

GEIST

NUMBER 127

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FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



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WINNIPEG POEM / SCHRÖDINGER'S KIDS / INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

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GEIST

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GEIST

Volume 32 • Number 127 • Fall 2024

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Paul Dhillon

*I didn't think he had it in him, the way
he counted slowly and breathed all deep*

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LONG LOST LIDO

Onjana Yawnghwe

*How could this story, which loomed
so large in my mind, be lost to history?*

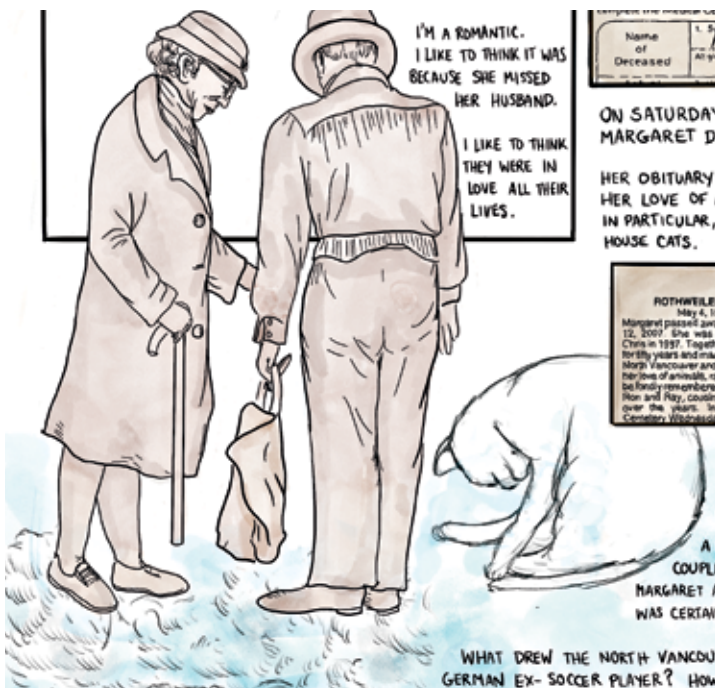
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LOVE SONG FOR MOSQUITO

Emily Lu

*The white will be the leftover rice scab on a collar;
and the red the cinnabar mark across the heart*

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COVER: *The Disappearing Vest*, 2024, hand-cut collage by Allison Chow(der).

A note from Allison, July 2024: "This collage is a companion piece to a poetic work of the same name. The work explores the changing nature of our bodies, the relationship with our aging parents and the ways our roles, hopes and dreams unfold and collapse along life's winding paths. How might we continue to hold space for one another as memories and markers of our relationships crumble away? I've often found that working with collage is a way to sit with and piece together my thoughts, feelings, revelations and what sometimes feels like a fragmenting reality—until I am whole again."

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M I S C E L L A N Y



GEIST AT SEA

A note from reader Bryce Fletch: “*Geist* 125 joined me on the coast of the Arctic Ocean this April while I worked and visited the hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories.”

Thanks for taking Geist to the far reaches of Canada, Bryce! —The Editors

NEW ARRIVALS

Congratulations to our editor-in-chief, Emma Cleary, on the birth of her daughter! This issue of *Geist* is dedicated to the new little one, Saoirse. We hear from Emma that Saoirse already loves stories. We wish her lots of joy while she’s on leave.

In the meantime, Dayna Mahannah, our interim editor-in-chief, has settled in at Geist. Congrats to Dayna on putting together her first issue! Read her dispatch “The Academy of Profound Oddities” in No. 126.

LIT DOG

While Dayna sifted through back issues of *Geist* and delved into submissions, the real workhorse chewed through beef stick after beef stick. She once thought that her little mutt, Javi, was pure muse, making appearances in more than a couple of Dayna’s comics and essays. But Geist may have a new office dog-in-chief on its hands. For a few more beef chews, anyway.

rites of passage

Paul’s Tomb (pictured below) is not only the subject of Tyler Finley’s 2023 Polter*Geist* Writing Contest story, but is a real, half-buried tomb located on a mountainside in Kelowna, BC. Apparently, a popular grad ritual for local high-schoolers was to insert an arm in the opening and see who could hold it there the longest. In his story on page 40 of this issue, Tyler builds upon the beginnings of myth.

What legends or myths might exist around you?

1. Make a list of objects in your home (or on your regular walking route) to which you don’t usually pay much attention. An old vase, a book you’ve never opened, the derelict phone booth around the corner.
2. Write down a few stand-out characteristics of each item—initials carved into ceramic, numbers faded on a keypad.
3. Dig into a little research about your neighbourhood. What



quirky facts can you scrounge up about its origins or people who lived there fifty years ago? Seventy-five? A century?

4. Ponder possible connections between the objects and found facts. Begin to freewrite, weaving

history, artifact and imagination—the stuff of legends.

You can read the winning entries of the 2023 PolterGeist Writing Contest on pages 39–41 of this issue. (Paul's Tomb photo by Tyler Finley.) —The Editors

OVERHEARD



Overheard in a medical office in Victoria, BC, by Geist reader and author M.A.C. Farrant. Comic by Dayna Mahannah. Find more of M.A.C. Farrant's work at geist.com.

WRITE TO GEIST

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

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Max Ammo (they/them) is a non-binary audiovisual artist from Mexico City. They primarily operate as illustrator and graphic designer under the name Slime Studio. They live and work in the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in Vancouver, BC. Find them on Instagram @slime___studio and @maxammo.

Natt Cann (he/him) is a visual artist whose print projects focus on the haunting of lands—ideologies and industries that keep afloat Canadian notions of colonial heritage and their subsequent degradations. His work “Scars” found on page 7 follows those affected by the dramatic flooding that took place in New Brunswick in 2018 and 2019.

“Scars” is a part of the publication *Shorelines: Climate Concern & Creativity* (Goose Lane Editions), a collaborative project created by ACAP Saint John and Third Space Gallery that promotes an ongoing dialogue between environmental action and artistic practice in New Brunswick.

Allison Chow is an artist and writer. Her practice draws from her studies of visual language, communications and a lifelong passion for disappearing into literary worlds. She lives on the unsundered lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Find her at hellochowder.ca and on Instagram @the.good.imp.

Tarralik Duffy is a writer and multidisciplinary artist from Salliq (Coral Harbour), NU. Her work centres on contemporary Inuit culture

and her experience as an Inuk living between her arctic island home and city life in the south. She works across media, regularly incorporating drawing, photography, sculpture, textiles, printmaking and digital mediums into her practice. Find her on Instagram @tarralikduffy and @uglyfishdesign.

TREY FLOZ creates vibrant paintings and digital illustrations that focus on mental health, addictions and self-identities. His work features repetitive and distorted figures that embody a graphic, low-brow aesthetic. Embracing the flaws within his work, he intentionally avoids hyper-realism and creates overstimulating compositions that reflect how life is beautiful and overwhelming. He is a member of Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) and lives in Yellowknife, NWT. Find him on Instagram @coolguymadsen.

Yoko Oji Kikuchi (a.k.a. Yoko O.K., she/her) is a fourth-generation Japanese-Filipino American artist, musician, map designer, zinemaker and New Yorker now based in Portland, OR. Check out her illustrated map “Yoko’s Adventures in Vancouver” on page 15. You can see more of her work at @yoko_okay on Instagram and on her website Yoko-OK.com.

Luke Painter’s practice explores a range of historical and contemporary subjects in relation to ornamentation, technology and his own personal history. His work has been

shown in local and international exhibitions including the Patel Brown Gallery and the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work, found on page 12, is inspired by the film *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*. Find him at lukepainter.ca.

Justine Wong is a food, book and lifestyle illustrator. She is the creator behind the project “21 Days in Japan: An Illustrative Study on Japanese Cuisine.” She lives in Toronto, ON. Find her at patternsandportraits.com and on Instagram @patternsandportraits.

Onjana Yawnghwe is the author of three poetry books: *Fragments Desire* (Oolichan, 2017), *The Small Way* (Caitlin, 2018) and *We Follow the River* (Caitlin, 2024). She illustrated the Lambda Award-winning novel *Little Blue Encyclopedia (for Vivian)* by Hazel Jane Plante (Metonymy, 2019). She likes to watch clouds and movies.

Lan “Florence” Yee is a visual artist and cultural worker. They collect text in underappreciated places and ferment it until it is too suspicious to ignore. The image on page 50 is from their series *The Ghost of White Sexual Imperialism*, which considers the global histories that have shaped perceptions of East Asian femininity and contribute to objectification, dehumanization and subjugation by what Sunny Woan calls “white sexual imperialism.” They live in Tkaronto/Toronto and Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal. Find them at lanflorenceyee.com.

Schrödinger's Kids

ADRIAN RAIN

The log jam is tall and wide and choosing wrong means we don't make it home



My brother and I drowned in the Horsefly River when we were kids. It was summer vacation, I was thirteen and he was twelve and Dad was sick of us, I guess.

“You’re only here for a month, why don’t you go out and *do* something?”

Horsefly is a village of less than a thousand people—retirees, homesteaders and hermits—spread thin across a beautiful British Columbian landscape. There’s one road, one bridge and one school with around fifty students. Horsefly is a middle-of-the-forest town in the Cariboo where black bears dig up vegetable gardens

and coyotes yip at the edges of cattle pastures every night. The sky is big and blue and kids make their fun over the bridge and down by the river.

Dad’s truck was dusty. Country living is like that—dust and dog hair and wet clothes hung over wood stoves that would leave my laundry smelling like smoke when I returned home at summer’s end. We packed into the cabin of the truck and drove down the one road, across the one bridge, my brother and I in our swimming shorts and T-shirts, Dad holding the wheel in one hand and a can of something cold in the other. The tires hit the

bridge with the *kathunk-kathunk* of five thousand pounds of rolling dust and rust. When the village was calm, it was a sound you could hear a kilometre away.

I don’t remember what he said to us that afternoon. I don’t remember a lot about that day. I call Dad all these years later and I ask him how long we drove for. He kinda just huffs, “I dunno, twenty minutes?”

I send a message to my little brother—who’s closer to thirty now than he is to twelve—asking the same thing.

HIM: It was probably a half hour.

We bring this day up to each other every now and then, like a funny story—*Haba, remember that time Dad abandoned us in the river?* We weren’t raised together. All the childhood memories we share take place in those summers I spent up north.

ME: living in abbotsford was so boring, all I ever did was play video games, sleep and get neglected 🙏

ME: so going to horsefly for the summer was always special cause its like wow fresh air .. adventure ...

HIM: 🐱

I don’t know who’s right; it could have been a half hour; it might’ve been only twenty minutes. I think that ten-minute difference means a lot to each of us. In the sixteen years since that day I’ve opened Google Maps and traced the route with my cursor dozens of times. The road is straight but the river curves. It veers one way before dragging itself back in zigzags that look tight and brutal from Google’s satellite but are mostly gentle when you’re out there in the water. To me, ten minutes could have been the difference between life and death.

Go play. Dad might have said that. My brother and I jumped out and huddled on the shoulder, the river shining at the bottom of a steep embankment behind us. I ask my brother if he remembers Dad getting out of the truck to see us off, because I can picture him standing at the top of that embankment, watching us through dense foliage as we climbed down to the river's edge. The image is so clear to me. I can see the sunlight coming through the trees, their leaves casting a hundred little shadows over him. But my brother doesn't remember.

And I don't ask Dad during our call because the question seems cruel.

Did you watch us go? Did you take the chance to see us one last time, or did you turn around and drive home, eager to take the afternoon off from being our dad?

I like to think he watched us sink into the Horsefly River. He isn't a mean or uncaring man; he was always good to me those summers. I *like* the image of him standing in the shade of the embankment. It's like a flower I've picked and pressed between the pages of my memory.

The sun was hot and the water was warm on the surface but cold underneath. We sat in it, the river drawing a line across our shirts at the chest—the water was so shallow in the beginning, that was the best we could do.

My brother says he can't recall most of what was said that day.

HIM: But I do remember talking about how my nipples started chafing and hurting on my t-shirt

ME: i remember the nipple convo too!!!!!!!!!!!!

We skidded along the river's bottom on our butts, rocks chewing up our legs until we finally gave in and walked, our wet clothes hanging off our bodies as we marched in the direction of home. Floating down the river was a common pastime in a place that, to this day, still doesn't have cell service. You make your own

fun out in the country, and though we'd never been that far upstream before, we weren't worried. This was *our* Horsefly River.

Eventually we came to deeper, slow-moving sections of water shaded by the long arms of trees that lined the riverbank. My brother and I dove into those cool depths and when we popped up again we said *This is so much better than swimming by the bridge.* The current was fast and dangerous there and could tear you away from the safety of the rocky beach like a grown man dragging a child by their ankle.

Walking sucked, but it was worth it every time we reached a deep spot. We were having fun.

As we rounded another bend we saw three men fishing from a boat. They were parked along the bank in the shadow of a tree, their lines angled in the deep water. I wanted them to think I was cool so I dove down where all the fish were and dragged my hand through the silty riverbed. When I broke back into open air one of them called to us.

"Where are you going?"

"Horsefly!"

The men stared as we floated by. Then one fisherman said something that scared me a little.

"Did you pack a lunch?"

I ask Dad how long we were in the river. "Geez, maybe five or six hours? It was just getting dark," he says in that I-don't-really-want-to-talk-about-this tone.

My brother points out that it gets dark at nine in August.

The sun was hot, yeah, but the water was cold and the river rocks were sharp and we were alone in this. My brother lost his shoe and when he chased after it I begged him not to swim too far from me. Maybe he heard the fear in my voice because he stopped and we floated along behind his shoe together.

We came to a fork in the river. It was an island, but we didn't know

that. We were small and the trees along it were just as tall as those on our left and right. A log jam jutted from its leading edge, dead trees stacked high in a violent tangle. The river was getting deeper and faster as we approached and it would be so easy for the water to drag our bodies under, branches catching our clothes and trapping us.

My brother sends me a screenshot of the island and the log jam is still there. I ask him if we went left or right and he says we went left. In my memory the log jam is tall and wide and choosing wrong means we don't make it home.

HIM: We also got out at one point and started walking on a quad trail. typical grass in the center, light brown tire tracks, trees both sides

ME: very horseflycore

HIM: and we almost immediately saw a bear straight up probably 30 metres in front of us

ME: AHHH!!!

ME: i 100% repressed this

HIM: We did in fact see a bear on the quad trail and immediately started walking back without looking at the thing

ME: 🤔

He remembers a lot more than I do. My best guess as to why? I'm like Dad. I was scared so, geez, I dunno, I guess I didn't want to remember every gory detail.

We saw one more person the entire time we were in the river. There was a house on a cliff, a million-dollar log home sitting on a couple dozen acres. We saw a man standing on his balcony and my brother said we should pretend to be dead. I didn't think that was funny, but he did it anyway.

I wanted to ask the man for help but he went inside and it was just me and my little brother, rolling like a corpse in the shallow water beside me.

Eventually the stars came out. The trees turned black at the river's edge and I thought we were going to die. I thought they'd find our bodies washed

up on the rock beach down by the bridge in the morning. I remember staring at the stars overhead as the sky went darker and darker around them.

Kathunk-kathunk.

HIM: The things that stand out the most for me remembering that day is how shallow the river was, encountering the boat people who asked if we packed lunch, losing my shoe downstream, getting out onto a quad trail and seeing the bear, playing dead in front of the house on the cliff, and being in pitch black night for half an hour until we heard the *kathunk-kathunk* of the bridge and knew we made it back.

I wish I could describe how it felt to hear that sound.

Dad was there. Sitting on the bench under the bridge in the dark. My brother and I crawled out of the river onto the rocky beach, cold, tired, alive. I don't remember if Dad hugged us. I don't remember what he said. I don't remember what we had for dinner.

Later, he'd say that he talked to his buddy Wally. When Dad told him what he'd done to us, Wally mentioned there was a log jam on the river. A big one.

For five or six or seven hours my brother and I drowned in the Horsefly River.

There are more cruel questions I can't ask. Like at what point did *Let's get these kids out of my hair* turn into *Shouldn't they be home by now?* How long did you wait for us by the bridge?

What would you have done if we never came crawling out of the water, cold, tired, but alive?

Adrian Rain was born in beautiful, unceded Secwépemc'ulucw, where kids float down Horsefly River still. Adrian has written on the back of his hand, in the dirt with a pointy stick, and now in the pages of this wonderful magazine with his first-ever published work. Find him on Twitter @byadrianrain.

In Arabic

NOFEL

After Montréal, my beloved city

"My love lasts more than my lifetime," I say in Arabic.
Montréal & I shake our hips night & day in Arabic.

"We all live seven lives. There'll always be birds flocking in even numbers," I heard on the subway in Arabic.

Over the seabed, fish snivelled when the son left. His eyes, arrows tearing the moon. We sing, we pray in Arabic.

Arabic would've never been were it not for our eyes.
O yesteryear poisoning on eyelids, grey in Arabic.

If you're in love, why deny it? All endearments are one.
Paint me a mural in an alleyway in Arabic.

I watched his mouth trail my body, called him "ya habibi."
I sniffed his body hair. I let him lay in Arabic.

I cry & laugh better in English, my now mother tongue.
I have never found a mother per se in Arabic.

I dream of the word « revenir » & the rest is English
until I rise to the Moors' songs. We stay in Arabic.

Here, take this cradled tongue, this propagated love, this sown hope. This isn't ghazal. It's your first bouquet in Arabic.

Author's note: Over the seabed, fish snivelled when the son left is in reference to a traditional Iraqi song titled "Rabaytak Zgayroun Hassan"; the line If you're in love, why deny it? is from the song "Madam Tebeb Beten-ker Leib" by Umm Kulthum (1898-1975).

Nofel is a poet and essayist, writing in English and Arabic. His writing has been published by the League of Canadian Poets, and appears in Canadian Notes & Queries, Contemporary Verse 2, Plenitude Magazine and The Ex-Puritan, among others. Nofel was longlisted for the CBC 2022 Nonfiction Prize.

A Partial List of Inconvenient Truths

HOLLIE ADAMS

In search of a big picture at the end of the singular world



ONE

I apply for an artist residency at Maine's Acadia National Park. My proposed project is a collection of poems grappling with the place of Maine in the Anthropocene. I write that I am interested in climate change, which I am, but only vaguely. It would be more accurate to say I *want* to be interested in climate change. I am accepted. But rather than an Artist-in-Residence—because I live in-state—I will be a Resident Artist. Instead of a traditional residency, which would include two weeks' accommodation at Acadia's Schoodic Institute, as a "local" I am encouraged to come and go as frequently as I want over the course of the year. I live a little over an hour away. I think about the gas I will use making the drive to a national park to write about climate change. I think about how frequently I want to

come and go. How much gas does it take to drive ninety miles every day for one year?

TWO

Because I am Canadian and have a PhD in English, I am qualified to teach Canadian literature in the United States. At the graduate level. In the planning of my graduate literature seminar on Canadian dystopian fiction, I had assumed my students and I would become ecocritics, discuss climate change and mass extinctions, examine how writers conceive of worlds without ice caps and bumblebees. We would read of Omar El-Akkad's imagined second Civil War fought over the use of fossil fuels. We would read of Margaret Atwood's eponymous Crake engineering a global pandemic to save the planet

from human beings. We would read of Pasha Malla's Niagara Falls run dry, the pre-COVID-19 pandemics of Emily St. John Mandel and Thea Lim. But the students do not wish to speak of what these writers have to say of the world writ large. Instead, they coin useful phrases: "micro apocalypse"; "apocalypse at the molecular level"; "personal catastrophe." In this way, they talk about the death of the self, individual dystopias, the end of a singular world.

THREE

I meet my first climate refugee at a brewery attached to a Chinese restaurant near the I-95 off-ramp. She tells me she recently fled the wildfires of interior Oregon. She has those sunglasses that dim and brighten of their own accord, the ones that always decide it's sunnier than it really is. When I meet her she is jobless, she and her cat newly installed in a historic apartment on a street locals believe to be on the bad side of town. *You moved here for neither love nor money?* I am bewildered. Bangor, Maine, is not a big place, it does not draw a crowd. Academics like me move here to teach at the university twenty minutes away. Doctors move here to fulfill shortages. The rest seem to move away. The climate refugee talks about the research she did. *This is the best place to live if you want a fighting chance.* Months later, on Instagram, I watch the climate refugee prepare her newly purchased sailboat for a hurricane whose name I cannot now recall.

FOUR

My mother calls to tell me she read that the world is getting windier. She has a friend who purports to love the wind, claims it as her favourite weather. I am incensed by the idea of a windier world. My favourite weather is stillness, a temperature my skin

doesn't have to register as anything. I imagine beach picnics spoiled by sand in sandwiches, blankets refusing to be tethered beneath water bottles and shucked sandals, playing cards cartwheeling into the surf, my view of the ocean blocked by my own riotous hair. Whoever is with me chases a wayward towel along the shore, whoever is with me fails to come into focus. I should be glad my mother only wants to talk about the wind.

Have climate change activists tried the wind angle? It wouldn't work on my mother's friend, but still.

FIVE

My students are creative. They look up the meaning of the word "apocalypse," discover the Greek word *apokálypsis* means *revelation*. Instead of talking about the end of the world, they talk about what is *revealed*. In a novel, it turns out, much is revealed. *Apocalyptic revelations are typically mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient*, they read off Wikipedia. What is an author to a character but an otherworldly being, a god of a kind? We discuss what the authors reveal. When I try to steer us toward the authors' politics, they jerk the wheel back to apolitical gods of prose and character development, plot structure and metaphor.

SIX

The poet Franny Choi writes that she cried when she saw photos of the bleached coral reefs, writes that she had to cut the same phrase from every poem she wrote: *Bleached reef. Bleached reef*. I understand completely. The assonance appeals. Those seductive vowels. The World Wildlife Fund says I can help protect coral reefs by taking simple steps like carpooling to work.

In lieu of solitude, I carpool us losers, us fools. I toot my own horn poorly, boorish. I eschew, I renew.

I brew kombucha, save the belugas. Soon I am doomed too.

What I will have to cut from every poem: *Doomed too. Doomed too*.

SEVEN

My students decide a text with any kind of loss is fair game: a death, a breakup, even a graduation is the end of the student self. It is all apocalyptic fiction, they conclude. Maybe they mean that all of literature is apocalyptic. Who am I to argue with their logic? But what does it mean, I wonder, that they don't want to talk of extinction and pandemics and overpopulation and natural disasters? That they multiply apocalypses and dystopias using the phrase "granular scale" until every conflict is an end that must be spoken about with the gravitas we typically reserve for mass death? What does it mean that they don't want to talk about Atwood's depiction of hyper-capitalism? That they instead want to locate the true end of the narrator's world as the moment his mother abandons the family?

