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# GEIST

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EARTHQUAKE DREAM DIARIES

AIRPLANE LOBSTER POETRY



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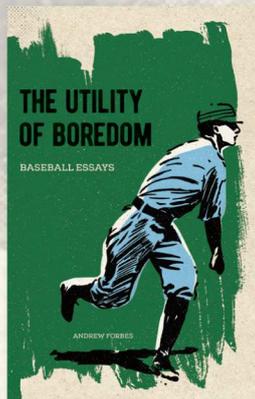
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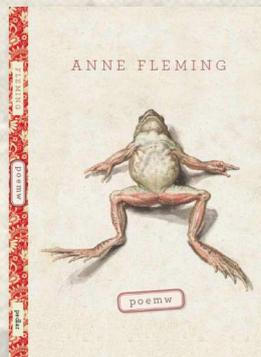


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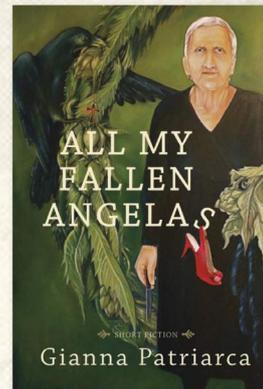
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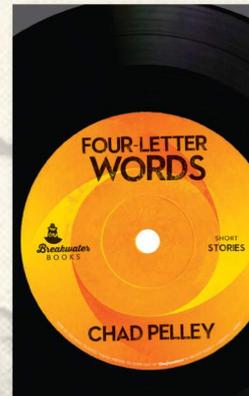
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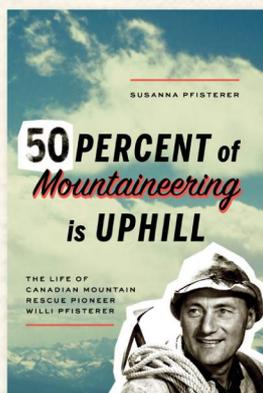
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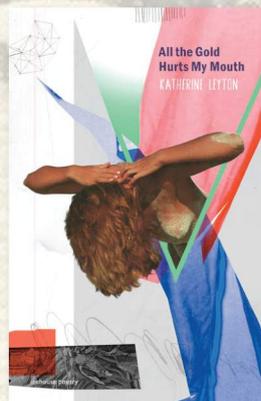


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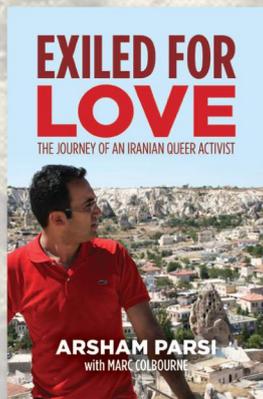
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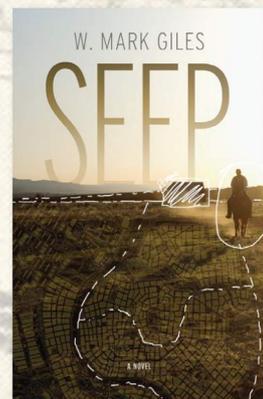
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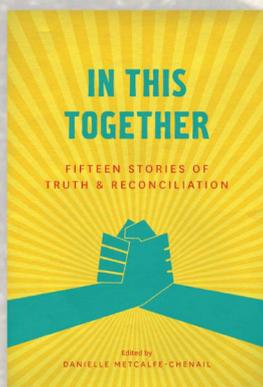
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JUST GOT  
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In partnership with the CanLit Premise Generator,  
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# The *Geist* Can't Lit Without It CanLit Short Story Contest

- Generate a CanLit premise at [canlitgenerator.com](http://canlitgenerator.com).
- Use the premise as a prompt to write a story. The weirder the better!
- Enter to win literary fame and fortune.

## Details:

500 words or less

\$1000 in cash prizes to be won

Deadline August 1st, 2016

Winning entries to be published in *Geist* and at [geist.com](http://geist.com)

[geist.com/canlit-contest](http://geist.com/canlit-contest)

Drake marries a sea captain in a pickup truck with Mennonites.

A man and his dog drive drunk on a skidoo to bring medicine to their snowed-in family.

A new immigrant transforms into a moose only to be beset by the spirits of their ancestors.



# GEIST

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**COVER:** A wooden A, 9 1/2" x 10 1/2", from Jeremy Borsos's ongoing project *Immaculate Debris*, an assemblage of duplicate found objects—bottles, posters, photographs, furniture and other common objects—collected by Borsos for most of his life. *Immaculate Debris* was on display at the *Deluge Contemporary Art* gallery in Victoria, BC, from June 17 to July 16, 2016. The A and its duplicate were found in Denmark in 1980. Find out more at [www.deluge.ws](http://www.deluge.ws).

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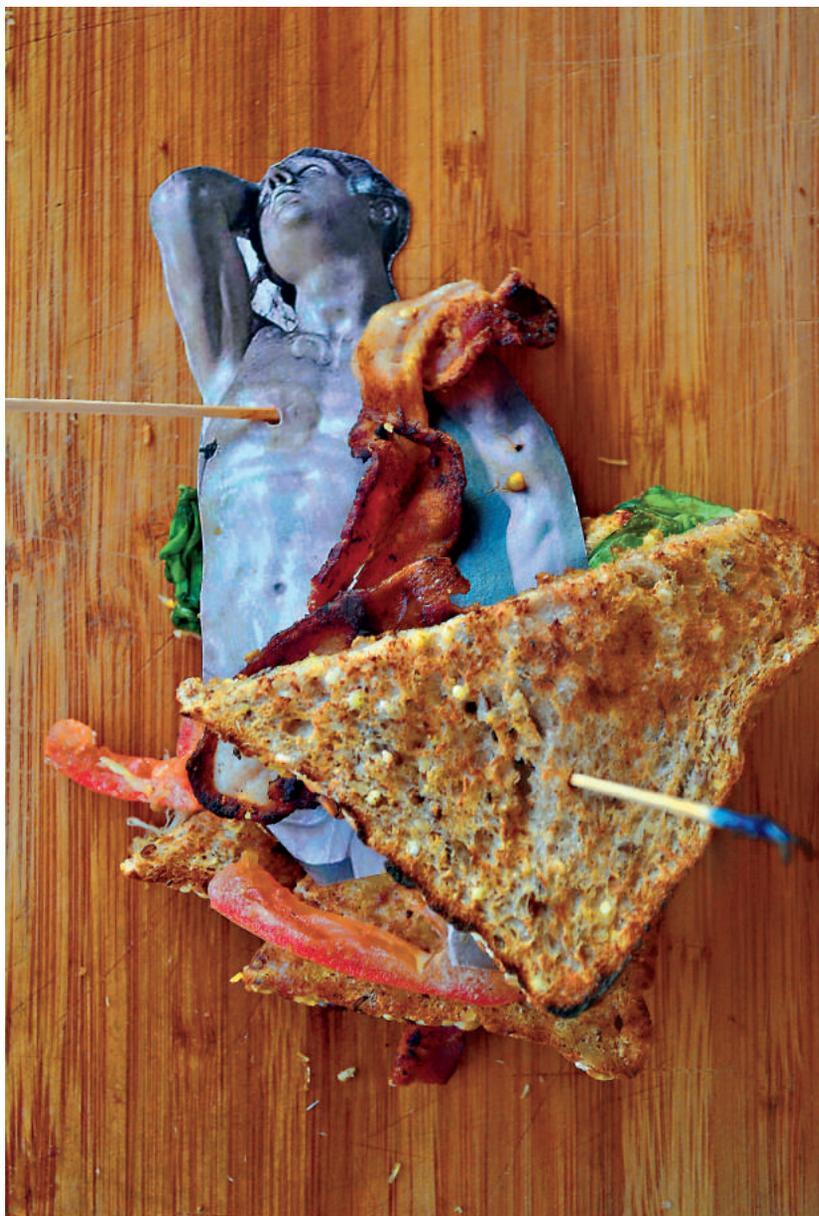
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## Beatitude, Lettuce & Tomato

The photograph above is part of a series of three photos titled *Tragedy of Open-Faced St. Sebastians* or *The Sacrifice of Artisanal Sandwiches for the Redemption of the Ethical Glutton*, a collage project created by the artist Jason Wright in the summer of 2014. The sandwich collages feature an image of St. Sebastian, a third-century martyr and saint, who was sentenced to death by the Roman emperor Diocletian for practising the Christian faith. According to Christian belief, St. Sebastian was tied to a stake and shot with arrows; he survived the attack but was later clubbed to death for publicly criticizing the emperor.

Materials used in the creation of this collage include bacon, lettuce, tomato, paper cut-outs and multigrain bread.

Jason Wright is a server, artist and educator. His work has been shown in galleries all over Canada, most recently at the Dunlop Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, as part of *On the Table*, a group show examining food and culture. Wright works in photography, painting, drawing, sculpture, collage, text and installation. He will be presenting new work at the Bakery Gallery in Vancouver in August 2016. He lives in Vancouver. See more of this work at [www.jasonwright.ca](http://www.jasonwright.ca).

—AnnMarie MacKinnon

# LETTERS

READERS WRITE

## TRANSIT VIGILANTES

I loved “The 99—Bus Without Pity,” Eve Corbel’s comic about the 99 B-Line express bus in Vancouver, in *Geist* 99. It resonated with me, a lifelong public transit rider who’s never owned a car, on a deep, spiritual level. I ride the 8 (Fraser) and sometimes feel I am one rude incident away from becoming a terrifying transit vigilante. A few days ago I politely informed a businessman engrossed in his smartphone that he should get up and let an unsteady older gentleman into the seat next to his if he wasn’t going to move to the window seat to make room. He continued typing on his phone and shouted “I AM BUSY!” and my mild-mannered commuter exterior disappeared and I transformed into Bus Batman. I lifted him over my head and threw him out the door. Okay, maybe that didn’t exactly happen as written. But I did inform him his behaviour was rude and uncivilized and jeopardizing the safety of his fellow passengers. Thanks for that comic!

—Cynara Geissler, Vancouver

## CUTTING REMARKS

The text accompanying the images from my book *Oddballs* (“Against the Grain,” No. 100) describes the images as woodcuts. They are, in fact, wood engravings and there is a significant difference. It’s a common mistake, since wood engraving is less common than woodcut.

—Jim Westergard, Red Deer AB  
Editor’s note: Woodcuts are created with chisels and are carved with the grain of a

wood plank. Wood engraving involves using graters to carve an image into the end grain of a piece of wood.

## MARGINALIA

Whatever happened to illustrations in magazines? The paintings in “Sir John’s Lost Diaries” (No. 100) were stunning, but *Geist* doesn’t feature enough illustrations. Open up a *New Yorker*! They’ve got drawings everywhere, and nice ones, too. Don’t be afraid to scribble in the margins! Your magazine looks stuffy without drawings.

—James Li, Brandon MB



## POETRY TO THE RESCUE

Editor’s note: *Geist* called for advice on growing a magazine’s circulation, and the Poetry Emergency Response Team (P.E.R.T.) responded. The following is what Jerome the Giraffe, a.k.a. Juliette Levy-Gay, age nine, came up with.

Dear Geist,  
Thank you for writing to us with your poetry emergency. Enclosed, please find our dragon-like response. We hope that you enjoy it. If you do not, please send it back and we will throw it in the recycling with a certain amount of disgust.

We have put our deepest hopes into these poems. Also, our hearts and other internal organs. And maybe some oatmeal. And certainly the bad bit of pancake at the bottom of the pan.

We hope that after reading our work, your poetic sadness will be turned into donkeys. Aren’t donkeys fabulous?

# GEIST

PUBLISHED BY  
The Geist Foundation

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WEB ARCHITECTS  
Metro Publisher

DISTRIBUTION  
Magazines Canada

PRINTED IN CANADA BY  
Lowe Martin Group

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SUPPORT THE GEIST WRITERS AND ARTISTS FUND:  
GEIST.COM/WAFUND

WWW.GEIST.COM

Geist is published four times a year.

Contents copyright © 2016 The Geist Foundation. All rights reserved.

Subscriptions: in Canada: \$21 (1 year); in the United States and elsewhere: \$27. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

Correspondence and inquiries: subs@geist.com, advertising@geist.com, letters@geist.com, editor@geist.com.

Include SASE with Canadian postage or IRC with all submissions and queries. #210 – 111 West Hastings Street Vancouver BC Canada V6B 1H4

Submission guidelines are available at geist.com. ISSN 1181-6554.

Geist swaps its subscriber list with other cultural magazines for one-time mailings. Please contact us if you prefer not to receive these mailings.

Publications Mail Agreement 40069678

Registration No. 07582

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Circulation Department, #210 – 111 West Hastings Street Vancouver BC Canada V6B 1H4 Email: geist@geist.com Tel: (604) 681-9161, 1-888-GEIST-EH; Fax: (604) 677-6319; Web: geist.com

Geist is a member of Magazines Canada and the Magazine Association of BC. Indexed in the *Canadian Literary Periodicals Index* and available on microfilm from University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

The Geist Foundation receives assistance from private donors, the Canada Council, the BC Arts Council and the Cultural Human Resources Council. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) of the Department of Canadian Heritage.



Sincerely,

*Jerome the Giraffe, The Aardvark,  
Bird 22 and Jello 989  
(The Poetry Emergency Response Team,  
Vancouver BC)*

### Strange, But Awesome

Increasing circulation can be tough.

Try 25 jumping jacks

Try sprinkling cayenne on all your pancakes

Try a high-pressure massage

Not working?

Oh, you mean magazine circulation!

Well, covers are crucial

Bright colours catch everyone's eye

Strange, but awesome can work too.

Try images of two-headed animals,

Square watermelons,

*Sesame Street* characters in chocolate outfits

Or...

Taylor Swift singing into a two-stemmed pumpkin.

That works too.

The best movie scenes are always in the previews

Previews for you are your cover,

So make it good!

Next, make your lead article

One that touches on something

That everyone knows a little about.

I never pick up magazines

With lead articles about theoretical physics

Or ice packs, or brothers.

I know what would interest me...

How to bug my sisters.

By bug them, I really mean bug them,

Like with insects.

Choose a writer who knows how to

Threaten with bugs.

Now that will sell

At least to me.

Finally, every good magazine

Needs a mascot.

A baby hippo with no teeth

Would work.

Have the mascot parade up and down Burrard Street where all the rich

Lawyers, tourists, and teenage sisters go.

Wave *Geist* magazine in one hand

And cupcakes with chocolate and vanilla swirl syrup  
In the other hand,  
Just in case!

### OOPS!

In "Vanderhoof Girls" by Gillian Wigmore (No. 100) the final line printed actually belonged to a different poem. Visit [geist.com/vanderhoof-girls](http://geist.com/vanderhoof-girls) to read the poem as it should have appeared.

In "First World Problems A-Z" by Suzanne Buffam (No. 100), we did not mind our Ps and Qs. The lines beginning with those letters were missing. Visit [geist.com/first-world-problems](http://geist.com/first-world-problems) to read the poem as it should have appeared.

We apologize for the errors.

### WRITE TO GEIST

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

The Editor, *Geist*

letters@geist.com

Snailmail:

#210 – 111 West Hastings St.

Vancouver BC V6B 1H4

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum. Authors of published letters will receive a *Geist* map suitable for framing.

### ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

**Jeremy Borsos** is an artist, writer and photographer. His work has been exhibited in Canada, the US and Europe. His essays have appeared in *BlackFlash* and *Geist*. He lives in Athens, Greece, Mayne Island, BC and at [jeremyborsos.com](http://jeremyborsos.com).

**Eve Corbel** is a writer, illustrator, cartoonist, mom and grandma. Her writing and artwork have been published in numerous anthologies and periodicals, including *Geist*.

**Roni Simunovic** is an artist and writer. They live in Vancouver and at [ronisimunovic.com](http://ronisimunovic.com).



Re-creation of Pérez in his ship *Santiago* as seen by the Haida Indians, Queen Charlotte Islands, in 1774; #3 by Robert Banks. This image documents the arrival of the Spanish explorer Juan Pérez and his crew off the coast of Haida Gwaii in 1774. This is the earliest known contact between Europeans and First Nations of what was to become British Columbia.

What comes to mind when you hear the words contact or no contact? I suspect most people immediately think of early explorers coming into contact with First Nations people in North America. Since that initial contact, our political and social situation has devolved into a state of no contact.

We at *Geist* have been talking a lot on the subject, about what we think of when we think of contact, what contact looks like in our lives, how we remember coming into contact with our own culture and the cultures of others.

So, I recently asked some friends what they thought when they heard “contact” or “no contact.”

One friend responded, “I miss having contact. I go to the bank machine and the text on the screen tells me what to do. I go to the gas bar and I have no interaction with any human to fill up my car with gas. I go to the grocery store and a machine tells me what to do to pay for my groceries. I try to communicate with my teenage children and all they want to do is text message on their cell phones.”

A friend in Ontario shared a funny story about his father taking him to a baseball game when he was six years old. He walked up to one of the African American baseball players and asked him, “Why do you have a chocolate face?” His father grabbed his hand and dragged him away, calling him a stupid kid.

An accomplished First Nations writer who has spent

much time in Germany responded by telling me about his fascination with Indian hobbyists, some of whom have a know-it-all attitude about First Nations culture. This reminded me of a non-aboriginal university professor who makes a good living by specializing in certain First Nations dialect and has the gall to criticize fluent First Nations speakers on their pronunciation. Non-First Nations people have become the “experts” in First Nations languages and culture. This phenomenon, which some might say verges on appropriation, is only one aspect leading to a no-contact environment across North America.

Governments and corporations prefer a no-contact environment because it legitimizes keeping First Nations people down, living in poverty with poor health, poor education and little hope. Control of First Nations people opens the way for resource extraction without the expense of compensating the rightful owners of the raw resources. Reconciliation has been discussed and debated for some years now. Does anyone really know what true reconciliation means?

—Randy Fred

*Randy Fred is a Nuu-Chab-Nulth Elder. He is the founder of Theytus Books, the first aboriginal-owned and operated book publishing house in Canada. He has worked in publishing and communications for forty years. He has won gold at the Canadian National Blind Lawn Bowling Championships five times. He lives in Nanaimo.*

*Got a smart, sassy  
teen in your life?*  
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TALKING BACK SINCE 2004.



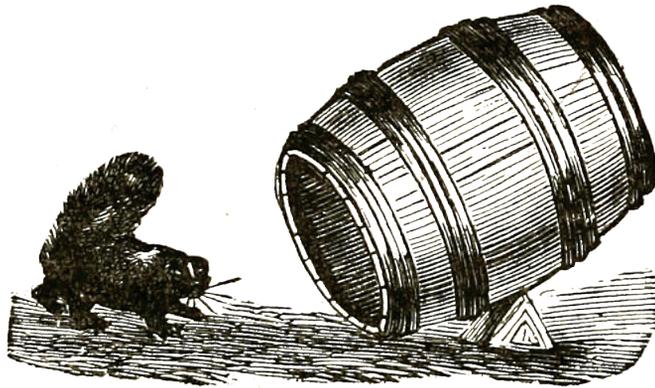
*Shameless* magazine, the fresh alternative to typical teen media, has been covering issues that matter to young women and trans youth for 10 years!

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## Squirrely

MICHAŁ KOZŁOWSKI

*The rodent crew sealed off all the entry points for good—three times*



About a year ago, sounds of scraping and scratching and a faint ticking of tiny footfalls began resonating from within my living room wall. A month later the landlord, a young entrepreneur in the sausage business who lives on the main floor, showed up in a white helmet with face shield, carrying a flashlight and hammer. He squeezed into the attic, paced the length of the house, climbed back down and departed. A few days later he returned without the helmet, this time with a saw, a metal cage, a jar of peanut butter and a bag of pitas. He cut a hole in the living room wall, baited the cage with a rolled-up pita slathered in peanut butter, placed the cage inside the wall and covered the hole with a metal sheet.

Days passed, and the scratchings and tiny footfalls continued apace. Then, one day, sounds of high-pitched barking could be heard from the wall: alarm calls, I later learned, known to squirrel experts as kuks, general warning calls to signify danger. (Other

squirrel alarms include quaas—shrieks indicating ground dangers, and moans—indicating threats from the air, such as eagles and hawks.)

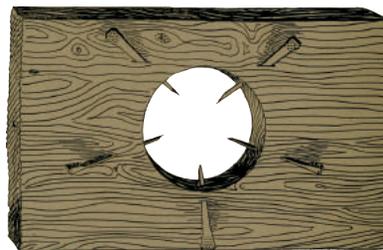
The kuks were a sign that the trap had worked. The landlord appeared at the door within minutes, carrying an empty IKEA bag and a screwdriver. He opened the hole in the living room wall and pulled out the cage. Inside was a tiny shivering grey squirrel with a broken tail, part of which was sticking out of the cage. We put the cage with the squirrel in it into the IKEA bag, and drove out to a beach on the east side and let the squirrel free.

The squirrels in my wall were eastern greys (distinct from Douglas, also known as red, northern flying and other local species), which are native to eastern North America. In the 1900s, eastern greys became popular among park architects as a more “appealing

squirrel”—larger, with fine grey or black fur; in short, more squirrely looking—for parks throughout North America and Europe, where the grey squirrel displaced whole local squirrel populations in countries as far away as Italy. The squirrels in my wall were likely direct descendants of the eastern greys released in the early 1900s into Stanley Park, which the parks board was then populating with gentle animals—songbirds, black swans, mute swans—while trying to rid the place of raccoons, crows, Canada geese and other local animal populations deemed too raucous and disruptive. The parks board was also removing human residents from Stanley Park during this period, including Portuguese, Chinese and Hawaiian settlers, and inhabitants of Xwáyxway (Whoi-Whoi), the village that had been home to Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh people for more than three thousand years.

One story holds that the eastern grey squirrels were bequeathed to Stanley Park by the mayor of New York City, George B. McClellan Jr., the man who gave Times Square its name and who banned moving pictures throughout the city. In a more plausible version, a park commissioner ordered the squirrels (two dozen for \$40, about \$1,000 today) from a Pennsylvania business specializing in breeding, exporting and importing pheasants, squirrels, beavers, deer and other animals.

My eastern grey left its cage and sprinted toward the beach, took a sharp right turn and zig-zagged off into the distance. We got in the car and drove home. There the landlord set up another peanut butter trap, but to no avail: the scraping,



scratching, thumping, running and slithering continued all summer long. I resigned myself to living with the squirrels forever.

By fall the sound of squirrels had become part of the auditory landscape of my apartment, along with the hum of the fridge, the dripping of the tap, the neighbours' crying baby, the other neighbours' barking dogs, the rowdy drunks at night. Then, in late November, the apartment filled up overnight with dozens of fat black flies, sitting on the window panes, clinging to light fixtures, thumping around in the paper lampshade. Was there a dead squirrel in the wall? I picked up the fashion edition of the *New Yorker* and started smashing away; by evening I had swept up dozens of dead flies and flushed them down the toilet. By morning, more flies had appeared. The next day even more. I continued smashing away for days, and shooing flies out the windows.

In January the squirrels chewed through the wiring in the bathroom, cutting the power to the fan. The landlord said he'd call the professionals. In February, a year after the squirrels had moved in, a rodent control crew of two young men with many ladders came by the house. They banged away on the roof for a few hours, and when they climbed down they said that the "entry points" were

sealed off and that within a week the house would be squirrel-free. A week later they had to come back to patch up several new "entry points." And again a week later. This time it must have worked, because the only squirrel sounds now were those of squirrels scraping at the tiles on the roof, trying



to get back into the attic; it was birthing season and they were looking for a nest.

A week later I opened my front door and heard loud scraping sounds coming from inside the apartment. I crept up the stairs and looked into the bedroom. A big grey squirrel, limbs extended in a starfish pose, was clinging to the frame of the small bedroom window, tugging at the edges with its claws. I slapped the window and the squirrel jumped down onto the roof, let out a few kuks and took off.

*Addendum: As of press day, the squirrels could be heard inside the wall again.*

---

*Michał Kozłowski is the publisher and editor-in-chief of Geist. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

Eric, who rides the train often between Vancouver and Saskatoon, says to a German couple, "Murals of parks used to hang here, but they had to be removed in the '80s because the grease from passengers' heads rubbing against them was ruining them."

A hint of diesel exhaust can be detected, and every so often the faint whistle of the engine at the front of the train can be heard.

