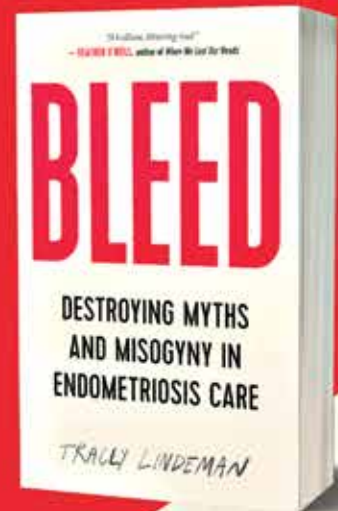
The Great Canadian Art Fraud Case: The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson Forgeries by Jon S. Dellandrea (Goose Lane) is a first-person account of a forgotten Canadian art history mystery. The story kicks off when Dellandrea, a Toronto art collector, purchases a box of effects of the unknown artist William Firth MacGregor. Among the sketches are newspaper clippings detailing MacGregor’s involvement in a major art fraud case in the 1960s, where he was put on trial for forging hundreds of pieces of art by iconic Canadian painters. Intrigued, Dellandrea tracks down archival material and as many fake paintings as he can get his hands on. Accompanying the case are the author’s own photographs of the forged paintings alongside the originals they took inspiration from, black-and-white pictures of key characters and locations, as well as dramatic images of white-gloved hands holding key documents against black backgrounds, which I can only imagine were enjoyable to stage. The images provide colour and drama to the narrative, which is sometimes repetitive in its details. Dellandrea works hard to sympathize with MacGregor, a

down-on-his-luck artist who knowingly copied paintings for unscrupulous art dealers in exchange for small sums of money, but otherwise allows the lead investigators of the case, OPP detective James Erskine and art advisor/Group of Seven member A.J. Casson, to guide the narrative. As someone who loves art, but admittedly could not give the names of more than a couple Group of Seven artists, I found this book did not actually help me differentiate the Group of Seven artists’ work materially from each other, but it did help me fill in some gaps in my knowledge of the group more broadly. More interesting to me was the detail provided on how the fakes were actually produced, and seeing side-by-side comparison images of the forged and original artworks was fascinating. Living at that wonderful intersection of true crime and art history, *The Great Canadian Art Fraud Case* brings to light a long-ago scandal, and manages to humanize an art forger. —*Kelsea O’Connor*

A SECRET WELL KEPT

On April 4, 1944, a German SS officer named Karl Josef Silberbauer was informed by phone that there were Jews hiding at Prinsengracht 263 in occupied Amsterdam, and when Silberbauer and his men raided the building they found eight Jews there, including Anne Frank. **The Betrayal of Anne Frank: A Cold Case Investigation** by Rosemary Sullivan (HarperCollins), is a recounting of how a group of people (who became known as “the Cold Case Team”) worked for five years to uncover who had made that call. The team included journalists, archivists, an FBI behavioural scientist, a retired FBI profiler, a forensic statistician, a handwriting expert, a rabbi, members of the Dutch National Police, Holocaust survivors, and relatives