EIGHT

On my drive along the Schoodic Scenic Byway, NPR tells me to check on my neighbours this weekend. It is early October, usually a safe time weatherwise, but Tropical Storm Philippe is scheduled to bring rain and high winds landward. No, I realize, it can't be Philippe. The meteorologist is talking about temperatures in the nineties, hundreds in the valleys and deserts. This is a national segment. It's Southern Californians who are supposed to check on their neighbours. Heat waves, forest fires, something something, the Santa Ana winds. I tune out, my own neighbours presumably fine. I start looking for trees along the byway that have flipped their switch. Maine's foliage map, reporting colour change and weekly leaf drop, says leaf-peeping conditions are approaching peak, and

I am ready to be dazzled by a golden, inert storm. If an otherworldly being wants to reveal something to me via burning bush, I will allow it. I will take a god of any kind.

NINE

But what do these authors have to say about neoliberalism? I ask the class. *How can we approach these texts through an ecocritical lens?* I almost project photos of bleached coral reefs onto the screen of our seminar room. *Are we, like these characters, doomed too? Are we, like these bleached reefs, doomed too?* I want to yell about the Santa Ana winds, about wind in general, but the truth is I've been paying such little attention. If NPR doesn't run a segment on one of the various ongoing global climate crises while I happen to be driving, I am likely oblivious. Besides, how could the students know why I am desperate to return to the big picture, the one with the rib-visible polar bear dragging himself across a browned-out tundra? How could the students know I am in the midst of my own myopic dystopia, that one of my singular worlds has collapsed? How could they know I want to be distracted from the fact my husband and I are living in separate houses, that I need something—something like a massive oil spill, something like a flood that's levelled a city the world just learned the name of, something like a forest fire that ate up the better part of a continent—something that I could say with some degree of certainty is not my fault?

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The Exquisite Cyclops

KATHY PAGE

A writer roams her sleepscape in search of the extraordinary subconscious



Another telehealth appointment, six months after the ghastly diagnosis: Parkinson's. Not fun at all. But on we go. I'm at the kitchen table, phone on speaker, notepad and pen to hand.

Do you have vivid dreams? The doctor has a quiet, rather sad voice.

No, I say. The thing is, I hardly sleep. I'm exhausted. Is there anything—

But you do! my husband Richard shouts from the new home office.

I'd assumed he was out, so I'm doubly startled when he appears atop the short flight of stairs leading to the kitchen where I sit.

You really do—every night. You talk, mutter, yell. Thrash around. He runs his fingers through his hair. Sorry, he mouths at me.

I turn back to the phone. *So apparently I do.*

The doctor sighs. *Well, we're normally paralyzed during REM sleep and that prevents us from acting out our dreams. But quite often, with this condition—*

Condition? I think. It's not a pregnancy! What century are we in?

—your REM sleep is disordered, so paralysis doesn't always occur. You act out

your dreams. These dreams tend to be aggressive and can be dangerous. Are you injuring yourself or anyone else?

I glance back over my shoulder. Richard has vanished. *Not so far as I know.*

There are treatments, apparently, but they're quite problematic. The doctor advises me to stay on the same dose of medication for now. *Let's add this to the watch list: Rapid Eye Movement Sleep Behaviour Disorder.*

Richard is outside, stacking firewood. *But why didn't you tell me?*

I don't know. I forget, and then I don't want to bother you with it ... And sometimes, yes, you're sort of running or struggling, even yelling, but most of the time you're just muttering away to yourself. Now and then you scream.

Scream?

Or laugh. Sometimes I can make out a sentence.

So even though I am oblivious to them, my dreams are waking him!

Not really, he says. *Only briefly.* Doesn't bother him. *The cat is far more of a problem.* He smothers a yawn.

I offer to sleep in the spare room and I mean it but I'm relieved when he says, quite vehemently, no. I would miss him dreadfully. When I'm awake, I can tell if he is alert too. Sleeping, he lies on his left side, and if there's any light, I am reassured by the shape he makes next to me, head to shoulder, waist to toe.

Some writers and artists claim to have been inspired by dreams, but my dream recall has always been sparse. Periodically I discover an extra room in my house (a different one each time); occasionally I recall more complex scenarios.

As a fiction writer, I had excellent daytime access to my subconscious. Symbols, questions, storylines, dialogue, interaction between invented characters—all of that popped up while I was fully conscious. Because I spent a lot of my waking hours imagining things, some of them very bizarre—waking dreams, effectively—perhaps I did not need access to the sleeping kind?

Since I became ill, I haven't been able to work imaginatively. It's enough of a challenge describing what's right in front of me. But I miss the invented characters, locations, events—especially the surreal and extraordinary. The alleged drama of my current sleepscape, the sheer energy of it all, makes me very curious. It's infuriating to be providing so much entertainment and yet be excluded from the party.

I could record my nocturnal shouts with my phone. Instead I select a notebook with a wavy design on the cover and good hand-feel, one that opens easily; I add a new soft pencil and arrange this equipment on my nightstand as an invitation. I remind myself nightly to pay attention. Every morning, I wake exhausted and recall precisely nothing.

Later, I ask my husband for his report.

'How dare you!' I think that was it.

You were humming. You sounded happy.

You said, 'Would you like one of these?'

One of what? Miniature falafel? Olives? Heated facecloths held out with tongs?

You yelled, 'You bastard! You've always been like this!' I hope it wasn't me.

I remember nothing. Nothing! Nothing. None of it.

Perhaps it would help to invent some dreams incorporating these fragments of dialogue? But they don't inspire. What I really want is an actual dream, in colour, with strange characters, weird fruit, extra-terrestrial visitors, sex ...

'Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.' Apparently I said this in a *bored voice*.

You said no thanks, it really wasn't your thing.

Bondage? Country music? Fermented seal meat?

You were making some kind of complicated arrangements.

If it was taking a group of kids to the swimming pool, I almost remember that. Can't be sure.

You spoke very clearly and confidently in a foreign language. Finnish, maybe?

Interesting! I once worked in Finland for a few months, but only learned about six words.

Shortly after three o'clock one night I scream loudly enough to wake everyone, including myself. Our adult son blunders into our bedroom. *Mom! Are you okay?*

Tsunami? Knife attack? Ghost?

Bloodcurdling, my son says.

Sorry ... can't help, Richard murmurs, turning onto his left side.

And then it happens. In my sleep I'm visited by a woman endowed with a single eye, large and exquisite, in the middle of her forehead. The iris is a complex composition of blue, brown and gold, the lid and socket sumptuously curved, the sole eyebrow long and arched. The rest of the face (which I assume to belong to a female, though that need not be the case) is harmoniously arranged around this central eye and subtly made up to accentuate its features: a

wide, full mouth with lips the colour of plums, angled cheekbones, a strong jaw, gleaming golden-brown hair cut to echo her jawline.

Though located exactly mid-forehead, pupil dead centre, the eye's little fleshy nodule containing the tear duct in the left corner renders the face asymmetrical. And yet the overall effect is one of balance. She's strange and beautiful. Mysterious, powerful. Hers could be the face of a goddess, of an alien queen. An exquisite cyclops. Though can I call her that? Cyclopes are by reputation not only one-eyed but also gigantic, violent and slow-witted, none of which apply to this woman.

Who are you? I shriek, waking myself. I lie in thick darkness remembering her over and over and promising to record her in my book. While Richard breathes evenly beside me, I deliberately imagine that he and I are sitting on a green plaid blanket laid out on sun-dappled ground beneath ancient Garry oaks. We're sharing a picnic of berries and fruit when the exquisite cyclops reappears wearing—like us—a white tunic and wide-legged pants. I invite her to join us. She nods, sits.

Who are you? I ask.

Who do you want me to be? Her voice vibrates like a cello.

Awake in the semi-dark of our bedroom, I try to answer. I know I don't want her to be anyone I can identify. I don't care that the internet interprets dreams of a one-eyed person as a sign that I'm not seeing the whole picture, or that I'm being seduced by a demon. I've had a dream! One with no yelling or violence at all! I almost rouse Richard to tell him.

A by-product of Rapid Eye Movement Sleep Behaviour Disorder is (even more) exhaustion, but when COVID-19 restrictions ease and we're invited to a party, I'm keen to go. At least thirty people—an intoxicating experience after months of

isolation—spill into the overgrown garden, eating, drinking, catching up. After an hour or so I'm drawn to someone new: Phyllis, a graceful, brightly dressed older woman who has one leg. Her foot emerges from beneath a rustling silk skirt, encased in a fuchsia running shoe. She pats the cushion next to her and I sit. She hovers her hand an inch or so above my wrist, something I have seen her do to several others. Do I feel anything? She tells me my energy is low and uneven. *Ragged*.

Energy? What energy? I say, and suddenly I am explaining my recent diagnosis, the long wait to receive it and how, between the disease, the recommended exercise regime, and the various sleep interruptions, I don't have a lot left in me.

I can't cure you, she says, *but maybe I can make things easier. I used to be a nurse. What I do now is therapeutic touch*. She suggests I look it up online and get back to her if interested.

Touch that is not actually touch. It's not something I would naturally seek out. I'm wary of the intangible, could never trust homeopathy. But I appreciate her kindness. And something nags at me: first one eye, now one leg ...

Shrubs and flowers surround a yellow house with white trim half-buried in vegetation: hollyhocks, poppies, clematis, plum and fig trees. There's a fairy tale quality; we're near a main road, yet the garden is utterly quiet except for the constant singing and rustlings of birds. Enthroned in her wheelchair, wearing a purple shoe today, Phyllis directs me toward the path to the sun-dappled deck. She returns via the house to meet me there. We sit facing each other and, without touching, she hovers her hands above my chest.

Prior to her amputation, Phyllis explains, she and her husband farmed organically. She was a nurse and an artist. One of her clay sculptures, a near life-sized terracotta figure of

THE CALL
IS COMING
FROM INSIDE
THE HOUSE



BY
ALLYSON
McQUAT

"One of the best books I've read in years . . . Touching on themes of motherhood and pregnancy to true crime and horror movies, this collection is a dream for any reader looking for queer feminist essays that will intellectually thrill you, scare you, and make you laugh." — Autostraddle

ECW PRESS

a young woman, watches us from among some raspberry canes.

I turn as directed while Phyllis passes her hands over every part of me, making small noises of approval or curiosity. Do I feel the energy shift? A kind of warmth? No, but I'm enjoying this all the same. She tells me about her five grandchildren and then, when I ask, the story of how she lost her leg.

It began in a different part of her body; a doctor brushed aside her concerns about a breast lump which ultimately required a total mastectomy, involved a trip to the US and took three attempts to remove. Years later came a painful swelling in her right thigh. A hiking injury, the doctor thought. She iced, rested; the swelling grew until a Vancouver specialist discovered a hyper-malignant growth called *pleomorphic liposarcoma* and recommended immediate amputation of her entire leg.

I was lucky. People often resist but losing my breast made it way easier to lose a leg! Even so, it was frightening. On the ferry to Tsawwassen the morning of the surgery, the captain slowed the boat so passengers could watch a pod of orca whales. All Phyllis's worries evaporated.

They took the whole leg, right to the hip. Shocking, but better than being dead! After, Phyllis and her husband moved to this house on the edge of town. He tends the garden, feeds the birds. She assists people—women especially—with their health. She uses crutches and a wheelchair. She swims for exercise and reads detective novels to relax.

When Phyllis leans forward, bending double in her chair to rest her hands on my feet, I think I almost feel something, but probably not. She invites me to follow her inside and lie on the sofa, tucks me under a cashmere blanket, orders me to rest, sets a timer for fifteen minutes and wheels away to another room.

Had I not first met the exquisite cyclops, I might not have accepted Phyllis's offer. I could have missed

filtered garden light on a warm afternoon. Missed her kindness and care, missed learning her story. All of which, frankly, feel more sustaining than telehealth.

I hover on the verge of sleep, then close my eyes and walk deep into familiar woods, into the golden light, the air lively with gnats, moths, dragonflies. At the edge of a pool, deep green and smooth as polished stone, I glimpse my reflection. I, too, have only the one enormous, central eye, its iris a blend of blues and greys, of turquoise. A breeze ripples the water and the eye scatters across the surface, becoming moving patterns of light.

I am in the eye of it—on the brink of finding some way to meet the erosion that lies ahead (slow, I hope, but cannot know) of my own physical and mental faculties. I may have a chance to learn new ways of seeing—of living, even—that I can't yet imagine. I feel a kind of confidence—

The timer sounds, a faint, tinny tune. It's followed by the soft, sticky squeak of the wheelchair's approach. I open my eyes as Phyllis comes to a halt by the couch.

Do you feel a bit better? she asks.

For a long moment we each study the other. Artfully draped in a cream and lilac dress that complements the purple of her shoe, two-eyed, one-legged, wounded, whole. My new friend, both dream-like and astonishingly real.

Kathy Page's fiction titles include *Dear Evelyn* (*Writers' Trust Prize* winner) and two *Giller-nominated short fiction collections*. Always a versatile writer, she now faces the challenge of living with Parkinson's. The ability to create fictional predicaments has abandoned her (or she it), replaced by a desire to explore and convey the physical realities, philosophical perplexities and many ironies of her new situation. "Which is," she dryly remarks, "more interesting than you might expect." *"The Exquisite Cyclops"* is part of that project.

YOKO'S ADVENTURES in VANCOUVER*

A MAP IN TWO TINY EPOCHS: COMICS & MUSIC (NOW) (THEN)

BY YOKO OK

A. OPPENHEIMER PARK

IN 2010, AT THE HEIGHT OF MY ANTIFOLK MUSICIAN DAYS, THE POWELL STREET FESTIVAL FLEW ME IN FROM NYC. TWO SOLO SETS! ONE BIG STAGE!



6. GUU WITH GARLIC

MY BIGGEST JOY IN LIFE: HANGING WITH PALS (MOLLY, THE SECRET ROOM CREW) IN A NEW COUNTRY. SHARED "TACO RICE," POTATO MOCHI, SASHIMI! (NEW ARTIST FRIENDS JOINED TOO!)



1. ROUNDHOUSE NEWS

LOCATION OF VANCAF (VANCOUVER COMIC ARTS FESTIVAL), FEATURING HUNDREDS OF VENDORS! I DROVE UP FROM PORTLAND—FIRST TIME DOING A COMICS FEST OUTSIDE THE US!

7. VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

SAW THE "COPY MACHINE MANIFESTOS" ZINE EXHIBIT, AND MY FRIEND EMILY NAHMANSON'S ZINE FROM EARLY NINETIES NEW YORK!



C. BLIM (115 E. PENDER)

I MET ZIGGY MIMLOID, THE OWNER OF BLIM, AT POWELL ST. FEST. I CALL THEIR AESTHETIC "HARAJUKU-FUTURISTIC-ALIEN." IN-HOUSE EMBELLISHMENT IS THEIR SPECIALTY.



5. COOPER'S PARK

READ NEW COMICS WITH MOLLY ON THE GRASS BY THE WATER POST-VANCAF DAY TWO. I DREW HER AND ADMIRER HER COURTNEY LOVE HOODIE.



8. HIGHWAY 99

MY FRIEND ROSS RODE SHOTGUN IN MY '99 HONDA CIVIC BACK TO PORTLAND, LILY ALLEN BLASTING AS WE DROVE OUT OF TOWN. UNTIL NEXT EPOCH, VANCOUVER!



3. SPANISH BANKS BEACH

SKIPPED A PIZZA PARTY TO WATCH THE SUNSET FOR MUCH-NEEDED SOLO TIME AFTER VANCAF DAY ONE. (I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE OTHERS WENT.)



2. THE AIRBNB

SHARED A LAUGH ABOUT AN EMPTY PICTURE FRAME ON THE WALL WITH ARTISTS MOLLY LECKO HERRO AND THE FOLKS FROM ZINE HUG. WAS IT ART??? (INSTANT FRIENDS!)



E. WRECK BEACH

BOUGHT HOMEMADE ROMPERS AND TOOK JUMPING PHOTOS WITH THE MONTRÉAL BAND DYNAMO COLEÓPTERA. DIDN'T GET NAKED BUT HAD A BLAST.



D. GENE COFFEE (MAIN @ KINGSWAY)

I DREW A SAD MAP OF WHAT I THOUGHT CANADA LOOKED LIKE, AND A CANADIAN GUY DREW ME AN EQUALLY ERRONEOUS AND ENTERTAINING MAP OF THE UNITED STATES.



INSET BELOW

B. (FORMER) BEST WESTERN

KINGSWAY AT 10TH. POWELL ST. FEST PUT ME UP FOR THREE NIGHTS! GREAT LOCATION—WALKING DISTANCE TO SUSHIYAMA. OISHIKATTA DESU!



F. BILTMORE CABARET

DON'T RECALL HOW I ENDED UP HERE. THE SSRJ₂ PLAYED. A LOCAL PUNK BAND. OUTSIDE, I GAZED AT THE LIGHTS ON THE NORTH SHORE MOUNTAINS. (A SKI RESORT, I WAS TOLD!)

4. LUCKY'S COMICS

VANCAF DAY ONE AFTERPARTY AND ART SHOW (POST-SOLO SUNSET DATE). LUCKY'S NOW CARRIES MY DIARY COMICS ANTHOLOGY, PLICA FIMBRIATA!



* UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE MUSQUEAM, SQUAMISH AND TSILIL-WAUTUTH NATIONS.

HK

FINDINGS



Pop, Chip, Kukuk, 2022, by Tarralik Duffy. Pop, chips and kukuk make up the triad of Nunavut junk food. As commodities with a long shelf life, soda pop, potato chips and chocolate bars are available everywhere in Inuit Nunangat and consuming them together is an unmistakable part of Inuit popular culture.

Post-Mating Rituals

DEEPA RAJAGOPALAN

From Peacocks of Instagram by Deepa Rajagopalan. Published by House of Anansi in 2024. Deepa Rajagopalan's work has been published in the New Quarterly, Room and elsewhere. Peacocks of Instagram is her first collection of short stories. Find her at deeparajagopalan.com.

I make a good living. I have a business selling peacock accessories on the internet. Earrings, bracelets, pendants, sleep masks—that sort of thing. Unlike other birds, the peacock does not derive its colours purely from pigments but from a combination of pigments and photonic crystals. This combination is what causes the feathers of the peacock to be iridescent, creating a shimmering look. The essence of a single peacock feather is this: the eye a deep royal blue, an inverted heart shape, and around it, layers of glossy turquoise, brown, yellow, and shades of green. I capture this essence in every accessory I make using beads, fabric, and sometimes, real peacock feathers. I make

them by hand, and people here will pay ridiculous sums of money for anything handmade.

I also work at the coffee shop by the mall. I have worked here for seventeen years. Three owners have gone; the average turnover of the other employees is about six months, but I have been the rock of the establishment. The local paper even did an article about me. It was good publicity for the store. I have seen the minimum wage go from \$8.92 to \$14. More recently, I almost single-handedly brought up our online rating from 2.9 (burnt bagels, stale doughnuts, nineteen-minute wait at the drive-through) to 4.4 (excellent customer service, the Indian cashier lady made my day, good location, friendly staff, good variety).

Most of the other employees look at this job as an unpleasant rite of passage on the way to greater things. They put on blinders and do their bare minimums. Except for Celina and me. Celina works hard, but she gets into trouble because she is loud and speaks her mind. She was an actor back in the Philippines, but now she works here to put her son through university. A lot of the employees are students themselves, studying calculus and



engineering and business. I only studied until the tenth grade back in Kerala.

I do my best—smiling brightly as customers walk in, chatting as I enter their orders, and making eye contact as I hand them their lattes. The key is to make them feel special, like you’ve been waiting all week to see them. Confidence is important. And you must come across as somewhat cool, not trying too hard. I learned this the hard way. No one wants to deal with an over-eager Indian woman with a thick Malayali accent. And you have to dress the part. I usually wear bright red lipstick, which complements my skin tone, and winged eyeliner. My uniform is always ironed. Most days, I wear my peacock earrings or bracelets. They are good conversation starters, and, after having worked here for so long, I can do as I please. Very often, customers want to buy my products, especially the ladies who wear cashmere sweaters and toques with pompoms. When they hear words like “handmade,” “local,” and “organic cotton,” they get excited. And excitement is good for business.

My earliest memory of seeing a peacock was with my family at the Krishna temple back home

in Kerala. The temple had a few resident peacocks and peahens. One of the birds that was sitting in the middle of the courtyard stood up, strutted toward us, and began splaying out its feathers. It was strange and magnificent, but at that age—I must have been three or four—I was afraid and hid behind my father. He picked me up and told me there was nothing to worry about. And he told me that the peacock can foretell the rains. When it danced, it meant the clouds would soon burst and water our crops. Years later, my husband would tell me that this peacock story was one of the more ignorant ones he had heard.

My husband is a peafowl researcher (if you say “peacock,” he will lose it and say, “I don’t just study one gender; in fact, I specialize in sexual selection”). I met Kannan in Kerala twenty years ago when he was studying peafowl at a sanctuary in Idukki. I was seventeen. After my family was cremated, I was offered a job as a live-in caregiver for a paralyzed man. I said yes immediately and left the house I had grown up in.

My family had lived in a thatched-roof mud house with a single room: the living room, kitchen, and bedroom all in the same space. The bathroom

was outside, and if my sister or I needed to go in the middle of the night, it was a family affair—our mother would light the kerosene lantern, our father would step out first to make sure there weren't any snakes about, and then off we'd go to the outhouse, listening to crickets and howling dogs. Above our front door, a black and white photograph of my parents on their wedding day hung at an angle. My parents must have been in their early twenties in that picture, but they already looked tired and disillusioned with life, my mother with a sully expression and my father angry. The only other thing on the wall was a Malayalam calendar, on which my father diligently crossed out the days as they passed, as if waiting for something to end. The floor of the house was made of compacted mud through which the roots of our peepal tree protruded like a camel's hump.

When I was little, I used to sit on the bump and pretend I was an Arab sheikh riding his mount.

