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Fact + Fiction • North of America

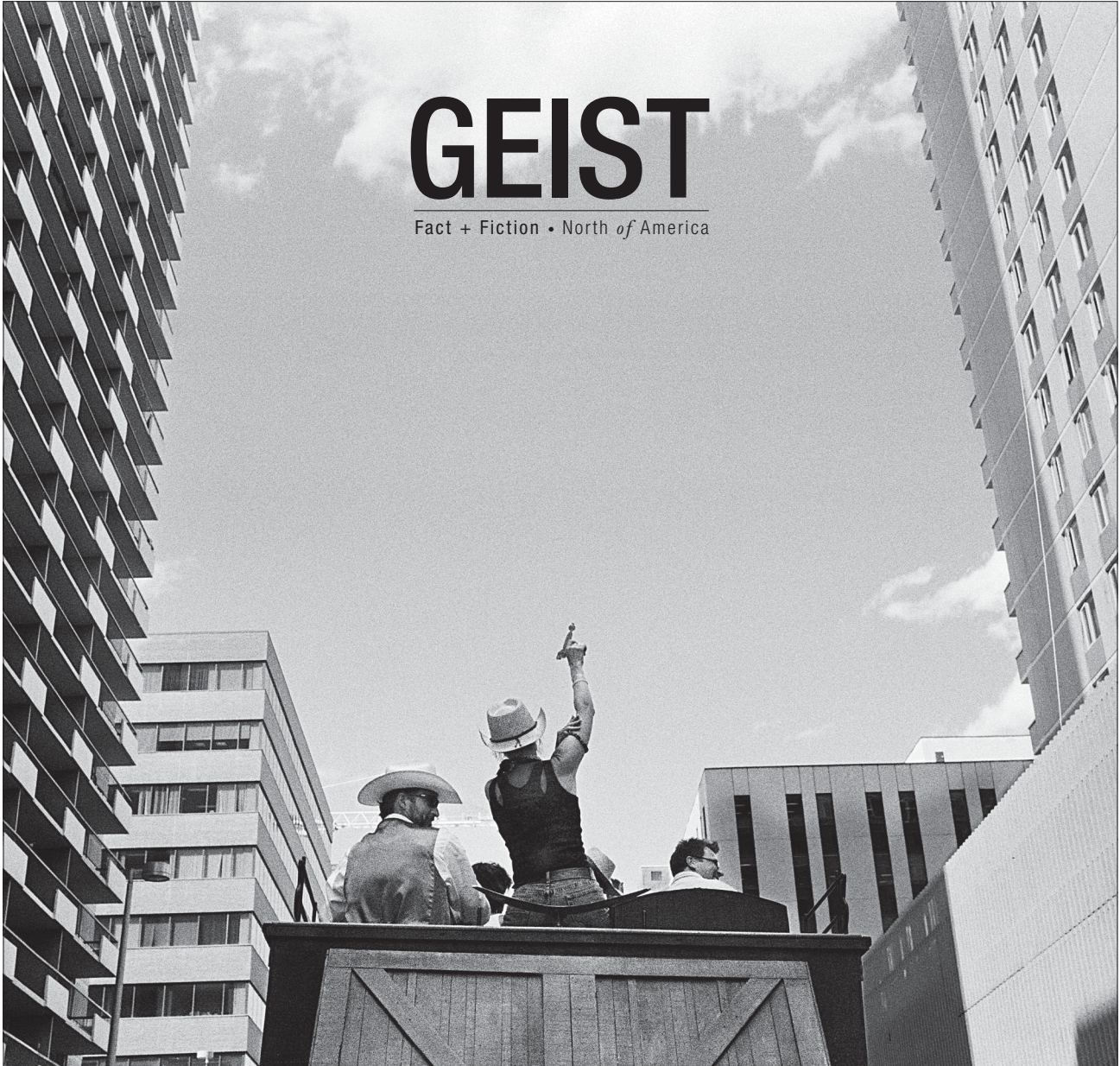


photo by David Campion in *Geist* 53

“Weirdo neato
canmag!”

“Maddeningly
homespun!”

“Better than any
spam or tv show!”

—*Geist* subscribers write

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GEIST

Volume 22 • Number 85 • Summer 2012

FEATURES

Hashtag Summer Reading
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Which books to read, read later, not read and leave at the beach—friends of *Geist* share their summer reading picks

Postcard Lit
Davey Thompson and Cameron
Tully, Susan Steudel,
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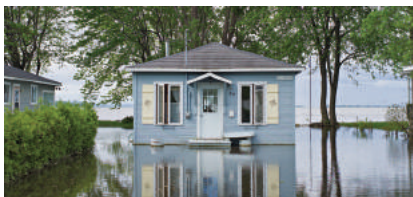
The image-inspired short stories that took First, Second and Third prize in the 8th Annual Geist Literal Literary Postcard Contest

Everyday Heresies
Renée Sarojini Saklikar
40



Again and again I seen you on Howe Street. You wear a suit. You carry no umbrella. In your ears, ear buds implanted.