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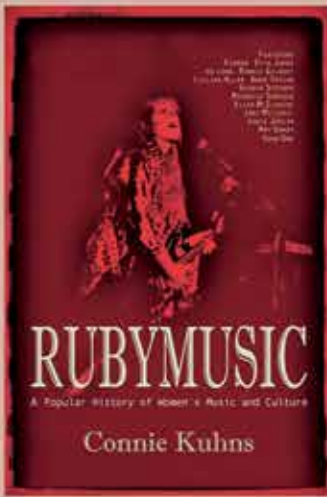
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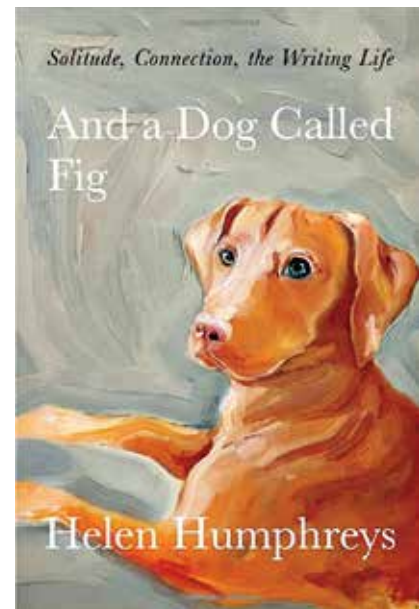
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of the murdered. As they worked, they came to realize that they also “wanted to understand what happens to a population under enemy occupation when ordinary life is threaded with fear,” so even though each clue was examined, recorded, and cross-checked, this story is much more than a procedural. According to testimony from Otto Frank—the sole survivor of the hidiers—and from the “helpers” who supplied them with food, water, and other support, the hidiers remained calm during the raid, while Silberbauer grabbed the briefcase that contained Anne’s diary, threw the diary and other papers on the floor and then filled the briefcase with valuables and money. When the raid was over, one of the helpers picked up the diary and put it into a desk drawer to save until Anne returned. Rosemary Sullivan got involved with the cold case investigation in 2018, when the Cold Case Team had narrowed the project down to about thirty theories, and thanks to her excellent writing, we’re right there with the team on their twisting, turning, and sometimes overlapping paths. In the end, a chance remark during an interview recorded many years ago, plus a handwritten note on a scrap of paper led to the solution. I listened to the audiobook, read at just the right pace by Julia Whelan, who has a mellifluous voice and pronounced all the German and Dutch proper names flawlessly. Each time Whelan paused and then read the name of a new chapter, I felt the hope that the investigators must have felt each time they turned their attention to a new possibility.

—Patty Osborne

DOGS AND THE WRITING LIFE

Is there something about sharing your days with a dog that complements the writing lifestyle? This is just one of the many questions Helen



Humphreys ponders in **And a Dog Called Fig: Solitude, Connection, the Writing Life** (HarperCollins). The immediate occasion for these thoughts is her acquisition of a new Vizsla puppy, Fig. During the challenging first weeks of puppyhood, which include separation anxiety, difficult training sessions and intense biting, Humphreys keeps a journal, reflecting on a lifetime spent loving dogs and what she has learned about art and creativity through their companionship. Humphreys has plenty of time to reminisce while she is bonding with Fig during the coldest months of the year. It is not just a gimmick to ask what we can learn about writers through their relationship with dogs. By scrutinizing a photograph of Virginia Woolf’s dog, Grizzle, Humphreys feels she knows everything there is to know about Woolf by how her dog returns the gaze. This thought experiment about dogs illuminates much about the process of writing: the capacity for surprise, the necessity of discarding what we think we know. Repeating the same dog walks daily teaches Humphreys that nothing is ever the same if you observe it closely, a lesson she has incorporated into her writing process. Unlike some other books about dogs, this is not an

exercise in humour or romanticism, but rather a quiet, slow meditation. It's about recognizing the interconnectedness of order and chaos, the many unexpected events that come with dogs. She also sees how nurturing and growing a book is like establishing a relationship with a dog; each book and each dog has its own temperament and complexities.

—Kris Rothstein

WALK ANOTHER PATH

In her first book, *The Salt Path*, Raynor Winn and her husband Moth walked several hundred miles around the south coast of England. They did this because they were destitute. They'd lost their home to bailiffs, and at the same time Moth had been diagnosed with corticobasal degeneration, a brain disease for which there is no cure or even treatment. And so they set off, with sleeping bags and camp stoves, and walked. As they walked, meeting other homeless people along the way, and living, quite literally, in nature, Moth's condition gradually improved; in fact it went away. *The Salt Path* was a sensation and rightly so. Winn's third book, **Landlines** (Penguin Random House), finds Ray and Moth living on a farm in Cornwall. However, Moth's disease has come back, and he is getting worse. Not knowing what else to do, they set off once again to walk. This time they walk the Cape Wrath Trail, 320 km through the wilds of Scotland's mountains, glens and lochs. It's a difficult, even a perilous, journey. After surviving that, the pair continue walking south: to England. To home. When Winn writes about nature there's a luminous beauty to the prose, and a powerful empathy for the endangered and those at risk, whether human or wild creatures. She explores themes familiar to readers of *The Salt Path*: climate change, extinction, migration, homelessness.