My employer used to work in Dubai and his family was accustomed to a certain lifestyle, which they couldn't keep up since his heart attack and subsequent paralysis. So they rented out the second floor of their six-bedroom house, which had marble floors and teak furniture. Kannan was one of their paying guests. I was worried when he started showing interest in me. He said he didn't care if he was seen with the house help, but I couldn't risk it. I didn't want people thinking I was sleeping my way out of a life in domestic work. And in the beginning I doubted his intentions, even when he said he wanted to marry me. That kind of thing rarely happened to people like me. I think Kannan liked me because he had never met a girl who wasn't turned off by the whole peafowl situation. On the contrary, I liked that he was so passionate about what he did, even when no one else cared about it. Eventually I said yes, even though he was just two years younger than my father, because I wanted to get out of Kerala. Kannan was based in Toronto, and in my imagination then, Canada was pristine, with wide open spaces and people who minded their own business, where no one knew me and no one would feel pity for me. Where I could make a fresh start. Soon after we arrived, Kannan signed me up for ESL classes, and within a year, I got this job at the

coffee shop. I started at the back, buttering bagels, and worked my way up.

We never had a child. I was afraid of the permanence of having one. What if I lost my job, or Kannan left me, or our money disappeared one day? We couldn't get rid of the child. I didn't want to feel the way my parents did for most of their lives. Kannan didn't mind because he travelled a lot, and he didn't think it would be fair to leave the child-rearing responsibility all to me.

Kannan still travels a lot: to Florida, Texas, British Columbia, Madhya Pradesh. He has spent most of his life studying why evolution invested so much energy in the vibrant peacock plumage. He straps little hats with cameras on the peahens and peacocks to track their gazes during mating season. He spends hours studying these videos

to understand what the peahen looks for in a suitable mate, and what the peacock looks for while sizing up a rival. Some nights, we watch peacock displays together in the living room, drinking wine. We see the peacock from the peahen's perspective. The peacock spreads out its feather train in a concave semicircle more than six feet long and then rattles it vigorously. Kannan tells me that the longer the train, the more force the peacock has to exert. The eyes of the feathers stay still like a thousand bullseyes,

while the rest of the plumage—all this turquoise, green, and yellow—vibrates, and if you look long enough, you go into a trance, mesmerised by this extravagant show. And all the rattling makes a sound like waves crashing onto the shore. Kannan sometimes starts moving his body to match the vibrations of the peacock. And sometimes he gets turned on and wants to have sex.

Kannan is lucky to have this singular, steadfast obsession to fill his days and nights. Thanks to him, I know several peafowl facts, and I try to use them to my advantage. When a customer at the coffee shop compliments one of my accessories, I say something like, "Did you know that only the peacock—that is, the male of the species—has the flashy blue and green plumage?" Once I have their attention, I provide more information: "The female, or the peahen, has dull brown feathers because she needs to blend in with her surroundings to guard her eggs and chicks. But she gets to choose whom she wants to mate with. If



the female isn't interested, nothing will happen. So the males have to work hard to attract her." Then I casually say, "I have a page on Instagram—Peacocks of Instagram—if you like this kind of thing." I want my customers to feel like a refreshing splash of water has awakened them from the drudgery of daily life. And by the end of the day, I have gathered a few followers, which eventually leads to some sales.

Late one morning in winter, a customer said she was strictly against hunting birds to make jewellery and I told her that peacocks are not hunted for their feathers. The peacock sheds its entire tail after mating season, like a snake sheds its skin.



Bleeding Through My Jeans at The Bonavista Foodland

ALLIE DUFF

From I Dreamed I Was an Afterthought by Allie Duff. Published by Guernica Editions in 2024. Allie Duff is the co-founder of Spoken Word St. John's. I Dreamed I Was an Afterthought is her debut poetry collection. She lives in St. John's, NL.

In Newfoundland, April really is the cruellest.
From a TV production office in a coastal town,
I stare
while the sun bursts through the clouds
for fifteen whole minutes.
I'm on my period and, painfully, the sky has been
grey
for twenty-eight days.

Bored, I check Facebook, get bombarded
with photos of my ex and his new girlfriend.
Sort of looks like me, doesn't she?
She studied Law — fear of mediocrity
mixes with vanity's sting.

A decade, erased:
if I'm a cardboard cut-out,
am I also the one holding the scissors?

My coworker tells me to use pain
as information; there's always more to learn
when it comes to loss.
Picking at my manicure
like an archaeologist of feminine beauty,
I scroll to a safer part of social media.

On the Bonavista community board,
an article about rare birds in Newfoundland

reads like a Christmas song:

*Barnacle Geese in Bonavista,
Lapwings in the Goulds,
and a dozen Golden Plovers in Cape Race.*

These lost birds, far from home, are called
vagrants —
in the article,
an ornithologist named (I kid you not) David Bird
says that "Birds are like people. They really want
to go somewhere they're familiar with."

My film friends, flocking from big cities
to this bleak peninsula,
are like vagrants, too:
*D.O.P in Bonavista,
Gaffers in the Goulds,
and Some Famous Guy directing in Cape Race...*

Running an errand before the last location scout,
I feel my second-day-heavy period gush out of
me
like a river tongue-kissing the ocean.
No time for the bathroom; the director is
impatient
and they *need* bottles of water and snacks.

So I bleed through my jeans at the Bonavista
Foodland.

The clerk helps me carry cases of water —
I wonder if he notices the cranberry patch
forming on my butt.

After, I tell everyone in the office
that I have to drive home and change.
It feels like Junior High,
except instead of a sweater tied around my waist
it's a grey polyester blazer. Real professional
period-leak-chic.

(Just another ADHD day, carrying shame
for countless small mistakes but somehow,
blissfully,
no shame for the blood).

Near the end of the film shoot
I can't stop playing Geo-Guesser.
Blurry Google Map cities
are claustrophobic; narrow streets
look exactly the same, but are thousands of miles
apart.
Vanessa Carlton hurls a piano across the ocean (0
points).
I break my own heart, texting him again (-1000
points).

That night I dream of shrieking into a
pillow
until my voice is raw.
When someone walks in, catching me
red-throated,
I pretend I'm singing
a gorgeous opera of grief.

The days get longer. My favourite time of year,
usually.
Can't enjoy: it's freezing,
but the grass perks up, feeling green.

I numb myself, spend
\$80 at the local consignment shop.
Red cashmere and striped designer jeans.
Buy a lotto ticket, too.
Bad habits;
sometimes I think he never believed
my diagnosis was real.

On the weekend, I walk around Old Day's Pond.
A seagull shudders
and the sound of its wet wings
is like a dishrag being shaken.
Crow lazily leaps from lawn to post, complaining
the whole way. Cocked head gives me a dirty
look;
I interrupted snack-time.
These are no rare birds, but I ask
for their autograph anyway.

Driving back to the city, there's rain on the roof.
Rain
on the highway.
Fog like smoke in the headlights.
More rain. I keep driving, waiting
for the sun to come back to me.



Coming Home

KISHA SUPERNANT

From Around the Kitchen Table: Métis Aunties' Scholarship edited by Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides. Published by University of Manitoba Press in 2024. This passage is from the chapter "Connecting to Our Ancestors through Archeology: Stories of Three Métis Women Academics" by Kisha Supernant, Dawn Wambold and Emily Haines. Dr. Kisha Supernant is Director of the Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alberta. She is a citizen of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Archaeology is part imagination, part science, part storytelling. We are time travellers, using the material minutiae of lived experience to understand the past, weaving back together tapestries of existence

with a fraction of the threads. We try to breathe life into those who came before us, to tell stories that are otherwise unspoken. For me, archaeology is also deeply personal, an act of reclaiming and resistance, of resonance with myself and my ancestors. It is not breathing new life so much as listening to their breath, recognizing that their lives and stories were never fully lost, although many have forgotten how to hear. If not for my own journey home, I may have been among them.

It was during my teenage years that archaeology caught my imagination. The ideas of adventure, exploration, and learning about things unknown were deeply compelling; at the time, I didn't have the self-awareness to understand why I might want to know more about ancient human identity and belonging. A child of a Sixties Scoop survivor, I grew up away from my homeland, disconnected from my community, although I lived with the trauma of my father's history in the foster care system. For a

long time, I did not know where and to whom I belonged.

Universities, at their best, reshape and transform minds. On the first day of my university journey, I was unshakable in my belief that my path would allow me to walk in the footsteps of the earliest civilizations, discovering their secrets, exploring the unknown and exotic pasts. However, many signposts, wrong turns, and course corrections later, I finally found my path within archaeology. It took a return to my homeland to show me the way forward. In 2010, I was offered a tenure-track job at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, my father's birthplace. Soon after, I decided to explore Métis archaeology as a way to learn about who I was and to whom I belonged. This journey has taken me to the sites of Métis ancestors in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where I get to explore our history through the archaeological materials left behind by our ancestors. It has also taken me home to my living relatives, as through engaging in the archive, I have discovered my many generations of Métis ancestors who built their lives and families in the lands we now call Alberta. The work I do is designed to connect living Métis people to the vibrant, resilient lives of our relatives and to provide material evidence of our way of life throughout the homeland. I also want to show how exploring our history on our own terms transforms the practice of archaeology and how our places can teach us to be good relations.

I would like to tell you a story about one of these places.

A light breeze floats in from the west, bringing with it the promise of afternoon heat. On this late June morning, I crouch over a perfectly square hole, trowel in hand, breathing in ancient soil. The first thing that hits you about the soil is the smell. A sharp richness, steeped in the depths of time, rises from the newly disturbed earth under my trowel. I catch a glint of something buried in the dirt, a flash of blue that is almost absurdly out of place in the myriad of brown and grey tones of the soil. My breath catches with a thrill of excitement as I painstakingly scrape at the surrounding matrix. A tiny blue glass bead emerges, exposed to the light for the first time in the 150 years since it was first lost. I close my eyes and a scene emerges in the speckled darkness behind my eyelids.



I am standing on a low billtop, overlooking the crowded settlement just below. Cabins, three or four to a cluster, are spread out in dozens of groups between me and the not-too-distant lakeshore. A light snow lies on the ground, trampled into paths by multiple moccasined feet, large and small, with the overlying tracks of dogs, horses, and oxen. The cabins are mostly simple, single-room log constructions designed only to last the season, but from afar they appear snug and cozy, enwrapped in a dense layer of muddy clay that keeps out the worst of the winter chill. Each is adorned with a chimney cheerily emitting smoke from the fireplace below, creating localized columns of grey reaching toward the bright blue sky. I breathe in the brisk winter air, my lungs contracting with the cold, and can almost taste the village, so laden it is with a cacophony of smell. Mud, smoke, and a light undercurrent of human are most prominent, with a dash of wet animal fur, meat, and waste as an aftertaste.

The sounds are as chaotic and comforting: the wail of a tired child, a woman's boisterous laugh, the bark of a dog fighting for food, a distant tuning of a fiddle turning into a full-fledged reel. The thud of an axe chopping wood for the ever-present fire reverberates through the clearing. A man calls to his brother, the language distinct but vaguely French, vaguely Cree. The response is playful, teasing, as they gather supplies for the coming hunt. Out of a cabin, a woman emerges, dressed soberly in a dark dress and fur robe, with a mere flash of blue and white on her feet as she walks down the packed snow path. She speaks to the man, handing him a new pair of beaded moccasins. Unbeknownst to her, one of the beads caught in the folds of her dress as she painstakingly beaded the moccasins in the darkness of the small cabin tumbles down into the snow, lost, forgotten.

The tiny blue bead has been measured, photographed, and removed to a new home where it can live a different sort of life. I have taken the beads lost by my relatives and am seeking to reweave them into some semblance of order, of understanding that which cannot easily be known. I think of the cousin I met a few years ago while talking to the community about my archaeology. I think of my Grandmother, whom I would never meet. I think of my aunts and uncles, disconnected from a sense of belonging but forever seeking. I think of my many generations of Métis ancestors who called these places home, interwoven into webs of relations through time and space. I think of my thousands of living relatives and the ones to come

after us. For me, this is the power of archaeology, of standing in the places of our ancestors. I feel deeply privileged to engage with our ancestors' belongings and the work of reconnecting them into our webs of relations. There is power in the past, as the vibrant and resilient lives of our families through time can inspire us in the present and can support our future as Métis people.

I lay my hand down on the soil. I can feel them breathing, my ancient relatives, the lands and the waters. I can feel them breathing, my ancestors. Their breath fills me, heals me. I breathe with them, our heartbeats in sync.

I am Métis. I am home.



Even Laura Dern Can't Coax the Scream from My Throat

DINA DEL BUCCHIA

From You're Gonna Love This by Dina Del Bucchia. Published by Talonbooks in 2023. Dina Del Bucchia is the author of Don't Tell Me What to Do (Arsenal Pulp Press) and five collections of poetry. She is the co-host of the podcast Can't Lit.

I ask if you want to finish *Game of Thrones*, and you shrug. And I support that. But I've

started this ride, and I need to stay on the roller coaster until the dragons die, the incest crushed in rubble.

When I start something I know would appeal, I try again, but you tell me you're not interested.

You're Gen X, but mimic Gen Z, watch YouTube, visual podcasts about wrestling. I see you perk

up when they mention your favourites, current, or from your youth, deep WWF/E.

You seem to have given up on television but I'm just getting started. I'm deep in.

It's not cable, it's illegal downloads, a found friend that keeps me from deep thoughts

related to myself, to the ways your body is rejecting activities you used to enjoy.

I make a list of all the ones I want to rewatch, revisit, as if that brings back a past time,

better moments for our bodies, our weepy brains. *Enlightened* and *Carnivàle* are comfort,

despite the anxiety, the stress, the grotesque ways humans interact when they want to be better

when the lines between good and evil are drawn in the dust-bowl sand or semi-permanent Sharpie

on a white board. When Laura Dern screams in the bathroom stall, mascara streaming

in that shot of her in the pilot, I feel it. I want to scream, sometimes I do scream,

but I am quiet, watching, yearning for a valid reason to scream my frustration. Instead

I stay in bed and watch three more episodes in silence. I hold in my pee because the covers

are warm and smell of too many days without a wash. You're in here too, a subtle scent.

She wants the world to be a better place, but no one has articulated the term "white feminism"

to her or about her. Taking down one corporation still leaves the foundational corporate structure.

Amid

her self-help leanings, her new-age heart, there is pure inclination to help, and a stubborn drive to connect.

A show to come back to, relevant in how we try to function as a society. Underground tech bunkers

filled with people being underpaid, a woman living with her mother because she broke down, lost it.

Shit. Am I Hannah from *Girls*?*

** I mean, am I lacking self-awareness while pretending I have total self-awareness, but the awareness is so narrow it's like barely being aware at all?*



Slurpees, Ding Dongs & Other Feel-Good Hits

SHAWNA LEMAY

From Apples on a Windowsill by Shawna Lemay. Published by Palimpsest Press in 2024. Shawna Lemay is the author of eleven books. She lives in Edmonton, AB. Find her at shawnalemay.net.

I can measure out my life by the cameras I've owned. Many of us can do this. I took the Pentax with me when I moved out at eighteen. I would take black-and-white photos of friends in front of old buildings, of cigarette butts, and of my lipsticks in a row reflected in the bathroom mirror. I'd not heard of Irving Penn at that time. The camera came with me through several moves to crummy apartments. Near the beginning of my relationship with Rob, he used it to take a reference photo for his first still life painting as a professional artist, one that ended up in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. We took that camera on our honeymoon to Italy. When we had our daughter, I bought a Canon Rebel SLR. After that there was a Lumix point-and-shoot, which I never really did get the hang of; we weren't simpatico. When DSLRs appeared, we bought a Nikon D50. Both Rob and I used that Nikon for ages, each of us having our own lens for it. My latest camera, a Nikon D610 is mine alone, as Rob has moved on to using an iPad for his reference photos.

Before I bought the D610, I had the idea that I would try to learn how to paint and then write

about that. But painting well is difficult and I don't have the heart to do it horribly. I've watched my husband go to his basement studio to paint for thirty years, almost every day. And then when our daughter made getting into animation college a goal, I watched her draw endlessly, until she did get in. She was rarely without a pencil or stylus in her hand, going to figure drawing classes, drawing the flowers in the front yard, the dog, her own hands. I thought of the thousands of hours I would need to learn to just draw, before I could really make a solid go of painting. It occurred to me that photography was attainable because I've been doing this all along. I've been composing and seeing through a lens since high school and learning about digital photography for years. Still life also seemed to be the subject right before my very eyes. It's a subject I've read about alongside Rob all these years. What was holding me back? I didn't want to step on his toes or infringe upon his subject matter. But since I started to take these photos, he has been as delighted by them and as interested in them as I am. A photograph, after all, has only so much in common with a painting. I felt free to begin practicing my practice.

The photograph I'd had in mind when I began this project was this one:



As soon as I saw that mind-boggling image of Trump and his fast-food spread, I knew I wanted to take some photos of burgers. I wanted to mix it up with traditional motifs, the cat, the tropical fruit and flowers, the unwinding lemon.

Fast-food is cheap, it's terrible for us, but it's designed to give us a quick, feel-good hit. It's easy to be moralistic about it, but it persists. We can know how truly awful something is and still be okay with it, collectively, because it's an industry, it's larger than we are, and there's a feeling of helplessness before all that. And meanwhile, some of us have fewer choices than others. When I see kids who spend most of their summer in

LOVE ROOM

From Bridestones by Miranda Pearson. Published by McGill-Queen's University Press in 2024. Miranda Pearson is the author of six books of poetry. She lives between England and Canada.

Blow me if we haven't gone and buried desire
and forgotten where on earth we put it.
Even the hotel's best "Love Room"
can't swim us back to erotic joy, that take-off
of a body's freedom. Is it buried in the plump
satin hearts that dangle off the door handles?
Perhaps it's in the dinky teacups? Behind
the ruched curtains or the heart-shaped
pink velvet cushions. Of course! It must be hiding
here in the trampoline-sized bed, that would be
the obvious place. But nope, nothing.

the library playing video games on the computers, I never judge them for consuming their giant bags of chips, Slurpees and, on rare good days, the burgers and fries. It's what they can afford.

Maybe if we could figure out the nuances of our addiction to fast-food, we could figure out how we got to where we have politically. You'll notice in my photo how the orange of the cheese is picked up in the flowers and how the red french fries box is a counterpoint to the magenta of the ranunculus. The porcelain cat is never going to get a morsel. And the lemon is the same colour as the M on the cup. If I were to have left all this as pictured, the lemon would have rotted, the flowers would have wilted, but the fries and burger would remain. That stuff never decomposes, never goes away. Nevertheless, memento mori.

Is there still beauty to be found in all this? Does the presence of the fast-food spoil the other elements and make them less beautiful or interesting? Are we left feeling satisfied in our looking? Or do the empty calories translate there as well? How hungry for beauty are we? How hungry for something of substance? Questions.

One of the first still lifes I constructed was a bit of a free-for-all. I went to the 7-Eleven and purchased all the junk food I could think of. When I paid for my bags of Hawkins Cheezies, Doritos, Hostess Ding Dongs, processed cherry pie, sprinkle-covered pretzel, and powdered mini-doughnuts, the clerk didn't bat an eye. I picked whatever flowers were growing in my yard that day, some dahlias and a bouquet of

mock orange blossoms, and I arrayed them along with copies of *Jane Eyre* and *Pride and Prejudice*, a classical bust, and a peeled and unwinding lemon.

Thus began my practice. In other attempts I put in things that would appear in traditional still lifes, but in different forms. Goldfish crackers or Swedish fish to stand in for the bream prevalent in Dutch still lifes. Cats were regularly depicted in still lifes by artists such as Chardin, Clara Peeters, and Frans Snyders. I added a cut melon, another standard still life object, in a painting with a hotdog and a Slurpee from the 7-Eleven.

What interests me in still life is that while it's all just stuff on a table and has been for hundreds of years, those things can say a lot about our time, how we live, about our level of wealth, and how we understand and interact with beauty. It also says something about the consumer market, what we desire, what we hold dear, what is actually available to us. The Sev in our suburban neighbourhood is a hotspot. You run into people you know there as you're grabbing your milk and a lottery ticket. Sometimes you just need some junk food. They don't call them convenience stores for nothing. It's not a Roman piazza, but it's what we have.



The High Femme and the Search for Symbols

ALLYSON MCOUAT

From The Call Is Coming from Inside the House by Allyson McOuat. Published by ECW Press in 2024. Allyson McOuat is a queer writer who has been published in the New York Times, the Globe and Mail and elsewhere. The Call Is Coming from Inside the House is her debut essay collection.

When I was a young woman, I was intrigued by tea leaves, but I found it a little like trying to find the constellations. I enjoyed the search for symbols and meaning in the chaos, but I couldn't quite see the pictures in the dots. I preferred storytelling, so I went with tarot, following their original use as storytelling cards. One person would flip over the Lovers and begin a story

about two lovers wandering through a garden, and then the second might turn the Hierophant card over, and the mystery would begin, until the fated Death card appeared and the story ended.

The idea came to me when I came across my brother's vintage pack of 1973 James Bond 007 *Live and Let Die* tarot cards amongst family games. The bright yellow box peeked out from underneath a copy of *National Geographic* like Charlie Bucket's golden ticket, with a psychedelic illustration of a dapper Roger Moore on the front, his gun erect, and the sexy Solitaire draped over his shoulder. I assumed my brother wasn't using them—as far as games were concerned, fortune telling was for girls, and Risk was for boys. These were going straight to the next church rummage sale, I surmised, and selling them at a church rummage sale would be sacrilegious because reading tarot is a pagan ritual. In this way I rationalized pocketing the deck that was not mine to own as a good Christian thing to do. I took the deck back to my cement blocked dorm room to teach myself how to read fortunes from the handy-dandy instruction booklet. Inspired by my grandmother's resourcefulness and a need for free alcohol, I decided to try reading tarot cards in exchange for drinks at my university pub.

As a person with multiple privileges, I see now that fate is a word happy white people use as a universal explanation for why good things seem to land in our laps. Accountability is not what most people want—most people would like to be cradled when the hard times fall or when the tough decisions must be made. They want someone else to tell them what is meant to be or why something happened. Fortune telling offers a nurturing calmness, a way of saying, "This path was set out before you long before you came. Your ancestors built the pathway with stones from the graves of their ancestors, and somewhere in the universe an angel blessed your birth and foretold your coming. So, yes, yes, yes, you should definitely quit your analyst job at the insurance company and take up pottery."

As a queer person curious about psychics and readings, I pay attention to films where there is someone in the role of mystic or fortune teller, as it has always read as exceptionally High Femme to me. The clairvoyant is theatrical, feminine, dangerous, but also nurturing and someone you

can trust with your deepest secrets. She will hold your hand, stare deeply into your eyes, all the way into your soul, and she'll tell you that good things are coming your way. Be patient, but keep going. And when times are rough, you can be assured that she will break the news gently: "You're in danger, girl." When it's a woman, she is your best friend, a secret lover. Even when it's a masculine character, he is always a little bit femme: stylish, strong, brave, sensitive, willing to suffer a little for the greater good.