Just past Boston Bar, the spotlight from an approaching freighter lights up the trees and thunders past at high speed.

Natalie, a VIA service attendant, puts out muffins baked on the train; a family of mallards bathe in a small pond by the side of the tracks.

### **Imperial Diner Car**

An elderly passenger named Paul, with white hair and pink skin covered in eczema, says he's been travelling by train for two months from New England to New Orleans, up to Washington, back down to Los Angeles and back again. "This is pretty good," he says, staring at his plate of seared scallops and prawns with asparagus, "on Amtrak, they can't even make toast."

### **Prince Albert Park Car**

Natalie the attendant climbs into the viewing dome in the Park Car to announce that the Canadian is running about an hour late but that there will still be a one-hour stopover in Jasper. "Which is just about all the time you need for Jasper," she says.

Natalie the attendant returns to the viewing dome to point out Mount Robson. "It's the tallest peak in the Canadian Rockies," she says, "unless you go south. The American end of the Rockies are way bigger. Actually, everything's bigger down there, even the belt buckles."

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## Sleeping Class

DAVID LOOK

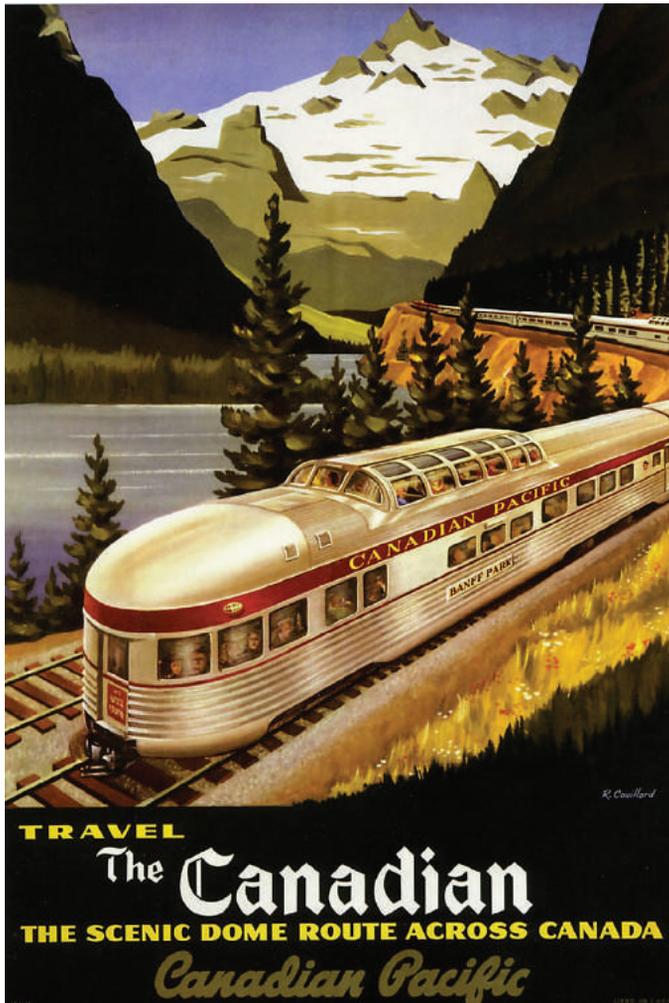
*Scenic views, fresh muffins and drunk passengers—three days and four nights aboard the Canadian from Vancouver to Toronto.*

### **Pacific Central Station, Vancouver, BC**

The Canadian—the Vancouver to Toronto train operated by VIA Rail—pulls out of the station at 8:30 pm, on schedule.

### **Prince Albert Park Car**

The sound of a cork popping from a bottle can be heard throughout the Prince Albert Park Car as the passengers gather in the Panoramic Lounge for a bon voyage toast.



The car speaker crackles to life. “This is your third and final call for lunch. Once again, this is your third and final call for lunch. Last call!”

**Jasper Railway Station, Jasper, AB**

A VIA Rail crew member lifts himself in a cherry picker over the glass dome of the Prince Albert Park Car and begins to wash the windows.

**Athabasca Hotel, Jasper, AB**

The lobby of the Athabasca is decorated with mounted heads of bison, elk and deer. In the bar, a lone patron sits in front of a coffee with a cane beside her, watching curling on TV and putting stamps on a stack of about fifty letters.

**Imperial Diner Car**

A herd of grazing mountain goats on a hill look in the direction of the

Canadian. The passengers eat roast duck and lamb and drink wine.

**Prince Albert Park Car**

After her set, Dorika, one of two hired musicians aboard the Canadian, lingers with the audience in the Panoramic Lounge. The other musician, a squat man with pudgy fingers who goes by “Miami Beach,” says, “I once played a nightclub until 4 a.m., went and slept on the sand two hours, then played a breakfast show.”

**Laird Manor Car**

In the night, glasses rattle and toothbrushes fall from their resting spots as the Canadian jostles along a straightaway of flat prairie at top speed.

**Dawson Manor Car**

The Canadian crosses a road somewhere in Saskatchewan.

**Prince Albert Park Car**

A man in red pajamas and toque with Hudson’s Bay stripes on it asks the service attendant, Daphne, if his attire is appropriate for breakfast in the dining car. “You’re good,” Daphne responds, as she swaddles a muffin in cling wrap.

Grain elevators, displaying the names of the towns in which they stand, appear beyond the windows.

A man with reading glasses folded into the pocket of his plaid Oxford shirt approaches Daphne, who stands behind the bar of the Mural Lounge. “Well,” he says, “I put out an APB.”

“Oh, who are you looking for?” Daphne asks.

“A cribbage player,” the man says.

**Imperial Diner Car**

A herd of bison grazes by the tracks.

“Where are you from?” Dorika the musician asks a small woman with short grey hair sitting across from her. “Cornwall,” says the woman. “I don’t live in Cornwall, I exist there.”

**Melville Railway Station, Melville, SK**

In front of the station dogs squat to pee in the snow, then they are returned to their kennels in the baggage car.

**Prince Albert Park Car**

At the beginning of her first set of the evening, Dorika the musician says, “You’re always going somewhere on a train, and leaving something behind.”

**Imperial Diner Car**

A British family—two grandparents, husband, wife and twin daughters—take up the front booths of the dining car. A woman about the same age as the grandparents joins them. Upon

# Toronto Layover

RONI SIMUNOVIC

Friday, April 22, 2016, 12:30–3:30 p.m.



hearing that the woman is from Yorkshire, the granddad leans over the table and says, “Are you still a proud lady?”

## Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, MB

The lounge pianist plays Barry Manilow’s “Looks Like We Made It” on a grand piano.

## Sioux Lookout Railway Station, ON

Dee, one of the passengers, prances and kicks at the snow. “Isn’t this just the greatest!?” she cries out.

## Prince Albert Park Car

A large blond man in a Black Sabbath shirt introduces himself as Greg to

Paul, the pink-skinned man with the eczema. “I’ve never seen the country like this,” Greg says, looking out the window. “My kids all grew up and moved away. Divorced the wife. Dad died a few years ago, so we sold the house. Mom made a fortune in the real estate business in the ’80s and retired at fifty. ‘Go. Live your life,’ I told her. Now I got a house in Ile-des-Chênes, just south of Winnipeg.”

## Imperial Diner Car

A woman in her seventies with a diamond on the front of her tooth and wearing big black sunglasses eats a bison burger; a farmer from Sudbury sits across from her, silent.

## Bayfield Manor Car

In a clearing by the tracks, a man in a red flannel shirt, baseball cap and sunglasses stops chopping wood and looks up as the Canadian goes by.

## Prince Albert Park Car

Greg, who hasn’t left the Mural Lounge since noon, with a glass of neat rye in one hand, gives Dorika thirty dollars. She gives him a disc of her music. “I’ll listen to it at home,” Greg says. “I saw you play yesterday, but had to leave. I was getting sad.”

A guy named Antonio who boarded the train in Winnipeg, wearing high-tops and a Caterpillar Equipment

sweatshirt, says, “The only way I’m going to be able to sleep in that berth is to get blackout drunk.”

### **Hornepayne Railway Station, ON**

Paul and Greg smoke on a stretch of gravel beside the Canadian. Greg is wearing a Banff, Alberta, hoodie.

### **Imperial Diner Car**

Greg yells out, “yaaaaauullllpp!” He’s sitting with an Australian couple and their young son, who wears a conductor’s hat. Greg gets up and stumbles toward the front of the car, leaving his dessert untouched on the table.

A bald eagle standing on a frozen pond looks in the direction of the train as it rolls by.

Gary, the head service attendant, stands up and says, “Ladies and gentlemen, you’ll notice that the Canadian ten-dollar bill features your train. Eventually, these will be collector items and I just so happen to have some for sale. Two for twenty-five bucks!”

A professor from the University of Wisconsin says, “We are sounding like old farts here, but nobody knows how to do anything anymore. Most of my students can’t even have a conversation with someone they just met.”

“The kids that do best in my class are the ones involved with sports,” says a schoolteacher from Fort McMurray. “It’s the only thing left in the world where failure isn’t rewarded.”

### **Prince Albert Park Car**

Antonio launches into a rendition of Woody Guthrie’s “Way Over Yonder in the Minor Key,” with Dorika’s guitar. Greg slouches across two chairs in the dark observation dome.

“You asleep?” Paul says to Greg. “Nah, I ain’t asleep,” Greg says. “Just restin’.”

“It’s Greg right?”

“Ya.”

“I’m Paul.”

“Raul?” Greg slurs.

“No, Paul.”

“Paul? Raul? Who cares? Fuck it. What do I care,” Greg slurs. “I’ll never see any of you people again anyway.”

“Come on, let’s go get a drink,” Paul says.

A beer bottle rolls back and forth beneath the seat Greg’s hulking body rests upon as he snores in the observation dome.

### **Laird Manor Car**

A woman wearing a grey, hooded, all-weather jacket stands at the side of the road with a German shepherd in the morning winter fog as the Canadian passes in front of her.

“I got on in Hornepayne,” a woman from Ajax says. “It’s out in the boonies and there’s no airport. So here I am!”

### **Union Station, Toronto, ON**

After traveling 4,466 kilometres over four days, the Canadian lumbers into Union Station seven minutes ahead of schedule.

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*David Look’s writing has appeared in Thought Catalogue, Vancouver Is Awesome and many other publications. This piece was produced with assistance from VIA Rail (viarail.ca). David Look lives in Vancouver. Follow him on Twitter: @davidlook.*

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## **Thirteen Litres**

SONJA BOON

*In the Special Care Nursery, maternal worth is measured five millilitres at a time*

**I**t was spring and my new son, born almost eight weeks too early and too small to nurse, was in the Special Care Nursery, a feeding tube snaking down his nose and throat and into his stomach. I, meanwhile, was in the pumping room.

The pumping room was small, just big enough for a couple of comfy chairs and, along the back wall, a row of electric breast pumps on wheeled carts. I settled myself into a chair, reached for a pump and pulled up my shirt. The next steps were easy. All I had to do was screw bottles onto the machine and place my breasts into the cone-shaped funnels, positioning my nipples at the valves. The machine did all the work, whirring

quietly while the milk splashed, drop by drop at first, and then in rhythmic squirts. It was an industrial milking operation in some respects, and remarkably effective.

Each plastic bottle was like a miniature measuring cup, marking increments of five millilitres to a maximum of sixty. There’s something comforting about the markings; they are quantifiable, calculable. And in the Special Care Nursery, this was how I measured my maternal worth. The millilitres added up and through them I could make visible and concrete my maternal virtue. I measured time in pumping units. Twenty minutes. Every three hours. Eight times per day. I measured value in milk bottles:

60 ml. 120 ml. 180 ml. 240 ml.

That morning, just under a week after my son's birth, I'd walked up the hill from my house to catch the bus to the hospital. The #25 from East 22nd and Slocan to King Edward and Oak. I'd taken the route many times before. But that day, everything was different. Each step reminded me of muscles I hadn't used. My body felt new. Foreign, even. I had to feel my way into my movements, relearn how to walk. My muscles stretched and contracted. My feet touched concrete, toes spreading. My arms swung loosely, bumping into my sides. Cool morning air moved into my lungs, slowly finding its way through my body. I squinted. Stopped. Took a deep breath. The air was almost too fresh, the colours too vivid, too rich, the light too bright. I didn't know where to look. I couldn't make sense of the sounds, the smells.

This was a world I hadn't seen for six weeks. For forty-two days, I'd been on bedrest, existing in that liminal state between day and night, wakefulness and sleep. Waiting. On hold. Suspended. For what? For my body and my fetus to make friends, I suppose. For my placenta to get along with my body. Because it was clear that something was wrong. My blood pressure was up. My platelet levels were falling. I was, in the nurse's words, spilling protein. Classic symptoms of HELLP syndrome.

And so there I lay on the couch in the living room, a bloated Cleopatra surveying her domain. The days had passed slowly, time marked by the notations on the home-care nurse's chart, the pumping of the blood pressure cuff, the paper tracings of a pair of heartbeats, a series of bad novels and visits to the obstetrician.

300 ml. 360 ml. 420 ml. 480 ml.

As an extra precaution, my obstetrician prescribed steroid shots.

"It's to ripen the lungs," the nurse said as she swabbed my backside in the cool shadowed depths of the labour and delivery ward. "They're not usually ready before thirty-four or thirty-five weeks." She jabbed each buttock. She was cheerful, friendly and efficient. But it still hurt.

540 ml. 600 ml. 660 ml. 720 ml.

My baby and I made it to thirty-two and a half weeks. The obstetrician's voice was serious.

"It's time," she said. "Your platelet levels are falling. We can't wait. If you start to bleed, you won't clot."

"Lots longer than we expected," a home-care nurse reported to me, the day after my son was born. "We thought for sure you wouldn't make it past twenty-nine weeks."

And now, a little less than a week later, I was learning how to walk again. My body was lighter and yet it was awkward. Lumbering, as though I were still pregnant. Maybe I was. My son wasn't at home, and wouldn't be for another few weeks. My arms were empty. The clothes. The diapers. The pail. The crib. Everything was at a standstill. This wasn't a babymoon. It was something else. But what?

780 ml. 840 ml. 900 ml. 960 ml.

In the Special Care Nursery, our new baby spent his first days in an incubator breathing rarefied hyperoxygenated air. Around his tiny bottom, a face mask like miniature swimming trunks for a diaper. On the second day, they found drug-resistant bacteria somewhere on his body and he was spirited into isolation. So began three weeks of measures designed to keep any hint of infection at bay. We handled pumped milk with gloves. We washed our hands

## Airplane Lobster

BILLEH NICKERSON

You don't fool me  
with all that tenderness,  
all those public displays

caressing my cardboard  
as if it were me  
and my exoskeleton.

I don't feel anything  
for you  
except contempt

and a wish that you'd stop  
opening my box  
every bloody hour.

I ask simply:  
what would you do  
if you found me dead?

We're on an airplane.  
It's not like you could flush me  
down the toilet

or set up an impromptu  
overhead compartment memorial  
for people to pay their respects.

I once heard about an emergency  
where a man told he couldn't  
bring his possessions

---

in thick liquid soap for thirty seconds before entering and exiting our baby's room. We opened and closed doors with paper towels. We bagged and sealed anything that left the room, and then bagged and sealed it again. The incubator beeped and blurred, and probes continually came undone. With his breathing tubes and jaundice treatment, our baby looked like a prehistoric insect with sunglasses.

slid down the chute  
with a lobster  
in his pants

and afterwards  
people called him heroic.  
Heroic? I think not.

Burning plane, boiling pot,  
it's all the same  
flames to me.

In my dreams I fantasize  
our plane falls from the sky,  
returns me to the waters below

but in reality  
I can't wish such violence  
on anyone.

My only revenge  
is knowing  
I've inconvenienced you

by limiting  
your allowable  
carry-on.

It's the small things,  
isn't it? I hope  
you enjoy your flight.

---

*Billeb Nickerson is a writer, editor and educator who lives in Vancouver. His most recent poetry collection, Artificial Cherry, was nominated for the 2014 City of Vancouver Book Award. He is permanent faculty in the Creative Writing Department at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.*

---

1020 ml. 1080 ml. 1140 ml. 1200 ml.

Mortality is close in the Special Care Nursery. Life is fragile, measured in minutes, hours, days. Measured in the space between operations, the time between feedings and treatments, the settings on the incubator.

1260 ml. 1320 ml. 1380 ml. 1440 ml.

We had another scare later on the second day. The chief neonatologist—the head honcho of newborn intensive care—was making rounds. On his way out, he noticed us near our son's isolette.

"About your son's brain scan," he began. He talked about swelling and about not quite being out of the woods yet. He talked about possible complications. He talked about more tests. And as his words registered and multiplied, I felt my body collapsing, folding into itself. Could this be our little wee man? Could I bear to lose him so very soon after meeting him? I was stunned and by the time I was back in my room I was in tears. Could this really be happening?

It took the next twenty-four hours to sort things out. We asked a nurse. We asked a resident. We waited. And then we waited some more. The resident looked through every hospital record, every database entry. There was no record anywhere of a brain scan. It wasn't even normal procedure for a baby of our son's size and delivery date. It was a mistake, she said, nothing more.

1500 ml. 1560 ml. 1620 ml. 1680 ml.

In the small room down the hall from my son's isolation room, I pumped and pumped and pumped. Twenty minutes. Every three hours. Eight times per day.

1740 ml. 1800 ml. 1860 ml. 1920 ml.

"You could feed the whole Special Care Nursery," a nurse marvelled, and she was right.

1980 ml. 2040 ml. 2100 ml. 2160 ml.

By the end of the first week, I was producing more than two litres of milk per day. My son, still well under

five pounds, drank only thirty millilitres per day.

I left a desperate, rambling message on the lactation consultant's answering machine. Too much milk. Way too much milk. Fountains of it. Aching. Help.

"You should be happy," she said when she called back. "Most women would love to have that problem." Her voice was upbeat, even a bit patronizing.

2220 ml. 2280 ml. 2340 ml. 2400 ml.

"Anyone need any milk? Anyone?"

But nobody did, not even the milk bank. Having lived in the UK for more than six months during the height of the mad cow disease crisis, my milk was tainted. And so the nurses and I continued to bag and double bag the bottles, arranging them by date in the Special Care Nursery's freezer. Liquid gold, lactivists would have said. But I'd flooded the market, pushing down its value.

2460 ml. 2520 ml. 2580 ml. 2640 ml.

We left the hospital three weeks later, carrying our baby and thirteen litres of frozen breast milk. Two hundred little bottles of milk, each carefully labelled with my name. At home, I divided them into groups of five or six, placed them in Ziploc bags and arranged them in rows in our freezer. I'd grown used to order. A couple of days later, a friend who was an epidemiologist stopped by and told me about her new research project on chemicals, health and pregnancy. I reached into the freezer and grabbed a bag of bottles.

"Here," I said. "Experiment away. There's loads more if you need it."

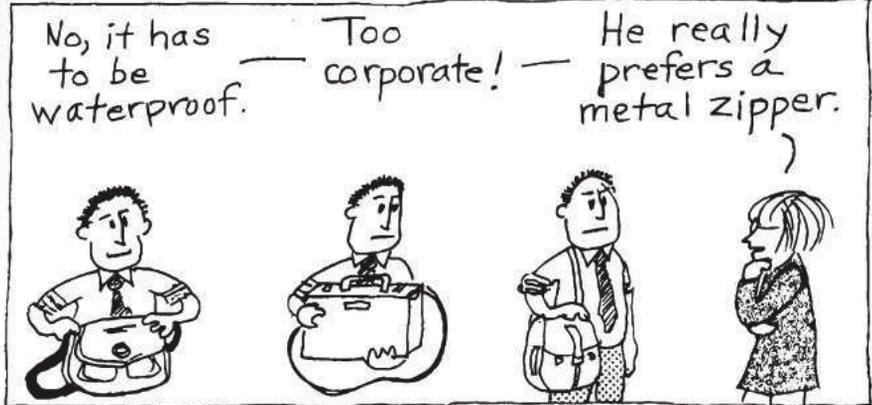
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*Sonja Boon is a researcher, writer and teacher. She lives in St. John's.*

IT WAS A STRAIGHTFORWARD ERRAND.  
GO GET THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT HE WANTED.  
JUST WALK INTO A STORE AND PICK OUT A

# MAN-PURSE

...a true retail tale by Eve Corbel



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# Walrus Keeper

ALEX KHRAMOV

*His heart went yok-yok-yok*



In the mid-1960s, when my dad was just a kid, his family lived in a communal flat in Moscow. Back then, most people in Moscow had to live in communal flats so there wasn't anything out of the ordinary about that. What was out of the ordinary was that the flat faced the Moscow Zoo. During the day, the trolleys and buses on the street drowned out the noise of the zoo. But by evening, the whole neighbourhood was filled with the trumpeting of the elephants, the howling of the wolves and the screeching of the birds. My dad said that all the noise made you feel like you were living out in the wild, in the forest, the jungle even.

A zoo is a depressing place, especially in a poor country like the USSR

in the 1960s. The animals are gawked and screamed at, and mocked, and fed inedible crap; and cruel people pelt them with garbage and cigarette stubs and rocks. And it's even worse for the humans. The animals are kept alive and fed at the expense of the people. It's an unseemly vanity project and everyone involved has to pretend to like it. But as a kid you don't have to care about that. All you know is that the elephant trumpets, the wolf howls and the zoo is as good as any jungle.

One of the people who lived in my dad's communal flat was a man named Pavel—Uncle Pavel to Dad—who worked at the zoo as the walrus keeper. One of the advantages of life back then was that people had jobs that could be easily defined. None of

your strategic walrus initiative development consultants or anything.

One of the duties of the walrus keeper was to feed the walrus. The walrus was supposed to get a certain amount of meat every day—but then isn't it cruel that the walrus gets meat and the walrus keeper doesn't? So Uncle Pavel would take some of the walrus's rations for himself and to compensate for the lower food weight he would hide steel nuts and bolts in the walrus's portion of meat. That worked to fool the management but it wasn't much good for the walrus, which one day died of poisoning.

Uncle Pavel was devastated. Despite taking his meat, Uncle Pavel did love that big ugly walrus. Besides, looking after the walrus's health wasn't part of Uncle Pavel's duties: someone should have been keeping track. "The fuckers killed the walrus," Uncle Pavel said between sobs.

After the walrus died, Pavel's life went downhill. He missed that walrus and, what's more, he was out of a job. Despondent, he boiled some vodka, put in all the tea leaves he could for the caffeine and drank the whole thing. His heart went *yok-yok-yok* and he collapsed in a heap.

The ambulance came and took Uncle Pavel to the hospital. He was discharged and given invalid status for one year. That meant he'd get a pension and wouldn't have to work. When the year was over, Uncle Pavel boiled some more vodka, infused it with tea and drank it all. His heart went *yok-yok-yok*... And so it went on, year after year, until one day he drank the whole thing, and his heart went *yok-yok* and then stopped.

Within a few days, the flat had a new tenant, a housekeeper who had moved in from up north.

---

*Alex Khramov was born in Moscow and grew up in Vancouver. He teaches physics in Bellingham, Washington. This is his first publication.*

# Poem in Thirteen Voices

*An exquisite-corpse-style translation relay by Alberto Manguel and his twelve students in the course Borges: Twelve Texts, at the Columbia University School of the Arts, in spring 2016. The class started with the poem "Shoprite," written in English by Emily Skillings, one of the students. A colleague translated it into Spanish, then another into English without seeing the original English, then another into Spanish, and so on. The translators, who chose to be credited as a group, are Marina Alamo, Adrienne Bonilla, Dana Hammer, Umair Kazi, Daniel Lefferts, Alberto Manguel, Constanza Martinez, William Monette, Michael Rex, Daniel Sidman, Konrad Solberg and María Zevallos.*

Like dead fish positioned  
on a shaved ice incline  
mouths agape towards some vast  
white space  
I am curving muscular spines  
Towards the monger of this century  
I will not let him, or anyone  
take their eyes off mine  
my eighteen cold, wet eyes

*Como pescados muertos posicionados  
En una colina de hielo raspado  
Boquiabiertos hacia algún gran espacio  
en blanco  
Voy encorvando espinas musculares  
Hacia el traficante de este siglo  
No dejaré que ni él ni nadie  
Quite sus ojos de los míos  
Mis dieciocho ojos, mojados y fríos*

Positioned like dead fish  
On a hill of shaved ice  
Gawking at some great white space  
I'm bending my spine  
Toward the dealer of this century  
I will not let that, neither he, nor  
anyone  
Remove your eyes from mine  
My eighteen eyes, wet and cold.