Winn and her book are not without humour. Sometimes Winn and Moth are recognized along the way; at other times people tell them (not realizing who they're speaking to) that they're walking because they were inspired by *The Salt Path*, and: "Have you read it?" After the journey, when Moth has a new scan, well, there are tears. But happy ones.

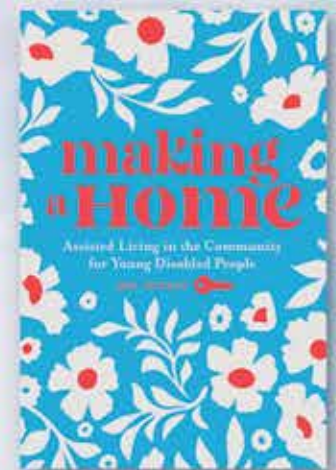
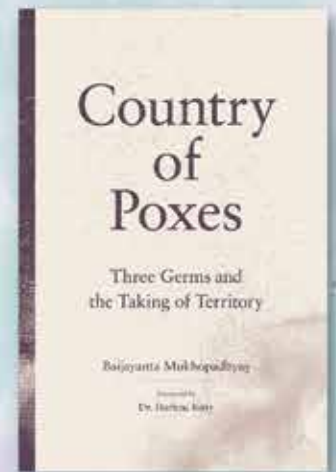
—Peggy Thompson

THE COMMON SHAMAN

As a tepid reader of science fiction, I've remained undecided for some time on whether I was ready to read something by Kim Stanley Robinson, whose world building has been described as "detailed" and "meticulous." Only recently did I discover **Shaman** (Orbit), Robinson's eighteenth novel, a standalone work that follows the life of a trainee shaman during the paleolithic age; it seemed like it might be an off-centre introduction to the author's writing. And to this end *Shaman* meets the reader's expectations: within, we encounter themes of humanity's nascent spiritualism, the role of oral history before written language, and the forms our humanity might take when removed from everything we would consider familiar. I was surprised, however, to find that the strongest emotion elicited in me by Robinson and his protagonist, Loon, was the desire to help, perhaps the most primordial of our feelings: I wished that I could aid in the keeping of the seasons, and count provisions for a harsh winter, to weave and chase and gather for the sole purpose of a collective well-being. In Robinson's writing I could see that this flickering flame of humanity, always on the brink of being extinguished, is held there safely by only the bonds between its caretakers, their interpersonal trust, and the acknowledgement that we are nothing but helpless when pitted

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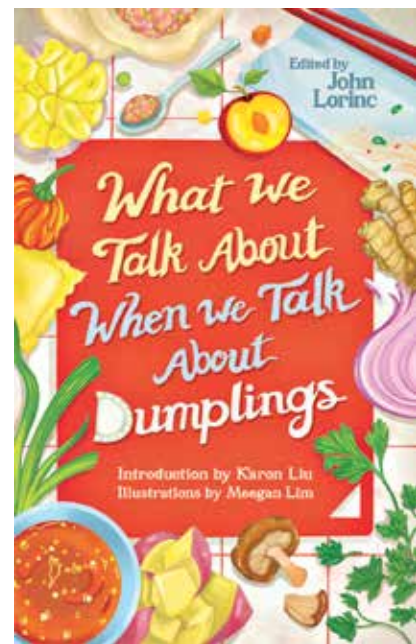
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against the harshness of the environment in which we are placed. These structures on which we rely, our indulgences and our comforts, exist only through the labours of others, others who rely on our participation in society so that we are all elevated. The details of this world, meticulous as they may be, are only ancillary to what is really being shared.