The clairvoyant is camouflaged. She looks like all of the others, which allows her to watch from the fringes, mostly an outcast, but not entirely. Not allowed to fully participate in society, yet she understands human nature better than most because she is able to see it from the perspective of another dimension. I prefer the stories that are told from the perspective of the psychic, often exploring how painful it is to be the person who bridges two dimensions, like we see in *The Sixth Sense*, *The Shining*, *The Dead Zone*, or *The Green Mile*, to name just a few. The psychic is often someone who has experienced a great trauma, or a life of abuse and neglect. Unseen, oppressed, othered. Finally, something triggers their powers, and we all discover that, internally, this person had a great gift that they weren't sharing, a secret. A hidden ability akin to a superpower, that they could have used to hurt, or for their own personal gain, but they chose to help others instead.

I don't consider myself psychic, but with all of my readings, I became attuned to people asking the same question over and over again. Am I going to be okay? It didn't matter what the question was. "Does he love me?" is just another way of asking, "Is he going to break my heart? Will I be okay?"

Reading cards was a bit of a rush for me. I could forget my own worries for a while and focus on someone else's. It required me to be quiet and listen to someone and connect with the energy they were giving off both physically and emotionally. I'm not a small talk person, I have social anxiety, so at that time, in university, I would usually either clam up, ramble on, or start kissing someone. Reading cards gave me a reason to be in the room, an opportunity to



step away from the social stress, and focus deeply on one question at a time. I think because I am a decently empathetic person with performance training, I could effectively match the energy of the person in front of me. In drama class, we learned how to transfer energy between people in a way similar to the way a choir harmonizes or a band plays together. Synching energies with someone helped me understand the answer they wanted, or what was keeping them from the result they sought. Were they anxious, nervous, sad, despondent, desperate, exhilarated? Reading their emotions was as much a part of reading cards as the cards themselves. That isn't to say I was being dishonest—I wasn't—or that I think psychics are flim-flam—I don't. Like all professions, I am sure there are a wide range of people with different sets of values, ethics, and beliefs. I was absolutely reading cards, but I wasn't doing it by drawing on forces from the universe, I was taking a complex question, a bundle of emotions in front of me, and finding context by focusing on the symbol on the card, the meaning that had been ascribed to that symbol in my James Bond 007 *Live and Let Die* tarot card training manual.

When it comes to myself, now, even though I hold the cards, I still can't help but ask the questions. Am I going to be okay? Will my little family be okay? Will this ever get any easier? Does she love me? Is this love sustainable? Is it real? Is it responsible? Is it the kind of love you can raise a family on? I want the comfort of those answers. The older I get, the bigger the consequences of making the wrong decision seem to be. Because far from being alone in the world, at some point in the last five years I have realized how deeply interconnected I am with my family and friends. If anything were to happen to me, or to any of them, it would have a ripple effect across our whole little ecosystem.

Life is filled with insecurity around the potential negative consequences of our choices. People will cling to any faint wisp of an answer, and when you put your questions to a psychic, for a moment in time, someone else is not only bearing witness but supporting you in your fears. They are partnering with you on solving your conundrum. It's slightly maternal, very intimate; many people choose visiting a psychic over seeing a therapist.



One way or another, sharing our decisions and looking at the consequences of life are necessary, because free will is too big of a concept to cope with. Nothing about the future is carved in stone. It's a fact right now, that across the vast expanse of the entire known universe, we are the only sentient life force. And we will

likely never know if we aren't. We also cannot possibly know with one hundred percent certainty if there is a heaven, or if reincarnation is real, or if nirvana exists. We will not know if an afterlife of any kind exists until it's too late to tell anyone else about it. So if we believe we have one life, and we believe we are alone in a vast universe with infinite possibilities ahead of us and only a finite number of days, how could we *not* get overwhelmed by making even the smallest decisions. Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher who unpacked what responsibility means to humankind, said, "Man is con-

demned to be free," meaning that with ultimate freedom comes an impossibly heavy burden. If we cannot from time to time lay our decisions down on the shoulders of someone else, how can we possibly bear the weight of them?



Monuments and Memories

STEPHEN OSBORNE

From The Coincidence Problem by Stephen Osborne. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2024. Stephen Osborne is the founder of Arsenal Pulp Press and the co-founding publisher of Geist. He is the author of The Coincidence Problem: Selected Dispatches 1999-2022 (Arsenal Pulp Press) and Ice and Fire: Dispatches from the New World, 1988-1998 (Arsenal Pulp Press). He lives in Vancouver, BC.

When you enter the leafy precincts of Stanley Park at the edge of downtown Vancouver the first thing that escapes your attention is likely to be the bronze statue of Lord Stanley flinging his arms into the air on the grassy knoll just inside

the park entrance; the second thing you are likely to forget, only metres away, is the statue of Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, clutching a sheaf of papers to his chest. Cross over the lawn and you come upon the elaborate and somewhat faded memorial to Queen Victoria (“Victoria the Good” reads the plaque, “Erected by the school children of Vancouver”); in a moment it too will have vanished from your notice and your memory. Monuments, which are intended to make us remember, tend to make us forget; nowhere more so than in Stanley Park, where dozens of monuments and memorials sit tucked away and forgotten among four hundred hectares of forest and pathway, lawns and beaches, playgrounds and tennis courts and lawn bowling pitches, and where they persist in the landscape as in a dream. Indeed monuments and memorials are the contents of public dreams and collective forgettings; we approach them like psychologists alert for archetypes, fleeting glimpses of the soul.

Lord Stanley was Governor General of Canada in 1889, when he threw his hands into the air in a grand gesture and proclaimed Stanley Park, which he named after himself (his name is also on the Stanley Cup), to be open to the public. His monument is also a monument to Major Matthews, the City Archivist, who commissioned and fund-raised for the statue, and finally—when the City refused to pay for a suitable pediment—held it hostage in a secret warehouse until his demands were met. A short hike away from Lord Stanley lies a mini-forest of trees planted in honour of the plays of William Shakespeare: oak, pine, hemlock, cypress, juniper among others, each assigned an appropriate line of verse on a tiny plaque. The Bard himself is represented by the profile of a rascally-looking gent with a goatee mounted on a chimney-like structure; he reminds us less of Shakespeare (“not of an age but for all time,” reads the plaque) than of a frontier city making a claim to high culture in 1916, which is the date on the plaque, just as the memorial to Queen Victoria reminds us of the same city making a claim for Empire eleven years earlier, in 1905. And although Stanley Park is crowded with people on a fine summer day, here among Shakespeare’s trees almost no one is to be seen: monuments are lonely places, even among crowds; indeed a way to escape from the stream of rollerbladers and powerwalkers and joggers and cyclists in Stanley Park is to seek out its monuments.

WINNIPEG POEM

From Scientific Marvel by Chimwemwe Undi. Published by House of Anansi in 2024. Chimwemwe Undi is the Winnipeg Poet Laureate for 2023 and 2024. Scientific Marvel is her debut poetry collection. She lives on Treaty 1 territory in Winnipeg, MB.

1. A reference to the famously frigid winters, often by way of reference to winter clothing or activities
2. For obvious reasons, the phrase “prairie sky”
3. Lamenting (general)
4. Lamenting (winter-specific)
5. Invoking John K. Samson, explicitly or by prosody
6. A reference to the history of the name *Winnipeg*, being “murky water” in Ininimowin
7. A passing or rote reference to Indigenous peoples, broadly (post-2015, apologetic in tone)
8. A mention of local flora, typically in metaphor (e.g., lilac, chokecherry, birch, milkweed, Saskatoon berry, thistle, goldenrod, prairie grass, etc.)
9. A mention of local fauna, typically in metaphor (e.g., deer tick, blackfly, skeeter, cankerworm, pigeon, crow, etc.)
10. A reference to the forking of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, and/or to the Forks
11. A reference to Salisbury House (“Sals”), and pre-2019, Stella’s restaurants
12. Portage & Main and/or Confusion Corner and/or the Golden Boy
13. Invoking Guy Maddin’s *My Winnipeg*, explicitly or in tone
14. Grain, etc.

Along the First Narrows shore can be found a splendid dragon’s head that turns out to be a fibre-glass replica of the prow of the *S.S. Empress of Japan*, a ship that, according to the plaque, “plied these waters” at the turn of the twentieth century. From here you can see the bronze likeness of a girl in a wet-suit perched on a rock a few metres from shore; the plaque says that she represents “Vancouver’s dependence on the sea”; how that might be so is not explained. A nearby boulder bears the name of the man who put up a sawmill in 1865, and behind it can be seen a log balanced on two stumps in the manner of a lean-to: this is Lumbermen’s Arch, which turns out to be a memorial to an original arch made of logs in the form of the Greek Parthenon, in 1911, on Pender Street in downtown Vancouver, in order that the Duke of Connaught (another Governor General, and the son of Queen Victoria) might be driven beneath it in a parade.

Such are the apparently random contents of public memory. A camellia bush commemorates the centenary of Frances E. Willard, for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. A dogwood tree memorializes John Drainie, actor and broadcaster. A rhododendron garden reminds us of the names of Ted and Mary Greig, "pioneers in rhododendron culture." Rose gardens memorialize Eva Moore and Sir John Martin Harvey, thespians of another age. A pyramid of boulders at Prospect Point marks another shipwreck. Even bits of the park itself are memorialized: the Hollow Tree, for instance, is remembered by its own hollow stump, which has been uprooted and sits on hard ground next to a rustic sign that reads "Hollow Tree"; and the Seven Sisters, a once-beloved stand of tall evergreens, is remembered by a plaque and a planting of seven fir trees whose purpose is to invoke the spirit of the vanished originals. A totem pole at Prospect Point marks Captain Vancouver's arrival in 1792; another near the aquarium is dedicated simply "to the children of the world." A group of eight totem poles near Lumbermen's Arch reminds us briefly of the first inhabitants of this coastal land, and in their picturesque aspect (unlike the other memorials in the park, the totems are always surrounded by crowds of admirers taking pictures) they serve as the occasion for forgetting the First Peoples at the same time as we appear to remember them.

Over near Brockton Point, hidden in a leafy glade looking out at the harbour, an imposing Celtic cross rises from a stony pedestal, erected "in memory of eight persons who lost their lives on the *Chehalis* sunk by the *Princess Victoria* on July 21, 1906, at 2 p.m. opposite this spot." You look out over the traffic on the roadway, past the stream of walkers and joggers and rollerbladers and cyclists on the seawall, to the blue waters of the harbour, where eight persons lost their lives at 2:00 p.m. in July, and you look at your watch to compare the time. How great was the loss, to move shipmates and friends to this extravagance? You are completely alone in the glade.

The grandest of memory traces hidden away in Stanley Park (and possibly the least-known) sits off to the side of Malkin Bowl (itself a memorial

to the wife of a local merchant), where a pair of huge bronze eagles stand sentinel over a fountain dedicated to the visit of Warren Gamaliel Harding, 29th President of the U.S.A., charter member of the Kiwanis Club of Marion, Ohio. In September of 1925, Harding's scandal-ridden administration was crumbling and he was looking for favourable publicity away from Washington, D.C., where several of his ministers had already committed suicide. He arrived in Vancouver (at the invitation of the Kiwanis Club) in a pinstripe suit and top hat, and delivered a windy speech which was

later inscribed on stone slabs next to two enormous bronze goddesses wearing flimsy robes and leaning on war shields. "No grim-faced fortifications mark our frontiers," you read and you feel the President's speech erasing itself from memory: "not of perishable parchment, but of fair and honorable dealing," and by the time you turn away you have forgotten all of it: words, dates and even the name of the 29th president of the U.S.A.

Before leaving the park (and monuments yet unseen, yet to be forgotten, dedicated to, among other things: a sprinter; several military personages; a chief forester; the honour of seafarers, the game of cricket; peace between the children of the USSR and Canada; the Salvation Army; a cannon that fires automatically at nine p.m., and the legend of Skalsk the Unselfish), you find the grave marker of Pauline Johnson near Ferguson Point, in a dark grove occupied by a family of ring-tailed raccoons. A slab of rock, a trickle of water, the necessary plaque: here lie the ashes of the most famous of Canadian poets, Tekahionwake, daughter of a Mohawk chief, interred in the park that she had come to love in the last years of her life, at the intervention of the Duke of Connaught (already you have forgotten his connection to Lumbermen's Arch), who as Governor General was able to convince park authorities to allow the only official burial to be performed in Stanley Park, in 1913, a date that vanishes from your mind, as will even this place, which is beautiful, quiet and lonely, and already fading away.



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SEVERANCE

PAUL DHILLON

I had screwed up in making us blood brothers. Outside of basketball, we were different



“Bhaji,” the voice said.

I sighed. I thought I’d lost Ravi in the steam of the shower. I slid the metal razor across my armpits and wiped the blade clean with a towel. The skin smooth. I held my breath as I shaved the trail of hair leading from my dick and up to the dark ring around my belly button. I wanted to look strong and sleek for Sarah.

It was the first day of summer vacation and my cousin Ravi was in town from Toronto. My parents had never even hinted at the possibility of him coming. I could imagine our moms arranging Ravi's visit—"Cousin brothers are supposed to grow together. Experience life together"—just like how they introduced us three years ago at our uncle's wedding—no names, but as cousin brothers. How could we be both? Cousin brothers sounded so stupid.

"Challo!" Ravi's face peered over the stall's wall. Panicked, I dropped the razor in the toilet. I pulled up my shorts and flicked the lock and swung the door open.

Ravi's long hair dripped water down his broad chest. "Were you shaving?"

"No." I darted past him and headed toward the changeroom exit. I rubbed my hand over my belly. The left side smooth, the right coarse, like a hedgehog.

Sarah and I talked about the
UK and she couldn't stop
mentioning castles, Big Ben, the
London Eye, all the "cheeky"
pints she had. She must have
said "culture" twenty times.

"But I saw the razor in the toilet." Ravi's feet smacked across the tiles behind me.

I yanked my shorts above my belly button and reached inside for the drawstring. Fishing around, I could only find the satin tag—*Made in India*. I turned to Ravi and unclipped the key from my waistband. "I forgot the sunscreen."

"Wait for me." He grabbed the key from my outstretched hand. "Your shorts are on backwards."

"It's called style," I yelled, as he trotted to our locker. I dropped my shorts, turned them around, cinched the drawstring and fled to the tunnelling light of the pool deck. Ravi could find his own way.

Ravi and I were once close. That first night in Toronto, in Ravi's room, between playing carrom board and Bhabhi, I had swiped a straight razor from my father's dopp kit. "I saw this in a movie once." I bit my lip and cut across my thumb. A warmth flooded my body. I handed the blade to Ravi and motioned my head for him to do the same.

Ravi pinched the razor and held it close to his face. He swallowed, hovered the blade above his thumb, and counted down from three in Punjabi. I didn't think he had it in him, the way he counted slowly and breathed

all deep, but when he reached zero he slashed his thumb. He gritted his teeth and sucked in air. It sounded like Velcro tearing. We winced when our thumbs touched, our blood mixing together. It felt rather unceremonious so I blurted out, "All for one and one for all." Ravi repeated the oath. Sworn brothers from that moment on, we would be bonded in this life and the next.

We were inseparable for the week. At the wedding reception, our parents smiled as we owned the dance floor. The DJ boomed Apache Indian while Ravi and I pumped our arms and legs. Our parents decided it would be smart for us to spend more time together. My mother and father flew back to Vancouver while I stayed in Toronto for an extra month.

I had screwed up in making us blood brothers. Outside of basketball, we were different. Ravi's life was so Indian. Only Indian food. Only Indian movies. The dubbed punching sound effect from Bollywood movies became the soundtrack of my trip. I was unable to understand a word the actors said. Sensing my distance from our heritage, Ravi's parents enrolled us in Khalsa school for two weeks. Ravi acted as my guide to help me understand and connect with our roots.

"What's up, lil bugger?" Sarah's head cocked away from the nozzle of the outdoor shower. Water spurted over her tight red swimsuit. She glistened. Her arms. Her thighs. Her chest. Her mouth. She kept her hair tied up.

I adjusted my waistband again to cover the half-ring of hair around my belly button. I hadn't seen Sarah since she left for her trip to the UK, missing the last two weeks of school. She'd returned with a posh British accent. I waved.

She stepped away from the shower and went to the fountain. Water dripped off her butt onto the concrete.

"Are you just going to stare at me?" Sarah's lips glossed wet as she spun around.

"Easy to stare at nothing," I said.

"You shite."

In front of us, summer stretched out at Kits Pool. Three wrestlers from our school—grade 12s, with their boulder shoulders—passed a football in the water, lunging their bodies to make dramatic diving catches in front of three girls in small bikinis who were probably their girlfriends. The sun turned the girls' legs pink with blotches. My brown skin sucked up the sun like a sponge. Sarah and I talked about the UK and she couldn't stop mentioning castles, Big Ben, the London Eye, all the "cheeky" pints she had. She must have said "culture" twenty times.

"Is it not the same as Canada?" I said, gazing at the grassy area where, behind a short metal barrier, a group of big-bodied men hammered nails into planks. Electric saws droned. A bald man tapped the one with the power saw on the shoulder. He pointed to a group of girls near us and they began to laugh. The workers were building a stage,

preparing for the annual summer kickoff. I loved the Snorkel Scavenge and Flick-n-Float.

"You just need to visit it yourself." Sarah's eyes went to the basketball hoops. Her friends Whitney and Jessie bobbed in the water, shooting jumpers. "Come with me."

We sidestepped a boy and girl my age lying on a shared towel, making out. He pulled her tight to his chest and cupped her butt as their tongues twisted around each other's, their bodies fusing together. A lifeguard walked over and knelt beside them. "The pool is a public, family-friendly place." The couple rolled apart, faces burning as the lifeguard sauntered off, his eyes scanning the pool deck.

I'd never even seen my parents kiss, yet I saw people inhaling face in broad daylight. At the rec centre. In the glow of the movie theatre. In the soccer field at school. It was embarrassing to be fifteen and to have never kissed anyone. It always felt like something I should have been doing. Or should have automatically known how to do, like an inherited power once my voice dropped. I imagined that some kind of specific genes were supposed to flick on and tell my mouth how to contort my lips and twirl my tongue. I should have been some type of Romeo at this point. A kiss machine that knew how to woo girls and make them swoon. But I felt average in every way. My muscles were puny and no one had body hair like mine. I rode the bench in basketball, did okay enough in school to keep my parents happy. I never felt exciting enough to warrant anyone's attention. How would I ever get Sarah to like me? I didn't even like myself.

I waved at the twins, Whitney and Jessie. They were short and had brown hair slicked back into braids. Their eyes Gatorade blue. They weren't my type, acting like their cuteness was some great evolutionary strategy. I could never tell them apart. Sarah sat on the pool's edge, then eased herself in. She hugged them both and they began to play basketball. Sarah stood guard under the net as Whitney and Jessie tried to score. Sarah blocked all their shots. A pure force.

Next to the slide, Mike called out and motioned me over. I told Sarah I would catch up with them later. I slunk past a row of girls lying on their stomachs, bikini tops undone to prevent tan lines. They talked about a house party that night, and how the wrestlers from across the way would be there, who said they'd use their fake IDs to grab bottles of Vex. They smelled like bananas.

I spread my towel beside the snacks. A bag of chips and grapes laid between us. Mike's face morphed into a perv grin, his lips drawn back, eyes the size of coin slots. I knew what he wanted to launch into. For him the major event of 1999 wasn't Gretzky retiring or Columbine or even Y2K. It was sex. It's all he talked about while we were glued to the bench during basketball season.

"She's got some tits under there," Mike said. "Smallies from what I can tell." He pointed at Sarah. "A pussy too. I bet it's a smooth, pretty one."

Sarah dunked the basketball, her legs thick and bright as she launched out of the water. I pulled out a few curly hairs on the inside of my thigh. "You think she shaves?"

"No doubt." Mike crunched a handful of BBQ chips. "When the fall comes, the honeys will be mature in the body. I need to get a piece of someone, anyone. You're so lucky to be sitting on a winning ticket."

I shook my head. "What do you mean?"

Mike pointed over the water at Sarah. "I see how she looks at you."

"We're just friends."

"That is exactly how it happens."

The ball landed near us. I tossed it back. Sarah waved. I waved back.

"She's moist for you. Foaming even."

"It's not like that between us," I lied. I should've asked Sarah if I could play with them.

"Listen, get reps with Sarah and you will reek of sex. Ta-da, grade 10 will be an ass parade." Mike rolled onto his stomach and humped the ground.

"Bench slugs are known for their sex appeal."

"It sounds like you want to die a virgin."

For him the major event of 1999 wasn't Gretzky retiring or Columbine or even Y2K. It was sex. It's all he talked about while we were glued to the bench during basketball season.

I rolled my eyes. "In it together, amigo."

"Please—Whitney has been straight macking me on MSN. Our messages are racy yet tasteful." Mike put his fingers to his lips and kissed them.

"You sound dumber by the second."

"God, I would die for a piece of Whitney. You better hook up with Sarah—if not for you, then for me."

I watched the girls hoop. All of them had grown since grade 8. Their bathing suits hugged their chests, their thighs were bigger. If I didn't know them, I'd think they were older than me—seniors even. I felt nervous to think about what I would say to Sarah. "Isn't sex a little too ... I don't know ... adult?"

Mike looked down at my stomach. "Nice mom shorts." He ate a few more chips. "Who is that dude with long hair waving at us? You think he flosses his ass with it?"

Before I could reply, Ravi laid his towel down beside me. I introduced him.

"Oh. Like ravioli?" Mike said.

"Short for Ravinder." Ravi gestured at me. "Like Aaron, short for Aerbinder."

I glared at him. A whistle blasted across the pool.

"Why the long hair?" Mike said.

Ravi stood and bounced on his toes. "I'm Sikh."

Mike leaned back. "Sick with what?"

"Will my parents be at the beer garden this weekend? Guaranteed. Will they be hungover the whole weekend? Guaranteed. What kind of tradition is that? So imaginative. Bravo." She clapped her hands. "Lives on repeat. Whoop-de-doo."

"It's Indian," I said.

"Like you?" Mike took in my buzzcut before returning to Ravi. "I would melt if I had that much hair."

"It's important," Ravi said.

Mike looked to me for answers.

"He'll wear a turban."

"Wait, hair goes up there?" Mike rubbed his blonde undercut.

"It's called a pagga," Ravi said.

The pool skimmer burped and gurgled.

"Aerbinder?" Mike turned to me. "Shouldn't we call you Aer for short?"

"And we should call you dick for short."

Wet footsteps approached. "And who is this?" Sarah gave Mike a peace sign, then stared at Ravi.

"This is Aerbinder's cousin." Mike jabbed me with his elbow.