*Tirado como un pescado  
en una loma de hielo raspado,  
boquiabierto en frente de la llanura  
blanca,  
me tuerzo hasta el patrón de las  
ventas—¡Nadie  
quitara sus ojos de los míos!  
Dieciocho, empapados, fríos.*

Lying like a fish  
On a hill of shaved ice  
Open-mouthed in front of a white  
plain  
I twist over to the owner of the  
stalls—  
Nobody take your eyes off mine!  
Eighteen, soaked, cold.

*Acostado como un pescado  
En un montaña de hielo granizado  
Su boca abierta enfrente de campo blanco  
Como la entrada de un cueva  
Bailo por la gente hacia el dueño del  
mostrador  
Mírame! Mírame!  
Diez y ocho, empapados, frío.*

Lying like a fish  
In a mountain of crushed ice  
His mouth open in front of a  
white field  
As the entrance to a cave  
I'm dancing to the owner of the  
counter  
Look at me! Look at me!  
Eighteen, soaked, cold.

*Cual pescado tendido  
Sobre un monte de hielo roto  
La boca abierta frente a un campo blanco  
Como la entrada a una cueva  
Para el dueño del mostrador, bailo  
¡Mírame! ¡Mírenme!  
Dieciocho años, empapada, fría.*

Which fish, well tended  
lies on the mountain of broken  
ice, mouth open cavernously  
before a field of white  
for the owner to counter, dance  
Look at me! Look at me!  
Eighteen-year-old, soaked, cold.

*Qué pez, bien cuidado,  
yace en la montaña de hielo roto.  
Su boca abierta como una cueva  
sobre un campo blanco.  
Para que el dueño lo evalúe, baila.  
¡Mírame! ¡Mírame!  
18 años, empapado, viejo.*

What a well-bred fish,  
sprawling on the cold bed,  
lips parted like a cleft  
in the blanketed landscape,  
dancing for the pleasure of the  
patron.  
Look at me! Look at me!  
Eighteen years sopping old.

*Qué pez bien educado  
En su frío lecho tendido  
Con labios abiertos como un valle  
En un paisaje nevado.  
Baila para su amo:  
¡Míreme! ¡Míreme!  
A los dieciocho años ya anciano.*

What a well-educated fish  
Lying in his cold bed  
With his lips open like a valley  
In a snow landscape,  
Dancing for his master:  
Look at me! Look at me!  
Eighteen, and already old.

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# The Question Does Not Come Before There Is a Quotation

ROB KOVITZ

*Each day is attended by surprises*



*Suzie Grogan, Is Britain Still "Shell-Shocked"? A Question for World Mental Health Day (zenandtheartofrightropewalking.wordpress.com)*

A practical and personal application of inertia / Can be found in the question: / Whose Turn Is It / To Take Out The Garbage? / An empty pair of dance shoes / Is a lot like the answer to this question, / As well as book-length poems / Set in the Midwest.

*Cornelius Eady, The Empty Dance Shoes*

"Why does poetry suck?" This question echoes down the ages and is echoed by undergraduate students, eyes glazing as they gaze upon their reading lists. "It doesn't," we tell them, but in our hearts, we know different. We know it does.<sup>1</sup>

What sucks about poetry? The short answer is the words, and their combinations. The longer answer has to do with how so few of those combinations include the pairing "Nacho Tuesdays." Yes, poetry seems to

lack nachos, and, aside from that, it seems to lack humour. Indeed, no literary genre appears less funny than poetry, where conventional wisdom has it that a "good poem" must move the reader to some epiphany through the subtle revelation of some aspect of the human condition, the least funny condition of all.<sup>2</sup>

*Ryan Fitzpatrick and Jonathan Ball, "Take These Poems—Please!": An Introduction (Why Poetry Sucks)*

Joe Wenderoth, not by a long shot / sober, says, I promised my wife I wouldn't fuck / anyone to no one in particular and reads a poem / about how Jesus had no penis. / Meanwhile, the psychiatrist, attractive / in a fatherly way, says, Libido question mark.

*Rachel Zucker, Hey Allen Ginsberg Where Have You Gone and What Would You Think of My Drugs?*

1. Yes, we know footnotes suck too. Give us a break!

2. Even leprosy has its lighter moments. Look, Ma, no hands!

Popping bullets of sunlight / crack into the subliminal / orifices, and the tree thinks, / “How exquisite. Is this love?”

*Ruth Stone, The Questions*

The show did not start off / auspiciously, the contestants / were nervous and kept fiddling / with the wires attached / to their privates, the men / being especially anxious / over the question of balls. / The women were more querulous. / The first question, a medical subject, / was why had the anti-abortionists / not mentioned, let alone commented on, / the Baboon Heart transplant? / One terrified contestant guessed / it was because the moral majority’s / nervous concern with evolution / precluded their bringing it up. / That hopeful contestant’s face / reflected the malicious light / in the eyes of the host who / immediately threw the switch / A powerful surge shot through / the wires and both sexes screamed / and writhed, to the delight of / the vast viewership, estimated / at 100 million, all of whom, / presumably, were delighted / not to be on the show, / because not one in a million / knew the answer.

*Edward Dorn, The Price is Right: A Torture Wheel of Fortune*

What is the use of a violent kind of delightfulness if there is no pleasure in not getting tired of it. The question does not come before there is a quotation. In any kind of place there is a top to covering and it is a pleasure at any rate there is some venturing in refusing to believe nonsense. It shows what use there is in a whole piece if one uses it and it is extreme and very likely the little things could be dearer but in any case there is a bargain and if there is the best thing to do is to take it away and wear it and then be reckless be reckless and resolved on returning gratitude.

*Gertrude Stein, Tender Buttons*

Yes, but beyond happiness what is there? / The question has not yet been answered. / No great quotations have issued forth / From there, we have no still photographs / Full of men in fine leather hiking boots, / Women with new-cut walking sticks. / So yes, it is the realm of thin tigers / Prowling, out to earn even more stripes; / It is the smell of seven or eight perfumes / Not currently available in America. / Maybe this is wrong, of course. / The place may after all be populated, / Or over-populated, with dented trash cans / In the streets and news of genital herpes / In every smart article in every slick magazine / Everywhere in the place. / But everybody there smiles— / Laughs, even, every time a breath can be caught. / This is all true.

*Alberto Ríos, Mason Jars by the Window*

Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table; / Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets, / The muttering retreats / Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels / And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells: / Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent / To lead you to an overwhelming question ... / Oh, do not ask, “What is it?” / Let us go and make our visit.

*T. S. Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

When the snake bit / Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa / while he was praying / the snake died. (Each day / is attended by surprises / or it is nothing.) / Question: was the bare-footed, / smelly Rabbi more poisonous / than the snake / or so God-adulterated / he’d become immune / to serpent poison?

*Dannie Abse, Snake*

Well, it all makes for interesting conjecture. / And it occurs to me that what is crucial is to believe / in effort, to believe some good will come of simply *trying*, / a good completely untainted by the corrupt initiating impulse / to persuade or seduce— / What are we without this? / Whirling in the dark universe, / alone, afraid, unable to influence fate— / What do we have really? / Sad tricks with ladders and shoes, / tricks with salt, impurely motivated recurring / attempts to build character. / What do we have to appease the great forces? / And I think in the end this was the question / that destroyed Agamemnon, there on the beach, / the Greek ships at the ready, the sea / invisible beyond the serene harbor, the future / lethal, unstable: he was a fool, thinking / it could be controlled. He should have said / *I have nothing, I am at your mercy.*

*Louise Glück, The Empty Glass*

They dropped the charges of homicide, filed new charges of / terrorism, dropped the charges of terrorism, filed / new charges of public nudity, dropped the charges of / public nudity, filed new charges of lewd and / lascivious behavior. A spokesman for the FBI / said they found him on the hood of an SUV in a part / of town known as the “Fruit Loop.” His penis was in another / man’s mouth and in the front seat were vials containing a rare / strand of bacteria known to cause blindness in rats. They / dropped the charges of public nudity and filed new / charges of sodomy. A spokesman for the police department / said they found him with his pants down and it appeared / that his penis was in another man’s anus. But since they / could not prove to what degree his penis had penetrated / the other man’s

anus they dropped the charges of sodomy / and filed new charges of assault and battery. A / spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security said / that he assaulted a worker from the Department of / Public Health who used a Q-tip to extract from inside of / his urethra a rare strand of bacteria capable / of causing pneumonia in chickens. He was placed in / solitary confinement and a spokesman for the / Department of Corrections suggested that he was a / serious threat to the community. They examined the / strand of bacteria found in his urethra but since they / did not properly store the bacteria in the / appropriate container with the appropriate seals and / signatures they could not charge him with intent to commit crimes / against humanity. They dropped the charges of intent to / commit crimes against humanity and filed new charges / of larceny. They said he had stolen the rare strand of / bacteria from his employer and that he had done so / with the deliberate and malicious intent to harm as / many civilians as possible. They tried to verify / for whom he had worked during the given time period but since / they could not verify the name or location of his / employer they dropped the charges of larceny and filed new / charges of tax fraud. When they discovered he was privately / employed, they dropped the charges of tax fraud and filed new / charges of theft with an unregistered weapon. A / grocery store in his neighbourhood had recently been robbed / and the cashier said that the thief had carried the same model / of weapon that the man in question kept beneath his bed in / case of emergencies. They dropped the charges of theft with an / unregistered weapon when they discovered the cashier was / partially blind and that the weapon the man in question kept / beneath his bed in case of emergencies had been / properly purchased and registered. When they found on his / bookshelves several works of fiction with blind characters, / including *King Lear*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Endgame* and *Blindness* by / José Saramago, they accused him of conspiring / to use the rare strand of bacteria to blind not only / the grocer but the seven other blind residents of his / neighbourhood, each of whom had had perfectly good eyesight / until he came to town. They asked him why he had so many / books about blindness, but he refused to answer the question. / They asked him why he had so many books about blindness and / when his attorney arrived the man in question said that he / did not know why he had so many books about blindness. They / asked his friends and family why he had so many books / about blindness. No one knew why he had so many books / about blindness and they accused him in the press of / anti-social behaviour. When his neighbours testified that / the man in question enjoyed society as much as

he / enjoyed a quiet night at home, they dropped the charges of / anti-social behaviour. They dropped the charges of / anti-social behaviour and filed new charges of / jaywalking. An undercover police officer filmed him / with a video camera as he illegally crossed / the street. At the advice of his attorney, he pleaded / guilty to the charges of jaywalking. He agreed to pay / the fine.

*Daniel Borzutzky, The Man in Question*

In any case, the ruling was long overdue. / The people are beside themselves with rapture / so we stay indoors. The quest was only another adventure / and the solution problematic, at any rate far off in the future. / The people are beside themselves with rapture / yet no one thinks to question the source of so much collective euphoria, / and the solution: problematic, at any rate far off in the future. / The saxophone wails, the martini glass is drained. / Yet no one thinks to question the source of so much collective euphoria. / In troubled times one looked to the shaman or priest for comfort and counsel. / The saxophone wails, the martini glass is drained, / and night like black swansdown settles on the city. / In troubled times one looked to the shaman or priest for comfort and counsel. / Now, only the willing are fated to receive death as a reward, / and night like black swansdown settles on the city. / If we tried to leave, would being naked help us?

*John Asberry, Hotel Lauréamont*

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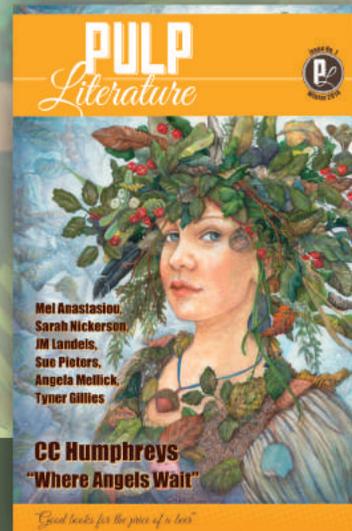
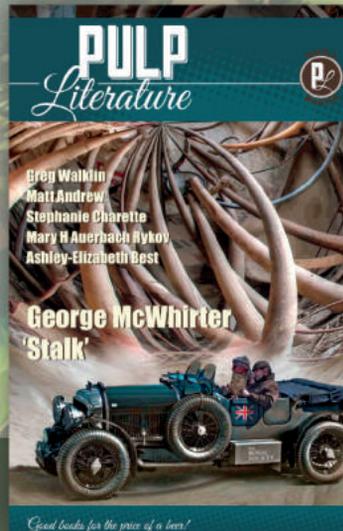
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# FINDINGS

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Throwing in the Towel, from *retroActive*, by the Canadian sculptor John Greer. Greer's most recent exhibition, *retroActive*, showcases

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## We All Know What Happened Next

DAVID BALZER

*From Curationism, by David Balzer. Balzer is the Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Art as well as the author of numerous works of criticism and a collection of short stories. He lives in Toronto.*

How much curatorial work did you do today? You got dressed, perhaps laying out various options in the manner of an installing curator. Perhaps, for lunch, you went to Chipotle, Subway, Teriyaki Experience or one of any number of food chains that now ask you to select ingredients to compose your meal. (Subway got in early on curationism, calling their sandwich-makers “sandwich artists” in an amusing, telling marketing of the artist-curator relationship as parallel to that of the server-customer.) Perhaps you purchased something from an online retailer like Amazon or

Everlane, consumer-curatorial work that will result in subsequent emails from the retailer suggesting other products you might like. Perhaps you updated your profile on a dating website or app, further streamlining your identity to attract the right people and repel the wrong ones, curatorial work that will also result in further suggestions of who you might like. Perhaps you spent some time on Facebook, organizing a photo album of your latest trip, or updating your cover photo to something cute and clever, an addition to your own digital exhibition of personal and cultural

imagery. Perhaps, on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Chat, Google+, or a sex app like Grindr, Scruff or Tinder, you curated connections, making new ones, perhaps hunting by geographical location, and/or favouriting/deleting/blocking existing ones. Perhaps, finally, you unwound with Netflix, Hulu, Mubi or another film- and TV-watching service incorporating your every selection into further selections tailor-made for your tastes.

Some of you actually got paid to curate. If you work in fashion, you are probably curating in some way every day. As a model scout, you are looking for the next face, perhaps not even fully formed, but, as your eye and industry knowledge can tell you, eminently groomable. As a retail worker, you might arrange displays in addition to organizing racks and suggesting what works best for each



*fifty years of his work. The catalogue, retroActive, was published by Goose Lane in 2015. He lives in West Dublin, Nova Scotia.*

client. If you work in a large department store, this job will go to a visual merchandiser—not just a window dresser anymore, for a visual merchandiser can function in all sorts of environments and, actually, very conceptually, and outside the fashion world. In fashion and other lifestyle industries, such as food, the role of the stylist has emerged as a prominent curationist profession. (A friend of mine in fashion recently told me, “We didn’t know we needed stylists until you could tell who didn’t have one,” a smart comment on how curators spin wants into needs, becoming their own best value-imparters in order to seem indispensable.) Stylists, working in an editorial capacity, are, in true curatorial mode, collaborators, liaising with photographers, editors, designers and—especially if a celebrity is involved—the model

or models, to determine which looks work best and are most strategic for the season. (Another friend of mine who has done styling cleverly referred to these acts as ones of “negotiation.”) And this is just scraping the surface. In any lifestyle industry closely connected with media, you will find entire subsets of workers who are paid to activate their own cognition to select. Likely they are bringing their curated crops up through a hierarchy for ultimate approval, as evinced in the 2009 documentary *The September Issue*, in which *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour is basically pictured in every scene pointing at things and saying yes or no.

If you work in digital, you are also getting paid to curate. Speaking of crops, perhaps the most common curator of our time is what has become known as the “content farmer.”

(Compare and contrast, figuratively, with writer Douglas Coupland’s well-known coinages of the postmodern economy from *Generation X*, in which he referred to the office cubicle as the “veal-fattening pen.”) The content farmer is the dystopian new journalist, producing online content, typically for a large company, based on search data from engines like Google, in an attempt to garner more advertising revenue because of the popularity of the topic. Here, the value impartation is done by others (droves, really) via algorithms. Value is thus proportional to popularity, and audience courting is synonymous with it. There is no better example of the darkest, most tautological aspects of accelerated curationism: rather than the simulated democracy (or, at least, simulated beneficence) of curated works being presented as attractive

to a potential audience because they have been chosen exclusively and carefully for their value, the value in these content-farmed works lies not in preciousness but in popularity. It is not a stretch to connect content farming to the increasing art-institutional interest in touring exhibitions. Revenue is scarce, so give the people what they want.

You may do something else in the fields of the cognitive or information economy, producing tweets for a large company, for example, typically for little or no pay. As with the curatorial profession in the art world, digital-curatorial jobs tend to divide feudally, except the elite class in the digital realm is considerably larger and more entrepreneurial. These are often new

types of designers. If you are a game designer, you are intimately involved in the curatorial act of audience courting, but you are also—as we saw with banks and other corporations—recruiting gamers as curators, asking them to manage their own experience, interactivity being an increasingly fundamental aspect of gaming. (Such recruitment is also instrumental to app design.) Experience designers are also a new and growing breed sprung from the curationist moment. Writing for the Australian website *The Conversation*, author, educator and qualitative researcher Faye Miller begins by pegging the following fill-in-the-blank phrase as “the unofficial catch cry” of the twenty-first century: “it’s not just a \_\_\_\_\_ ,

it’s an experience.” Miller cites the concept of the “experience economy” or “exponomy,” which she traces back to a 1998 article by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore in the *Harvard Business Review*, essentially contending that commodities have more impact when the consumer has an experience, one that is often collaborative and cross-platform. Miller uses the example of “a major fashion event [that] would collaborate with the entertainment, media and tourism/hospitality industries to provide an audience with a lasting impression through a multi-sensory experience that is both enjoyable and prosperous.” To me, someone who deals with culture and its discourses rather than business, the description is redolent of biennials or large-scale conceptual-art projects in which curators are frequently instrumental. Miller, naturally, positions the late Steve Jobs as an incipient experience designer, quoting one of his many curationist quips: “Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something.”

Gathering things, connecting them, sharing them with others in a way that positions one as a taste-making host: sounds fun, doesn’t it? This is precisely why everyone is now doing it. Yet it is still not okay to call yourself a curator if you haven’t somehow acquired that professional designation. In a dismissive 2013 posting on the art-and-design site *Complex*, independent curator Vanessa Castro lists “people who definitely shouldn’t have the title ‘curator’ in their Twitter bios,” noting that “the term ‘curator’...has been overused by many people so they can appear as ‘creative’ types when in fact, they actually don’t curate anything.

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## Territory

JORDAN ABEL

*From Injun, a collection of poetry sourced from public domain frontier adventure novels of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Published by Talon Books in 2016. Abel is a Nisaga’a writer from Vancouver.*

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irring across the line into Mexican territory. Madeline’s sensibilities w  
-center of several hundred miles of territory. On the main street there  
d the boundary line of his hunting territory. The decision he made to t  
the mouth of the river. A vast wild territory—a refuge for outlaws! Sor  
elieved that he was getting on safer territory. Twice he came to a wide t  
part of an outlaw, drifting into new territory. He passed on leisurely be  
politics for a while, and of the vast territory west of the Pecos that seer  
, when it’s paid, you strike for new territory.” “Thet might be wise,” m  
on whistled low. “An’ leave for new territory?” repeated Snake Anson,  
is hand to indicate a wide sweep of territory. “Me sick.” Nas Ta Bega la:  
l another ball into Clammer’s wide territory. The hit was of the high an  
ormer excursions and entered new territory. Here the woods began to  
ein’ as how we won’t be in redskin territory fer awhile yit, we kin hev  
and started across country for new territory near Whitley’s Peak. We r

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Curators are supposed to be arbiters of taste, people who pick what's cool and trending in the world, people who have a trained eye for what is best. Most people on Twitter definitely don't fit this definition." (One of Castro's more charming finds is @SusieBlackmon, "Curator of news, information, & #horsebiz re Horses (Western, Thoroughbreds), Western Lifestyle, Western Wear, American West. Microblogger.")

I do not find Castro's objections convincing. I agree with her that the title of curator is itself inherently and inevitably curatorial, a way of imparting value to activities as exclusive

and specialized work. But, as we have seen, what a curator is "supposed to be" often leads to more interrogations than assertions. Castro's concerns speak to larger issues: first, to the ironic credentialist anxieties spawned by the cognitive or information economy, which still (as we saw with curatorial-studies programs) looks to old and arguably outdated models to legitimate what are plainly difficult-to-professionalize professions; second, to the old-fashioned way many people continue to understand their online curatorial activity and self-branding, hoping, eventually, to monetize it in a more traditional manner rather than

doing it as a matter of course, for free. Such fantasies include a Tumblr turning into a best-selling book or a popular Twitter account leading to a position as a columnist.

Anxiety is one of the key drivers of the curatorial impulse in capitalist society and culture, an anxiety to ensure things are valuable and in turn to define them as somehow productive or useful. Søren Kierkegaard famously wrote, "[A]nxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself." Curation provides this

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## Aquarians

CORA SIRÉ

*From Signs of Subversive Innocents. Published by Signature Editions in 2014. Siré writes poetry, essays and fiction. She lives in Montreal.*

we chain-smoked Camel cigarettes  
we got beach tar on our feet  
we put a candle in the window  
we believed there'd be an answer

we looked at the ivy on the old clinging wall  
we learned where the grapes of wrath are stored  
we requested amor por favor  
we were so good with words

we watched your every breath  
we planted love and let it grow  
we rocked you gently with our song  
we cried for Argentina

we got a shirt that we really loved  
we bought, oh Lord, a Mercedes Benz  
we found a place to stay and a place to go  
we got stuck in traffic, not moving anywhere

we booked a one-way ticket to paradise  
we watched you standing by the ocean's roar  
we hated that sadness in your eyes  
we felt nothing but a heartache

we were very superstitious  
we went down to the river to pray  
we tried to find a reason to believe  
we saw fire and we saw rain

we remembered when rock was young  
we tried to relax and take it easy  
we squandered our resistance  
we saw the damage done

we didn't draw the queen of hearts  
we didn't all call the tune  
we didn't really give peace a chance  
we didn't celebrate the blaze of light in every word

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Getting Bombed in Vancouver by Art Nuko. Airbrush and pencil on illustration board, 30 x 40 inches, 1976. The piece appeared in *Atomic Postcards: Radioactive Messages from the Cold War*. Published by intellect books in 2011.

finiteness. In a time in which information, population and ambition continue to accelerate unmanageably, there is an attendant desire to control, contain, organize and, as a result, make elaborate, fretful ontological claims. To reiterate Christov-Bakargiev's paraphrasing of Paolo Virno, "You think you don't exist if you're not different from everybody else."

If curators began to dominate the art world in the 1990s, they began to dominate everything else in the 2000s. This is the precise moment at which the avant-garde idea of culture failed, for throughout the twentieth century in the West, especially after

World War II, we read experience aggressively through the Gregorian calendar, in a succession of vibrant, exciting decades: "the 1950s," "the 1960s," "the 1970s," etc. The 1990s, a perfect concluding paragraph to the avant-gardist twentieth century for introducing to the zeitgeist the concept of "retro," led to the bathetic non-apocalypse of Y2K, and then to the amorphous 2000s, in which most of our cultural innovations, most of what we could claim as completely and utterly "new" in the avant-garde sense, came from the digital realm. Otherwise we were and are, to quote critic John Bentley Mays, living in

"the contemporary,' [a] seemingly timeless zone of consumerism and spectacle," a general and generalizing era in which, nonetheless, more people than ever before are clamouring for attention.

In the 2000s, digital innovations brought into culture an impulse very similar to the one that birthed the contemporary curator in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet the masses of information parsed by upstart curators in the 2000s were not new but old. It was a nervous organizing and hoarding of data from the past that the internet made available in the present. Personal exercises of taste before the

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said Mike Yapp. COMPANY RECLAIMS THE LOST ART OF STORYTELLING: Spink & Edgar's new website proves that making mattresses can be romantic. THE NEED OF STORYTELLERS IN CRICKET COMMENTARY: A beautiful storyteller has the effect of hypnosis on the viewer. THE 5 BEST STORYTELLING RAP SONGS FROM THE '90S:

2000s were a form of collector culture and often required pilgrimages and extravagant expense. These were not common activities. Two subcultures might be exemplary. Gay subcultures, which, with their devotion to histories not widely acknowledged and thus, in many senses, curated, sought out, for instance, rare 16mm prints or VHS tapes of Old Hollywood films, of opera-performance recordings, of fan ephemera of cult icons, etc. Audiophile subcultures dug through crates of records in numerous vast record stores in cities across the world, crowing to friends about their latest finds,

and using mail-order catalogues, conventions and auctions, anxious to possess something that might have taken years to acquire.