—Jonathan Heggen

DEFINED BY DUMPLINGS

This anthology of personal stories about dumplings investigates many topics of substance: culture, history, family, sustenance. These fundamental themes are explored through a specific food, the dumpling, though the desire to define this item proves contentious. In **What We Talk About When We Talk About Dumplings** (Coach House), more than two dozen authors provide their take on culinary treats from wontons to samosas, matzo ball soup to gnocchi, empanadas to Jamaican patties. Dough pockets stuffed with filling, or unfilled bread dumplings, are prepared and consumed over much of the globe. This anthology uses the dumpling as an anchor for stories about geopolitical rootedness and mobility. Many of the authors reflect on their childhoods, where this specific comfort food often lies at the centre of a sense of identity. Most of the stories are personal in nature, often recalling how a cherished parent or grandparent passed on secret knowledge or the disruption of immigration was tempered by the continuity of dumplings. Some are scholarly, others literary, and many are instructional. In “Siopao Is Not Just for Kids” Christina Gonzales suggest that the evolution of siopao (a Filipino steamed dumpling)

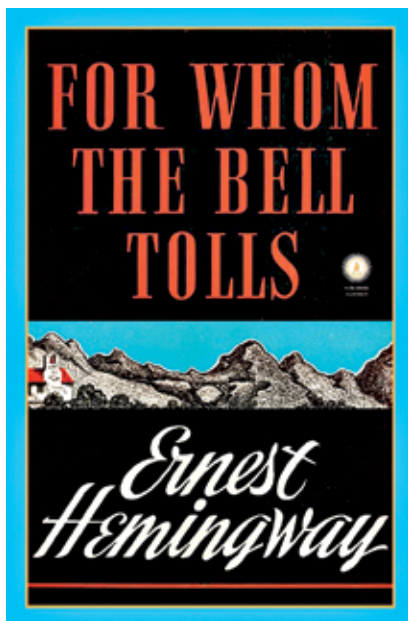


tells the history of colonization through its elements, which are a combination of Chinese, Spanish and American. The most thought-provoking is Navneet Alang's “The One True Dumpling,” which considers cultural appropriation, authenticity, and whether fusion cuisine is cultural evolution or soulless market capitalism. Whether they believe calzone, pierogi, or even Scotch eggs count as dumplings, all of the authors share a sense of joy and community when it comes to these flavourful, starchy delights.

—Kris Rothstein

THE BELL KEEPS TOLLING

I have been trying to finish Hemingway's **For Whom the Bell Tolls** (Scribner) since the Russian invasion of Ukraine last February. My busy barber on Main Street, whom I visit monthly, probably thought I was just trying to look smart, always with the same book open as I waited my turn. It's not that I disliked the novel. I was attracted by the premise: the idea of a volunteer, fighting in someone else's war. In this case we have an American, Robert Jordan, embedded with a band of guerrillas, whose mission



is to blow up a bridge in a remote, mountainous part of northern Spain. And I quite enjoyed Hemingway's ability to sum up an outsider's adoration of another culture, while also recognizing the ironies and contradictions in their ways. I didn't particularly mind the usual criticisms: the medieval-esque dialogue I credited to direct translations from a dialect of Spanish; I looked past the lack of character development, paying more attention to Hemingway's focus on the futility of the guerrillas' situation, outmatched by the fascists. I even suspended judgement on the way he wrote the two female characters. Sometimes Hemingway's prose does work; I liked *The Old Man and the Sea*, and his account of the village massacre in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was compelling: it felt like a short story within a larger story. When I learned later that Hemingway may have based that section of the novel on actual events in Ronda during the Spanish Civil War, it added a new layer of meaning to the story. In other places, however, Hemingway can drone on like a bureaucrat glossing over import and duty regulations. Don't get me wrong, I still intend to keep going. I have half a dozen chapters left, so with a bit of luck I'll finish the damn thing by Thanksgiving.—Anson Ching