Sarah examined Ravi's hair and his silver bracelet. "Nice to see a bloke with his own style. Your hair, let me guess—egg white wash for the silky shine?"

"It not like it's his choice," I said under my breath.

"Coconut oil." Ravi smiled, confident, like back in Khalsa school. His muscles popped in the sunlight. It looked like he ate whole chickens. He should've been on TV.

"Brilliant, love it," Sarah said.

He blushed.

"Let's go hoop with the chicks, Ravi." Mike winked at me, and the two left to join Whitney and Jessie.

Sarah plopped onto Ravi's towel. We looked over at the stage being built. The men swung their hammers, shirts painted with sweat. They all howled at something the bald one said. The biggest one, the boss with a handlebar moustache, ordered them to knock it off. "Clamp your squawk boxes. I don't wanna be swingin' and sawin' under the moon." The men stopped laughing and returned to work.

I grabbed the chips. "Remember all those times we rode your dad's work float in the parade?"

"Back when we were naive," Sarah said. "We really thought that was peak life."

"Does he have room for us this year?"

"Funny, Aaron." She watched Jessie and Ravi versus Whitney and Mike play basketball in the pool.

"I heard we might go to New York next year for a tournament." I tracked a sweat line on Sarah's chest. It burned white in the sun below her throat and disappeared between her breasts. I offered her the grapes.

She grabbed a few and laid them on the towel. "Well, you might."

"What do you mean?"

"Junior league is full of scrubs. The coach from the senior team called me. He wants me to play with them next year." Sarah popped a grape into her mouth. "It will help my chances at a scholarship. I'll hoop with their club team this summer."

"I hope you have time for the Flick-n-Float."

"How many times are we going to do this?" She pointed at the men building the stage.

"It's tradition."

"Will my parents be at the beer garden this weekend? Guaranteed. Will they be hungover the whole weekend? Guaranteed. What kind of tradition is that? So imaginative. Bravo." She clapped her hands. "Lives on repeat. Whoop-de-doo." She rummaged in Mike's pack, pulled out a tube of sunscreen and handed it to me. "If I die here, my life will be a failure."

I squeezed the sunscreen into my hand. "When did you decide to play senior?"

"Just now."

I rubbed Sarah's shoulders. Her skin warm, flawless. Not even a freckle. It smelled of cocoa butter with a hint of jasmine. Her breathing calmed as I reached her lower back. I felt needed. Like I was her priest, the first to hear these innermost thoughts. I wished I could be so certain like her. So against the grain.

Sarah's head and shoulders rolled forward. "You never told me about Ravi."

I rubbed my fingers across my thumb, feeling the thin line of the razorblade scar. "He can be embarrassing." I shook the sunscreen bottle and squirted more lotion into my hand.

"How so?"

"When I visited him in Toronto he left me out to dry at summer school. A bunch of old men asked me about my—" I wanted to say pind but thought it would sound dumb. "My father's village. Ravi knew his and I didn't know mine. The old pricks looked at me like I pissed on all my ancestor's graves."

"Well."

"Well what?"

"Do you know it now?"

Mike, Whitney and Jessie treaded water in the deep end, watching Ravi execute handstand somersaults off the diving board. Ravi barely made a splash as he dove into the pool. Pure grace. His hair added to the mystique; he looked like Tarzan. He motioned everyone toward the shallow end and they followed.

"He doesn't usually look like that," I said.

"Let me guess. The long hair is his experimental phase?" Sarah's fingers clawed at the air.

"He usually covers it."

"Like with a hat."

"More like with cloth."

"A bandana?"

"I guess you could say that."

Sarah ogled Ravi as I worked back up to her shoulders. Ravi taught our friends how to somersault into the shallow end. He stood beside them on the deck, braced their legs with one hand and tucked the other against their stomachs as they inverted, helping them roll over into the pool. Perfect form, toes pointed. Mike surfaced near the swimming lanes and the lifeguard snatched the megaphone. "Do not cross over into the swim lanes. Please exit the pool to go around." Mike shook his head and swam back to the edge.

"Ay!" Sarah yelled. "Why don't you be a good bloke and ask if I want to learn?"

Ravi pointed at himself, mouthed, Me?

"Yes you, genius."

He waved her over. Sarah undid her hair and it fell over my hands.

My thumbs circled her lower back. I cleared my throat. My heart thumped as I did my best Austin Powers impersonation. "How does it feel, baby?" Sarah turned to me. I licked my lips, closed my eyes and leaned forward.

A wet hand dragged across my face. "Such a dork." Sarah wiped her sunscreen-slathered hand over my flat chest. "Let's skip the Flick-n-Float and go see Austin Powers again. I could use the laugh." Then she left, heading straight for Ravi.

I sat on the pool edge and swayed my feet in the water. The pool skimmer gulped. I wished I could be sucked into the drain and forgotten. It wounded me to think that Sarah didn't feel the same as I did. The special atmosphere of just the two of us together, my hands on her, in the sun's warmth. I felt so far from everyone. As if I could just float away and no one would notice, like some sort of gas. I

moved my mouth, made the right sounds, gave people what they expected. Played along. I still felt foolish. Uncomfortable. An imposter. I didn't fit in.

Everyone was laughing as they somersaulted perfectly and stuck their landings in the pool. Should I have made it more romantic? Taken her under water like Leo and Claire in *Romeo and Juliet*? I should've gotten Sarah to sign something when we were thirteen. Some kind of binding agreement that we would kiss. So that—what? I wouldn't have to ask her? This was so stupid. I got up and walked over to the group. "You're a pro," I said to Sarah. "Teach me."

We stood on the pool deck and Sarah instructed me to tuck my chin tight before rolling over into the water. I stepped forward and swung my legs up, balancing on my hands, fingers curled around the pool's edge. Sarah tried to grip my ankles to help me balance but my momentum carried us both forward and we splashed into the pool.

Under water, I watched Sarah sink. She sat cross-legged on the pool bottom with her palms pressed to her chest. We made eye contact. I tilted my head, examining her like a specimen under a microscope, unsure what she was doing. Sarah shrugged her shoulders and smiled. What a smile—it was like she had too many teeth. Bubbles floated out from her nose. Then she stood and grabbed the basketball bobbing on the surface. I stayed submerged. It was peaceful. Sarah's long, toned quads looked like ivory, her carved stomach like speed bumps. Curly strands of hair strayed from the red spandex V of her crotch, coming alive as she juked and spun with the basketball. The hair lapped against her skin, caressing, teasing. I could've watched her forever.

I felt so far from everyone. As if I could just float away and no one would notice, like some sort of gas. I moved my mouth, made the right sounds, gave people what they expected. Played along. I still felt foolish. Uncomfortable. An imposter. I didn't fit in.

Then Ravi's legs sidled up to Sarah's. She hid the ball under water and turned her back to him. He reached both arms around her waist and the ball squirted from her hands when she pivoted to face him. Their thighs touched.

I bolted out of the water and caught my breath. Ravi was embracing her, his biceps the size of mangoes, attached

to Sarah like a leech. They didn't seem to notice me or anyone else—not Jessie or Whitney sunbathing on the deck or Mike shooting hoops. Sarah slung her arms around Ravi's neck. Ravi's hand cupped the back of her head. Then he kissed Sarah's upturned face.

My stomach heaved, my breath tangy through my nose. I swallowed the sharp acid. I hated their poise, their naturalness, as if they'd rehearsed so often they didn't have to think about it. They pulled away, their faces red, and scooted to the shallow end together.

Images flashed through my mind—Ravi and Sarah in my basement, a mess of arms and legs, kissing. Sarah pulling Ravi's stray hairs off her tongue as she grabbed a popsicle from the freezer. Mike and I playing *Golden Eye* in the living room, throwing grenades at each other on the screen, trying to feel something.

Images flashed through my mind—
Ravi and Sarah in my basement,
a mess of arms and legs, kissing.
Sarah pulling Ravi's stray hairs
off her tongue as she grabbed a
popsicle from the freezer. Mike
and I playing *Golden Eye* in the
living room, throwing grenades
at each other on the screen,
trying to feel something.

It was right there! There must have been a way to bring Sarah back to me. Something I could have said, something cool. Maybe a Punjabi proverb? I should have paid more attention in Khalsa school.

Ravi tucked an arm behind Sarah. She cocked her head into his shoulder.

"Let's play something different," I yelled. "Something we all can do."

No one listened. Ravi kissed the top of her head.

"Hey! Let's do something different!" I sprang across the water and grabbed Mike. "Marco."

"Such a kid's game," Mike said.

"Fun." Whitney jumped back into the pool.

"That's what I meant," Mike said.

Ravi motioned his head to Sarah. They joined.

We zigzagged through the shallow end, dodging Mike. Ravi finally became "it" when Mike called him out for

hiding under water. Ravi lunged at the air as Mike circled him. I plodded toward Ravi, splashed him. A beach ball bounced off his head, but he was locked on me. Bares from the lifeguard's megaphone cracked over the pool. I dove as Ravi lunged.

When I resurfaced, Ravi said, "You're it. You brushed my leg."

"No way."

Ravi swept away a Nerf football bobbing in the water between us. "You never play by the rules."

Electric saws squealed. "Pound those planks ova there," a stage builder yelled.

I approached Ravi. "You come here and steal the show"—I backed him toward the edge of the pool, my face hot—"and kiss my friend."

"Aaron, chill," Sarah said.

"I saw you two. Under the water, groping each other."

"Not my fault you have a hot cousin."

Ravi interrupted. "Bhaji—"

"Shut up." I turned to Sarah. "We've known each other for so long. We were supposed to."

"Supposed to what?" Sarah said.

I swallowed. "We were supposed to kiss and be something."

Sarah shook her head. "Aaron, we're friends."

"I thought that's how it starts. And then we become more."

"Aaron, I don't want that." She leaned against the fence.

Mike sat on the pool deck. He shrugged. I craned my neck to the sky and put my hands behind my head.

"I didn't know. I didn't mean—" Ravi started.

I glared at Sarah. "You're leaving, Mike is trying to have sex. Where do I fit in all this? Everyone is changing, like you all can't wait to leave everything behind." My legs were air as I gripped the pool deck. "It's all happening so fast. I can't keep up."

Sarah pressed her palms together, collapsed her fingers and raised her hands to her lips. Mike cupped his palm over his mouth to hide a laugh.

"Aerbinder," Ravi said.

I faced him. His long hair floated on the surface of the water, completely horizontal.

Ravi stepped forward and winced. His head tilted back and I saw that a chunk of his hair was caught in the pool skimmer. I started to laugh as the rest of it snaked toward the drain, but Ravi's desperate whisper silenced me.

"Help."

I rushed for the skimmer and tugged on the trapped hair. It loosened for a second before grinding further down the drain. Ravi yelped. He fell backward into the water. I snatched his arm and pulled him closer to the drain to ease the tension on his head. Ravi reached back and yanked. He flinched. Mike fetched the tube of sunscreen from the deck and threw it to me. I drained the bottle into my hands. I lathered Ravi's clogged hair and

the inside of the pipe, believing the greasy lotion would make it glide out.

"Help!" I looked around the pool. "Someone help!"

Feet slapped against the concrete of the pool deck. The lifeguard's short bob bounced up and down as her arms waved in big circles. Three sharp blasts from her whistle and the pool emptied and she sprinted through the crowd and high-stepped into the water. Only me, the lifeguard and Ravi remained in the pool. A thousand eyes stared at us, but I only noticed the wideness of Sarah's. She paced along the edge as if ready to jump in to help. Her hand over her mouth. I couldn't tell if she was looking at me or Ravi. I wanted to call out to her, to say I was sorry for how I acted, but I only tasted my dry tongue.

"Scissors!" commanded the lifeguard. Her partner knelt on the pool deck and searched the first aid kit. He held out a pair of shears, but the lifeguard's hand shook and she fumbled them. They plopped into the water between my feet. I retrieved them, then clutched a shock of Ravi's hair near the skimmer.

"Kid, leave it to us," the lifeguard said.

I flicked my thumb; the scissors opened. Ravi's scalp was red and swollen.

"Aaron, don't," he whimpered, his face scrunched.

Sarah squatted into a ball on the deck as Whitney and Jesse rubbed her back. Everything about Sarah looked different now. Her face red with heat. Her hair frizzed. She fanned her eyes. Her distress seemed calculated. She seemed like a stranger. Behind them, the moustached stage builder laid down his hammer and wiped his hand on a rag.

I turned to Mike. "What should I do?"

Sweat clustered on his forehead. "It's hot, Aaron. Hair grows back."

"Please," Ravi said. "You don't understand."

"Cut it already! Help him!" Sarah walked closer but the lifeguard blocked her.

"Back up!"

Ravi sobbed gently into his hands. "Please. Don't do this."

I closed the scissors and glided my hand to the top of his head. A band-aid floated by. "Drain the pool."

"No way." The lifeguard motioned to the crowd. "He's not the only person here."

The stage builder had ambled over. He approached me, his face calm as he ran a finger over his moustache.

"Sir, you can't—" the lifeguard said.

"Well, I just did." He crouched next to the concrete ledge and rested a large palm on my shoulder. I smelled sweat and sawdust. "Kid." The twang in his voice was comforting. He pointed to the half-built stage. "Kick-off be tomorra' and the boys need to swing back at it." He squeezed my shoulder and winked. "Tradition can't be put on hold today."

I squinted across the pool toward the stage, but the sun's glare over the water burned my eyes. I closed them. Everything orange and red. My forehead slathered with sweat. I breathed and tried to think. Rivulets of Coppertone dripped off my nostrils.

"The whole crowd is waitin' on ya," the builder said.

I opened my eyes. "I'm not ready."

"Get out of here," the lifeguard said. "Leave the kid alone."

The builder wiped his T-shirt sleeve across his face and tapped his watch, then sauntered away.

Ravi clutched my elbow. I struggled to clear space in my mind. A terrible wet belch bubbled from his chest. "Please, Aaron." It left a wet trail down his chin. "Beg them not to."

I looked at his face. He had the same flat contours around his nostrils as me. Like me, his ears stuck out. Our big lips matched. My grip tightened on the scissor handles. Ravi's hair strangled in my hand. I looked back at Mike and Sarah. Mike stared at his feet while Sarah's hand dropped to her stomach and she mouthed, Please.

"Get on wit it will ya," the stage builder yelled from a distance.

I squinted across the pool toward the stage, but the sun's glare over the water burned my eyes. I closed them. Everything orange and red. My forehead slathered with sweat. I breathed and tried to think. Rivulets of Coppertone dripped off my nostrils.

I wrapped my arms around Ravi. The bones in our chests knocked together. He tightened his grip around my back, shaking, his shoulders crusted with salt.

"Māfa karanā," I whispered. "I had it wrong."

He exhaled, then coughed hard. I shielded his face from the crowd and looked up to the lifeguard. "Please drain the pool."

"Kid, give me the scissors." The lifeguard stepped forward and unclipped the walkie-talkie from her shorts.

I let go of Ravi and held the shears between our faces. Ravi's eyes went flat.

"Is it still there?" I said.

"What?" Ravi wiped his face.

I held up my thumb.

Ravi lifted his hand and showed me the white line splitting his own wrinkled thumb. Pressing mine into his, I nodded. Then I opened the scissors, gripping one handle.

"Bhaji, no!" Ravi said.

I slashed the cool blade across my palm, swallowing a yelp. I dropped the scissors and dunked my hand into the water and pressed beside the wound. Blood spun and twisted at our knees like smoke from a signal flare. My legs wobbled.

"Why do that? You don't have to prove anything to me." Ravi rubbed his eyes, then exhaled. "Grab the scissors."

I bent into the water and retrieved them. Ravi reached for the scissors as I stood, but I tossed them onto the pool deck. Blood rushed from the cut, thick and strong. I focussed on Ravi and tightened my grip on his hair. His eyes were red. He squeezed my shoulder.

On the deck, the lifeguard turned to her partner, motioned her hand across her neck and spun her finger in the air. "Drain the pool."

The other lifeguard signalled to the control room. Then they reached into their med kit, grabbing gauze and alcohol wipes.

The stage builder clapped his hands and whistled. "Get back ta work ya lazy sacks. Shows ova." The saws and hammers returned, hard and fast.

Mike's eyes were wide. "What the hell?"

Whitney removed Mike's arm from her hip. She returned to Jessie, whose mouth hung open.

Sarah shook her head at Ravi and I as red bloomed across her face. "You could've just cut his hair!" She grabbed her towel and stormed away with Jessie and Whitney. They strode past the stage builders, past the water fountain, past the outdoor shower, all the way to the change room without looking back.

Several lifeguards appeared on the pool deck and started corralling the crowd toward the exit.

"Aaron, I'll wait for you!" Mike called, running to the changeroom.

I turned to Ravi. He twisted, trying to look down at the blood. It moved back and forth, inched its way to the skimmer. I watched it glide over and through Ravi's hair. The pool slowly drained. The lifeguard asked again for my hand, but I kept it in the water. The blood streaked toward the drain in a long thread, then bobbed and clustered before it began to circle.

Paul Dhillon's work has appeared in the Malahat Review and Prairie Fire and was a finalist for a National Magazine Award. He lives in Vancouver with his Sweetie and their brindled mutt. He is a high school English teacher.

— Praise for *Scientific Marvel* —

"A captivating debut."

Toronto Star

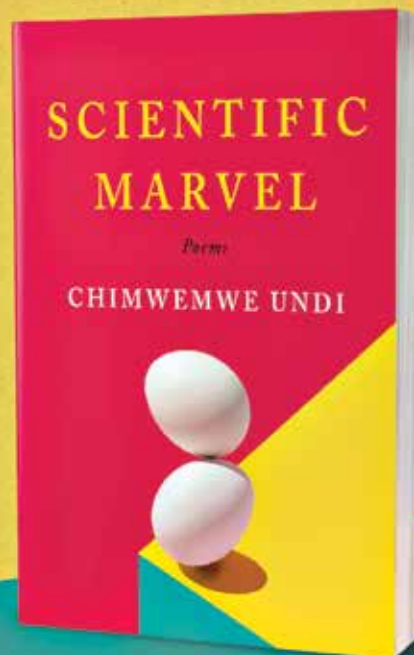
"Masterful."

Katherena Vermette, author of *The Break*

**"A fight song for anyone in love
with their broken city."**

Sanna Wani, author of *My Grief, the Sun*

An arresting collection of poems about what
is left out from the history and ongoing
realities of Winnipeg.



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Winners of the 2023 inaugural

PolterGeist

Writing Contest

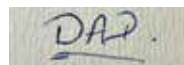
Inspired by the word geist, which can be translated to “spirit,” “wit” or “ghost,” these stories orbit fact and fiction, capturing haunted moments and the strange and sublime of the everyday.

FIRST PRIZE

Holes

JENNIFER ROBINSON

The d’s and t’s in his childhood scrapbook have long backs and straight spines and his capital letters swirl with youthful pride. The script in his work files is neat but scratchy, the t’s loop and the b’s hunch over. “How much time do you have?” I remember him joking after his second diagnosis, when I asked him to write something, anything, his hand shaking, letters faint, little ghosts on the page, opening, dissolving, more and more loops and more and more holes, until it all became holes, empty, a blank page, just like before, before he ever existed.



Jennifer Robinson lives and writes on Treaty 1 territory (Winnipeg, Manitoba). She gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Manitoba Arts Council. Her work has appeared in Prairie Fire, the Dalhousie Review, River Teeth, Grain and elsewhere.

Paul's Tomb of Madness, Hopeness, Oneness, Repurposed Kosher Dill Jars, Good Luck Money Trees, Avoiding Osteoporosis, and Good Housekeeping—Which Is to Say, Everything

TYLER FINLEY

Wait until it is well dark. Lie beside the tomb. Run your fingers over the inscription, AD 1910, to find the secret window underneath. Insert your arm past the elbow and let it dangle. If you can hold it this way for sixty minutes, you'll live forever. If you cannot, well, let's just say you won't. Place your back to the tomb on a clear day, close your eyes and form a picture in your mind of whatever it is you want most in life. Hold the picture, unwaveringly, as you walk back to your car. Lick the tomb and jump in the lake in February and your parents will buy you a dog. Hook up on the tomb and you'll never break up. Touch your face to the tomb and your zits will clear overnight, the crows will release their feet from the now luminous skin that frames your eyes. Place your grandmother on the tomb and she'll pick the next Grey Cup winner. Crush a sixty-four-ounce slushy on the tomb and your urine will divine a path to gold and other precious metals. Feed silk scarves into the tomb while playing any song off Both Sides Now and you'll gain the gift of prophecy as it pertains to weather, the compatibility of future sexual partners and the best new best-kept secret spot for brunch. Also, your bone density will improve. Kick the tomb barefooted and break at least one toe to secure prime minus 1 on your mortgage if you lock in today. Rub an ear of corn along the tomb and you'll be able to sprint the haunted maze blindfolded and impress the heck out of your nieces and nephews next Halloween. Set a Good Luck Money Tree on the tomb and it will yield perfectly ripe organic avocados and your shower door will retain a streak-free finish. Stare longingly at the tomb and you'll be able to make friends in your thirties. Leave a pickle jar full of wildflowers on the tomb for Elizabeth Paul, d. 1914. It must be a pickle jar. Nobody knows why, but you should do it anyway. Read K-Ming Chang next to the tomb and you'll find a two-bed-two-bath on the bus loop and your third round of IVF will take and your heart will feel like it has emerged for a moment from the great unspeakable weight of things. Call your mom from the tomb and she'll appreciate it. When you return to your car, clear your mind. Take three deep breaths. Know that whatever happens next, at least you're on the right side of the ground, as your grandmother used to say. Repeat this to yourself because our bodies deal in ritual.

Paul's Tomb is found on Knox Mountain in Kelowna, BC. The trail is open year-round. Nearby amenities include a disc golf course and an off-leash dog park. Parking is free.

Tyler Finley (he/him/his) is a storyteller from Kelowna, BC. He lives with his partner and their children on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan People. His work explores love, loss, connection and the body—particularly the chords of mental health.

Squeeze Me

HSIEN CHONG TAN

Somewhere around page 140 of the report she is photocopying, Sally hears a sound coming from the left side of the machine. The copies are still rolling out, settling in a pile on the tray.

Knock, knock. Knock, knock.

"Who's there?" she asks.

Knock, knock.

She hits "cancel." The copier stops humming. Knock, knock.

Sally pulls the trays out one by one. Plenty of paper, nobody home. She opens the front cover and depresses the pale green levers, sliding out the corresponding parts, each one hot to the touch. She turns the knobs that roll the rollers. She closes the cover and checks again.

Knock, knock.