We all know what happened next: eBay, Napster, larger and cheaper bandwidth, faster download speeds, MySpace and Facebook as new methods of cultural display (supplanting the bookshelf or CD rack), the iPod and its iTunes—collection-assimilating entities that encouraged the hybrid, eclectic assortment of works into playlists, another banner word of the aughts that is betrothed to the verb curate. Many have written about the

democracy afforded by such things. Lines drawn by the *Only Lovers Left Alive*-style vampire-snob curators of the Gen X 1990s, when you were either “alternative” or “hip-hop” but couldn’t be both, were erased. Value is now imparted by what, at least on the surface, appears to be outré curation, and it is much more curation than what occurred in the 1990s, which might better be described as categorization. “What kind of music do you like?” has become a tedious, unanswerable question. We hope our identities are more complex than that, and indeed desire them to be. 🍷

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## Perfect

SOUVANKHAM THAMMAVONGSA

*From Light. Published by Pedlar Press in 2013. Light won the 2014 Trillium Book Award for Poetry. Thammavongsa is a poet and short story writer. She lives in Toronto.*

When I am fourteen, my father will quit his job and sell our home. He will use the money to start a sign-making business. He will start by buying computers and big heavy equipment and we will spend nights sleeping in the van. I'll try my best to sleep, to close my eyes and feel warm in my wet socks and thin winter coat. In the mornings, I'll brush my teeth at school and comb my hair so I'll look like nothing is wrong with me. I'll wander the empty dark halls before the students fill them, and sometimes I'll sing and dance like a star in a Broadway play. When I see a teacher, I'll sit quietly outside a classroom door with a heavy book in my hand. *Moby-Dick*. The only teacher to ask is Ms. Irons. I will tell her that I'm just so excited for school and I'm so happy to be here. It's not a lie. I'm happy that for the whole of a day, I'll be warm and I can be with my friends. I don't tell her all the other stuff. That this will be the year my parents' marriage will begin to fall apart. That they'll stop dancing in the living room and that my mother will stop making me beautiful dresses which match hers from leftover materials, that the bottles full of colour and fragrances dry up.

I didn't know it then so how could I tell her? After school, my mother will pick me up and drive for hours. She'll sometimes stop at a lake somewhere in cottage country and listen to the radio. She'll walk back and forth, never saying anything. And I will bow my head and work out the math problems in my homework. The math problems are easy. They are always about some guy who had to get to the other side. There's always an answer, a sure thing. You just have to work your way there. Everything you need to know to solve it has already been given to you. There is no secret but the answer, shimmering alone without any signs around it. I will keep my print small, filling up every blank space I can find like a Captain plugging leaks in a sinking ship. It will get dark and just as the sun sets, the streetlamp will turn on. I will angle my notebook to catch this light. This light. I will go back to school and hand in my notebook and it will be perfect. Perfect. It's what I've earned. A friend will lean in and announce my score, and I'll hear someone ask, “How'd *you* get perfect?” I can't begin to say what it took to get it that way. It's perfect. Perfect. 🍷

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From Biggie's “I Got A Story To Tell” to Ice Cube's “Today Was a Good Day.” STORYTELLING MAKES MEN MORE ATTRACTIVE: A recent study says that men who are good storytellers are perceived by women to be “high status” and better long-term partners. DON'T SHOW A POWERPOINT, TELL A STORY: The art of storytelling

# Plans

ALEXANDRA OLIVER

*From Let the Empire Down. Oliver has performed her poetry at Lollapalooza, the National Poetry Slam, the CBC Radio National Poetry Face-Off and other venues. She divides her time between Toronto and Glasgow.*

Mid-morning: here I sit with splayed-out hands,  
womanly and worked-with, on the towel.  
The manicurist, twenty at the most,  
is pretty in her bow-necked carbon dress.  
(The shop has not been open for a week;  
a box of Thornton's Classics stands uneaten  
on the table, by a copy of *Hello!*)  
She has a job, Someone has told her so.  
If she were made to do it, she's uncertain  
(and, if she were uncertain, would she speak?).  
Plucking metal clippers from a glass,  
she starts to pick away, a little lost,  
until the rip, the blood, the muted howl,  
*I'm sorry!* Meaning, *Not what I had planned.*  
A half an hour before, this girl had told me  
how she loved her small-town school back home,  
excelled in sciences, rejoiced in donning  
lab coats to untuck the life from frogs,  
set fire to wide-hipped flasks, lean in to watch  
the magnified amoebae wink and burble  
coily in the Petri dish, a hand  
unshaking on the arm of her best friend.

A girl's future should be full and bright, a marble,  
but (alas for her) there is a catch:  
we take on the immediate. Hope flags;  
wishing to be wise and come out shining,  
we pop a beaker over our own flame.  
We do it cheerfully. We do it coldly.

Tamping down the soggy, trembling cotton  
on my bleeding cuticle, she asks  
*What colour? Meaning, How can I do better  
when I know the business isn't in me?*  
Look, I want to say, I've done it too,  
sold candlesticks I'd never care to clean,  
told women that a lipstick made them young,  
gone drinking with the after-hours gang;  
I've told admirers things I didn't mean  
and said to students, *It'll come to you!*  
The wrong direction never treats you kindly.  
I long to tell her that it doesn't matter;  
there's a way to live and shirk the axe,  
though what that is, I've probably forgotten. 🍷

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## Double Consciousness

HOWARD ACKLER

*From Men of Action. Published by Coach House Books in 2016. Ackler lives in Toronto.*

**W**ilder Penfield was Cushing's most famous student. He performed hundreds of successful operations during his surgical career and founded the Montreal Neurological Institute in 1934. He specialized in the treatment of severe epilepsy.

The brain may be an elaborate processor of sensory data, but it is itself without sensation. So, Penfield and his longtime collaborator Herbert

Jasper used only local anesthetic. Their patients were fully conscious and able to answer questions as the surgeons slowly moved an electrode across the folds and contortions of their cerebral cortices.

Zap. "Anything?"

"My tongue feels numb," said one young woman.

Zap.

"A ... A ... A," she vocalized.

A dozen verbal and reflexive responses later and Penfield had not only located the damaged tissue but also deduced how much was essential and how much could be removed with no detectable functional loss. He isolated the point of irritation—often a scar—that triggered a seizure and then excised it, confident there would be little risk of paralysis or aphasia. In this way, he mapped the brain's centres for speech and movement, a cartography still current.

He was a pioneer in neurophysiology and neurosurgery. But Penfield struggled with his strangest discovery. Stimulation of the temporal lobe often set free a patient's long-dormant

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has been usurped by lifeless software. NOT USING STORYTELLING IN YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGN YET? NOW'S THE PERFECT TIME TO START: Think of the last time you experienced a story. UNLOCK YOUR STORYTELLING MOJO WITH YOUR RP GROUP: Here are some tips to help induce a state of storytelling back into your

memory. The recollection described in vivid detail: a song once heard verse and chorus expertly hummed years later; the fusty stink of a father's cigar. The kicker was that each patient, while immersed in ardent past, was also fully present. Every one of them aware of the surgical theatre, of the operating table and the inescapable fact that these flashes of memory were imposed upon them.

Penfield called this a “double

consciousness.” It confounded him. Here was a part of subjective experience he could not materially manipulate. Long an avowed man of science, he had no choice but to believe that the mind and the brain were not one thing, but two. He became a late-life dualist. His quaint but requalified analogy: “There is a switchboard operator as well as a switchboard.” ☹

coffee grinds on the floor by the trash can. A damp kitchen cloth. Your hometown is burning.

10. The face of a woman you know appears on the computer devoid of any apparent emotion. What does it feel like when your hometown is burning? How can you show it? Where are the t-shirts, the arm bands, the YouTube clips, the tweets, the letter writers, the dissenters, the peace lovers, the protesters, the batons, the loudspeakers, the police, the guns, the tear gas, the burning tires in the middle of the road, the pickup trucks, goons throwing politicians to the back of the track and speeding away? Where are the signs that your hometown is burning?
11. Pink and yellow tulips in a vase. Not any less gorgeous, even as dead stalks that cling to any semblance of life opening up to the light through the blinds and closing up in the evening, sucking at what juices might be mixed in the water.
12. Wash some dishes.
13. Shower.
14. Fix your hair.
15. Wear lipstick.
16. Remember to take your shades—it's sunny outside.
17. Call your mother.
18. Listen to your mother freak out just like you thought she would. Why should this be happening to us again, why? When did it start? Who is doing this? Not again, she wails, not again.
19. Gulu is in flames as the fourth division pours out into the streets showing firepower, manly power, deadly, manly firepower.
20. Your hometown is burning. So you take the bus, go to work, mark papers, submit a short story and think about dinner. ☹

## Stuff to do When Your Hometown is Burning

JULIANE OKOT BITEK

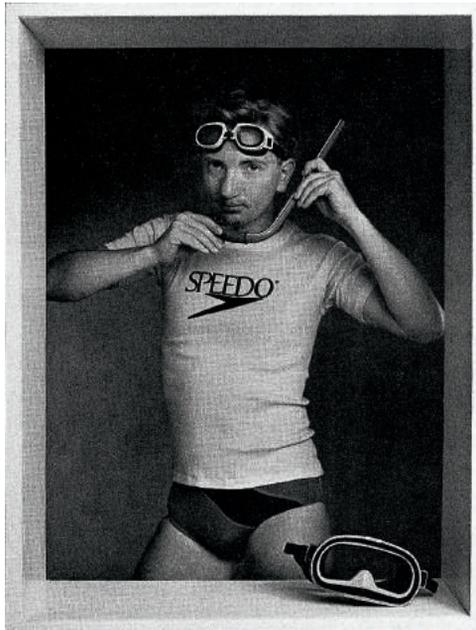
*From The Revolving City. Published by Anvil Press in 2016. Edited by Wayde Compton and Renée Sarojini Saklikar. The poem was written in response to the military violence that followed the Walk to Work protests—the post-presidential election outcry over increased costs of living and frustration with a soaring inflation rate and poor social service delivery—in Uganda in April 2011. Five people were killed, dozens injured and hundreds arrested. Juliane Okot Bitek is a doctoral candidate at UBC. Her research is centred on social memory and national identity.*

1. Finish up your cup of tea before it gets cold because you know you hate it cold.
2. Think about calling your mother.
3. Don't call your mother. She'll freak out. Asking questions like hail pelting down, like pepper sneezed into your face, like unrelenting projectile vomit on your recently cleaned carpet. Don't call your mother. She'll freak out as if you knew much more than the headlines proclaim: Gulu in Flames.
4. Change the channel. Change. Change. Change. Nothing. None of the news media will carry it, and why should they? Gulu is burning, but does not even warrant a lined script flowing at the bottom of your TV screen.
5. Return to the internet site. Read the article again. Gulu is Burning. Still burning. Same title renders the burning a continuous and never-ending act—Gulu is hell.
6. Email a friend. Enclose the link.
7. Read your friend's response—oh dear.
8. Oh dear you, oh dear me, oh dear everything around you—scattered books on the table, papers, receipts from a cup of coffee and muffin that you hated, the latest *O Magazine* proclaiming secrets to a long and joyful life complete with beautiful skin—your hometown is burning.
9. The dishes are stacked up in the sink. They always are. Grape stalks on the kitchen counter,

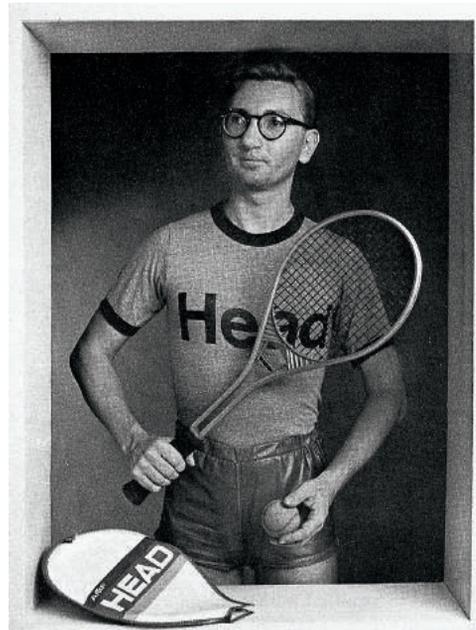
roleplaying group. KOBE BRYANT IS GETTING STORYTELLING ADVICE FROM STEVEN SPIELBERG AS HE DEVELOPS KOBE STUDIOS: Kobe comes up with a movie idea, then dials up Steven Spielberg to talk through the plot. Wouldn't you like to listen in to that call? DATA DRIVEN STORYTELLING IS THE NEW NORMAL: The internet

# Modern Fashions Suite: Men Like You Like Semantic T-Shirts

DAVID BUCHAN (1950-1993)



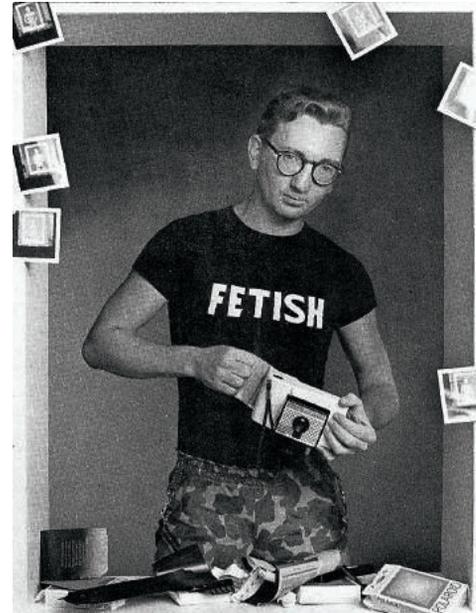
*Going down? Perfect for all kinds of watersports. Get below the surface—get to the bottom of things in this outfit designed with total immersion in mind.*



*Tennis anyone? A bit of the old back-and-forth? In this dialogue with balls, it's not important who serves, but the quality of the exchange.*



*Our jocks are tops. Play ball, go for a long one, he shoots—be scores. Catch my drift? At any rate, in this game, it's three stripes and you're out.*



*This self-reflexive statement of the nature of compulsive self-identification in the latest style in self-addressing. His fetish, wby the Semantic T-shirt!*

*From Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene, published in 2016 by Black Dog Publishing in partnership with Art Gallery of York University. The book documents Toronto's downtown arts community during the late '70s.*

was set ablaze the past few weeks, by Candace Payne, now dubbed the "Chewbacca Mum." READING COMICS IN CLASS? IT'S JUST A WAY TO LEARN MATHS: The storytelling and comics approach has been tested on more than 100 students at three secondary schools this year. 10 BOOKS THAT WEAVE MEDICAL SCIENCE INTO

# How to Reach Canada

GREGORY SCOFIELD

*From Louis: The Heretic Poems. Published by Nightwood Editions in 2011. Scofield is the author of six previous collections of poetry. He lives in Sudbury.*

If you are planning to go to Canada, you should plan to leave home about mid-April. This will allow you to reach Canada in time to earn some money with harvesting, before the winter sets in. You may take a steamship from Liverpool to Quebec, and from there you may travel by Canadian Pacific Railway to your proposed home in the west. Allan Line steam ships sail every Thursday from Liverpool to Glasgow. The Dominion Line sails Tuesdays from Liverpool, the Terminal Line on alternate Tuesdays from London. The voyage takes from eight to ten days. You should arrive at the port the evening before the sailing, since ships leave early in the morning. All food is provided, but steerage passengers should bring their own bedding, beds and eating and drinking utensils. You should also lay in a good stock of clothing.

We are collected here  
Like raindrops in a bucket.  
The piece of parchment says  
We are to stay here  
Like stones that do not move.  
We are to wait for rations  
Like a dog or a beggar.

They come by boat or train.  
They are fed  
When there is no food in the country  
They are coming to.  
The wâpiskwîyâsak tell us *white-meat, derogatory word for white people*  
To make holes in the dirt.  
I think this must be to plant our dead.

—Minahikosis (Little Pine),  
Chief of the Plains Cree 🍄

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## The Grey Islands

JOHN STEFFLER

*From The Grey Islands. Originally published in 1985 and republished in 2015 by Brick Books. Steffler writes fiction and poetry and has held the title of Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate. He lives in Corner Brook, Newfoundland.*

Four years and I'm still like a tourist here. I haven't even left the motel.

The first job they gave me, their new town planner straight from U of T, when they'd driven me round the place, thriving Milliken Harbour, and we sat in the "conference room," myself and the councilmen—two

contractors, the fish-plant manager, and the man with the liquor commission franchise—and I asked were there any areas that needed immediate attention, and they all agreed the bears was a headache this time o' year, tearin the hell outa the town dump, a danger to folks goin out there, and some of them roamin right into town, everyone phonin worried complainin

night and day, and you couldn't stop the young fellers goin out for a lark and gettin the bears drunk and tryin to ride on their backs, and one day somebody'd get killed and sure as hell the council'd be to blame. They wanted to talk about cheap fencing and scarecrows and machines that go bang every thirty seconds. I got them a grant and had an incinerator put in, and that's still the most popular thing I've done. Four years ago. And the rest has been mostly road signs and litter barrels and organizing the odd parade.

Town planner. Town joe-boy is what I've been. But whose fault is that? I'd find lots to do if this place meant anything to me. Or if the

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GREAT STORYTELLING: These doctor-authors have made the ambitious and difficult choice to write for a general audience. PLAYWRIGHT, FILM PRODUCER STRIVE TO TEACH TRUTH THROUGH STORYTELLING: Creators of works for stage and screen liken what they do to Jesus's method of using parables to teach gospel precepts.

# The New Yorker

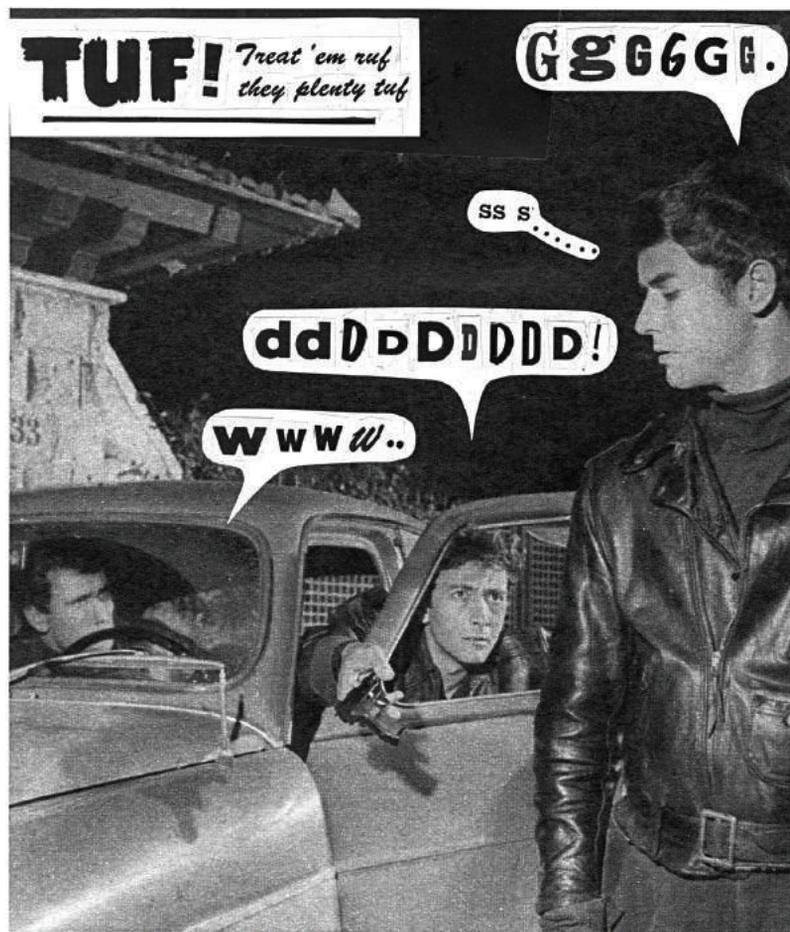
MICHAEL CRUMMEY

*From Little Dogs. Published by House of Anansi in 2016. CrummeY is the author of the novels River Thieves, Galore, and Sweetland.*

He was the most exotic creature I'd ever met, corpulent and balding in a suit and tie, waddling through the vacant parking lot with one hand raised to hail me across the quiet street, as if I was a cab idling in Manhattan traffic—a native-born New Yorker, fresh from the airport or just through his first grim night at the Grenfell Hotel, his girth and lumbering gait suggesting he'd made a meal of a small to middling American state en route to Labrador. All that stood between him and endless arctic tundra was an anemic shopping mall, a tin-can hockey arena, and that see-through skim triggered a silent alarm in the man, something befuddling inspired him to flail helplessly with his hailing arm as he tweedledummed on a swivel, taking the riddle in-roads that dead-ended and nowhered in the Big Land's navel, company houses bordered on all sides by a void from an old wives' tale. Nothing he knew compared to the lack my hometown tried to huckster off as charm. Nothing had ever made him feel so unaccountably small. 🍷

people wanted to change a thing. And I'm dying bit by bit, shrinking, drying up along with my dreams of the New Jerusalem, the four-gated golden city with market squares and green belts and pedestrian streets and old buildings restored and tourist money pouring in. I laugh at that now, an old pain I screw myself with, and every once in a while (like every day) it hits me I've got to get out of here to save what's left of me, and I keep up with the trade magazines and write to people I used to know, but there's nothing going, there isn't a job from here to B.C. And I think then how lucky I am, Bill driving cab in Toronto for Christ sake and David in some office block

in Ottawa, and I figure I'll sit tight till something turns up, at least it's a good place to raise kids. That's one lie that's easy to swallow. There's lots of fresh air and there isn't much crime and the people are friendly is what I always say, the people are wonderful. And we head for the mainland every chance we get, Karen dying for Yonge and Bloor, Kensington Market, Spadina Avenue. And I'm dying for it too. We get there and drag ourselves over the sidewalks and I hate the place. Two weeks every year. We're like ghosts looking for something we've lost. The city changes in four years, people move, we don't have a home. And we change too. We fade slowly. Into ghosts. 🍷



*From Carpet Sweeper Tales. Published by Drawn and Quarterly in 2016. Julie Doucet is a Montreal artist and the creator of the comic-book series Dirty Plotte. Her work includes artist's books, collages and animation films.*

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"BETTER CALL SAUL" SEASON 3 EXPECTS TO CONTINUE WITH THE HIGH STANDARD OF STORYTELLING: Fans and viewers should trust the storytelling capabilities of Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould. IS STORYTELLING THE KEY TO VR'S FUTURE?: Virtual reality may be the closest to teleportation we will ever have in our lifetime. 🍷

# Publishing

JUSTIN MCGRAIL

*From Oratorealis, Vol. 1, No. 1. Justin McGrail is a member of Meridian, a multimedia performance troupe.*

Dear still unpublished writer:

Thank you for your submission to:

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Unfortunately  
We will not be  
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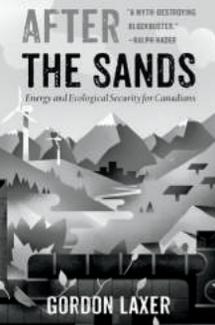
Thanks for your interest in poetry,  
and keep trying.

Signed

R.Q.B. Vaxxmann,  
Editor



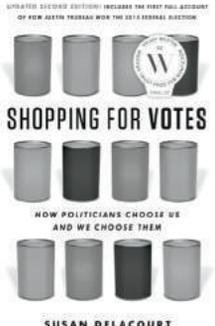
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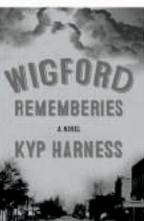
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# What I Learned in Florida

CARY FAGAN

*There were always things to see at the pond—tadpoles, leopard frogs, dragonflies—but that day we saw two boys, with a rifle.*



## I

When I was about twelve, I gave up fishing because I had too much empathy for the fish with a hook in its cartilaginous lip. I still went along with my two older brothers to Holland Landing, some thirty miles north of the Toronto suburb where we lived. Along the river beyond the village they would cast their lines with the red plastic floaters that bobbed on the water, and I would sit under a tree and write a poem or story in a notepad, affirming my position as the artistic one.