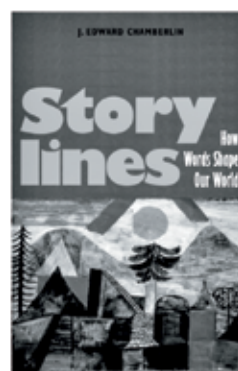
ADVENT (AND OTHERS) IN A BOX

A pair of Albertans, Michael Hingston and Natalie Olsen, have taken the traditional Advent calendar—that glitter-strewn winter scene, printed on cardboard and pinned to the kitchen wall, with twenty-four hidden windows to be opened one per day—and given it a bookish twist, building a successful publishing house in the process. Every fall since 2015 Hingston & Olsen Publishing (“A literary press in the frozen north”) have released a *Short Story Advent Calendar*, in the form of a colourful clamshell box containing twenty-four short stories. Each story is printed separately as a bound-and-stapled booklet, shrink-wrapped in plastic film to maintain the mystery of “what’s inside?” until the proper day. Their 2021 *Short Story Advent Calendar*, edited by Alberto Manguel, sold out fast, but there are still some (discounted!) copies left of the 2022 edition. Hingston & Olsen also have other, non-Advent publications, all beautifully designed by Natalie Olsen, such as **Projections** (edited by Rebecca Romney), another clamshell box, containing a dozen classic science fiction short stories and excerpts from longer work. Again, each story is in booklet form, and each author seems somehow to have anticipated our troubled times. The golden age of science fiction is represented by Murray Leinster (a short story from 1946), and Frederik Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth (an excerpt from their classic 1953 novel *The Space Merchants*). There’s a 1977 short story from New Wave science fiction writer J.G. Ballard, and an excerpt from Afrofuturist writer Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Talents* (1998). And did you know that Mark Twain anticipated the internet in 1898?

—Michael Hayward



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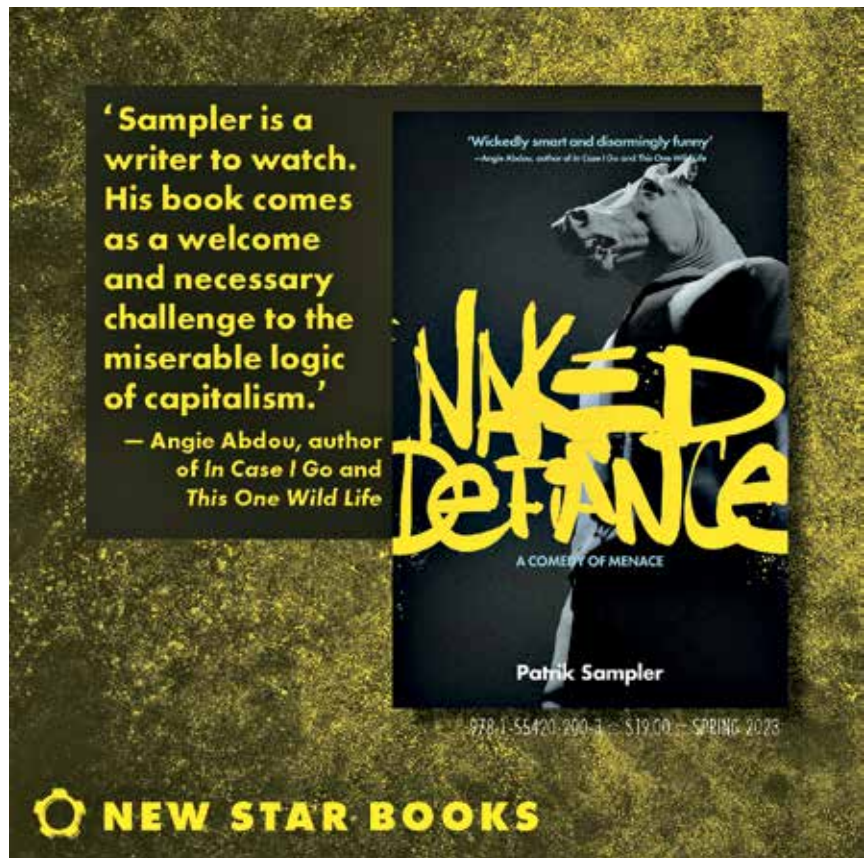
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POINTS OF INFLECTION