Is it coming from the *right* side?

Sally flattens her hand against the glass and presses "copy." The strip of light burns with purpose. She can almost see through her fingers. The copier hums, then stops. "Paper jam," announces the LCD panel. "Do something," blinks the error bulb.

"It's late," Sally says to the empty office. "I'm going home."

The bus takes forever. When she finally reaches her apartment, Sally looks at the large package outside her neighbour's door. It's been there for three days.

Knock, knock.

Like some kind of bad joke.

The parcel is sealed with tape and bulges slightly. She could pop into her kitchen and get a knife. It wouldn't take long.

Sally puts her ear against the cardboard.

"This side up," says the box. The arrow is pointing down.

She lifts with her knees, not her back, and turns the box the right way up. It's heavy.

Maybe it is a gym set, a sex toy, a body, a bookshelf.

Sally goes home and locks the door.

Inside, Sally kicks off her shoes, drops the mail on the table and hangs up her jacket.

She falls on the couch, turns on the TV, rubs her feet, then stands up again.

The dishwasher is broken and all her glasses are in the sink. She turns on the faucet and starts to rinse one, and that's when she hears it—from inside the fridge.

Knock, knock.

Sally spins around and yanks the handle; the beer bottles on the bottom shelf clink. Top shelf, a segment of brie. Lettuce in the crisper.

The fridge door holds some milk, three eggs and a bottle of ketchup, inverted. "Squeeze me," says the label.

Inside the freezer, three tubs of ice cream in different flavours, each excavated to a different depth. She opens them all, finds the insides furry with frost.

At the office the next morning, the copier light is no longer blinking. Whatever was stuck has become unstuck.

On the table next to the machine, Sally sees a sheet of paper, crushed and stretched out again like the folds of an accordion. On it, the image of a pale hand against dark glass.

"Hi." It seems to be waving. "Hi."

Hsien was born in Singapore and lives in Vancouver, BC, with his wife, dog and two cats. He was the winner of PRISM International's 2019 Jacob Zilber Prize, and his stories have appeared in Mid-American Review, Crab Orchard Review, The Journey Prize Stories (2020) and elsewhere.

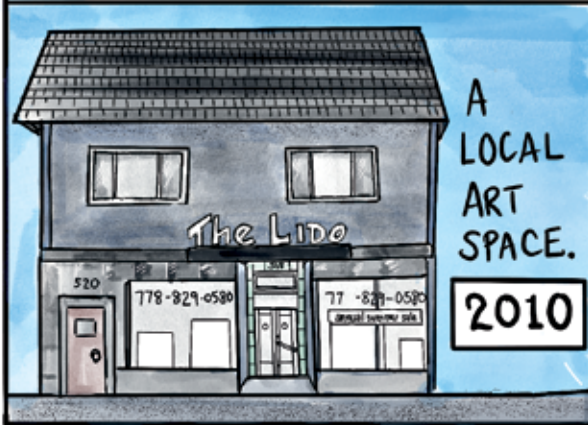
LONG LOST LIDO

By Onjana Yawnghwe

Lido: a public place outdoors that one can swim, like an open-air swimming pool or part of a beach. Comes from Italian meaning "beach." Origins from Latin "litus" meaning "shore."



518 EAST BROADWAY, VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA.
THE LIDO AS IT STANDS TODAY IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD
BAR WITH LIVE MUSIC AND EVENTS,
BUT BEFORE THAT IT HAD BRIEF STINTS AS:



BEFORE THAT, IT STOOD VACANT,
ITS WINDOWS COVERED BY BEIGE CURTAINS.



THE LIDO WAS A VANCOUVER MYSTERY, ESPECIALLY TO FOLKS WHO LIVED IN THE MOUNT PLEASANT NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE 2000s. LIKE ME.



Sorry, WE'RE
CLOSED

IT WAS THE STORE THAT NEVER OPENED.
THE SQUARE LITTLE BUILDING STOOD SUSPENDED IN TIME
WITH NO ONE EITHER COMING OR GOING.

IT BECAME A FIXTURE OF MY YOUTH, A PLACE AS ODD AND OUT OF PLACE AS I
FELT IN MY OWN LIFE. EVEN THE NAME LIDO WAS PECULIAR, SOUNDING BOTH
FRIENDLY AND FOREIGN. I LIKED SEEING IT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE. IT WAS
REASSURING BOTH IN ITS PRESENCE AND ABSENCE.

SOME PEOPLE CALLED IT A CRIMINAL FRONT, OR AN ART INSTALLATION PLAYING THE LONG GAME. SOME RECALLED VISITING THE STORE
IN THE 1960s, WHEN IT SOLD EXPIRED CHEESE AT DIRT-CHEAP PRICES. SOME CLAIMED THE STORE OPENED ONE DAY A WEEK FOR A
SINGLE HOUR. I SOMETIMES WONDERED IF THE OWNERS
IMAGINED THEMSELVES LOUNGING POOLSIDE OR ON THE BEACH
INSTEAD OF AT WORK IN THE MIDDLE OF A NO- NONSENSE, HIGH
TRAFFIC STREET.

I REMEMBER WALKING BY THE STORE, NOTICING BOXES OF
BRIGHT YELLOW NO NAME PRODUCTS IN THE WINDOW DISPLAY.

THE STORE LOOKED LIKE IT WAS FROM ANOTHER ERA.

IT WAS ALWAYS CLOSED.

ALWAYS EMPTY INSIDE.





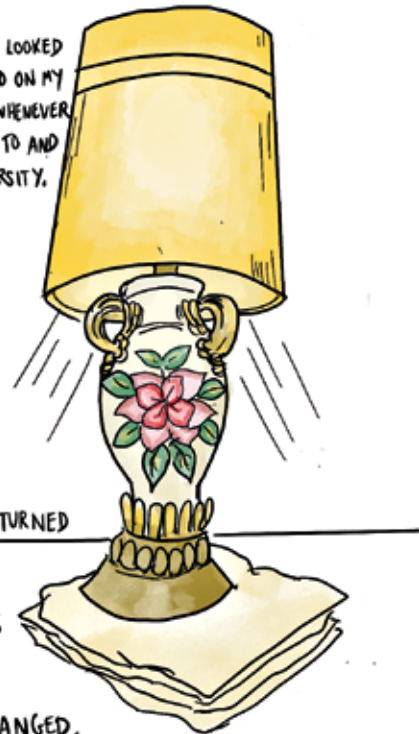
SOMETIMES,

A LAMP WAS TURNED ON AT NIGHT.
OR VASES OF BRIGHT ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS APPEARED
AT THE WINDOW.

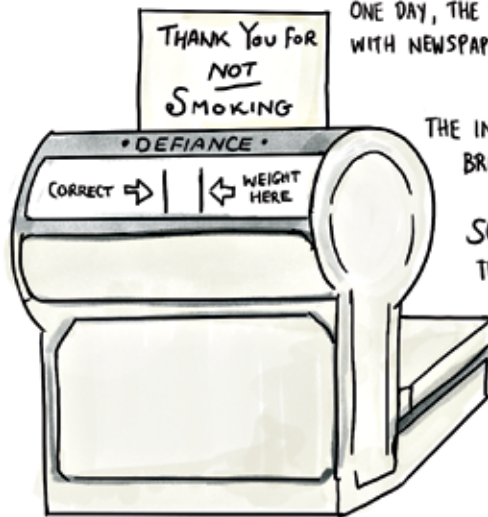
FUSSY WHITE DOILIES CROPPED UP BELOW EMPTY JARS.
OCCASIONALLY, THE WINDOWS WERE COVERED ENTIRELY WITH
NEWSPAPERS, ONLY TO BE TAKEN DOWN A FEW WEEKS LATER.

THE STORE WAS STILL THERE — AS IF PRESERVED IN A BELL
JAR — WHEN MY PARENTS FULFILLED THE IMMIGRANT
DREAM AND PURCHASED A HOUSE IN COQUITLAM IN THE
1990S AND WE MOVED OUT OF EAST VANCOUVER.

BUT I STILL LOOKED
FOR THE LIDO ON MY
BUS ROUTE WHENEVER
I COMMUTED TO AND
FROM UNIVERSITY.



I MOVED BACK TO MOUNT PLEASANT WITH MY THEN SWEETHEART IN THE 2000s. THE LIDO
REMAINED ON MY MIND.



ONE DAY, THE STORE WINDOWS WERE AGAIN COVERED
WITH NEWSPAPER.

THE INK FADED OVER TIME, THE PAPER TURNED
BRITTLE AND YELLOW.

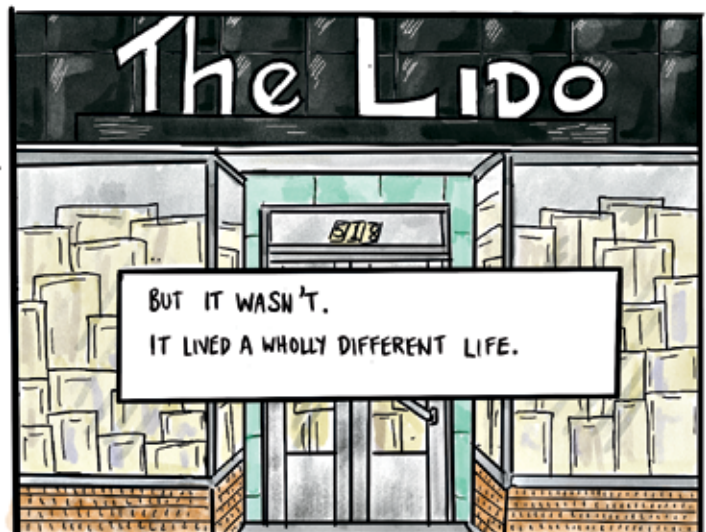
SOMETHING FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTED AS
THE STORE REMAINED SHUTTERED.

VANCOUVER HAD SOMEHOW CHANGED.

I OBSERVED WITH CURIOSITY THE FATE OF THE LIDO OVER
THE INTERVENING YEARS.

IT LOOKED WORN DOWN AND DERELICT,
IT REMINDED ME OF DEATH AND LOSS, PERHAPS
BECAUSE AROUND THAT TIME MY FATHER
UNEXPECTEDLY DIED.

I EXPECTED IT TO BE TORN DOWN.



BUT IT WASN'T.
IT LIVED A WHOLLY DIFFERENT LIFE.

Mysterious East Van shop yields hidden bounty

BY DARAH HANSEN
VANCOUVER SUN

It was one of the great myster-

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2008

A RATHER ASTONISHING STORY MADE THE
NEWS IN THE SUMMER OF 2008.

THE LIDO HIT THE MAINSTREAM...



JUNK CREWS DESCRIBED THE CONTENTS OF THE STORE AS A "TIME-WARP" WITH 1950s ERA ELECTRONICS, "15 CUBIC YARDS" OF LONG-EXPIRED, RUSTY CANS OF FISH AND FOOD AND MOUNTAINS OF MILDEWED CLOTHING ALONGSIDE RAT DROPPINGS. IT TOOK FIVE DAYS AND TEN TRUCKLOADS TO HAUL EVERYTHING AWAY.



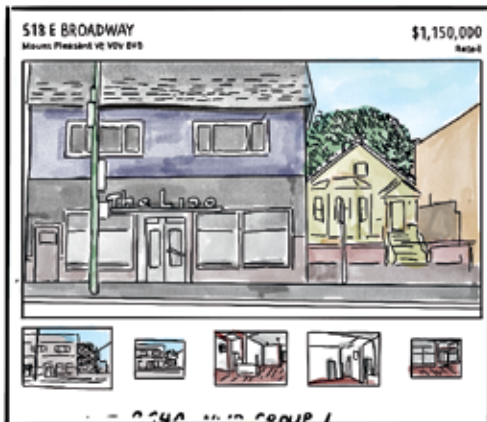
THE JUNK GUYS DISCOVERED \$950 IN 1930s BILLS HIDDEN UNDER SOME RUGS, WHICH THEY ALMOST THREW AWAY BECAUSE IT LOOKED LIKE MONOPOLY MONEY, THEN, THE BUILDING'S CARETAKER FOUND \$400,000 JAMMED IN A BAG IN A BEDROOM CLOSET AND AN OLD SUITCASE CONTAINING PASSPORTS FROM THE 1940s AND '50s.

IN OTHER NEWS STORIES, THE OWNER OF THE LIDO WAS NAMED - MARGARET ROTHWEILER. THE MONEY WENT TO HER FAMILY; HER NEPHEW JACK, WHO HAD NOT SEEN HIS AUNT IN YEARS, SPECULATED THAT SHE AND HER HUSBAND CHRIS MADE THEIR MONEY THROUGH REAL ESTATE AND BETTING ON HORSE RACING.

I DIDN'T READ THIS NEWS WHEN IT FIRST CAME OUT.
SO FINDING THE STORY THROUGH AN INTERNET SEARCH
YEARS LATER FELT LIKE A DOOR FLINGING OPEN.

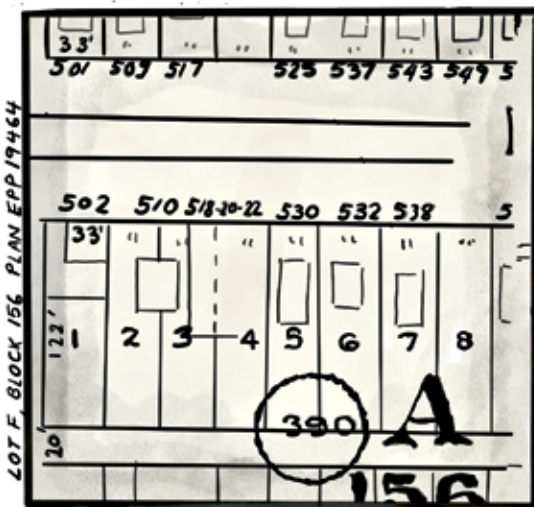
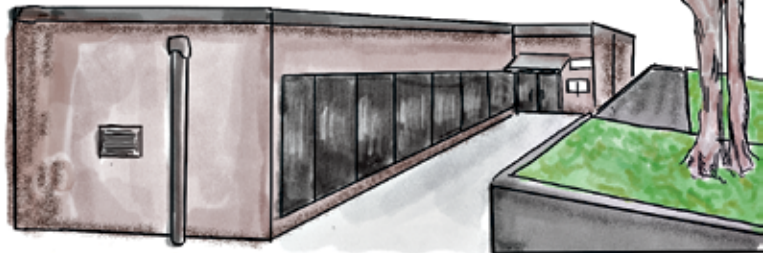


A FEVER TOOK HOLD OF ME: LIDO FEVER. WHY HAD I NEVER TRIED TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE STORE BEFORE? IN ANY CASE I NOW HAD A NAME: ROTHWEILER. A PLACE TO START. I ASKED FRIENDS IF THEY'D EVER HEARD OF THE LIDO; MOST HADN'T. I WAS SURPRISED THE LORE OF THE LIDO WAS NOT MORE WIDESPREAD. HOW COULD THIS STORY, WHICH LOOMED SO LARGE IN MY WORLD, BE LOST TO HISTORY?



I FOUND AN OLD REAL ESTATE LISTING ON THE INTERNET (FROM AROUND 2009) OF THE BUILDING THAT HAD BEEN MARKED "SOLD." IT BOASTED THREE UPSTAIRS SUITES AND 1800 SQUARE FEET OF RETAIL SPACE, ALL EXTENSIVELY RENOVATED. IT WAS LISTED FOR A COOL \$1.1 MILLION.

I WENT TO THE VANCOUVER ARCHIVES. I LEARNED THE LIDO BUILDING WAS CONSTRUCTED AROUND 1911 BY JOSEPH STEVENS. THE LOT CONSISTED OF THREE UNITS: 518, 520 AND 522. (UNIT 518 USED TO BE A TABLE SUPPLY STORE, A BAKERY AND A GROCERY STORE BEFORE BECOMING "THE LIDO CONFECTIONARY.")



1912 GOAD'S FIRE INSURANCE MAP

THE ROTHWEILERS LIKELY OPENED THE LIDO IN THE 1940s, THOUGH EXACT DATES ARE UNKNOWN.

AS I DUG THROUGH THE ARCHIVES, TRACES OF THE COUPLE BEGAN TO EMERGE.

ON FEBRUARY 7, 1941, CHRISTIAN JACOB ROTHWEILER, AGE 32 AND BORN IN MANNHEIM, GERMANY, WED 27-YEAR-OLD ALBERTA-BORN MARGARET MAE FELTON, A NORTH VANCOUVER RESIDENT, AT THE VANCOUVER COURTHOUSE. THE GROOM'S OCCUPATION WAS LISTED AS A SALESMAN IN HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS, WHILE THE BRIDE (CURIOUSLY CATEGORIZED AS "SPINSTER") WAS LISTED AS A CLERK AT A GROCERY.



SOURCE: ROYAL BC MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

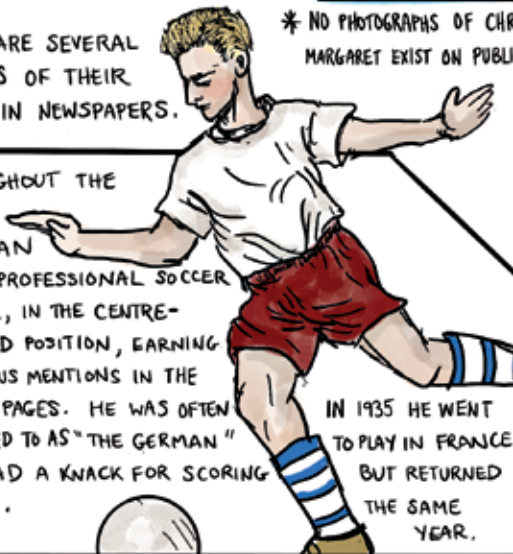
IMMIGRATION RECORDS REVEAL THAT CHRISTIAN SAILED ON THE HMS MONTCLARE TO QUEBEC ON AUGUST 15, 1930. HE BECAME A NATURALIZED CITIZEN OF CANADA ON JULY 10, 1937.

THERE ARE SEVERAL GLIMPSSES OF THEIR LIVES IN NEWSPAPERS.

* NO PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHRISTIAN OR MARGARET EXIST ON PUBLIC RECORD.



THROUGHOUT THE 1930S CHRISTIAN WAS A PROFESSIONAL SOCCER PLAYER, IN THE CENTRE-FORWARD POSITION, EARNING NUMEROUS MENTIONS IN THE SPORTS PAGES. HE WAS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "THE GERMAN" AND HAD A KNACK FOR SCORING GOALS.



IN 1935 HE WENT TO PLAY IN FRANCE BUT RETURNED THE SAME YEAR.

SEPTEMBER 18, 1942

CHRISTIAN PLEADED GUILTY IN A COURT CASE FOR STEALING \$16,000 WORTH OF JEWELLERY, WHICH WAS FOUND AT BOTH THE STORE AND AT THE NORTH VANCOUVER HOME OF HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW. HE ALLEGEDLY BOUGHT THE JEWELS FROM THE THIEF. HE WAS SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IN JAIL WITH HARD LABOUR.

German Admits Guilt In Stolen Goods Case

Christian Rothweiler, 33, proprietor of a confectionery store at 518 East Broadway, pleaded guilty before Magistrate

IN 1943, NEWSPAPERS REPORTED TWO THEFTS AT THE LIDO - IN JANUARY AND OCTOBER - NAMING MARGARET AS THE VICTIM.

Burglar Gets \$525 In Woman's Store

A burglar got a rich haul - \$525 - when he broke through a window at Lido Confectionery, 518 East Broadway, Sunday night. Mrs. Margaret Rothweiler, manageress, said that \$500 was



IN 1949, "BOOTLEGGER" CHRISTIAN WAS FINED \$300 FOR SELLING LIQUOR.

CHRISTIAN MADE NEWS AGAIN IN MARCH 1954. HE WAS CHARGED WITH POSSESSION OF 900 TABLETS CONTAINING CODEINE WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY BOUGHT FROM A CONDEMNED CHINESE GROCERY STORE. HE DECLARED:

I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS ILLEGAL TO SELL THEM!



A FEW WEEKS LATER, HE AND HIS COCONSPIRATORS WERE ACQUITTED.

UNLUCKY MARGARET HAD HER WINNING HORSE RACING TICKET - WORTH \$157.20 - STOLEN RIGHT OUT OF HER HAND BY A YOUTH.

Lucky lady picks winner - for nothing

Mrs. Margaret Rothweiler held a winning ticket worth

AUGUST 17, 1961

IN THE 1970S THE ROTHWEILERS MADE REGULAR APPEARANCES IN THE HORSE RACING SECTION OF THE NEWSPAPER.

THEY OWNED AND BRED RACE HORSES. MANY OF THEIR HORSES DID SPECTACULARLY WELL.

HORSE NAMES INCLUDED:

"HI FASHION AGENT"

"GYPSY JEWEL"

"NORTHERN PILOT"

"WALDRON CASTLE"




LITTLE IS ON RECORD OF THE COUPLE'S LATTER YEARS.

CHRISTIAN DIED ON JULY 2, 1997 AT THE AGE OF 88 AT VANCOUVER GENERAL HOSPITAL.

FOR TEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, MARGARET KEPT THE LIDO OPEN, IF ONLY FOR ONE HOUR A WEEK. THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE UNKNOWN.

I'M A ROMANTIC.
I LIKE TO THINK IT WAS
BECAUSE SHE MISSED
HER HUSBAND.

I LIKE TO THINK
THEY WERE IN
LOVE ALL THEIR
LIVES.