Memory of Winter
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A photographer captures the town of Venise-en-Québec under water—then he returns to watch the town re-emerge

Show Business
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48



A young Irish girl sells her goat to a gypsy fortune teller and plays Sleeping Beauty in a tinkers' sideshow

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“The emanation of an unknown country”

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COVER DESIGN: ERIC UHLICH

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COVER PHOTO: STEVE MCCURRY

This photograph, taken in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is part of Steve McCurry's long-term project to document people reading all over the world. McCurry's photographs capture the conspicuous intimacy between reader and book in private and public spaces. "Everywhere I go in the world," he says, "I see young and old, rich and poor, reading books. Whether readers are engaged in the sacred or the secular, they are, for a time, transported to another world." Steve McCurry is an award-winning photojournalist whose work frequently appears in *National Geographic*. His most recent book is *Steve McCurry: The Iconic Photographs*, published by Phaidon Press in 2011. See his work at stevemccurry.com.

Hub to the North



Victor Post was a professional photographer in St. Albert, Alberta, where, according to the *St. Albert Gazette*, he operated a successful studio in his parents' basement from about 1970 until 1984, when he relocated downtown. He is identified by a credit line stamped in red ink on the back of this photograph, which was found by the poet Billeh Nickerson in a thrift store in Chilliwack, BC, in May 2012, and purchased for fifty cents. Victor Post served as official photographer for the government of Alberta, for which he photographed Pope John Paul II, King Hussein and Queen Noor of Jordan, and “many members of the British Royal family.” He even photographed Wayne Gretzky for an advertisement of Pro Stars breakfast cereal, when Gretzky played hockey in Edmonton, a few miles south of St. Albert.

Dog show photographs constitute a genre of their own with its own conventions (the judge holds the trophy and the ribbon, the handler holds the leash, handlers and dogs often resemble each other, etc.). In the example shown

here, the judge's outfit resembles the Full Nanaimo, an ensemble made popular by car salesmen and Rotarians in Nanaimo, BC, in the 1970s: white belt, white shoes, flamboyant sport jacket and shirt. Frank Ney, who launched the Nanaimo Bathtub Race across the Strait of Georgia in 1967 and was elected mayor in 1968, was an ardent wearer of the Full Nanaimo and a great booster of the city of Nanaimo, which, according to Wikipedia, is one of three official Hub Cities in Canada, along with Moncton and Saskatoon.

The Hub City referred to in the placard in the photograph is probably not Nanaimo; St. Albert, Alberta, refers to itself on its website as the “hub *to* the north,” implying a centre lying on a periphery. The Post family donated the archive of Victor Post, who died more than ten years ago, to the Heritage Museum in St. Albert early in May 2012, a few days before Billeh Nickerson encountered this image in the thrift store. 🐾

—Michał Kozłowski

LETTERS

HOMES PAST

I'm grateful that Caroline Adderson took the time to find out about the past of her home ("Lives of the House," *Geist* 83), stories that otherwise would have been lost. I have two old houses in Alberta. One was built in 1917 and we bought it from the granddaughter of the original owner, so we know much of its history. The other is a 1907 home that has been through many changes: from a six-bedroom home to a boarding house, and eventually to an apartment building. We know the step-daughter of the original builder—she lives across the street—but there are so many stories we do not know.

—*Jamie, Cyberspace*

Our home is on a tree-lined street in Toronto's Leaside neighbourhood—a small-town-like enclave undergoing a mad rush to renovate and expand. In our home, I have removed and refinished all the original doorknob plates and the solid brass hinges. Keeping its original charm is important to us. There is no shrine. There is no story of families past. Perhaps we will be that family and leave our story in its walls. Thank you for this story—it was charming, memorable and rich in melancholy from start to demolition finish.

—*Son Roberts, Cyberspace*

What a heartachingly beautiful article. I have long felt that a piece of me has been left behind in each house I have lived in and have treasured each artifact left by previous residents, from layers of wallpaper to a hand-crafted clothes-peg box attached to the side of a Kitsilano (Vancouver)

house—in my mind, lovingly constructed by a husband to make his wife's laundry chores a little easier. The current trend of decorating to "lifestyle" magazine standards makes me wonder what traces of our lives will be left behind in the homes we live in now.

—*Susan Goldie, Cyberspace*

Read "Lives of the House" and other work by Caroline Adderson at geist.com.

TO THE HEART

In "A Table in Paris," an essay about Mavis Gallant (No. 83), Stephen Henighan writes: "Alice Munro, whose confected ironies often act as a form of emotional self-protection..." Now there's an assumption for a university professor to make. And sadly

patronizing, diminishing an otherwise pleasant article. Mind reading doesn't interest me. Or perhaps Alice Munro has confessed this to him? Or is it the reader who undergoes "self-protection"? Sometimes irony gets one to the heart of an emotion.

—*Alban Goulden, Cyberspace*

Lovely piece, but I think Henighan underestimates how much Mavis Gallant is appreciated by Canadian readers now.