If you like chapbooks, there is an illuminating column in *SubTerrain* that discusses many of the latest ones: “Chuffed about Chapbooks,” by Kevin Spent. If I may borrow Kevin’s word, I was totally chuffed to read the enigmatic and fleeting epiphanies that comprise M.A.C. Farrant’s most recent chapbook, **Some of the Puzzles** (above/ground press). The first line in one of the stories, “Puzzle of Lifesavers,” delivers the message that our higher power can be found anywhere, and everywhere, as “Jesus Christ turned up as a greeter when I was standing in line at the bank.” Naturally, everyone in the line was either staring at the floor or working their phones at the time. Another spiritual leader who shows up in one of the stories is Shunryu Suzuki, while a host of filmmakers and artists are mentioned in other stories: Jim Jarmusch, Jean-Luc Godard, Mary Pratt, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Gertrude Stein. Regarding the latter, in “Puzzle of Youth,” an English graduate who is enraptured by Stein’s colossal intellect has an insightful moment where “the cherry pie is a miracle!” It’s evocative of the Zen poem about how wondrous it is to chop wood and carry water. A similar piece, “Puzzle of Clairvoyance,” may especially appeal to film buffs, as it’s based on a scene from *The Bicycle Thief*. It’s impossible, though, to discern where the story ends and the movie begins. Then there is “Puzzle of Astrology,” where the author sees her father in a care home, “with an afghan blanket spread across his knees,” as two mystical nursing-assistants tell his fortune. *Some of the Puzzles* is the most spiritual book I’ve read so far this year. It’s like listening to a recording of “Stolen Moments” by Oliver Nelson; makes me glad I’m on Planet Earth.

—*Jill Mandrake*



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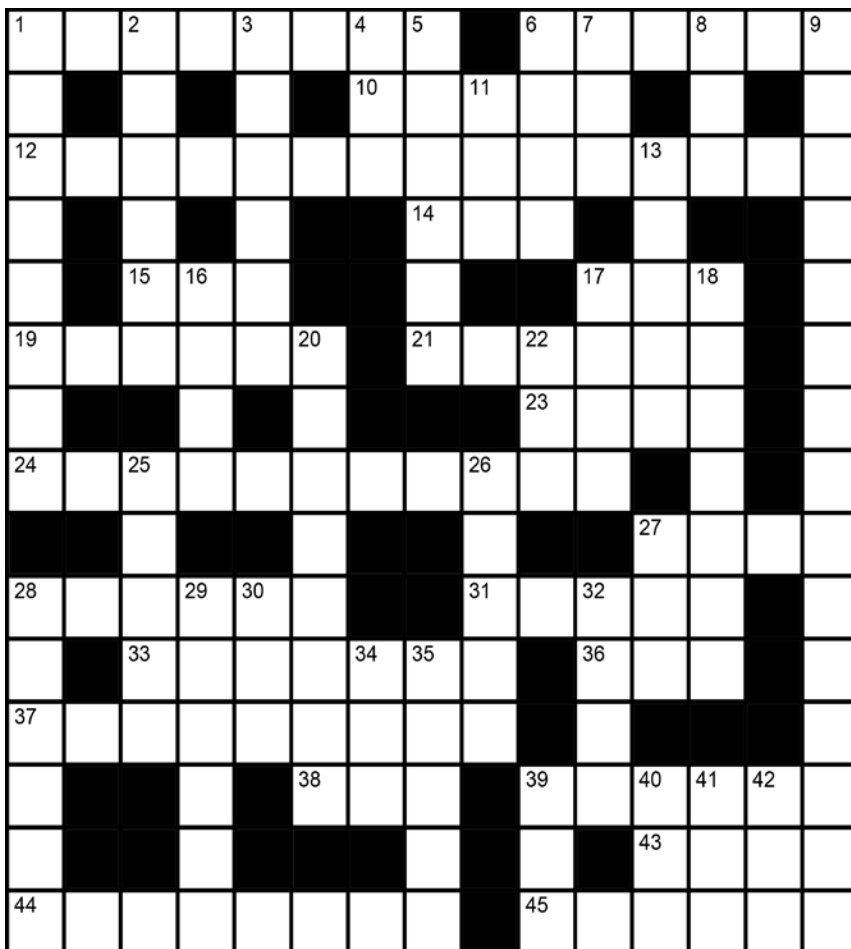
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ACROSS