 <p>GOVERNMENT OF British Columbia Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors Division of VITAL STATISTICS</p>	
<p>MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH</p> <p>This is a permanent legal record - Type 1</p>	
<p><i>Important Notice to Doctors</i> Issue the Medical Certification of Death promptly to avoid delay. Complete the Medical Certificate within 48 hours of death.</p>	
<p>Name of Deceased</p>	<p>1. Surname (Print or Type) ROTHWEILER All given names CHRISTIAN</p>

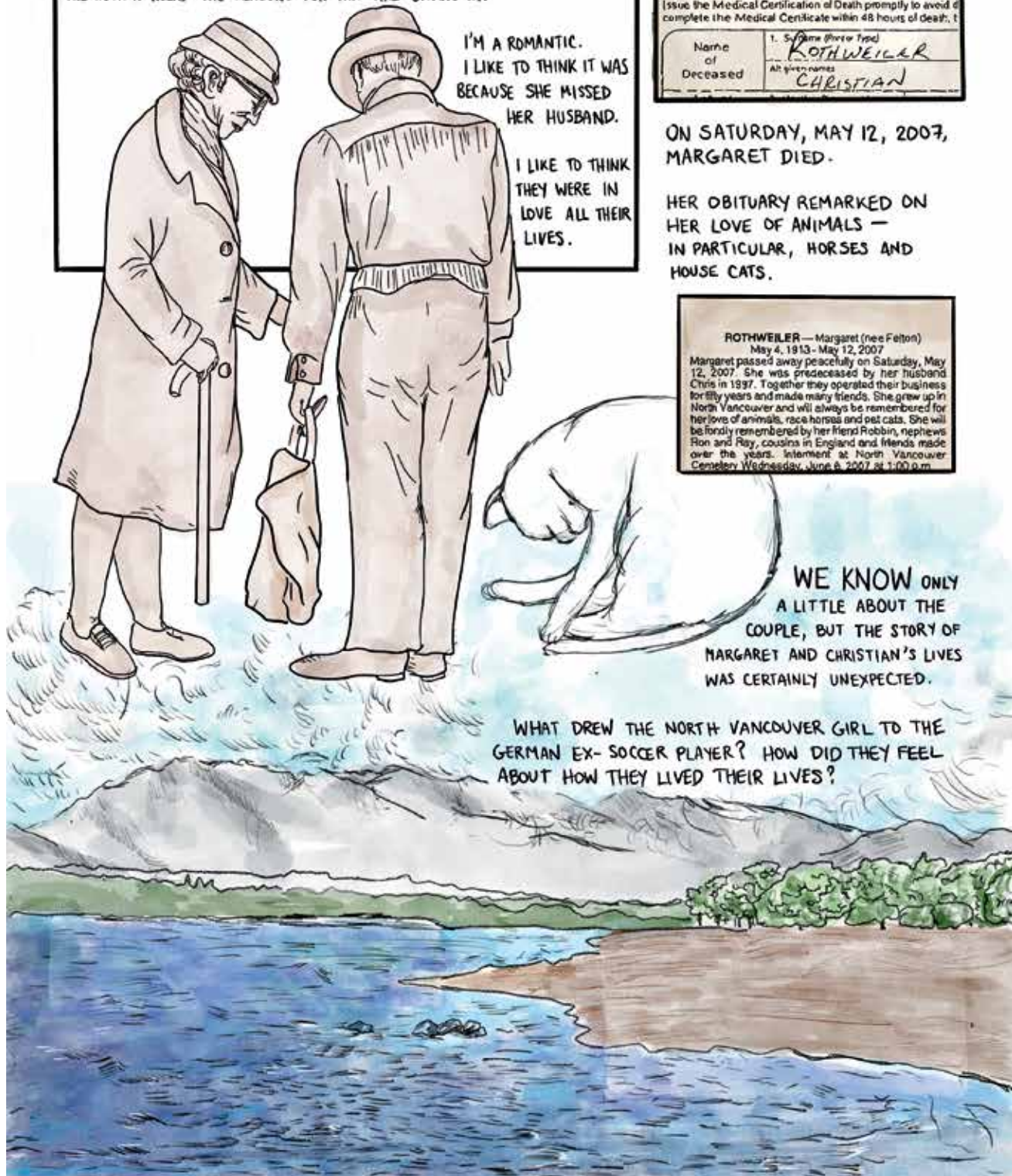
ON SATURDAY, MAY 12, 2007,
MARGARET DIED.

HER OBITUARY REMARKED ON
HER LOVE OF ANIMALS —
IN PARTICULAR, HORSES AND
HOUSE CATS.

ROTHWEILER — Margaret (nee Felton)
May 4, 1913 - May 12, 2007
Margaret passed away peacefully on Saturday, May 12, 2007. She was predeceased by her husband Chris in 1997. Together they operated their business for fifty years and made many friends. She grew up in North Vancouver and will always be remembered for her love of animals, race horses and pet cats. She will be fondly remembered by her friend Robbin, nephews Ron and Ray, cousins in England and friends made over the years. Interment at North Vancouver Cemetery Wednesday, June 6, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.

WE KNOW ONLY
A LITTLE ABOUT THE
COUPLE, BUT THE STORY OF
MARGARET AND CHRISTIAN'S LIVES
WAS CERTAINLY UNEXPECTED.

WHAT DREW THE NORTH VANCOUVER GIRL TO THE
GERMAN EX-SOCCER PLAYER? HOW DID THEY FEEL
ABOUT HOW THEY LIVED THEIR LIVES?



CONFESSION:

IN ALL THESE YEARS, I'VE NEVER VISITED THE LIDO BAR. A PART OF ME RESISTED ITS CURRENT INCARNATION; I WANTED TO PRESERVE MY MEMORY OF THE OLD LIDO WITH ITS DUSTY BLUE WALLS AND SHELVES OF YELLOW BOXES.

BUT LEARNING ABOUT THE LIDO HAS GIVEN ME MORE THAN MEMORY: IT HAS GIVEN ME STORIES.

AFTER WALKING BY THE LIDO AND FINDING IT CLOSED SO MANY TIMES, I FINALLY CROSSED THE THRESHOLD AND HAVE BEEN WELCOMED IN.

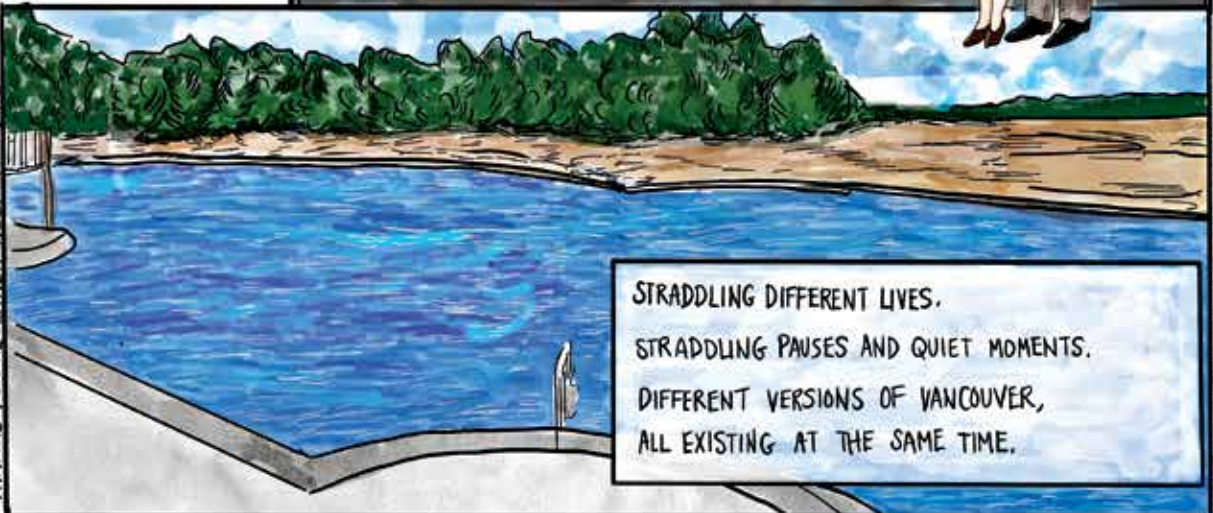
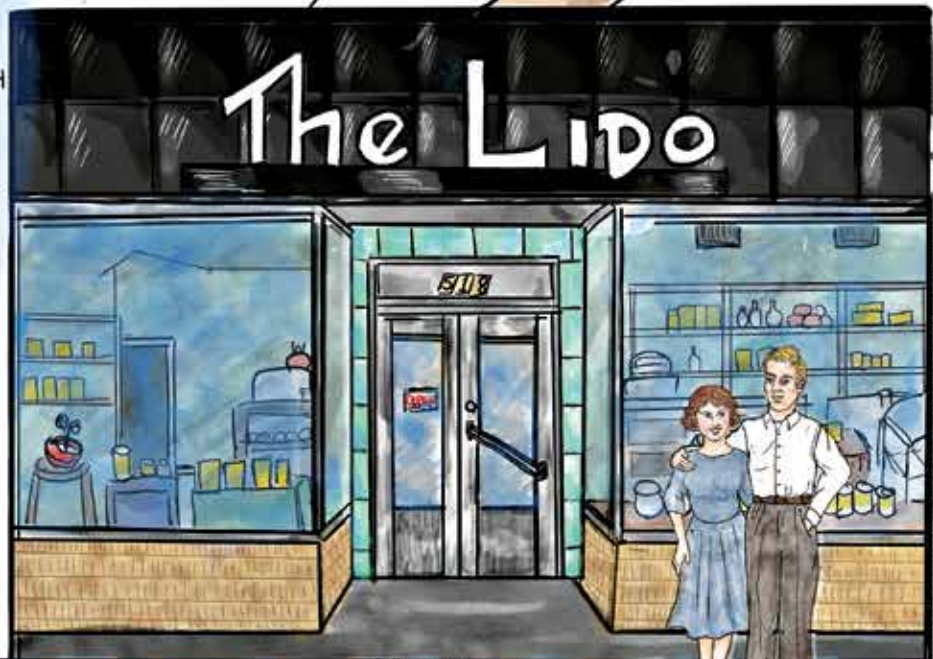
SO HERE I AM, AT THE LIDO, SIPPING AN ICE-COLD CIDER. IT'S HARDLY A BEACH OR A SWIMMING POOL. BUT THERE IS MUSIC AND ART AND AN OLD-FASHIONED, COZY FEELING. I SEE THE SAME FRAME, SAME WALLS,

I PICTURE THE STORE WITH ITS FADED BOXES.

I PICTURE THE COOL, BLUE WATERS OF AN OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL.

I PICTURE THIS BAR.

SOMEHOW, DISPARATE AS THEY ARE, THEY SHORE EACH OTHER.



STRADDLING DIFFERENT LIVES.
STRADDLING PAUSES AND QUIET MOMENTS.
DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF VANCOUVER,
ALL EXISTING AT THE SAME TIME.

THANKS FOR RESEARCH HELP TO KAREN ESTRIN, JOEL DESTEFANO, AND THE CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

CREDIT TO BLOGS: "STOREFRONT VANCOUVER" BY JIM A. + MY TWO CENTERS BY TAMARA BROOKS. FILLER: KENT BARRETT, JACONI, PHOTOGRAPH, CISA "WEN, SHAWN, LILLIBUR STARKOW, NINE W., BOB 2004

Love Song for Mosquito

EMILY LU

Violence could not reach them only when they were distant as the moon, not of this world



The second time I heard the song “白月光与朱砂痣” was in a Chinese grocery store at the corner of Wonderland and Oxford in London, Ontario. It was January 2021 and one year into the pandemic. I lived in three places: the hospital, the Chinese grocery store, home. I called my mom sporadically. I learned to play melancholic Chinese pop songs on the guitar. I drifted listlessly down hospital corridors at 3 a.m. Over the phone, I asked my mom about the meaning of the song’s title, “White Moonlight and Cinnabar.” Was it a Chinese-specific allusion I hadn’t heard of? My mom said she didn’t know. Something about love, maybe.

The Chinese grocery store got me through my psychiatry residency from 2017 to 2022. It kept me fed and watered and sustained. At the beginning of the pandemic, their employees wore masks weeks ahead of other Canadian grocery chains. They were also the first to stock face masks in London, long before hospitals provided consistent PPE to their staff. I wandered the aisles in a daze on my way home from the hospital after 24-hour shifts. Finding a new grocery item—a firm vegetable, a bright melon—was the most entertainment I had. The cashier once commented on my

alarming snack-to-vegetable ratio. We shared a chuckle. The store shuttered in February 2023 after successfully seeing me through to graduation.

In January 2021, the CEO of London Health Sciences Centre was fired. Months prior, he sent a hospital-wide email berating staff for the high rates of staff COVID-19 infection and sick leave. I still have a copy of the email. This was, however, not the reason for his employment termination. When news broke of his multiple travels to the US over the year against national policy and public health guidelines, the hospital board initially came out in support on a Friday. They dealt with public backlash over the weekend. The following Monday, the board recanted. Then, days later, the former CEO sued the hospital for \$2.5 million dollars for wrongful dismissal.

That month my mind settled on two anxieties. The first: to get vaccinated as soon as it became available. The second was related to the first, in that because the vaccine was not yet available in London and because of multi-level institutional failure, I would catch COVID-19 at work and die. My body wouldn’t be found for days, maybe weeks.

I would become a thirty-year-old virgin ghost and haunt the hospital and my replacement, warning them of my fate with ambiguous omens and ghostly gestures.

Two years later in a Toronto bubble tea shop I encountered “White Moonlight and Cinnabar” again. The name of two teas on the menu, 张爱玲与朱砂痣 and 张爱玲与白月光, were rendered in English as Eileen Chang Watermelon Coconut Juice and Eileen Chang Thai Coconut Lime Tea. I ordered the coconut lime tea. It was tart and refreshing.

When I returned home from the bubble tea shop, a quick internet search provided the answer to my question from 2021. The allusion was to Eileen Chang’s 1944 novella 红玫瑰与白玫瑰.

也许每一个男子全都有过这样的两个女人，至少两个。娶了红玫瑰，久而久之，红的变了墙上的一抹蚊子血，白的还是床前明月光；娶了白玫瑰，白的便是衣服上沾的一粒饭黏子，红的却是心口上一颗朱砂痣。

The pandemic had been my excuse for never meeting anyone ever again, but I decided to download the dating app Hinge for the third or fourth time. I swiped left and right. People unmatched me for not responding after six hours, for having simultaneous conversations, for many, any reason. I swiped after work, in the grocery aisle, before bed. I didn’t reply to a message for a day and a man said I disrespected his time. I actually spent time trying to understand this. I finally stopped when he said he expected his future wife to not disagree with him in public, lest he lose face with his friends. Another man casually mentioned he could crush my arm. I had no reason to remember the context.

I translated the passage from the 1944 Eileen Chang novella, *Red Rose, White Rose*, like this:

Perhaps every man has had these two kinds of women, at least two. Long after marriage to the red rose, the red becomes the mosquito smear on a wall, while the white is still that moonlight across the bedroom floor; after marriage to the white rose, instead the white will be the leftover rice scab on a collar, and the red the cinnabar mark across the heart.

A nurse handed me a discreet note in the emergency department telling me I had a period stain on my scrub pants. Another time I left a bloody mark on a ward chair after sitting on it for a little too long charting. Then I bled all over the on-call bed linen while I tried to sleep. I was exhausted. I was sad. I blamed it on the ceaseless hours and cognitive load of medical residency. But I was overworked and so was everyone else around me. After putting it off for months, I went to see the doctor about heavy menstrual bleeding. The bloodwork results came back showing anemia.

I waited several more months—an attempt to avoid academic disruption—before finally requesting a medical leave of absence. I had already completed the academic requirements of that year. Still, the doctor warned against taking a medical leave longer than a month in case it left a mark on my permanent record. Administrators agreed. They elevated the issue to the provincial physician licensing body to extend my academic year by one month. This would cause me hours of additional administration work every time licensing came up in the future. I also lost pay because resident doctors are salaried according to their year of training. After four weeks of rest, my health barely improved. I still felt ragged and on edge. When I returned to work, I discovered my card access to all clinical areas revoked. I spent hours on the phone with hospital security. Yes, I said, I’m trying to return to work. It felt like another petty kick to my uterus. It was March 2021.

At the time, I was reading Sara Ahmed’s *What’s the Use?* and her subsequent book *Complaint!* She examines the trajectory of complaints at institutions and cases of those who complain about unequal working conditions and abuses of power, including harassment, bullying, sexual violence. I tweeted this sentence from the book:

Complaint seems to catch how those who challenge power become sites of negation: to complain is to become a container of negative affect, a leaky container, speaking out as spilling over.

In July 2021, two hours east of London, Dr. Sophia Duong filed a complaint of sexual assault against her supervisor to the Sunnybrook Hospital and the University of Toronto. She was just starting her second year of medical residency. The supervisor, Dr. Benedict Glover, with at least one prior complaint against him, then sued Dr. Duong for defamation. The *Globe and Mail* detailed the institutional inaction on that complaint a year later, with both the university and hospital denying any duty to investigate or take on the role of upholding basic labour rights or protections for doctors. To the journalist, Dr. Duong said that until the matter was resolved she did not want to return. Her medical training was on hold indefinitely. She gave the newspaper permission to publish her name, to destigmatize both complaint and complainer. That’s where I read her story.

I went to the public library in search of Eileen Chang’s other works and found her 1966 novel 怨女. 怨: to resent, to blame, to complain; 女: woman, daughter. I couldn’t be sure if the woman was the subject of resentment or if she was the one complaining about her station in life. The novel starts with a clanging at the gates and someone on the street clamouring for sesame oil after the vendor family has closed shop for the day. When the young woman finally goes to answer the incessant racket outside, she realizes the man

at the gate doesn't want sesame oil at all but to touch her, to sexually harass her. After she reprimands his advances and cusses him out and (at least) seven generations of his ancestors, she returns to her shop only to be admonished by her brother and sister-in-law for causing a scene. Instead of coming to her defence, they warn her to keep her voice down so as not to lose face with the neighbours.

I returned this book to the library without finishing it. I could not bear to read another narrative of women suffering despite their attempts to resist and refuse. I already knew there was no way things would end well for this fictional young woman.

The longest conversation lasted two months. He sent bold romantic declarations, photos of himself walking home at dusk, pictures of a meal he prepared and was sharing with roommates (egg and tomato, a whole fish). I replied with a photo of my rice lunchbox-for-one at the hospital. He was too busy with work to meet up in person that weekend, the next weekend, one month after that. He dropped screenshots of some cryptocurrency platform he was investing in, with graphs. To my lukewarm response, he sent dick pics and requested nudes. At some point, I concluded that I was dealing with not a man but a cybercrime syndicate dealing in 杀猪盘—pig butchering scams—and I was to be the pig, bleeding from a neck wound.

Re-reading Eileen Chang's words, I encounter again and again the violence in her metaphors. Women as mosquito smear on the wall, women as leftover rice scab, women to be picked off, women to be discarded, women to be crushed in hand. Violence could not reach them only when they were unobtainable, distant as the moon, not of this world. To live as a woman in the world is to live in violence.

At the start of my fourth year of residency in July 2022, I filed a complaint against my supervisor for abuses of power and bullying in the workplace. It was not my first time; I was a serial complainer. I had been through the institutional complaint process enough times to know its futility. This time I told the program director that until they addressed the problem or arranged an alternate work environment, I would rather sit at home and fail the rotation. I was refusing the hospital my labour. I couldn't just sit there and be smeared against the institutional wall like a pesky mosquito again and again. But my refusal was not enough. Administration combed through my records to find proof that I was making this complaint maliciously. Objectively, my records were stellar. When they found nothing concrete, the dean decreed my complaint unprofessionalism, mandated I take a communication skills course and reconcile with the same supervisor, alone, with no additional oversight. Nothing about my situation changed. I accepted

this. I returned to work with the same supervisor. I smiled. I tried to be friendly. My whole body hurt.

The program director later told me he was concerned about my collegiality after I submitted the complaint. He worried I wouldn't be able to get along with my future colleagues. Worried about my future as a doctor if I couldn't get along with everyone, anyone. I almost believed it myself.

A year later, an applicant to my residency program posed a question during her interview. She asked what Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives the workplace offered. I was conducting the interview on a Zoom panel of three (me, program director, faculty member). The program director, pointing to his virtual left and right to women of colour, declared that the representation on this panel was commensurate with their DEI efforts. To this explanation, I did not smile. I did not offer a step-down to the discomfort. I had learned to keep my mouth shut.

In my voice notes from March 2021, I found a couple of my piano covers of sad Chinese pop songs. And a few more on guitar. I didn't make a recording of “白月光与朱砂痣.” That song was lost to that year. The recordings were melancholic, pining and sincere. I could hear myself hesitate, start over. My voice was quiet. A record.

Eileen Chang depicted the violence inherent in women's lives in her time and turned it into a beautiful love story. Almost a century later, that story is a ubiquitous pop culture reference, with bubble tea shops and pop lyrics alluding to the beautiful part of the metaphor. But what about the mess, the complication, the violence, the woman's body represented? Marketing was not going to name their coconut watermelon tea Eileen Chang Bloody Mosquito Smear.

A full calendar year after I left medical residency, my body was on the mend from the institution. That's when I encountered Eileen Chang again at the local bubble tea shop and tried her namesake tea. My anemia had normalized some time before that on medication. I no longer had to contend with spills and leaks everywhere. I no longer left a bloody trail.

My isolation during 2021 was life-depleting, but not completely. I was not a moon detached from the world—I was a woman's body living in it, working the same workplace conditions, shopping in the same grocery store as others. Hours and days and centuries apart from me, there were others. Before me and beside me and after me, there were others. There was a mark, a smear, a mess, a sound, a complaint, a trail, a record.

Emily Lu is a poet, translator and psychiatrist born in Nanjing. She is the author of the chapbooks there is no wifi in the afterlife (San Press 2022) and Night Leaves Nothing New (Baseline Press 2019). She lives in Toronto, ON.