I don't know how we got there on this particular Saturday, since we were all too young to drive. Perhaps my Uncle Jack had driven us. He was the dedicated fisherman in the family, his *mamalegge*—a sticky ball of cornmeal, Tabasco sauce and other ingredients—was irresistible bait to carp. As a kid in the city, he had fished from the banks of the Don River with a homemade rod, a Jewish Huck Finn. He was different from the other men in the family, with his quick boxer jabs, his friendly headlocks, his shuffling dance steps as he sang old novelty songs like “Mairzy Doats” and “Yes! We Have No Bananas.” He shot pool and played cards and he neglected his jewelry business. But he was cheerful, a whistler, an optimist, a fisherman.

*The boy took two more steps,  
aimed at something in the  
reeds and fired again.*

If Jack was there, then he had already picked his spot on the river and settled in. My brothers and I decided to walk along the shore of a nearby pond that was wide but stagnant, its surface a green scum with waxy, half-submerged plants. There were always things to see, like tadpoles in the pond and dragonflies in the air and insects that skittered between them. But that day what we saw were two boys, older than us, on the other side of the pond, and instinctively we crouched down so as not to be seen. The taller of the boys carried something on his shoulder; it took me a minute to make out what it was—a rifle. When he lowered it and took aim and fired, we knew, from the *pfft*, that it was a BB gun. We had once asked our parents for one, but our mother had said no. The boy took two more steps, aimed at something in the reeds and fired again. This action he repeated every few seconds until it was the turn of the second boy, who did the same.

In this way, the two boys walked the entire perimeter of the pond. When they came

around to our side, we had to scramble back into the trees. Again we kept low, barely breathing. I was afraid they would take a shot in our direction, but they were too focused on their task to notice us. They wore jean jackets, rubber boots and baseball caps. I could hear their calm voices but not what they were saying. Finally the shooter lifted the gun and both boys stood there, surveying the pond for a few moments before taking the path that headed up to the road.

We waited until they were gone from view and then approached the pond. As soon as we got to the bulrushes we saw a leopard frog on its side in the water. My brother Mark pulled it out with a stick, and we examined the small hole in its flat head. We liked leopard frogs and had often spent time catching them, briefly keeping them in a large jar. They had sleek bodies with brilliant camouflage and silky-white bellies. Even dead, this one looked beautiful.

We began walking, finding a dead frog every two or three feet. How many were there—a hundred, two hundred? Even as we went around the pond I knew that I would write a story about what we were seeing. Back home I tried, but I couldn't figure out how, couldn't find its meaning or accept that it had no big meaning, that it was just a couple of kids with a gun and a bunch of dead frogs. So instead I wrote stories about spaceships and baseball and Godzilla rampaging through the streets of Tokyo, destroying the civilization that had woken him from sleep.

## II

When I was a kid in the 1960s, my parents would take me and my brothers to the Canadian National Exhibition every year. We visited all the buildings—Science, Home, Agriculture—and had lunch in the Food Building, where we lined up for a one-cent container of Lancia spaghetti covered in thin tomato sauce. We always finished off with thick wedges of vanilla ice cream melting between warm waffles.

The CNE promoted whatever was new and modern that year, but everything we liked best was old. On the midway, for example, we played Pull-a-String, which demanded no skill, other than choosing a string from the bundle and giving it a yank. My brothers and I won only cheap whistles and plastic snakes, never a giant stuffed giraffe or bear, but we wouldn't give up. Then there was the man who demonstrated the Veg-O-Matic. We would stand and watch him for a full hour, mesmerized by his salesmanship. He joked with women in the audience or teased their husbands, his hands all the while working the machine, changing blades from thick-cut to julienne, constantly adding to the mound of vegetables on the counter. We considered him an artist.

The midway still had a sideshow, a strange Victorian holdover. Hand-painted banners offered the spectacle of oddities both animal and human, all displayed for our "amusement and education." I didn't really understand why, but I asked my father to take me in to see "the fat lady." On the banner I saw a round laughing face, a mountainous bosom, a pink tutu above giant legs that ended in tiny slippers feet. There was something racy and exciting about a woman on public view. My brothers must have gone off with my mother, so my father indulged me by buying two tickets.

The bored young man who took the tickets lifted the curtain that served as an entrance to the trailer. The fat lady, sitting inside on a simple platform, was reading a paperback novel. She seemed to me a cruel distortion of the painting on the banner. I had expected a woman attractive and, without my quite understanding this, sexually alluring. I had not imagined that any person really could be so corpulent.

When about a dozen of us were crowded in the trailer, she put down her book and looked at us. She delivered her speech in a monotone; she told us how much she had weighed at various ages, what her measurements were and how a pituitary gland condition caused her brain and body to malfunction. She hauled up her skirt to show us the enormous folds of her thigh.

We remained silent. I longed for the show to be over, to get out of that dim, smelly trailer.

I wanted the fat lady's self-exposure and my own humiliation to end. My desire itself had been grotesque.

And then we were outside again, in the light and air and noise. "That poor woman," my father said, putting his hand on my shoulder. Joining my brothers and my mother at the rides, I couldn't get the fat lady out of my mind. Not then or later, when we finally trudged back to our car, which was parked on somebody's front lawn, and drove home in the dark, nor after I'd had a bath and gone to bed.

*Fat lady, I thought, forgive me.*



### III

In the winter our street became as dreary as a Russian landscape. So one December my parents took us to Miami Beach.

The hotel was enormous, with vaulted ceilings and huge tables covered in glass bowls brimming with exotic blooms. When my brothers and I weren't roaming the corridors we were out on the private beach of creamy sand, building complicated castles and moat systems. We took breaks only to swim, or rather play, in the ocean, diving into the oncoming waves and feeling the tug of the undertow that wanted to keep us down forever.

The hotel also had a magnificent pool and at the end of the day we would trudge up from the beach, shriek under the cold shower as we washed off the sand and salt, and then swim

again. There was a thick glass window in one wall of the pool near the bottom; we would swim down and make faces at people passing by inside the hotel. I always had the urge to pull down my swim trunks and dash to the surface.

One morning, my brother Lawrence and I got up before everyone else, dressed, and took the elevator down to the coffee shop for breakfast. Between the elevator and the coffee

## *Nobody, I thought, can hold his breath this long.*

shop was the hallway with the window looking into the pool, usually devoid of swimmers at that hour. But on this morning there was someone in the window, an adventurous early morning swimmer, and we stopped to watch.

He was holding his breath. At least, he appeared to be holding his breath. He had on a mask and snorkel and was hovering near the bottom, his arms and legs dangling beneath him.

“Boy, can he hold his breath,” my brother said.

We wondered why the snorkel wasn’t in his mouth. We supposed that he wasn’t moving in order to conserve oxygen.

*Nobody, I thought, can hold his breath this long.*

A flash in the water and then somebody, the lifeguard, was grabbing the man around the waist and hauling him up out of view. Lawrence and I looked at each other, eyes wide with excitement, and ran for the stairs up to the pool.

On the deck we saw the lifeguard kneeling beside the swimmer, who lay on his back. We approached silently. The swimmer had a big chest carpeted in curls. He had a big face too, the eyes closed, the skin bleached, as if from an overly long bath. His nose and ears had a lavender tinge. The lifeguard leaned down to give mouth-to-mouth, breathing into the parted lips and then turning to watch the chest deflate.

After three or four minutes the ambulance men arrived, one carrying a metal box marked with a red cross. They crossed the deck; I wanted to scream at them to run. When they reached him, the lifeguard stepped back, and one of them leaned down, placed his hands on

the bare chest and pumped three times. The swimmer’s head tilted to the side, white fluid seeping from his nostrils and mouth.

The ambulance man stood up. “Well, gentlemen, we did our best.”

At breakfast, my brother Mark was disappointed to have missed a real drowning, but our parents were horrified by what we’d seen. My father made inquiries and found out that the swimmer had been attending a Shriners convention at the hotel; a heart attack had seized him in the pool. According to the clerk, there was often a death during a large convention.

My parents decided that we should be separated from the experience as quickly as possible. Back in the room, my father got on the phone and booked us into another hotel.

We moved that afternoon. The porter arrived to take our bags to the lobby. While my mother supervised the loading of the taxi, I stole away and went back through the hotel, past the underwater window and up the stairs to the pool deck. Kids were cannonballing off the diving board and being scolded by their parents; grandmothers were doing the backstroke up the length of the pool; mothers were dandling their babies on the steps at the shallow end. Along the bar, men in straw hats read newspapers or kibitzed. Others slept in the lounge chairs, little black goggles protecting their eyes from the sun. None of them knew that a man had died this morning in that very water and that his body had lain on the hard deck.

But I knew—knew that he had died and that others too must have died all around us, wherever we went. In restaurants, barber shops, on street corners, park benches. We could never escape the dead; we lived among them.

That was what I thought as I sat in the back seat of the taxi, my brothers fidgeting on either side, my mother already announcing that she had spotted the new hotel.

---

*Cary Fagan is the author of six novels and three short story collections, among them A Bird's Eye and My Life Among the Apes. He lives in Toronto.*

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# Postcard Lit

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## 1ST PRIZE

### The Wisest Thing I've Ever Heard

GILLIAN BLORE



Blair says he plays online poker for a living because he is ill suited to the compromises of corporate life. I ask if maybe it isn't because he's been fired from every restaurant in the city for insubordinate belligerence and that maybe if he found work in a field where he didn't have unlimited access to alcohol he would have more success. He said I was being an interfering fuckface and asked did I want seared pork belly with beetroot mash tonight for dinner or posole? And while I'm out could I please pick up a pack of Pall Malls and a bottle of Tanqueray? (Beefer is fine too.) I think staying at his place, rather than the mid-priced Ramada suggested by the department, is one of the worst decisions I've ever made.

In the shower this morning I notice a bunch of small red patches all over my body. They don't itch but this worries me even more because an ex-girlfriend once said that's exactly what ringworm looks like. I wear a dark grey merino sweater to the lecture this afternoon even though it's July.

After dinner and six martinis Blair tells me I'm a cryptomisygnist because I don't read enough female authors. He identifies strongly as a feminist because he loves all women and believes them to be a superior species. I told him that wasn't quite the definition of feminism. Blair's slept with over 120 women in his 35 years. Most of them

are waitresses with huge tits and low self-esteem. He asks if I've read *To the Lighthouse*. I say no and he tells me to get fucked and drops his lit cigarette on the bed. This adds one more star to the existing constellation of burn marks on the sheets.

I decide to skip the last day of the conference. It only goes to 2 p.m. so there likely won't be any booze served and none of the presenters are hot anyways. I stay in the apartment all day with Blair and we get high and watch old episodes of *Rap City*. Blair tells me if I ever want to finish my book I need to ensconce myself in a motel room for a week with nothing but a laptop and a shoebox full of cocaine and draw the blinds till it's done. But make sure I get my girlfriend to come by every couple of days otherwise I'll just spend the whole time jerking off and get nothing done. This is the wisest thing I've ever heard and I wonder if my supervisor finished his dissertation in six months this way. Blair says if I'm staying for another day he'll make salad niçoise for us but with fried capers. But first we need to get more cigarettes as I've smoked all of his.

---

*Gillian Blore is a writer from Vancouver. She writes about film at [malevolentandoftenright.com](http://malevolentandoftenright.com)*

## Heaven At Last

kerry rawlinson



Hey! The weather's here, wish you were beautiful, ha ha ha. Just wanted to let you know I'm doing ok. I'm in the blue swimsuit, second from the left! They say grief makes you gorge yourself non-stop but I don't think I've eaten in two weeks—must be all the tears blocked up inside have swollen me up. Or the vino (kidding). The drive down was ok but every time I drive over a bridge that looks like Champlain I get a panic attack. No wonder. You can tell Pap if you ever see him sober that addiction *is* genetic. I never thought she'd do *that* though... Hope she's finally happy. I emailed work and told them they could f--k off, I'm not their slave. One day off for a funeral and that's *it*? Jesus. Don't worry. I guess I'll find another shitty job when

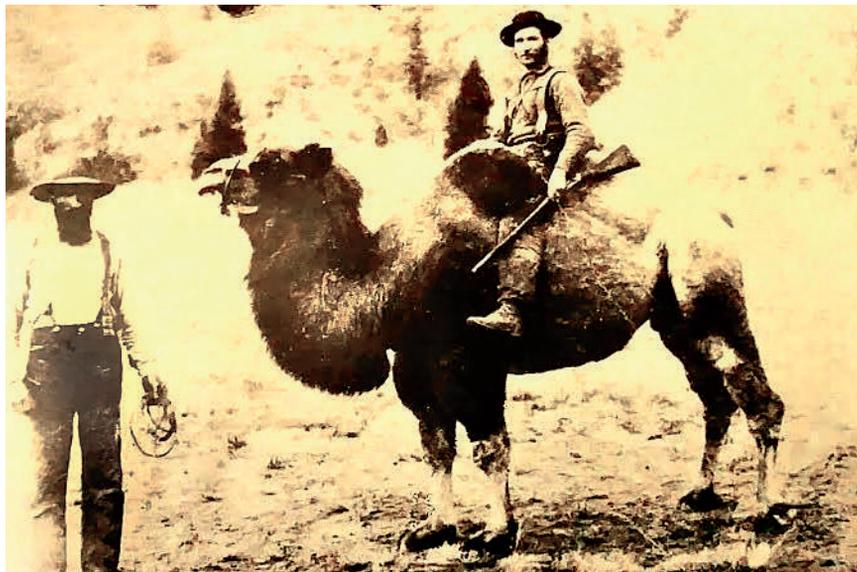
I get back. I just had to get away from Montreal (and everything) but all you hear down here is French, especially in Bealls Outlet. Guess you can't ever escape. Remember the time she went binge-shopping in there and came home with \$300 of stuff for everyone? Makes you sick how she ended up with nothing. The exchange rate sucks now. Wish we could exchange a lot of things, but the past's the past, right? In the meantime I just need room... I chill on the beach by myself, listening to the ocean. Sounds kinda like being inside a womb, if you know what I mean. Makes me wonder why some people even bother to get born. See you in a couple more weeks—hope you recognize me! \*lmao\*

---

*kerry rawlinson is a poet and artist. Her work has appeared in Midwest Quarterly, Section 8 and other publications. She is originally from Zambia and now lives in Peachland, BC.*

## Lady Cariboo

JAMES AVRAMENKO



Lady came to Barkerville sometime in late 1862. I stumbled into the area mid-2011. Once it was the largest city north of San Francisco, gold riches in the mountains for any man lucky or foolish enough to go looking. When I came it was a living museum, a monument to a time no one remembers.

Lady was brought off a ship and bought, along with twenty-three of her pack, to walk the Old Cariboo Road. Camels are hardy beasts, able to haul five or six hundred pounds. Almost double what a mule could muster. I was brought in to work the forge. My first day, I worked the sledgehammer until there were blisters on top of my blisters. My hands bled for a week. All that summer, mouth-breathers would ask if I knew how to make a sword. All I knew was how to turn a horseshoe nail into a ring.

The day my boss told me of “The Lady” was the same day he told me about his time in the military. He was a sniper, named his rifle Courtney. Said it was a good name for a high-maintenance bitch. His platoon called it the Devil’s hose.

He said horses are naturally scared of camels. Said once a horse spooks, it always remembers, that’s why you sometimes see horses coming in backwards in the stables. They remember seeing the gate that caught them.

An actor playing the town lawyer stumbled by. A drunk. My boss sighed and watched the boy.

“That man walked here from California. Now he’s a

clown. I pray to God I’m not remembered.”

Camels are resilient animals but that only goes so far. On the hard mountain terrain, their soft feet got chewed up. Canvas bags were made to cover them but those quickly tore. I tried to wrap my blistered hands in bandages but they just came off at the next hammer stroke.

The few camels that survived the first season camped at Quesnel Forks and were soon auctioned off as novelty pets. Judge Begbie, the Hanging Judge, had one spook his horse so bad he was thrown from his saddle. He was said to have hated camels for the rest of his days. Another was shot dead, mistaken for a bear. That night the local hotel served “bear” meat. They called the shooter “Grizzly” after that.

Me, I didn’t last the summer. My desire for rest outweighed my desire for money. I couldn’t make a fist for two months.

Some say Lady died on a ranch in Grande Prairie, the last of the Cariboo Camels. But some say she escaped one night. Maybe the call of the desert still sang in her ears. But the story goes, one night in 1905, a camel’s body was found in Manitoba, a tatter of canvas around her hooves.

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*James Avramenko is a poet and novelist. He lives in Calgary. For four years he has written a poem a day, which you can read at [jamesavramenko.com](http://jamesavramenko.com).*

## Non-Violent Communication

CATHY MACLEAN

So me and Marjorie, we went to one of those workshops over the weekend. Non-violent communication. That's the one.

I says to Marjorie, I says, "Marjorie, do we really have to do this?"

And she says, "Yes, Anthony, we do."

I know when she calls me "Anthony" she means business. So away we went.

So we're all sitting around in a circle, and the guy who's running the workshop is talking, and people are "sharing" their stories. I says to the guy next to me, I says, "Is this some kind of a fucking cult or something?"

And the guy next to me says, "I beg your pardon?"

And I says, "Is this some kind of a fucking cult or something?"

And he says, "Uh, no, I don't think so. But it could be. I'm not sure."

So that night I look it up on the internet, but there's nothing about it being a cult. Marjorie asked me why I think it's a cult. And I said, "They're trying to change the way you think. I don't like that."

Don't get me wrong. I learned some things. Handy suggestions I'm going to try to use. Sometimes when I get angry at Marjorie, I say things I feel really bad about afterwards. Really bad. She's a good woman, my Marj, when it's all said and done. And I hate it when I hurt her like that.

But here's the real clincher. So Monday morning after the workshop, I'm in the paint store standing at the counter waiting for my paint. And there's this German guy standing there next to me. I'd seen him there before. I don't like him. I don't like the way he talks. And he leans in close to me and he says, "I don't think it's such a bad thing what the Germans did to the Jews, do you?" And then he smiles at me like we got some kind of a little secret together.

I couldn't believe my fucking ears. I can feel myself start to shake. And I know the workshop says I should walk away. But I don't.

Instead, I says to him, "Do you know what you are? You're a fucking German cunt." Back where I come from, that's a nasty word. But it's okay to use it in Canada because



nobody here knows what it means.

And this guy he says, "Hey, hey, hey, do we have a problem?"

And I says, "No, *we* don't have a problem. *You* got a problem. You're a cunt. That's your problem." Then I walk out leaving my paint behind. And I'm thinking to myself, holy shit, I just finished a course in non-violent communication.

Anyway, the next day I go back to the store, and the Chinese lady at the counter hands me my paint and says, "No charge. On house." Then she smiles at me and says, "I like how you talk." That's what she says. "I like how you talk."

---

*Cathy MacLean's stories have appeared in the Antigonish Review, Gravel magazine and Writers on the Lake Anthology. They have also been shortlisted for and won creative non-fiction awards.*

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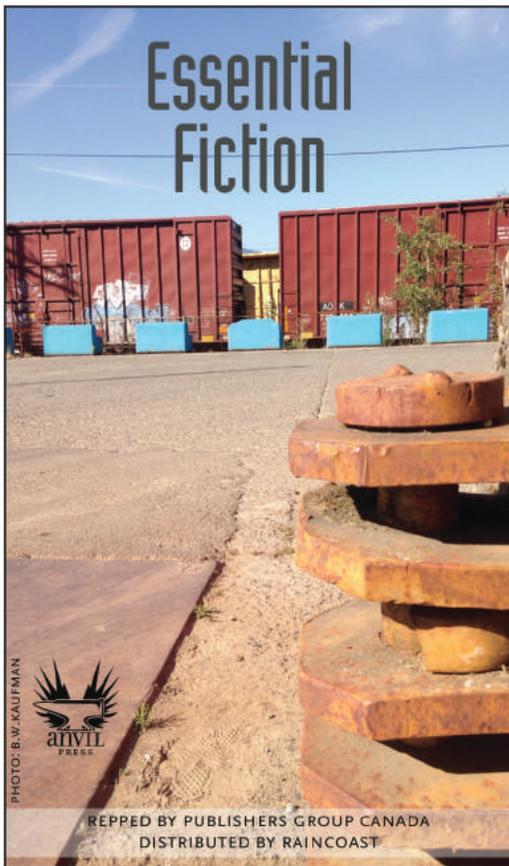


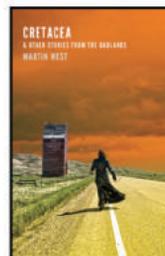
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# Earthquake Dream Diaries

RICK MADDOCKS

*Selections from the Earthquake Dream Diaries Project, a collection of dream-diary entries written by participants in the Pacific Northwest immediately before or after seismic events measuring 4.3 or higher on the Richter scale. The most recent event was a 4.6 tremor in December 2015, near Victoria, BC. The project, now in its tenth year, is administered by Rick Maddocks and members of Natural Resources Canada and the Western Dream Diarists Network. Its aim is to document the relationship between seismic activity and the unconscious.*

This phone call I got. A man's voice, speaking nonsense, as if he'd started talking long before I got on the phone. I told him I didn't understand, and the homely woman in glasses who was standing next to me smiled. There were orange couches suddenly. Then we were outside, this man and me, walking slowly around a small white house. He was chubby, pale and bald, with glasses. He talked softly, a smirk in his voice. He said he had some information on me that I'd probably want him to keep quiet. My mind reeled—I laughed nervously, said I had nothing to hide.

Ah, he said. So that's how it's going to be.

I was at a loss. Only when I woke up did I realize what he'd been talking about.

—Candace M., Victoria BC

I felt a strange sensation on my forehead, as if I had a very long, thick hair there and its follicle was very sensitive. When I looked in the mirror, it was a large grey antenna, articulated, as if it had knuckles.

—Luis B., Manzanita OR

A country house, white clapboard, and a gnarled tree in the front yard. I looked up through its skeletal branches and saw one, two, three large birds fly over in single file. Then a man dressed in a bird costume appeared in the yard. I knew him, though I couldn't tell who he was. He was up to no good, I knew that much, and we were excited that he was there.

—Sophie G., Point Roberts WA

This older friend of my sister was lounging in the den. She was dressed in a diaphanous muumuu that took up the whole room. She was brassy and loud, wore bangles and big rings and played with them a lot. She was lying on a sea of pillows, the TV blaring. She was flirting with me and I stood there, considering.

—Jay W., Comox BC

There's a creature in our neighbourhood that can kill us all. Some alien life form. At night, a chubby middle-aged couple, friends of the family, pull their sedan into the driveway of my childhood home. Usually they're so chipper, smiles on their faces. But as they trudge through the snow to our front door, unaware that I see them, their faces are hard and mean.

—Connie B., Port Angeles WA

Herod, dressed in a bad suit, stands outside his decrepit car dealership. Rough boys play amid shards of glass that stick up from the asphalt. It's hard to figure at first that this man is Herod, but he makes himself conspicuous as the alpha male. Chest puffed out, shoulders back, all loud voice and bad taste. His wife, sex-starved, has pretensions of glamour and class, but she's trying too hard.

—Trish W., Seattle WA

I was standing at a table before a group of people. The man who used to work for me and who'd stolen money from the company came up behind me and got me in some kind of wrestling hold. He wouldn't let go, no matter how hard I struggled. They all laughed and I was humiliated.

—Oscar A., Delta BC

This photo shoot wasn't going well. The others were way younger than me and I had my stained blue sweater on. Then I was walking through a market. There was a bear behind me and its paw kept digging into my calf. At one point I mused that you're usually in danger if a bear is following you. The other shoppers kept their distance. But I had my shopping to do and at some point the bear left me alone. At the checkout I felt a connection with the cashier, who looked like Brenda from work. She stared at me and said, "What are you doing out here?"

—Ian M., Vancouver BC

Richard opened his mouth wide and his teeth were full of black fillings.

—Bobbi V., Vancouver BC

I'm on a train in a foreign country. A sunny day. We're approaching our destination and there's a buzz of excitement in the train car. Mostly students. It's cramped and loud. I move back to a quieter car for some peace. I sit back and relax, then catch something out of the corner of my eye. I look behind me and see my mother and Harry Dean Stanton kissing passionately.