- 1 It's cold out so to save the orca, vote for the top layer
- 6 To keep warm, we stole from the big island
- 10 Careful, that acid can change your shape (2)
- 12 What are they trying to figure out from that confusing exemption rate in the trials?
- 14 Up here that would be Nunavut! (abbrev)
- 15 That short green one went down hill fast
- 17 Up there, that sounded quite musical
- 19 The warder told me to sketch it again
- 21 In the old days my pet kangaroo wore a jacket
- 23 I need a siesta after all that Californian wine
- 24 When he saw his war bride, Ken farted, then grabbed his jacket and ran
- 27 I told you to smarten up!
- 28 It's dangerous to wear a jacket when flying
- 31 Gary used to patrol the CBC in his winter jacket
- 33 Hide your rifles beside my tuxedo
- 36 How much is a train ticket to Reno? (abbrev)
- 37 Listen, are you saying you read that?
- 38 Casey rode that thing to the end of the line (abbrev)
- 39 Before we go out in the storm, do up your toggles and put up your hood!
- 43 Gym talk is all the same
- 44 My Croatian jacket will work well in Vancouver
- 45 That's a wrap (or two)!

DOWN

- 1 At that point you didn't have the money to get water
- 2 The VP wants to increase their holdings
- 3 In Cuba, you have to be an angel not to smoke
- 4 For my money, that thing should be able to shift itself (abbrev)
- 5 If it's raining, wear this to dig that ditch
- 6 Let's get behind the pot



- 7 That servant is extremely secure in their intelligence (abbrev)
- 8 Does Tim know that company is taking him to the ball game? (abbrev)
- 9 Indeed, Seth ranks low in the sympathetic department
- 11 Andrew's friend is a real doll!
- 13 That spring, she lit up outside the Rijksmuseum
- 16 Don't raid the veggie garden, it's too dry
- 17 Take the top off and it's just another Jewish month
- 18 Take off their jacket before you take their pulse
- 20 Brad wore clothes from that closet
- 22 Remember when Harry crooned that this was the loneliest?
- 25 If there's no dam on the river, we can move on for the next season
- 26 Leo coined many phrases about the biggest country
- 27 Sounds like you'll meet her at 10 (abbrev)
- 28 To mark the path, he tore up his striped coat
- 29 Seems to be some bin rot in London
- 30 Was that sentimental punk born in Canada or Ireland?
- 32 Heat up the kiln and we'll make a pot for tea
- 34 You're always positive, except when you're negative!
- 35 That bookie ruled the slide and listed equivalencies
- 39 Sounds like you'll meet her by 10 (abbrev)
- 40 Was Tuck from France? (abbrev)
- 41 That elite group is not definite
- 42 When you land, you'll see a brown organ in the water (abbrev)

Solution to puzzle 122

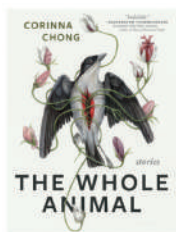
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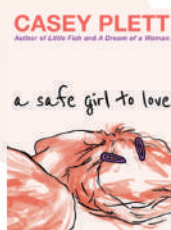
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