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ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

WORDY GOODNESS

The excellent article “**Rearrangements**” in the December 2023 issue of *The New Yorker* centres around Mangesh Ghogre, a forty-three-year-old man from a small suburb of Mumbai who, based on his “extraordinary ability,” obtained an EB-1A visa (also known as the Einstein visa) to live and work in the US. Ghogre’s extraordinary ability is writing crossword puzzles, which, being a crossword puzzle writer myself, thrilled me. Ghogre began his crossword journey when, as an engineering student in India, he and his fellow students worked on newspaper crosswords to improve their English fluency. With help from online forums, message boards and mentors, Ghogre entered the world of crossword writing and eventually had one of his puzzles published in the *Los Angeles Times*. His first trip to the US was for the 2012 American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. When he was not hanging out with other crossword writers “playing Boggle, trading puzzle ideas and punning compulsively,” he was trying American products that he had only encountered in crosswords: BLT, PBJ, OREOS. According to the article, crosswords came to America via an immigrant from Liverpool, whose first American puzzle (published in the *New York World*) set off a craze in the US. Of course, British puzzlers looked on in horror at what Americans were doing with “their” puzzles; American clues were too mechanical and required a dictionary, while British clues were whimsical and, above all, fair. From the article we also learn that Vladimir Nabokov published the first known Russian crosswords—his clue for DISAPPEAR was “what the Bolsheviks will do.” The immigrant connection is strong in the crossword world and these days there’s a push to widen the

scope of acceptable words and clues to include other languages and realities. For instance, a clue for TPS would usually hint at toilet paper in some way, but Nancy Serrano-Wu chose to refer to Temporary Protected Status, which allows people from certain unsafe countries to live and work in the US temporarily. Natan Last, the author of “Rearrangements,” is also a puzzle writer, so the article is peppered with words like “grok” (to understand intuitively or by empathy) and “alembic” (something that refines or transmutes as if by distillation), plus multiple bits of crossword trivia. To top it off, Last points out that his first name, NATAN, is a palindrome (a word spelled the same both forward and backward) and his surname, LAST, is autological (a word that describes itself). So much wordy goodness!—*Meandricus*

ENCIRCLED BY WOLVES

Anik See’s **Cabin Fever** (Fish Gotta Swim) opens with the narrator leaving the (unnamed) city behind in the dead of winter, heading for the woods with little more than a backpack, snowshoes and a sleeping bag. After making camp in the snow, with night falling, she begins to hear the wolves circling, “rotat[ing] counterclockwise around me, circling the tarp like the second hand on a clock.” Despite this dramatic opening, *Cabin Fever* is much more a novel of introspection than of action. Settled in her family’s isolated cabin to work on her writing, the narrator reflects upon her past—fishing, exploring logging roads by bike—as well as on her later life in Holland. She recalls extended conversations with Max, a Dutch restorer of old books, whose workshop is “scattered with scalpels,

small irons, leather shavings, bone folders, and brass finishing tools.” Her solitary reflections and her conversations with Max range from the deeply philosophical to the banal, from the mass migrations of this century—“people waiting, waiting, waiting before they can start their new lives”—to the seeming impossibility and yet inevitability of death. The German writer W.G. Sebald is an obvious inspiration for *Cabin Fever*, which opens with an epigram taken from a 1997 interview of Sebald by Eleanor Wachtel. As with Sebald’s work, the text of *Cabin Fever* is scattered with embedded photographs: the family cabin, the docks of Amsterdam, a disassembled antiquarian book in the process of being rebound. *Cabin Fever* is not a summer beach book, but it would be perfect for a wintry night sitting before a fire, wolves circling in the outer darkness.—*Michael Hayward*

BIG DREAD AT WEST ED

Kate Black’s nonfiction debut, **Big Mall: Shopping for Meaning** (Coach House), ponders the magnetic pull of the behemoth spectacle that is West Edmonton Mall—or “West Ed,” as it is sometimes known—and the ways in which malls have transcended their function as places to buy things. Through personal essay and academic study, Black is endlessly curious about the mall she grew up in, an alluring site where, despite its countless attractions over the years—we’re talking dolphins and hockey-playing chimps, rollercoasters and waterslides, submarines and pirate ships and lagoons—something never felt quite right. Beginning with a history of the modern mall, Black launches



into an investigation of mall culture, covering topics such as late-capitalism distress, resource extraction, the ethics of zoos, the fear of teenagers, vapourwave aesthetics and the pursuit of self-invention, to name just a few. Black's self-reflective writing style is engaging and relatable. As she tries to understand her place in West Ed, her role in capitalism, and her yearning for the mall's amusements, she reveals the mall for what it is: a place where suicides and deaths occur, where miserable animals are put on display, where people take shelter, where you never truly find yourself. For all these reasons a sense of dread pervades *Big Mall*, which Black articulates when writing about West Ed's art installations, such as the brass right whale, creeping toward extinction, or the dozens of glass oil droplets that dangle from the mall's ceiling onto three men drilling for oil. Whether you've visited West Ed or not, Black's personal reflections and examinations of mall culture will entertain and educate. It's a book that speaks to that overwhelming sensation you get in the mall—nestled right beside the insatiable desire for more, more, more—that something transformative is taking place. *Big Mall* lingers in that feeling, wants to put a finger on

what it might be, and it's all a bit awe-inspiring, all a bit off-putting.

—Kendra Heinz

A HISTORY OF OUTPORT RIVALRY

Michael Crummey explores the coast of Newfoundland once more in his latest novel *The Adversary* (Doubleday) which is organized as a series of tit-for-tat acts between two rivals, Abe Strapp and the Widow Caines. As with *The Innocents*, Crummey's previous novel, *The Adversary* appears to be grounded in historic fact. But while *The Innocents* focussed on the hardships endured by two orphaned siblings—a brother and a sister—in a remote cove in Newfoundland, *The Adversary*, set in the nineteenth century, has a whole townscape, the outport of Mockbeggar, to explore. Mockbeggar is offered as a sort of model town, illustrating just how bleak rural life had been on “the Rock.” Passages of matter-of-fact carnage are reminiscent of Cormac McCarthy, but the blows the residents face land awkwardly at times. My speculation is that Crummey was so committed to realizing the grim logistics of outport life in *The Innocents* that he had little interest left in helping the reader properly gauge the stakes in Mockbeggar. The town seems to float through the pages without gravity. *The Adversary* is still a pleasure to read, if only to admire Crummey's particular way of stringing sentences together—often using words “pillaged” from the Dictionary of Newfoundland English.

—Anson Ching

PINBALL WIZARDRY

For almost thirty-five years, pinball was banned in New York City. When young writer Roger Sharpe arrives in the early 1970s, the only place

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he can find a pinball machine is in a neighbourhood porn shop. Mayor LaGuardia had outlawed the game in 1942, on the grounds that it was used for gambling and corrupted the youth. Police seized over three thousand machines; their wooden legs were repurposed to make billy clubs for the force and the remains were tossed in the river. Finding writing work in New York proves tough for Sharpe, but his luck starts to turn on a long office-tower elevator ride up to a job interview—he meets Ellen, a secretary in one of the offices—and when he comes back down, he’s got a test assignment for *Gentleman’s Quarterly*, which is trying to reach a wider audience. From then on, his employment situation and personal life improve and pinball turns out to be surprisingly important for both. Austin and Meredith Bragg’s film about Sharpe and the role he played in making the game legal again is a clever blend of offbeat documentary, civic history and romantic comedy. From the seventies *GQ* fashion to the gorgeous pinball machines, **Pinball: The Man Who Saved the Game** (written and directed by Austin Bragg and Meredith Bragg) is as fun and eye-catching as the game itself. Streaming on Kanopy and the usual platforms.—*Helen Godolphin*

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO HANG A MAN

The British-born sailor John Robert Radcliffe had always wanted to be a vicar, but when he came to Canada with his family in 1890 and landed the position of Canada’s first official executioner, he was proud of his accomplishment. After all, he was experienced. Radcliffe had hanged pirates on the high seas where he dispatched criminals with merciful alacrity. Why, then, granted all the outer trappings of success, including hobnobbing with Toronto’s elite at the

Sunnyside Boating Club, did his life spiral out of control? In **The Hangman: The True Story of Canada’s First Executioner** (Tidewater Press), the Vancouver writer Julie Burtinshaw relates the history of Canada’s seedier side. We learn that Radcliffe assumed pseudonyms; we learn of his bigotry, and how he was beaten on the streets in French Canada. Gradually, he doubts the guilt of those he has executed and is driven to question the morality of capital punishment itself. This ethical dilemma is assuaged by frequenting the bar of Toronto’s Ocean Hotel on Queen Street West as he becomes increasingly reluctant to return to his family. “This is how they see you,” said his wife one morning as she slammed breakfast on the table. “Not as an angel of mercy, but as a friend of the devil.” Slowly, he discovers the fickle nature of status. Burtinshaw describes Radcliffe as “strangely likeable” as she skilfully reanimates history. This well-crafted account brings together a unique aspect of Canada’s past and reveals there is more than one way to hang a man.—*Maryanna Gabriel*

ON MOTHERHOOD: TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS

In **Matrescence: On the Metamorphosis of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Motherhood** (Penguin Random House), Lucy Jones investigates the transformative experience of becoming a mother in a way that is intimate, informative and illuminating. Blending memoir and research, Jones explores all angles of motherhood—from “hormonal soup” to care work, from the nausea of early pregnancy to the politics of being (or not being) a working mother—situating the experience not only in the biological body but in a larger societal context. Each chapter begins with near-lyrical passages on natural phenomena—frogspawn, eel eggs hatching, the aurora borealis; this

is where the writing really shines and Jones's background as a nature writer comes to the fore. Jones's candid look at the sociological realities of mothers in the modern Western world is particularly refreshing. *Matrescence* serves as an antidote both to bland baby-and-me books and to counter-culture birthing books that often give you the feeling of being quietly gaslit. In that sense, *Matrescence* is radical and necessary. If I had to hazard a guess, this book will make quite a mark not only on how we talk about motherhood but, more importantly, on how mothers feel about themselves.—*Cornelia Mars*

ROLICKING AND HONEST: LIKE ME

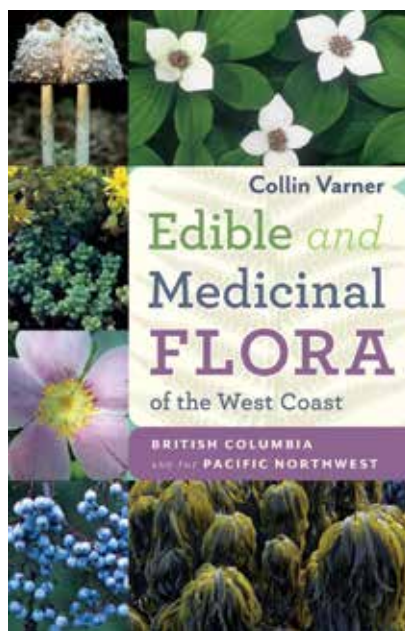
Queers Like Me (Book*hug Press) is a moving and very funny collection of poems from Michael V. Smith, a novelist, poet, filmmaker, professor and performer, who looks back at his small-town Cornwall, Ontario roots with compassion, awareness and humour, as in his poem, "A Parallel Universe": "In some other / Parallel quantum town / Life has given me / The opportunity to meet / Al Charbonneau / At the hardware store / So he can say, / You know / What, sorry I called you / A cocksucker / in Ethics class // But / am I / still my own person / who answers, Hey, no, look / that's all true. I've been / a cocksucker / this whole time. You / are not apologizing / for the right piece / of that action." In the poem "Facebook," Smith incorporates his father's posts from the last months of his life, and Smith's posts from his father's bedside; well, you can laugh or cry or both. Smith perfectly captures the tragedy and privilege of being present for a parent's death: "Overheard Dad talking to palliative / care today: 'I don't want to die / I can't say / why I don't / want to die, / I just don't.'" *Queers Like Me* takes us through Smith's family dynamics, his youth,

his father's death and then to his new joyous life with his husband. This is a rollicking and honest book.

—*Peggy Thompson*

WEST COAST FORAGING

Edible and Medicinal Flora of the West Coast: British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest by Collin Varner (Heritage House) is a compact "forager's guide" that feels like it should be slipped into a backpack instead of admired on a coffee table. The entries give you enough information to identify all sorts of plants and fungi, with large photographs, general descriptions (which perhaps feel a bit sparse and to-the-point), etymology, habitat, origin, edibility, the best season to find each particular species and, where known, their traditional or medicinal uses. The book closes with a dozen or so recipes for intriguing dishes like four clover stir-fry and birch syrup granola. While billing itself as a guide for foraging edible plants, Varner cautions the reader about the toll over-foraging can take on the sensitive ecosystem. He advises the reader to educate themselves on foraging best practices and to be careful about harvesting and eating anything from the





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resentments and
unspoken truths
boiling just beneath
the surface.

Like all great Bollywood
films, *The Wedding* is rife
with family drama and
steeped in tradition.

With humour, nuance
and honesty, it spills the
chai—exploring desire and
expectation, suffering
and judgment, class and
race, all in search of a
happy-enough-ever-after.



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wild. This is echoed in the foreword by seṇákw ethnobotanist Senaqwila Wyss, who encourages the reader to support the ecosystem by taking only what they need. In a time when foraging for wild food is fashionable, I was pleased to see these acknowledgements. One day in early spring, I did slip this guide into my coat pocket when I went for a walk with my mother. Not much was growing yet in the underforest of the Fraser Valley, but the ferns were unfurling and we had fun trying to identify them. The only one we could be sure of was the licorice fern creeping up the mossy trunk of a century maple. We left it intact. I found myself wishing that the images in the book's entries showed the plant in more than one state, since we sometimes found it hard to match young shoots with the mature specimens in the photos. I'm looking forward to taking this book out again later in the season.

—Kelsea O'Connor

THE BOY AND THE SELF

Hayao Miyazaki has come to occupy something of a rarefied space among millennials; his 2001 opus, *Spirited Away*, arrived at just the moment when we had begun to outgrow Disney films but still craved rich fantasy. *Spirited Away* for me was a revelation, a piece of media that coaxed me out of childhood and hinted at the fascinating, mature beauty that could exist beyond *The Little Mermaid*. Now, over sixty years into his career, and after several announcements of his retirement, the enigmatic Miyazaki returns with the illuminating **The Boy and the Heron** (Studio Ghibli). I approached the film tentatively, believing that I had outgrown all of his tricks; I prepared myself for a by-the-numbers hero's journey with magical creatures, a supernatural MacGuffin, and perhaps some latent undiscovered powers. I folded my arms, believing that I could not glean

anything new from this film, that it was made for the next generation of young artists and I was only paying my respects by purchasing a ticket. Yet I was stretched; once the momentum of the film was truly underway, I found nothing predictable plot-wise, and in fact was entirely overwhelmed by the sensory experience of the film. Does this location exist physically, or is it a dream? Does the protagonist actually fall through time, or is it a metaphor? What is this new realm, and who are these enemies? Miyazaki does not deliver easy answers. If what I'd wanted was a return to late childhood, I could watch *Spirited Away* again; if I wanted digestible morality, I could watch a Pixar or Marvel film. Miyazaki is one of the few artists skilled or daring enough to create an experience that viewers can explore for themselves without signposts or marked exits. We are left to discover our own hero's journey, which can be only uncovered through the interrogation of oneself.—Jonathan Heggen

AN ONGOING SPACE OF ENCOUNTER

Many Canadian publishers, including Coach House, ECW and Biblioasis, have series where authors are invited to write a short book/long essay on a topic related to culture and ideas. These might be considered experiments—some more successful than others—allowing authors free rein to write on any non-fiction topic without pressure to be an expert. In the case of **On Community** (Biblioasis), Casey Plett brings her background as a trans person, writer and small press publisher to think deeply about the concept of community, asking what it means and how it nourishes and supports us, but also how it can bring harm through insularity (as in some aspects of her family's Mennonite community). Such a ubiquitous word rarely receives scrutiny, but this

project wants to know who decides what defines a community and who polices their boundaries. A spiral of thoughts and anecdotes organized around questions concerning what it means to be part of the queer and trans communities, *On Community* invites readers to reflect on where we see and feel community and how we know it is there. Repetition and callbacks (a story in which she is welcomed as an insider despite moving away, a story in which her uncle feels like an outsider despite a long residency) strengthen the arguments, and the focus on personal anecdotes balances the big philosophical issues. This is a heartfelt, funny, wistful read—just conceptually rigorous enough to provoke thought, but without difficult theory or jargon.—Kristina Rothstein

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PAST

Conversations with Khahtsahlano, 1932–1954 (Massy Books / Talonbooks) is a reissue in photographic facsimile of a publication originally produced in 1955 in “five bound and indexed transcript copies.” These copies were intended to preserve conversations that took place over two decades between



Major J.S. Matthews, Vancouver's longtime city archivist, and "August Jack Khahtsahlano, born 1877, six feet tall, ... the son of Khay-tulk, and grandson of Khatsahlanogh, a chief of the Squamish tribe of Indians, and from whose name the suburb of Kitsilano is called." Reading this book is like travelling back through time. As Matthews notes in his cover letter to Public Archives of Canada (now called Library and Archives Canada), "[Chief Khahtsahlano's] recollections go back to about 1881, about five years before Vancouver was named. ... At that time potlachs [sic], attended by as many as 2,000 Indians, were sometimes held in Stanley Park." Reading through these conversations, the patience and the dignity of Chief Khatsahlano shine through despite his having witnessed the gradual disappearance of a way of life, as many of the villages of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and the salilwatał (Tsilil-Waututh) peoples, situated along the shores of Burrard Inlet, were slowly but inexorably impinged upon and displaced by newcomers to the area. In response to Matthews's questions, Chief Khahtsahlano recalls traditional burial practices: "There was a lot of Indian graves all along the first narrows. They did not bury their dead; they put them on the ground with the blankets, and put a shelter over them, just slabs of wood." He describes (with the aid of a simple sketch) how sturgeon had once been fished for at the far end of False Creek using ropes made of cedar bark and hooks made of bone. While the words and tone of the text occasionally reflect the prejudices of the day, this is nonetheless a fascinating and important document, and I'm grateful to Talonbooks and to Massy Books for having made it available to a general readership.

—Michael Hayward

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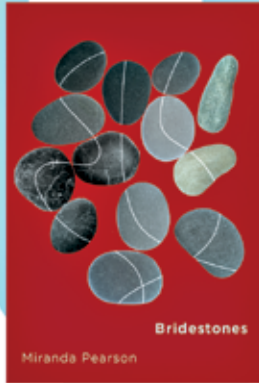



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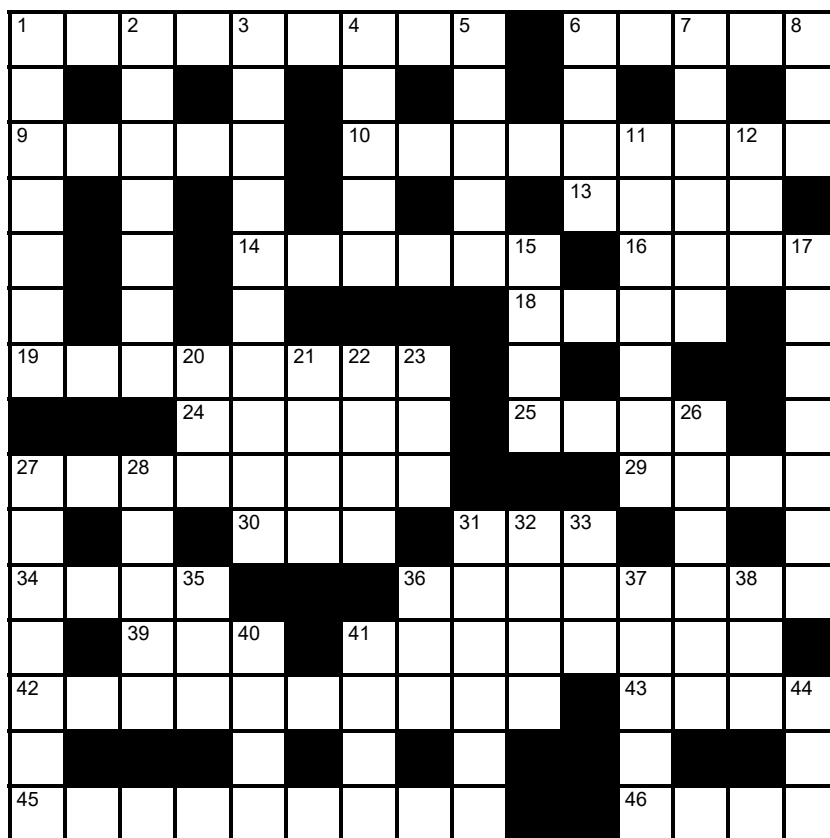
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ACROSS

- 1 The Briers CID found Paddy and his buddies in full flight
- 6 I'm all tuckered out from following that lead
- 9 Did David, Graham and Stephen speak French on the train?
- 10 Cut, then spread them with one stroke
- 13 That opera really cleaned up
- 14 It would be embarrassing to depose him without his trunks
- 16 Send me a message at the beginning of the game
- 18 After six balls it was all done
- 19 I can't abide the way you treat Leo
- 24 Throw me that pot for the tortillas
- 25 This summer Loudon went into the ocean
- 27 When she imitates Kermit, she propels the end of her bow (2)
- 29 You Americans sound like you need a lifeboat
- 30 Yikes! I hear you might need to squeeze out a bit more
- 31 Hey man, are we related?
- 34 Military measurement
- 36 Those famous dolphins acted like they were wearing shoes
- 39 We had fun with that pedal on the corner
- 41 When you're finished with my oar, leave it by the healing plant
- 42 Australians take credit for free movements, especially in water (2)
- 43 Are those snakes or reconstructors?
- 45 Is the addled GOP just imitating a barker in the water? (2)
- 46 Does Meghan still wear one?

DOWN

- 1 Frosty was the most poetic one
- 2 Will that thing go underwater with all five of us in it?
- 3 Brush behind the brackets, ok?
- 4 Why the curly sideburns and frock coat? It's tradition!



- 5 They were not fulfilled by their dates
- 6 He often eliminates himself from the pool
- 7 If you're at the festival, don't look for maidens
- 8 Jane's kid loved swinging in the trees
- 11 To get there, lasso some cars with a cable
- 12 They obviously have a permit because they have actual experience feeding babies (abbrev)
- 15 That Brit did it again!
- 17 He always looks stupid at spectacles like that
- 20 They could see my heart beating (abbrev)
- 21 Her girlfriend lives in Paris
- 22 If we take that approach we'll be able to nail it down
- 23 When Bullwinkle goes to Liverpool, he changes his name
- 26 Knitted gnomes, prepare to meet your creators!
- 27 They ruined my pillows by shaking them
- 28 Start with just a few
- 31 Why did she fly to Melbourne to make glass?
- 32 After he rebelled, he was stamped and coined
- 33 Police boat or mouthy disease prevention? (abbrev)

- 35 Amy got lucky when she joined that club (or did she just get sprayed?)
- 36 Stanley went south so he didn't make it to Edmonton (abbrev)
- 37 I bought some spare bars of that fruity soap
- 38 Aubrey is bummed because he's just a pop
- 40 In Taos we saw a portico
- 41 When there was no water, they staged a raid
- 44 Is Sarah still happy playing in the valley? (abbrev)

Solution to Puzzle 126

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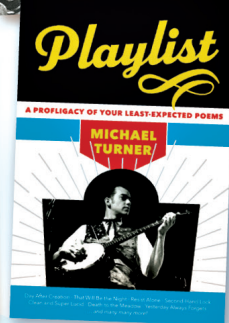
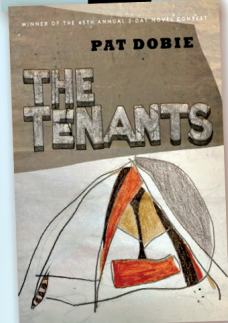
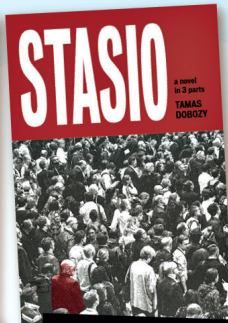
—Shelagh Rogers, former CBC host of “The Next Chapter”

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