—Nat B., West Vancouver BC

In the forest, a young man's hand is found to be deformed. Half of it, where three fingers should be, is a hoof. It's covered in short, sandy brown fur.

—Luis B., Manzanita OR

I meet the short, blond man I love. I forget his name. He carries a bubble of light with him. I feel generous, expansive. We meet each other in an abandoned school gymnasium filled with beds. I tell him I'm back for good. He tells me he's going to Africa.

—Rupinder S., Sebelt BC

Got a call from an old, estranged friend, someone I'd wronged. It had been years since I'd seen him. He sounded rough, not quite himself. He wanted me to come to his house. I assumed it was the same house—the old gang used to spend a lot of time there. Anyway, he didn't say anything else, but there had been something off about his voice; it still rang in my ears long after he'd hung up.

It was a syrupy afternoon. The sun was low. The house was more rundown than I remembered. I went around back, to the kitchen. It had windows all around, but now they were all covered with thick curtains. It was a long time before he answered the door.

"What are you doing here?"

"What do you mean?" I said. "You asked me to come here."

He stared at me. He was all grizzled and there were bags under his eyes. "I asked you out of nowhere? Just like that?" His face moved through several stages and I thought his eyes softened. There was a noise outside, several clicks, and he told me, "Get down." The window beside us shattered.

—Lucas R., Tsawwassen BC

Our bed was on fire. The headboard's wood panels were peeling away in the flames. It was his last unfaithful act. He was bound in a strange apparatus and dressed in white latex. The whole house was going up in flames.

—Maria G., Richmond BC

I didn't care what they told me. I wasn't going onstage with that huge ice cream cone.

—Karola M., Richmond BC

I laid Janie's expensive black dress on the bed. She asked me what I was doing—she had a much sexier cheap dress, she said. I told her I wanted to try it on, like I did when we were kids. She left without a word and I was despondent, listening to Pachelbel's Canon on a turntable with a rusty needle.

I went to look for Janie. She was in a bed, far away. She said she'd had an operation. What operation? She didn't know, she said. They wouldn't tell her. She was crying and looked very tired.

—Andy U., Olympia WA

Arnold Schwarzenegger was at the bathroom mirror, talking to a middle-aged Japanese man about the man's hair. It was a shampoo commercial and I was directing. I suggested Arnold talk less and maybe they just shoot single words back and forth. Arnold didn't like that idea. When asked how he'd describe his hair, the Japanese man said, "Apocalypse."

—Jess A., Portland OR

They placed a multitude of tiny seashells on my back. And while I lay there, someone went out and gathered twigs from the forest floor. Someone else shaved my head using a paring knife and water from the river. When the other person returned, they affixed the twigs to my head using bright orange sap from the trees.

—Luis B., Manzanita OR

There's been a tragedy of some kind out in the country. There are colouring books and scrapbooks that show the children's work, a pall of sadness hanging over them. I'm standing before a photograph display, a lot of small pictures and negatives set against a black cloth background that billows in the wind. And then the scene shifts and I'm in a very different situation. I don't remember what it was, only that I felt guilty about being there.

—Bobbi V., Vancouver BC

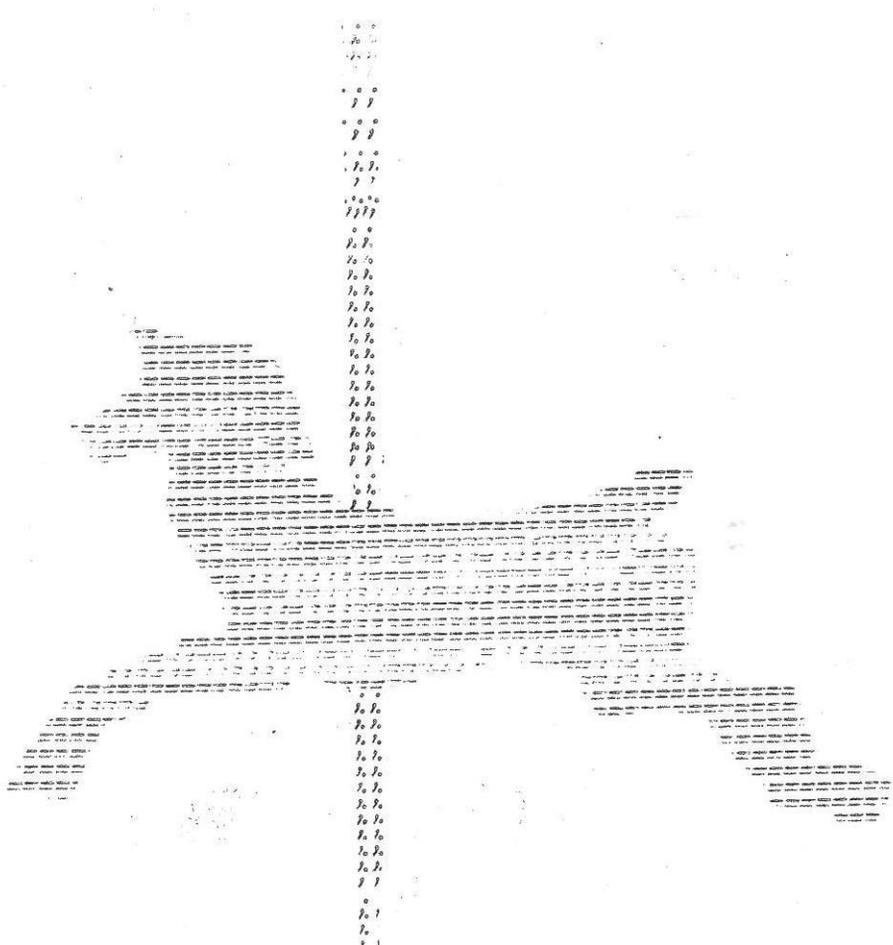
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Rick Maddocks is the founder of Sun Belt, whose multimedia project Cabalcor: An Extracted History (Anvil Press/OffSeason Records) was released in 2015. A stage version of the Cabalcor book and album premiered at the PuSb Festival in Vancouver. Maddocks lives in Vancouver and at [sunbelt.bandcamp.com](http://sunbelt.bandcamp.com)

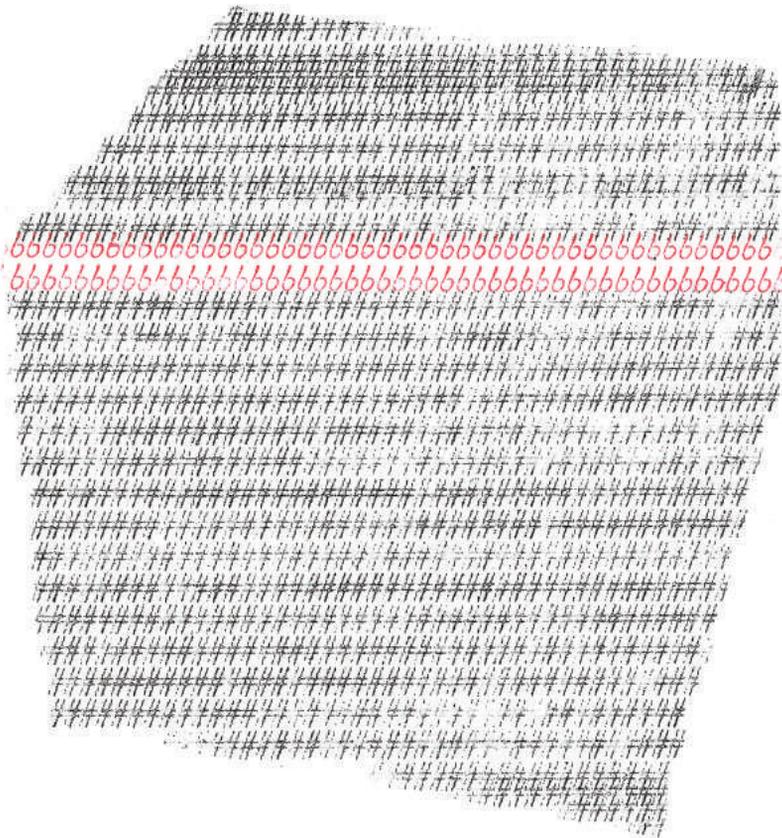
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JILL MANDRAKE

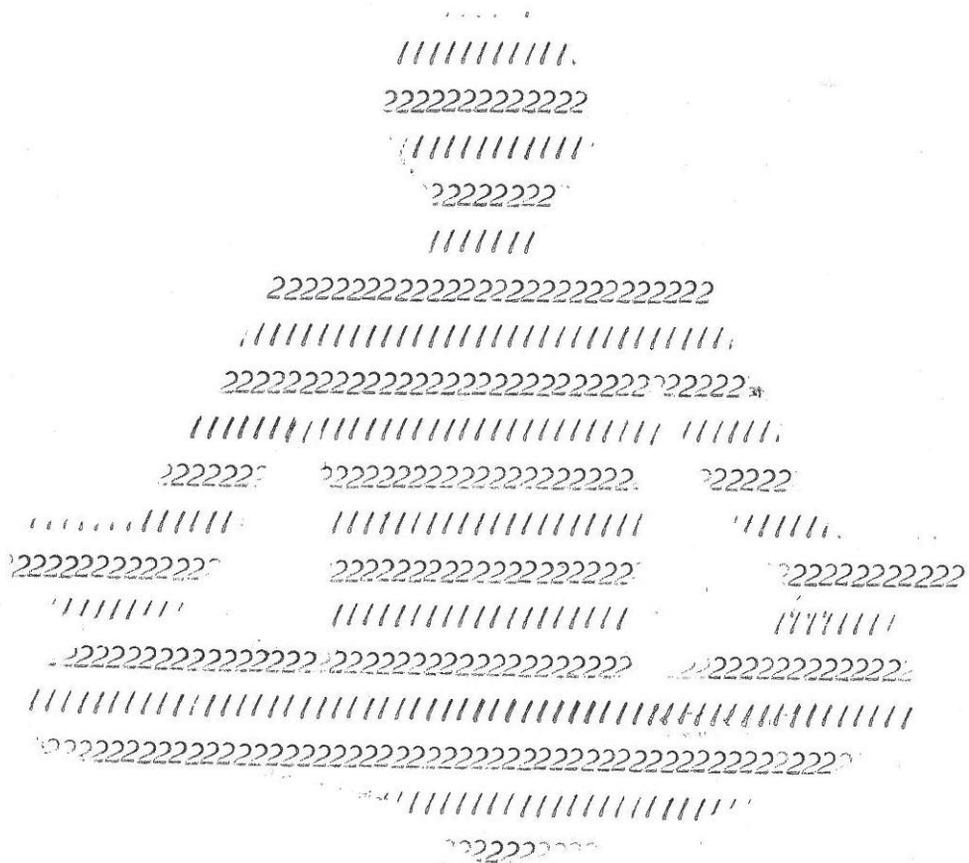
*this circus i've always wanted*



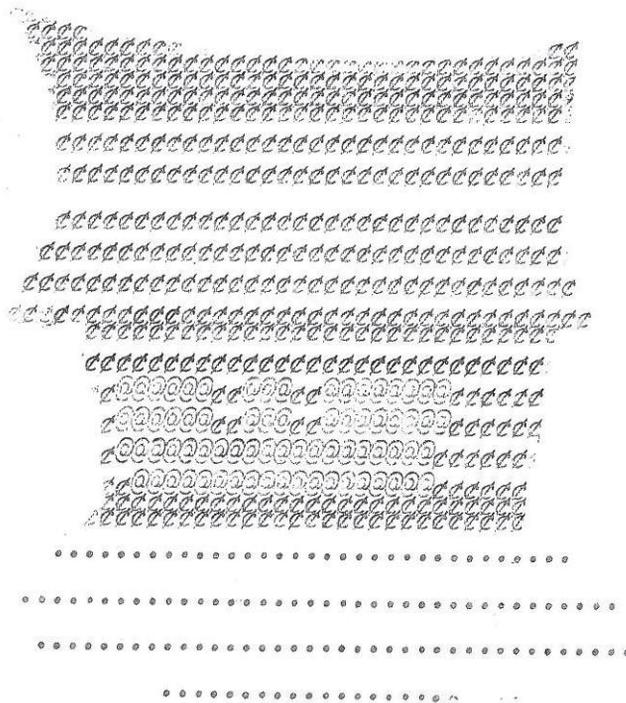
a music box, but  
i couldn't figure out which  
song it was playing



*breathing through the wrong nostril*



don't demolish my hang-out



---

*Jill Mandrake writes strange but true stories and leads Sister DJ's Radio Band, featuring rhythm and blues covers, post-vaudeville original tunes and occasional comedy bits. She lives in Vancouver. These poems come from the forthcoming chapbook A Portable Typewriter, due out in fall 2016.*

# Family Reunion

CURTIS LEBLANC

*The last thing she told me was: “Don’t grow up to be a coward like your father”*

I left Spy Hill, Saskatchewan, with a strong suspicion that the MacNab family reunion we’d just attended had nearly done my father in. He and I drove home toward Alberta through long stretches of unmemorable landscape. He flipped between radio stations, dodging advertisements and twisting the volume knob so that the sound came in and out in drawn-out swells, only turning it down completely to say, “Your aunt is a piece of work, but we love her because she’s family,” and “Sometimes good people do bad things, Alistair, because they’re ill-equipped for the directions their lives have dragged them in.”

The MacNabs were my mother’s family. She passed away when I was four and over a dozen years have gone by since then. Still, I remember when she was going to die and my father went away. He sent me on a Greyhound to stay in Spy Hill with my Aunt Emily. Then he went and lived alone in our family’s cabin on Lac La Biche, to wait for the call he knew would eventually come. Once my mother was gone, her family did their best to make it clear that they did not think much of my father. I think he’d failed to realize that the invitation to attend the reunion had only been intended for me.

As we came into North Battleford, he turned off the highway and took a side street. The dashboard clock read half past noon and I could tell Dad was getting hungry—the way he drummed his fingers against the steering wheel and kept staring out the passenger side window. Soon enough, we approached a sign on the boulevard that read Sunday Carve, Minors Welcome.

He parked his Chevy Corsica in the empty lot and held the door of the pub for me. Inside the pub had white Christmas lights strung up in the rafters and a set of tall speakers for live bands or karaoke. There was nobody around, it being a Sunday afternoon. A man came from behind the bar and showed us in. “Here for the carve?” he said.

I looked at Dad and he nodded at the man.

“Bit early, but it’ll be a fiver each. Cash up front.” Dad nodded again and gave him a ten.

We were led up a set of stairs and into what looked like a living room. There were kids’ building blocks in one corner, scattered around the legs of a yellowing plastic rocking horse, and a television that played the weekend cartoons. Against the wall was a long folding table with five or six warming trays on top, all steaming. A circular dining table was set for several people but apart from the man who had brought us upstairs we were the only ones in the room. We sat down in folding chairs and watched him disappear into the kitchen.

“Smells like Grandma’s,” Dad said.

The man came out gripping a large pot with two potholders. He was followed by an older woman who held the sides of a casserole dish through a thick towel. He dumped his pot into a warming tray first, helped the woman do the same with her dish. Then he came to the table and said, “Help yourselves to whatever you can eat.”

Dad and I filled our plates with mashed potatoes and Yorkshire pudding and slices of turkey, ham and pot roast. There was cranberry sauce for the turkey and a bowl labelled *popcorn* filled with ambrosia salad.

We ate in silence, the man coming by every once in a while to refill our waters, until my father spoke up. “I’ve got a good one for you.”

“Okay,” I said. I’d finished my plate and wiped it clean with a slice of sourdough. I hoped there might be dessert but wasn’t counting on it.

“Me and my brother—your Uncle James—we worked as garbagemen after high school. Did I ever tell you that? We had a route in Legal where we were living with your grandmother at the time, and we’d do it Wednesday mornings, once a week, every week.

“We’d take the metal garbage cans and dump ’em by hand into the back of the truck.

“Those cans were small little things, much smaller than what we’ve got now. Seems to me there was less garbage then. But we’d take ’em and we’d dump ’em, and this one time, your uncle spills a bin into the truck and sitting on the top of the pile is this beautiful brown leather shoe. Could’ve been Italian, this shoe. It was the nicest shoe I’d ever seen.

“We both try it on, and it fits him much better than it fits me—you know your uncle, he’s just a small thing, tiny little feet—and we figure, once this guy realizes he’s thrown out his shoe, he’ll do the same with the other one. So every Wednesday we pick through his garbage, and a month goes by with no sign of the other shoe.”

He paused to take a sip of his water. “One morning, though, we’re parked out front of that house drinking coffees and taking our fifteen, and I see the door swing open. I nudge your uncle and I point over to the entrance, and guess what we see? This guy comes out onto the porch on a pair of crutches, and he’s only got one leg.

“See what I mean?” Dad said. “He only ever needed the one shoe.”

I smiled at that, mostly because I felt it was what he wanted me to do.

“Maybe you’ve heard that one before,” he said. “But your mother would light right up whenever I told that punchline.”

**A**s we drove out of North Battleford and toward the provincial border, I thought about the reunion in Spy Hill. At night, the women kept to the covered porch of Aunt Emily’s home, drinking Caesars and talking gossip about the relatives that couldn’t make it for the weekend. The men would drink dark drinks and throw horseshoes by the light of a few citronella torches. I played with them while Dad stood off to the side and watched.

On our last night there, Aunt Emily took me for a walk down the CN Rail tracks that ran along the northern edge of her acreage. She told me stories about my mother when she was young, and about the MacNab clan burial grounds in Killin, Scotland—how they were on a strip of land that split a river into rapids, and how my mother should’ve been buried there.

The last thing she told me was: “You know we’re here whenever you need us, Alistair.

“Don’t grow up to be a coward like your father.”

And though I’d mostly gotten used to those kinds of comments from my mother’s family, it bothered me when my aunt said that. I don’t think she could have known what my father was feeling when he left my mother there in that Pasqua Hospital bed.

**B**ecause up until that point, he had spent his life setting things up just so. His demolition company in Edmonton was growing, and after I was born, he worked while my mother finished her nursing degree at the University of Alberta. He told me they were planning for a brother or sister for me after she graduated. Then they were going to move to Saskatchewan to be closer to her family. He was the worst kind of optimist—the kind too caught up in his own luck to anticipate a turn for the worse.

My father loved my mother. I don’t doubt that now and I didn’t then. But how could a man like him, a man who had always planned to keep her close, stand by and watch her drift into a place where he knew he could not follow? Faced with the choice, he looked away, and I guess I don’t blame him. As he might put it, he was ill-equipped for the direction his life had taken him in.

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*Curtis LeBlanc grew up in St. Albert, Alberta. He is completing a book of poetry and a novel. He lives in Vancouver.*

# Urban Villages

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

*Some city art enclaves suffer from parochialism, and not all sites of artistic innovation are urban*

During my second year of university, I became friends with a young actor who invited me to visit his family home in New York City. The address he gave me was in Greenwich Village. Two weeks later, I climbed a narrow staircase and entered a loft. The place was gloomy. Both of my friend's parents were well-known visual artists; their residence reflected their commitment to their vocation. Before all else, the loft was a workshop. A vast, rough-surfaced canvas, on which a menacing figure was emerging, was suspended from one wall. Tools, cans of acrylic paint and stray bits of wood lay on the floor. The rooms of the couple's three sons—my friend was the youngest—were little more than elongated, six-foot-tall cubicles built into corners of the soaring loft, like mere afterthoughts. My friend opened the door of his room and gestured inside. The floor was strewn with copies of plays and novels. Like his parents, my friend disdained possessions that did not contribute to his art.

When we left the loft, I observed that there was no rupture between my friend's home and the streets outside. The loft and the street existed in a continuum. This was the crime-ridden New York of the early 1980s and my friend's parents' paintings sold at high prices; yet the loft's security arrangements appeared to be negligible. As my friend showed me around Greenwich Village, people greeted him and mentioned that they were on their way to visit his mother or father. Everyone seemed

to know everyone else. I realized that, true to its name, Greenwich Village shared characteristics with rural villages. While not exempt from New York's roughness and disturbing social divides—turning a corner, we passed a staggering woman whose short skirt revealed purple tracks in her legs—Greenwich Village introduced me to the paradox that the districts



of big cities where art is made, and where culture flourishes, are the most urbane because they re-create village life on alternative principles.

*Pueblo chico, infierno grande*, the Mexicans say: a small town is hell. For generations young people have left small towns to go to the city, where

the aspiring artist can hear the latest music, browse in bookstores, go to poetry readings, see innovative art, meet people from other cultures, experiment with sexuality or living arrangements and hew out a personal creative vision. The best city was not necessarily the biggest one: Weimar, not Berlin or Frankfurt, incubated late eighteenth-century German classicism; Barcelona, not Madrid, was the meeting place for the authors of the Latin American Boom novels of the 1960s. In 1925, William Faulkner moved to Paris, at that time the epicentre of Anglo-American literary innovation. Faulkner decided that the bohemian expatriation that enabled James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Jean Rhys, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald to flourish did not suit him. He returned to New Orleans, which, as he describes in his novel *Mosquitoes* (1927), had its own bohemian scene, one that enabled him to develop as an artist while remaining in touch with his Southern roots.

The urban villages of bohemianism offered affordable lodgings close to the city centre. Like the rural hamlets they both repudiated and reproduced, they suffered from parochialism. In August 1927, when the execution of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in Massachusetts caused worldwide protest, provoking attacks on US diplomatic outposts and widespread property destruction from Tokyo to Johannesburg to Sydney to Rio de Janeiro, the Lost Generation, ensconced in their cafés, were baffled by the chaos in the streets. In his memoir *Paris Was Our Mistress* (1947), Samuel Putnam recalled: "The café terraces were in turmoil; they were being invaded by men dressed like laborers, tables were being overturned... 'What's it all about?' we wondered."

Immersion in art didn't have to come at a cost to social awareness: in contrast to their Anglo-American

counterparts, Latin American writers in 1920s Paris were politically informed; the paintings created by my friend's parents in Greenwich Village were highly political. By the same token, not all sites of artistic innovation are urban: when, in late 1960s Montreal, linguistic tension impeded creative exchange between Anglophone and Francophone writers, cross-cultural interaction decamped to the village of North Hatley in Quebec's Eastern Townships, where writers of French and English mingled and Canada's modern literary translation culture was born. Since at least the late nineteenth century writers, painters and musicians have relied on enclaves of cheap rent and cultural diversity to nourish their art. As former bohemian neighbourhoods are homogenized by massive capital flows seeking real estate investments, the question of where the artists of coming decades will meet grows urgent.

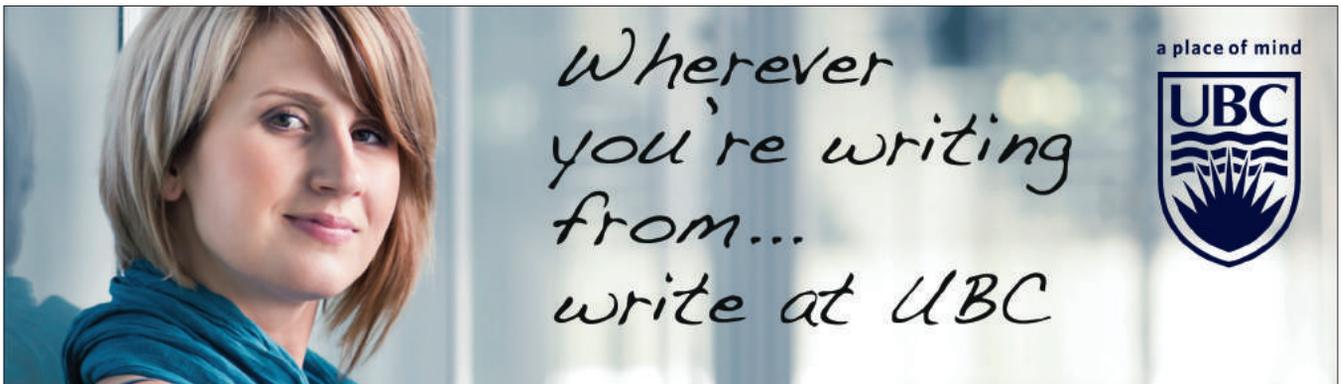
The last time I visited New York, Greenwich Village had all but disappeared, its distinctiveness from surrounding districts erased by gentrification, its street life extinguished. Recently, in London, I found my favourite Soho bookstores and cheap restaurants covered by construction hoardings as brand name shops took over. In the poor, even dangerous London district of Hackney, where I lived surrounded by refugees and painters in the late 1990s, the formerly ramshackle rental units have become stockbrokers' condominiums. Meanwhile, the actor who introduced me to Greenwich Village, now a director, lives in a residential neighbourhood on the edge of Paris and commutes to the provincial French city of Limoges, 400 kilometres south of Paris, where he manages a theatre company.

Must the urban village return to its rural roots in order to survive? The outer suburbs of big cities, where rents

are cheaper and most recent immigrants now settle, are the realm of the car; they lack the street life essential to creative exchange. One can make contacts in the online world, but without face-to-face interaction and bricks-and-mortar mingling spots, ideas and aesthetic values stagnate. As the world's population grows more and more concentrated in very large cities, art that is produced only in North Hatley or Limoges risks being severed from its audience. Yet, for the first time, it is possible to imagine art, like food, as a product that is harvested in outlying areas and imported to the city.

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*Stephen Henighan's latest novel is 'The Path of the Jaguar' (Thistle-down Press, 2016). He lives in Guelph, Ontario. Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [stephenhenighan.com](http://stephenhenighan.com). Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.*



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Steven Galloway	Susan Musgrave	Bryan Wade
Sara Graefe	Andreas Schroeder	

# Something Funny

ALBERTO MANGUEL

*Why do theatre audiences respond to bleak, wrenching, tragic, desperately sad scenes with howls of laughter?*



Last year, I went to see Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* on Broadway, with John Lithgow and Glenn Close as Tobias and Agnes, the couple into whose affluent home fear suddenly arrives. *A Delicate Balance* is Albee's most profoundly disturbing play, mercilessly showing us the dark core of our more or less contented lives. Perhaps most of the audience had come to see a Hollywood star in the flesh; perhaps Lindsay Duncan, as Agnes's alcoholic sister, played the part a touch too broadly. In any case, the tragic dialogue, growing in bleakness and intensity from scene to scene, elicited from the audience not as much awe as laughter. Every riposte, however heart-wrenching, was greeted with guffaws, every agonizing avowal with howls of laughter. The experience was astonishing, as if the audience were not listening to the words or watching the action unfold,

but were watching something else, a farce or a sitcom. I left the theatre in a state of utter bewilderment.

We know that an audience, much like consumers in a supermarket, must be taught the vocabulary with which it is being addressed. It's not enough to display boxes of cereal: the public needs to learn that certain images mean that the product is supposedly organic and therefore better for your health, that others denote luxury, and others thrift. A play needs to teach the audience the language in which it is to be seen and heard, and Albee's theatre responds to a long line of precursors from the Greeks to Samuel Beckett. I think it is fair to assume that at least part of the Broadway audience was aware of that lineage. However, it is much more likely that their dramatic training was not as much in Aeschylus and the absurdists as in *Fatal Attraction* and *Friends*, and that

the expected response to the deadly consequences of fooling around, or its inane rewards, is self-righteous laughter. Their attitude to tragedy is that which Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz gives of *Hamlet*: "To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped on to his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice. Now, why exactly are you behaving in this extraordinary manner?"

Unfortunately, my experience of the audience at *A Delicate Balance* was not unique. In the past months, it was repeated many times: when Winnie utters her cry against despair in Beckett's *Happy Days*, when the son Jamie confronts the addict mother with "You're a dope fiend!" in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, when the raped young women stand waiting for the commander to choose one of them for his bed in Danai Gurira's *Eclipsed*, when John Proctor's wife, to save his life, completes the Ten Commandments in Miller's *The Crucible*. On these occasions, the audience, who had been chuckling all along, burst into explosions of astonishing mirth.

Almost two centuries ago, Thomas De Quincey, describing his reactions to the knocking on the gate in *Macbeth*, tried to understand this burst of humour in the midst of a great tragedy. After King Duncan has been murdered and before the bloodbath continues until the last murderous scene, Shakespeare has a drunken porter come out to attend to the banging at the gates of Macbeth's castle. The porter is portrayed as a clown, loutish and grossly funny. "Hence it is," De Quincey wrote, "that, when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pagentry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced: the human has made its

reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.” The humorous scene is, for De Quincey, a return from the demonic to the human, to the everyday goings-on that are not utterly interrupted by the most horrible deeds we can imagine. De Quincey’s laughter says: This is not taking place somewhere outside my human experience, it is happening in the real world, the world in which the horrible coexists with the banal and the merely grotesque. I wonder if the reaction of the Broadway audiences is not the exact opposite to De Quincey’s. I wonder if it is not a way of saying: What I’m watching onstage is an outrageous fiction, a dark joke, and has nothing to do with my own or my neighbour’s existence.

In neo-liberal America, the answer

to the question “Am I my brother’s keeper?,” as Ayn Rand has taught us, is No. Sympathy for your neighbour and your neighbour’s suffering may lead to a gathering of forces, a democratic spirit of common responsibility, a sense of generosity toward others, which might oppose unjust rules and laws of privilege. If you begin to learn that someone else’s misfortunes are funny (as in *Seinfeld*), that pain inflicted on others is entertaining (as in *American Psycho*, now a musical comedy), that aliens want to come to your hometown to take what is rightfully yours (as in the many superhero films), then you won’t object to policies being set up, in the name of national security, that protect the fortunes of a moneyed few, and you won’t trust your fellow citizens enough to join critical forces with them. And you will come to believe that everyone gets what he deserves, that the loudest politicians are the

best, that there is no smoke without fire, that you certainly are not your brother’s keeper.

Several decades ago, in Toronto, I saw a Czech clown in a show called *The Jester and the Queen*. Halfway through the performance, when the Jester is being thoroughly clobbered by the Queen—whom he has repeatedly made fun of—the Jester turns toward the laughing audience and asks: “She’s pounding me with a stick and you’re laughing. I’m being hurt and you are laughing. Do you think that’s right?” I wish that one of the Broadway actors playing Agnes, Winnie, Jamie or John Proctor would confront the audience with the same question.

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*Alberto Manguel is the award-winning author of hundreds of works, most recently (in English) Curiosity, All Men Are Liars and A History of Reading. He lives in New York. Read more of his work at [alberto.manguel.com](http://alberto.manguel.com) and [geist.com](http://geist.com).*

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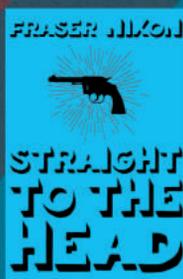
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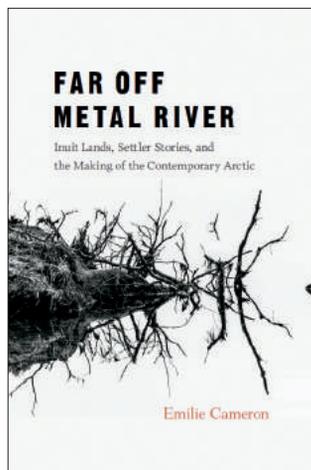
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# Tall Tales at Bloody Falls

DANIEL FRANCIS

*A murderous attack that took place on the Coppermine River two and a half centuries ago still is remembered as a decisive moment in northern history. Why does it matter?*

I'll tell you a story. In July 1771, Samuel Hearne, an explorer employed by the Hudson's Bay Company, arrived on the banks of the Coppermine River not far from the Arctic coast, led there by his Dene guides. For years the Dene had been reporting the existence of rich copper deposits far to the northwest of Hudson Bay where the company's men had never travelled. Hearne's superiors gave him the job of investigating the rumours, establishing trading contacts with distant Aboriginal groups and filling a blank spot in the company's knowledge of the North. As Emilie Cameron points out in her new book, *Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic* (UBC Press), Hearne's expedition was, on its own terms, a bust; he returned from the river with only a single lump of precious metal. More important, however, the journal that he kept during the excursion was later published and became one of the most famous explorer accounts in Canadian history, shaping what generations of Qablunaat (Whites, or more precisely, non-indigenous people) have thought about northern Canada



ever since. And a particular incident in the journal has had such an impact on Qablunaat understanding of the land and the people who inhabit it that Cameron suggests it is the moment when “history itself”—that is, Qablunaat history in the North—actually began. All despite the fact that Hearne's story turned out to be more fiction than fact.

The incident is known as the Bloody Falls massacre. When Hearne's party reached the river, the Dene discovered an encampment of Inuit at a local fishing site, known locally as Kugluk. Hearne described how the Dene stripped naked, painted their bodies, then crept up on the Inuit tents under cover of darkness and murdered all the people—men, women and children. In one particularly harrowing passage in his journal, he recounts how a teenage girl twined herself around his legs as two Dene drove their spears into her body, ignoring Hearne's desperate pleas for mercy. Hearne paints himself as a reluctant bystander, powerless to stop the orgy of violence. Even years later, he wrote, “I cannot reflect on the transactions of that horrid day without shedding tears.”

(Cameron, who is a geography professor at Carleton University, is skeptical of Hearne's tears. She argues that a compassionate response to the suffering of others was a way that the explorer, and his readers, tried to elevate themselves morally above the “savagery” of North American Natives. His possible complicity in the massacre—after all, it was he who brought the Dene into Inuit territory in the first place—is purged by a show of sentimental regret.)

Hearne's account of the incident at the falls has been discredited several times over the years, not least by the very expedition that went to the Coppermine in the early 1820s to confirm it. Cameron concludes that the torture scenes, including the one featuring the young girl, “are almost certainly inventions, inserted by savvy publishers and editors.” But the unreliability of the massacre story has not kept it from being repeated over and over again. “Despite repeated suggestions that it is partially and perhaps wholly invented,” Cameron writes, “the ‘truth’ of Bloody Falls as an event and a place has not been undone.” She notes that over the years the incident “has been anthologized in northern literature collections; reproduced in documentaries, plays, and poems; memorialized in stamps, murals, and street names; and even commemorated in song.” One particularly disturbing iteration is a wall-size mural depicting the incident that used to be displayed in the Northern Store in the community of Kugluktuk at the mouth of the Coppermine River, meaning that every time Inuit shoppers went to buy supplies they were confronted with an image of the murder of their own ancestors looming behind the counter.

But if Hearne's account of the events at Bloody Falls is bogus, why has it had such a long shelf life? What purpose, whose purpose, does it serve to keep on telling an old story long discredited? Cameron is not

interested primarily in debunking Hearne's account—this has been done by others—but in examining why it has such a strong hold on the Qablunaat imagination. The importance of the story, Cameron thinks, is not whether it is true but “what it *does*, what it makes possible.” How does this story, any story, “advance some interests and undermine others”?

Cameron describes how in 1972 the government of the Northwest Territories wanted to install a historic plaque at Kugluktuk, commemorating Hearne's expedition for its significance not just to territorial history but to the history of Canada. But local Inuit opposed the idea for several reasons. First, they believed that government money should be spent on more pressing problems, like decent housing. Second, they feared that a plaque might somehow compromise their land rights, a concern that was dismissed by government officials but not by Cameron, who argues that the Inuit had an accurate sense of one of the purposes of historical commemoration. She quotes one Inuit elder: “When white man put monument in places, they always start to do research and work, and start to say Inuit can't use that land...” And third, the local people did not want to be reminded of a painful episode in their history, no matter how important outsiders claimed it to be. In the end the plaque was not erected.

Cameron does not want us to understand this episode as a rejection of the Bloody Falls story. Participating in a debate about the accuracy of the story would implicate the Inuit in a shared history, and in her view Bloody Falls is a story “by, for, and about Qablunaat.” To the Inuit, it simply does not matter; raising plaques would only make it look like it did. Plaques present not just a version of history and a statement of significance, they also assert a claim to the land. This is the importance of story. “Qablunaat,” she writes, “have less

capacity to matter, less material claim, over a land in which they have no stories.” Outsiders colonize the North through the deployment of stories just as much as by the seizure of land or the extension of institutions.

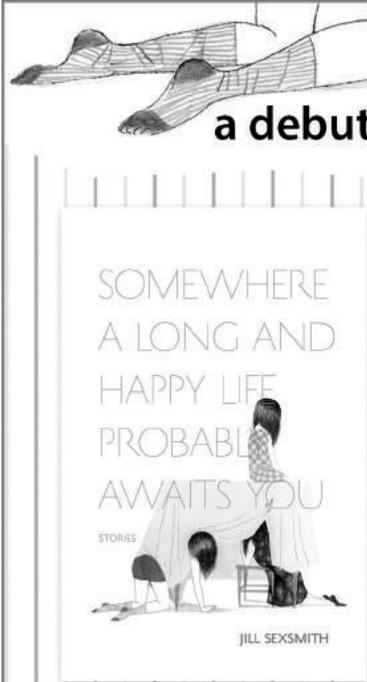
In the end, the Bloody Falls story is both significant and insignificant. On the one hand it matters because it has had such a pervasive influence on outside attitudes to the North. “The Bloody Falls massacre story is fundamentally about locating, claiming, and extracting resources in the name of empire,” Cameron writes. Hearne's three objectives when he set out on his expedition are just as operative today, two and a half centuries later. Locate wealth; negotiate with the indigenous people to acquire wealth; discover routes by which wealth can be moved to market. Outsiders have made the story of Bloody Falls part of that process.

On the other hand the story doesn't matter, in the sense that it

is peripheral to the lives of the local Inuit. Cameron encourages us to listen to the stories that *do* matter, the stories that the local people themselves tell. “The land is full of stories,” she writes, “even if the Qablunaat often can't see them.” These are the stories to which outsiders should be attending. Cameron does not want Qablunaat to forget Bloody Falls, just to remember it, and their whole history in the North, from a different perspective. She thinks that “by paying attention to the ways in which Inuit refuse, ignore, and forget this story, we can begin to learn all the ways in which we do not matter and do not know.”

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*Daniel Francis is a writer and historian who lives in North Vancouver. He is the author of two dozen books including, most recently, Where Mountains Meet the Sea: An Illustrated History of the District of North Vancouver (Harbour Publishing). Read more of his work at [geist.com](http://geist.com) and [danielfrancis.ca](http://danielfrancis.ca).*



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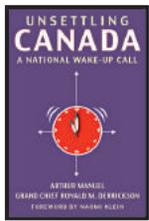
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# ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

**Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call** by Arthur Manuel (Between the Lines) is, despite a Royal Commission-like title and a cold, logo-like cover, a helluva good read, in which smart people find ingenious ways to fight for change against a Canadian government that has been intractable, no matter which party is in power. Using his own life as a model and starting at the local level, Manuel traces the recent history of the indigenous rights movement. He

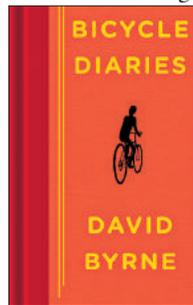


explains how the job of chief is different from the job of mayor (can you imagine your mayor showing up when you get arrested?), why non-indigenous government models won't work for First Nations and why international pressure seems to be necessary before change happens in Canada. He lets us in on what's behind the snippets of information that we get from mainstream media, namely that the Canadian government insists that our First Nations agree to the extinguishment of their land rights before negotiations on those land rights—whatever they might be—can begin. This “extinguishment” policy is so entrenched in federal and provincial attitudes toward treaty negotiations that the only recourse for those fighting for Aboriginal title is to work with other indigenous peoples around the world and to appeal to the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and Standard and Poor's (one of the biggest credit-rating agencies in the world). It is only at this international level that Canada's First Nations have found

support for their arguments in favour of settling land claims fairly, although, up until a few days ago (mid-June 2016), the Canadian government has been registered as a “permanent objector” to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Not long before that, our new federal government agreed to sign the UN Declaration, which is an essential first step toward meaningful negotiation; only time will tell whether they are ready to negotiate in good faith. In the meantime, read this excellent book so you'll understand what's going on if or when change happens. —Patty Osborne

## CYCLING IN CITIES

To properly understand Mayor Gregor Robertson's ongoing bicyclification of Vancouver, I think we need more books like Jon Day's **Cyclogeography: Journeys of a London Bicycle Courier** (Notting Hill Editions), an extended essay about “the bicycle in the cultural imagination.”



*Cyclogeography* is an invigorating blend of anecdote (drawn from Day's years as a London courier) and philosophical musings on cycling, in the course of which Day invokes prominent psychogeographers (Iain Sinclair, Guy Debord) and such cycling heavyweights as Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and William Saroyan. Saroyan contributes the following epiphany on the bicycle as muse (from his 1952 book *The Bicycle Rider in Beverly Hills*): “I was not yet

sixteen when I understood a great deal, from having ridden bicycles for so long, about style, speed, grace, purpose, value, form, integrity, health, humor, music, breathing and finally and perhaps best, of the relationship between the beginning and the end.” *Cyclogeography* pairs up nicely with David Byrne's **Bicycle Diaries** (Penguin), which the former Talking Head structures around his experiences cycling in various cities while on tour: Istanbul, Buenos Aires, Berlin and London among them. In the end, though, *Bicycle Diaries* has more to say about Byrne himself than it does about cycling or cities. —Michael Hayward

## COMING OF AGE NEAR THUNDER BAY

**Sleeping Giant** is a coming-of-age film directed by Andrew Cividino, set in a sleepy cottage town thirty minutes east of Thunder Bay. The publicity posters herald it as Canada's answer to *Boyhood*, Richard Linklater's twelve-year project and 2015 Oscar-winning



film. It isn't—nor is it trying to be. But like any good coming-of-age story it has awkwardly cast teenagers, a formative summer in which the boredom is palpable, underage drinking, tomfoolery, destruction of nature, a little theft and an underlying burgeoning sexual tension. The film contains one giant metaphor—a 100-foot rock that the three main characters risk their adolescent lives to jump off. The cliff itself is situated on Caribou Island, a

small uninhabited island at the eastern edge of Lake Superior. It was considered for use as an emergency landing airport in World War II, but the plan was abandoned because of the island's proximity to the twin cities Sault Ste. Marie in Michigan and Ontario. It is home to deer and the occasional eagle, but there are currently no caribou.

—*Rebekah Chotem*

### FROZEN, NOT FORGOTTEN

The miscellanist Rob Kovitz in his new book **Dead and Cold** has assembled, coordinated or otherwise summoned into being the best, the most spellbinding and the most chill-blain-inducing account of death in the Arctic that you will ever read. We had thought John Franklin to be done in as a Canadian subject, but here he is resuscitated, along with many more who perished in the ice. Kovitz excavates his text from a vast library of commentators, including Abacuk Pricket, who sent Henry Hudson and his son to their deaths; Thomas



James, who wrote magically of his trials in the seventeenth century; and Jens Munk, who kept a detailed and horrifying account of his

voyage in 1619 to the Northwest Passage that killed sixty-two of his sixty-five crew members; only he and two others made it back through Hudson Strait and across the Atlantic. The material explored in this volume ranges from obscure diaries to newspaper accounts, with many photographs, some of them gruesome. Its only flaw, in my opinion, is the undue presence of Margaret Atwood, whose remarks edge too often and often too rapidly into the panoply of comment; e.g., "He was simply a victim of landscape." This is a book that calls out for rereading, a true national treasure,

from Treyf Books (keep refrigerated), in Winnipeg. Kovitz's work appears occasionally in the pages of *Geist*.

—*Stephen Osborne*

### ELIXIRS

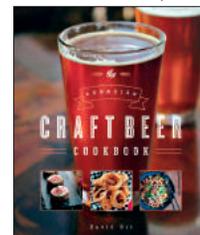
I set out to find the literature of alcohol and discovered that although it's easy to find books with alcoholic characters or books by or about writers with drinking problems, it is



harder to uncover titles about the culture of alcohol, its production and its place in our social lives.

The three titles mentioned here lean toward community and pleasure, and the making and eating of food and drink. **Craft Distilling: Making Liquor Legally at Home** by Victoria Redhed Miller (New Society) is a no-nonsense

how-to book, and a rational plea to lift laws that prevent small-batch not-for-profit distilling. Small-batch distilling is a rather daunting process, but Redhed Miller is a thoroughly entertaining writer who keeps the tone accessible and cheery. **The Canadian Craft Beer Cookbook** by David Ort (Whitecap) is more a cookbook than a beer book, although there are some helpful explanations of beer styles and ingredients: yeast, water and hops. If you'd rather not read a slew of books on home brewing, you can pick up the basics here. Some of the recipes really hit the nail on the head, like the porter gingerbread and the French onion soup made with bock. For me, the most exciting sections



were the more unusual ones, with recipes for hop extract, IPA mustard and beer vinegar. Ort's is a



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very appealing lifestyle book that is not pretentious; it would make a good gift for a beer snob friend. Finally, for pure fun, there's **A Field Guide to Canadian Cocktails** by Victoria Walsh and Scott McCallum (Appetite), a book of innovative cocktails inspired by regional distilleries and local ingredients across the country. In short introductions to each region of Canada, the duo discuss the high points of their adventures, often surprised by the depth and sophistication of the local scene. Saskatoon Julep, Fiddlehead Martini: yes, please!



For the casual drinker, though, these imaginative cocktails are a bit impractical. I have made my own bitters, but I do not have a lot of edible flowers or infused tequilas around the house, and I'm probably not going to whip up a rhubarb and peppercorn syrup for one drink. The book's

photography is enough to inspire even the laziest mixologist to make cocktails that are both demanding and distinctively Canadian.

—Kris Rothstein

## HOME AND HEART

In the second week of May, I took in three shows in the DOXA Film Festival in Vancouver. On Sunday: **The Babushkas of Chernobyl** (produced and directed by Holly Morris and Anne Bogart), a babushka being a grandmother and also a scarf—triangular, or folded into a triangle—worn by Russian grandmothers, including those who live in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, official name Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant Zone of Alienation, evacuated after the meltdown of Reactor No. 4 on April 26, 1986. This area, 1,000 square miles, will be radioactive almost forever. But it was home, and some residents went back. About 150 people live there now, 120 of



whom are women over seventy years old. Most of the zone is woodland and marsh; aerial footage shot in summer shows vast areas bursting with profuse foliage and flowers. The babushkas tend a few cows and pigs, catch fish, grow potatoes and green vegetables, gather succulent apples and berries. Sitting on a bench in the sunshine, surrounded by lush greenery, Valentyina Ivanivna comments that Kiev is probably more polluted than Chernobyl. Only occasionally are viewers reminded that this is one of the most toxic areas on earth, in cameos by scientists, soldiers, officials measuring radioactivity, young men in masks enacting dystopian video-game scenarios in the bush. The heart of the zone, and the film, is the babushkas in their babushkas—which are gorgeous, with pleasing designs and brilliant colours, always looking fresh and new. How have these women survived all these years, many of them in good health? In fact, statistically it is the forcibly evacuated people who have suffered trauma, depression and other ailments. The babushkas of Chernobyl knew the risks and went home anyway. Many of them remember the Stalin years, and the German occupation in the decade after that. “Radiation doesn’t scare me,” says Hanna Zavorotnya. “Starvation does.”

On Friday: **Inaate/se** (“in *ab* ta say”), meaning “it shines a certain way. to a certain place./ it flies. falls./” and “it’s a certain kind of movie,” among other things. Adam and Zack Khalil, the filmmakers, are Ojibwe brothers whose ancestral home is today called Sault Ste. Marie. The ancient Ojibwe name meant “place of the rapids,” thunderous

Room magazine's  
CONTEST CALENDAR

**Fiction & Poetry Contest**  
Judges: Doretta Lau (*fiction*)  
and Marilyn Dumont (*poetry*)  
1st Prize: \$1000 + publication (*in each genre*)  
2nd Prize: \$250 + publication (*in each genre*)  
Deadline: July 15, 2016

**Cover Art Contest**  
1st Prize: \$500 + publication on the cover of Room  
Deadline: November 30, 2016

**Short Forms Contest**  
1st Prize: \$500 + publication (two prizes)  
Deadline: January 15, 2017

**Creative Non-Fiction Contest**  
1st Prize: \$500 + publication  
Deadline: March 8, 2017

[www.roommagazine.com/contests](http://www.roommagazine.com/contests)

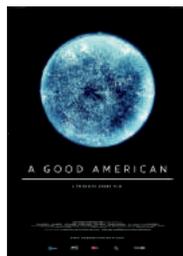
Open to all writers and artists who identify as women or genderqueer. Each entry costs \$35 (USD) for International entrants and includes a one-year subscription to *Room*. Additional entries are \$7 each. Visit [www.roommagazine.com/contests](http://www.roommagazine.com/contests) for more details.

**Room**  
LITERATURE, ART, AND FEMINISM SINCE 1975

waters teeming with fish, a meeting place for many groups during fishing season for millennia. In the film the hypnotic sounds of water rushing, trickling, gurgling, accompany the central thread: the ancient Seven Fires Prophecy of the Ojibweg and other Anishinaabe people, which foretold the terrible history we know now. The first three fires described the coming of the light-skins, the others predicted poisons running in the river, the false promise of salvation, the suppression of language and lifeways in children, the emergence of a new nation. The very look, sound and feel of this film releases even non-Aboriginal viewers from the urge to label and sequence the fires and the water. Here are maps, charts and photos from other cultures and times, some overlaid with graphics and animation; videos of performances; talking heads, weeping heads, shouting heads; water water water; then jump to a sunny day outside the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian, where visitors skim around on their Segways. The camera enters the museum and then a vault, where it scans shelf after white-wire shelf, room after climate-controlled room of Aboriginal “artifacts” arranged neatly with identifying cards. Jump to a funny-scary trickster figure, wearing an I ♥ Bingo hat, a grimacing mask and black priest’s robes... What’s not in this film is any hint of grand conclusions about all indigent people. It is a radical film about home, which says it all.

**O**n Saturday: **A Good American** (produced and directed by Friedrich Moser), about a patriotic whistle-blowing geek named William Binney who worked for the US National Security Agency as an analyst and crypto-mathematician. The straight-ahead documentary style of this film takes viewers right to the chilling

content at its heart. Binney worked on encrypted data in the late Cold War years, getting results by seeking mathematical patterns—i.e., human behaviour patterns—that related to world events; among other things he predicted the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. His expertise in metadata was even more useful in the 1980s, as the digital explosion took hold and it was becoming impossible to read every email, text, blog post and social media message ever sent, and Binney was keen to serve his country—his home. “The universe is dots and their connections,” Binney says. “You just have to find

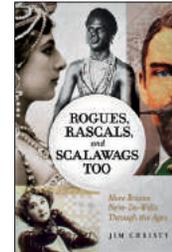


the structure.” On one of the first PCs, he and two colleagues wrote an algorithm, and then built ThinThread, a simple, effective system to track pertinent metadata, yielding useful intelligence with no infringement on anyone’s privacy. Reader, you know what’s coming. The NSA rejected ThinThread and poured money into Trailblazer, a program made by a flashier, better-connected private company. Binney’s funding was cut off, FBI investigations ensued, and so on. Why did ThinThread get dumped in favour of the inferior Trailblazer (which was scrapped not long after)? *To avoid embarrassing a senior military official who had supported Trailblazer.* No, really—in the film this horror is stated by government poobahs, not by Binney. And later, to add insult to injury, the US government removed privacy protection features from ThinThread and put it to use in domestic surveillance.

—*Mary Schendlinger*

## THE LIBRARY OF ROGUERY

**T**he writer Jim Christy and the editors who worked on **Rogues, Rascals, and Scalawags Too** (Anvil) should be congratulated for their uncanny ability to squeeze every last euphemism out of their thesauri. If any evidence beyond the title is nec-



essary, consider the synonyms that lard the book’s foreword: “the bizarre and the extraordinary,” “astonishing oddities,” “scoundrels,” “exotic personae,” “heroic adventurers,” “the odd, the absurd, and the quirky,” “those who exist in the margins,” “incorrigibles,” “rapsallions,” and my personal favourite, the *slightly* more accurate “thieving, bullshitting con artists who took the art of trickery to remarkable extremes.” It’s a richly assorted and euphonious vocabulary, reflecting the fascination that *less* incorrigible citizens have for those who prey upon them; the sheep’s fatal fascination for the wolf. It’s a bit of a conundrum: how to romanticize the actions of (and here I’ll throw in a few alternate terms) sociopaths, criminals and predators, without actually endorsing their behaviour. Rogues famous and obscure are here: from André Malraux to Bata Kindai Amgoza ibn LoBagola. Shelve this one in the Library of Roguery with its predecessor, Christy’s *Scalawags: Rogues, Roustabouts, Wags & Scamps—Brazen Ne’er-Do-Wells Through the Ages* (2008), and an all-time classic, the delightfully titled *Gay Canadian Rogues* (1958), “a rogues’ gallery of Canadian scalawags, nimble in the art of embezzling, swindling, spying and gold-digging, presented by Frank Rasky, Editor of *Liberty*, Canada’s largest monthly national magazine.” —*Michael Hayward*



her childhood alone—she writes that she built “comforting walls” around her emotions and that for her parents to be fulfilled as artists they had to be “more than just paternal or maternal”—but this is as reflective as the writing gets. Near the end of the book, Scoones describes leaving home as soon as she could after high school and surmises that “It must have been strange for them to see their second child leaving home.” “What!?” I said out loud. “There was another child in that family? And this is the first time he or she gets a mention?” I rushed off to Google, where I discovered that Scoones has a brother living in Fredericton, not a large enough city for me to believe that he never ran into his sister. It’s obvious that this family has a lot more going on below the surface than Scoones is prepared to reveal, but rather than disappointing me, it made me read and reread the book more closely, as I savoured whatever tiny glimpses I could get of anything that would help fill in the picture of Molly Lamb Bobak’s inner life. —Patty Osborne

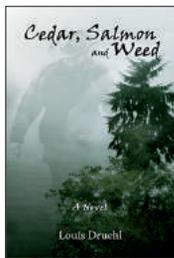
## TWO FISH IN A WESTERN SEA

**Cedar, Salmon and Weed** is probably not the Great Canadian Novel—but it could be the Great Bamfield Novel; it seems to have few competitors for that distinction. Self-published by the author, Louis Druehl, with assistance from Granville Island Publishing, *Cedar, Salmon and Weed* is set during the 1970s in Bamfield, an isolated community on the west coast of Vancouver Island, at the far end of a sixty-mile-long dirt road “strewn with beer cans, mufflers, hubcaps, and odd bits of clothing.” From the author bio we learn that Druehl is “a Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University, where he taught and researched kelp for thirty-six years.” It is not surprising, then, that kelp gets mentioned a number of times in Druehl’s novel, along with

sea asparagus, cedar, hemlock and “the wonders of marine biology.” (Here’s one character rhapsodizing about molluscs: “I love their simplicity and diversity. The unsegmented grace of *Octopus vulgaris*, the castanet clapping of butter clams, and the effortless gliding of limpets, snails and abalone.”) *Cedar, Salmon and Weed* has been blurbed by Howard White of Harbour Publishing (“worth reading just for the coastal ambience, even if the story weren’t such an energetic romp”), by the CBC broadcaster Grant Lawrence (“absolutely drips with soggy coastal flavour”) and even by former Senator Pat Carney (“captures an untidy, imperfect world of human flotsam and jetsam stranded on the kelp-strewn beaches”). There are comparisons to “Steinbeck’s masterpiece *Cannery Row*”—but Grant Lawrence’s reference to *The Beachcombers* feels more apt to me. Nick Adonidas and Relic would fit right into these pages as comfortably as a pair of geoducks in sand—or, with a nod to Druehl: two patches of *Haloclonium spendens* clinging to salt-water-sprayed granite.

I’ve been to the small Vancouver Island beach near Jordan River where Theresa Kishkan’s novella *Winter Wren* (Fish Gotta Swim Editions) is set; I’ve seen the waterfall that tumbles over sandstone onto the shingle just below, and the solitary cabin facing south and west, surrounded by salal. *Winter Wren* tells one possible story from the many that cabin could tell. As the novella begins, Grace Oakden, a painter now in her sixties, has just purchased this isolated cabin. She has recently moved

back to BC from Paris, where she ended a long relationship with a married man. Later, Oakden gets to know the cabin’s former owner, as he lives out his final years in a Sooke nursing home; she slowly becomes part of the nearby communities, Sooke and Jordan River. There are flashbacks to Oakden’s life in Paris, and ongoing attempts to “paint the sky at sunset.” The beauty of the novella format is what might be called its “ample brevity”: long enough to develop characters, to establish a mood and flesh out a specific setting; brief enough to read through in a day or two. *Winter Wren* is the first title from Fish Gotta Swim Editions, a new publishing venture that intends to focus on the novella. Operated by Kishkan and Anik See, a writer based in Amsterdam, Fish Gotta Swim dreams of swimming happily among the bigger fishes. —Michael Hayward



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## OFF THE SHELF

According to *In the small hours* by **Erin Brubacher** (Gaspereau), people don't hug in public unless they're having sex in private. A dish pig plots the murder of a billionaire in *Rich and Poor* by **Jacob Wren** (BookThug). Sweating blood is studly but secreting it remains a secret in *Sideshow Concessions* by **Lucas Crawford** (Invisible). The mole men of Zug break into song in *The Gun That Starts the Race* by **Peter Norman** (icehouse). Undead lobsters dance the *rigodon* in *The Back Channels* by **Jennifer Houle** (Signature). A ninety-pound beehive chugs with nectar-drunk bodyguards in *Serpentine Loop* by **Elee Kraljii Gardiner** (Anvil). Happy Henry distributes literature that claims the universe is a compassionate womb in *Wigford Rememberies* by **Kyp Harness** (Nightwood). A woman with thirteen children kisses Jesus' ass in *Rust Is A Form of Fire* by **Joe Fiorito** (Guernica). Marco Scutaro slaps a dinger into a fan's ungloved hand in *The Utility of Boredom: Baseball Essays* by **Andrew Forbes** (Invisible). Michael gets bounced to death in an old crate while he flees the mafia in *Course Correction* by **Douglas Morrison** (Stonehouse). A girl with a pierced eyelid refuses to squint in *Touch Anywhere to Begin* by **Jim Nason** (Signature). Burning Man attendees dole out Kool-Aid, back massages and temporary tattoos in *No Fixed Address* by **Jon Evans** (Porcupine's Quill). An old flame from high school scales Facebook's Wall of Evil in *Endangered Hydrocarbons* by **Lesley Battler** (BookThug). An unsuspecting honeybee gets trapped in a jar of birthday wind in *Après Satie—For Two and Four Hands* by **Dean Steadman** (Brick). A first-grader inhales the smell of HB pencils, mimeographed pages and clayish-wet poster paint in *Paper Teeth* by **Lauralyn Chow** (NeWest). White asparagus is out of the question after Dow Jones drops like a gored matador in *Disturbing the Buddha* by **Barry Dempster** (Brick). Toboggans sit idle when winter abandons Canada in *This Being* by **Ingrid Ruthig** (Fitzhenry & Whiteside). Father Time haunts the man who brought electricity to Quebec in *It Is an Honest Ghost* by **John Goldbach**

(Coach House). The church offering plate hovers overhead like a UFO in *Ignite* by **Kevin Spenst** (Anvil). The horologist's father thumbs greasy axle splines like pages in *How to be Eaten by a Lion* by **Michael Johnson** (Nightwood). A blood bank employee stalks his undead son in *The Birth of Kitaro* by **Shigeru Mizuki** (Drawn & Quarterly). An outlier is unfastened, unbuttoned and unzipped from the mainland in *Whelmed* by **Nicole Markotić** (Coach House). The young woman who is dating Tom's father giggles as she trips along on three-inch heels in *Perfect World* by **Ian Colford** (Freehand). Loving certain people is like loving crystal meth (both make your teeth rot) in *Weekend* by **Jane Eaton Hamilton** (Arsenal). A mom wants a miracle but gets a two-year-old who can conjure up magic balls in *Playground of Lost Toys*, edited by **Colleen Anderson** and **Ursula Pflug** (Exile). A construction worker falls asleep in a bathtub and wakes up babbling about bloodsucking forest demons in *A Whole Life* by **Robert Seethaler** (Anansi). A door-to-door vacuum salesman is told to fly his magic carpet back where he came from in *even this page is white* by **Vivek Shraya** (Arsenal). Yorkshire's fish-gut smell threatens to choke the life out of a doctor in *Middenrammers* by **John Bart** (Freehand). A sylvan poet sends his soul to fetch him a speck of personality in *The Bird in the Stillness* by **Joe Rosenblatt** (Porcupine's Quill). Madonna's vampirism is evidenced through her incubus/succubus kiss with Britney Spears in *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* by **David Balzer** (Coach House).

## NOTED ELSEWHERE

Brett Josef Grubisic refers to *Congratulations On Everything* by **Nathan Whitlock** (ECW) on Twitter as a "(semi) tragedy of a (sort of) self-made man"; Jowita Bydlowska calls it a "wonderfully complicated story," but the *Star* says it's "not always wholly gripping." The *Winnipeg Review* says it's "resonant of Angie Abdou's *Between*," while *Publishers Weekly* says it reminds them of *Cheers*; Katrina Onstad calls the novel "fast and funny,"

while Laura at *125 Pages* says it's "more sad than funny" and is "occasionally uncomfortable." The *Montreal Review of Books* likens *Worldly Goods* by **Alice Petersen** (Biblioasis) to "a well-set table"; *Quill & Quire* says it's "a multifaceted diamond." *Paste* says that reading *Carpet Sweeper Tales* by **Julie Doucet** (Drawn & Quarterly) is "like watching a Danish movie with the subtitles off"; *CBC* calls the collection a "genre-defying masterwork"; *Publishers Weekly* says its "gleefully unconventional panels evoke a beatnik poetry jam"; *Broken Frontier* calls it "the sort of stuff you could fill your ethically sourced tote bag with at any zine fair." *Quill & Quire* says it "doesn't get much more Canadian" than *The Hockey Scribbler* by **George Bowering** (ECW); the *Sun Times* says the book "offers the final word on why this country is hockey crazy"; Jason Blake of the University of Ljubljana says, "Hockey is Bowering's sporting mistress. Baseball is his real game and he remains faithful"; on the contrary, the *Winnipeg Free Press* claims that Bowering is "a hockey fan, naturally," and has "loved and followed [hockey] since childhood." On Twitter, Jonathan Kay says that *Leviathan* by **Carmine Starnino** (Gaspereau) has "an unusually large amount of solid lawn-care tips"; the *Montreal Review of Books* says it "alternately sings and skewers traditional images of masculinity." The *Star* says that in *Little Dogs* (Anansi), **Michael Crummey** "writes movingly of his ties to family"; *Quill & Quire* sums it up with: "many early poems concern the poet's dead father."

## CONGRATULATIONS

To *Geist* authors **Carellin Brooks**, who won the Publishing Triangle's Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction, and to **Dakota McFadzean**, winner of the Doug Wright Spotlight Award; to **Marcello Di Cintio**, who was shortlisted for an Alberta Literary Award; to **Irina Kovalyova**, who was a finalist for the Kobo Emerging Writer Prize; and to **Raoul Fernandes**, who won a BC Book Prize and was a finalist for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award.

# The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

Send copy of completed puzzle with name and address to:

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210-111 West Hastings St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4  
Fax 604-677-6319

The winner will be selected at random from correct solutions received and will be awarded a one-year subscription to *Geist* or—if already a subscriber—a *Geist* keychain. Good luck!

## ACROSS

- 1 Finn was afraid a bureaucrat might mess up his extramarital doings in South Asia (2)
- 8 What's the name of that dive thingy? (abbrev)
- 9 They've certainly had some cheesy disputes in Quebec
- 12 If he had more money the milkman would bid more (2)
- 13 Did the people eat raw meat when they were in situ?
- 15 Things can be slipshod when you get to L.A.
- 16 There was a time when we touched base quite often
- 17 Why didn't your rep tell us about the orange stuff?
- 19 Tell Ma to dig and then add water to the mix
- 20 I tried to get rid of my obligations but then I met Six-Gun here
- 23 Did Emma and John ever take revenge on that horse?
- 25 Prospects are often persuaded to eat meals
- 30 The Poles are always showing off their emblems around here
- 32 For that agreement, what's the ETA? Try to get it done in my lifetime, okay?
- 35 The matriarch was familiar with two degrees
- 36 Did you pay for that line or did you just make it up on your computer? (abbrev)
- 38 At the lake, Harper had a feather but didn't say it
- 39 After having to stay there he became a red alienist
- 40 Did you acquire that violently addictive series?
- 41 We're keeping that land for farming but we might bend the rules (abbrev)
- 42 I'm on call so I can't take over that country
- 47 A common corporeal ratio can be worrisome (abbrev)
- 48 Chris made a mistake when he hid in the north because he couldn't understand the language
- 49 Sign in on the knotted line
- 50 Did those initial federations belong to us or to themselves? (3)

## DOWN

- 1 At first it sounded like they are ingenious people but then they did tie-dye in gin
- 2 Try consuming this with relish
- 3 Did Sam's wife want you too?
- 4 Were those part of The Nylons' recipe for success?
- 5 One of those intervals came before he got down to 48 (2)
- 6 A gang of worldly sportsters chose the cariocas (abbrev)
- 7 If only I knew a person who knows something and can watch over me
- 10 The kid in the pj's is a great chopper
- 11 Studying the structure of the soma sounds like it's worse than being bitten by one mosquito (2)
- 14 Those Hollywood guys didn't used to be so uptight
- 15 Who knew flower necklaces originated in Romania?
- 18 I felt bad on that trip
- 19 Louis, it's me, Gabriel!
- 21 That little speck just has a bad attitude
- 22 Hey lady! Tell Gloria that piece should be in the mag (abbrev)
- 24 They wear elegant clothes when they learn times tables in Alberta (2)
- 26 Steady, brother! Have you already had 24?
- 27 We made sure those worldly movers went to school before we let them carry our desks (abbrev)
- 28 What do you call that city in Sweden?
- 29 Thanks but I'll pass on that cultural artifact because I'd rather use bad fonts to make my own!

- 31 Mum, Tina had to work for nothing but I got the free one
- 33 That man always takes stuff back, but not to the library!
- 34 Have any of the climbers seen a magical creature?
- 36 This bad oil from Madrid tastes like hell!
- 37 Have you heard the wild pink ones sing "Don't Fence Me In"?
- 40 Don't flog that poor fellow—he's only driving the cart
- 42 Sounds like the army head has been doing surgery on a pigeon!
- 43 Ooh, those expressions are surprising
- 44 Recently, we settled on Canadian writing
- 45 Mary and the other six were too happy to stay
- 46 She gets together with her pals on Saturdays in anticipation of his arrival

The winners for Puzzle 100 were Jim Lowe and Brian Goth.

B	O	A	R	D	I	N	G	J	E	T	W	A	Y
A	B	N	U	O	A	H	U	H	O	B	O		
G	O	T	T	I	T	T	E	R	O	R	A	D	
G	E	E	K	Y	A	E	R	O	K	E			
A	L	F	C	A	R	O	U	S	E	L			
G	O	R	A	S	H	M	H	R					
E	X	P	R	E	S	S	E	M	O	T	I	O	N
E	E	P	I	C	M	A	P	E	S				
D	I	S	C	H	K	I	O	S	K	T			
E	A	R	E	A	N	P	O						
P	C	R	O	R	E	T	H	R	O	W	U	P	
L	E	A	R	N	E	R	L	A	T				
A	M	E	A	I	G	C	C	T	V				
N	E	F	I	E	A	S	E						
E	C	O	N	O	M	Y	L	A	Y	O	V	E	R

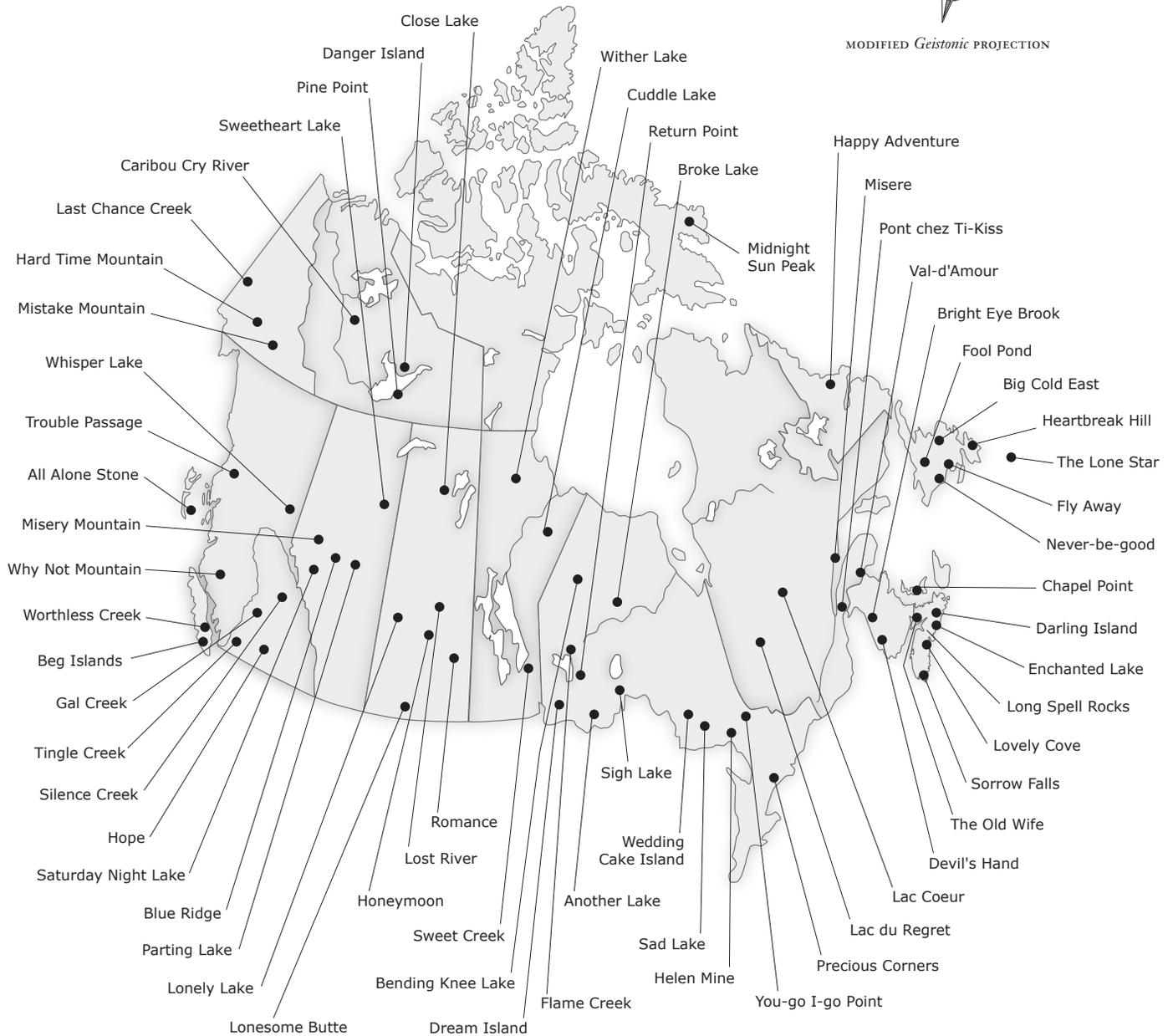
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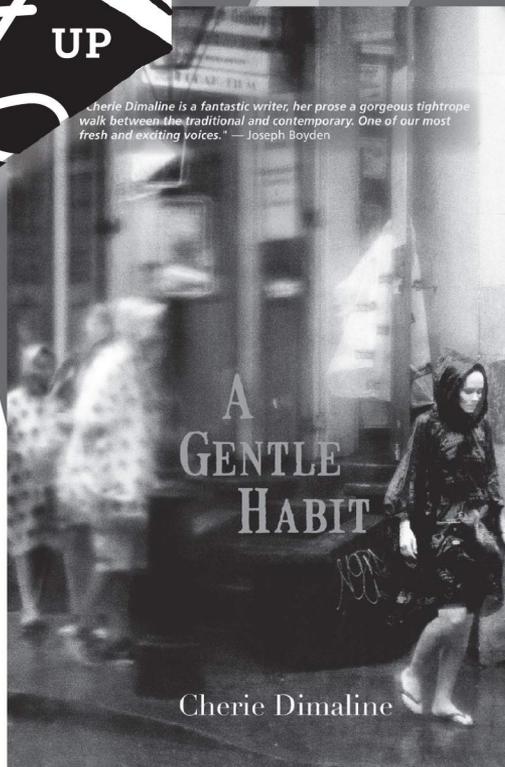
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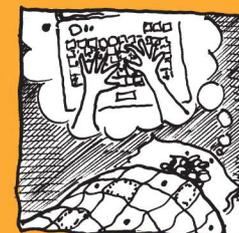
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