—*Greg Terakita, Cyberspace*

Stephen Henighan responds:

Alban Goulden needs to stop discriminating against people on the basis of their day jobs. His belief that certain occupations disqualify us from being sensitive readers is demeaning. In light of Goulden's own career as an English professor at Langara University College, one can interpret his remarks only as a confession that his own literary taste has eroded. This may be



GEIST

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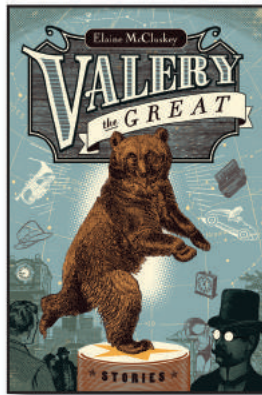
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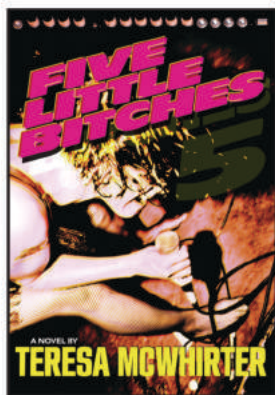


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why he is impervious to the perception, shared by numerous discerning readers, who hold a variety of day jobs, that, particularly in Alice Munro's later stories, irony becomes a way of side-stepping emotional engagement.

Read "A Table in Paris" and other work by Stephen Henighan at geist.com.

BEAUTIFUL JEALOUSY

I was on the cusp of forgetting what it feels like to read a great poem. A happy tear stuck under my eyeball clashes with a quick stutter in my heartbeat from the words, and the writer's choices to collect and order them as she has. Then, of course, there's the swell of jealousy bursting through my veins from my feet to the top of my messy-haired head because it wasn't I who wrote the poem, who chose the words and ordered them perfectly. I am grateful to be reminded of this feeling by Karen Connelly's "The Speed of Rust, or, He Marries" and Evelyn Lau's suite of poems, "Fiercely Awake" (No. 84). My mom has recently been under attack from her gallbladder, so Lau's poem really hit it on the gallstone. And Lord love a gal who writes a poem about her sagging vagina. Oh, my jealous roars! I love it!

—Vanessa Shields, Windsor, ON
Read "The Speed of Rust, or, He Marries" and "Fiercely Awake" at geist.com.

TALENTED AND TOUGH

"New World Publisher," the profile of the Aboriginal publisher



Carin Makuz enjoys Geist 84 at the restaurant Hog Heaven on Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands. Sir Richard Branson's private island (Necker Island) is to the far left.

Randy Fred, by Michal Kozlowski (No. 83), left me wanting to know more about the heart that steps out, even in the face of the cruelty and ignorance that persisted around this talented and tough man. Randy Fred has a new fan.

—Donna D. Peerless, Cyberspace
Read "New World Publisher" and other work by Michal Kozlowski at geist.com.

THEY ARE US

The glimpse into a life in Leslie Vyrenhoek's "Under the Surface" (No. 81) is so believable, so simple. The author offers up a turning point in these characters' lives without succumbing to writing that is overwrought, and without telling us how we should react. We feel for this family because we see that they are us, at our best and our worst. What we desire and what we fear the most.

—Anonymous, Cyberspace
Read "Under the Surface" and other winners of the 7th Annual Geist Literal Literary Postcard Story Contest at geist.com.
Read the winners of the 8th annual contest on page 37.

SQUANDERING

Henighan's "Third World Canada" (No. 82) intelligently and articulately expresses what I increasingly feel—that in spite of Canada's many positive attributes, we are squandering greater, long-term opportunities for individuality, for short-term goals of a generic nature. I've been in Vietnam ten months and the sometimes brutal honesty of life here seems preferable in many ways; I am less afraid of criminals or police, and people are generally friendlier and enjoy themselves in a more honest way. To say nothing about the cost of living in general. I am curious, though, what Henighan might see as solutions to our malaise and how he reconciles himself to living in such a place.

—Yuri Doric, Cyberspace

Read "Third World Canada" and other work by Stephen Henighan at geist.com.

WHAT COUNTS

I disagree with Chelsea Novak's perspective in "Women Count" (geist.com). Editors should be making gender and race part of their editorial mandate? The only thing editors need to look for is high-quality writing that people want to read. If women writers aren't getting published, they need to consider whether their articles or stories are relevant and extremely well written, and that's it. I despise the idea that someone's writing might receive extra consideration simply because they have a vagina or brown skin, or a brown vagina, for that matter. It's just as silly as suggesting more blond-haired folks should get published. If editors want to see more content about women or women's issues, or about race issues, they can screen for those topics. But if the writing doesn't make us want to read, then we'll stop buying your magazine. The words are what count, not the politically correct affirmative-action policies. What is the world coming to? Next thing you know, everyone will be worrying that there's not enough writing by iguanas. Who cares if they can't write?

—Penelope, *Cyberspace*

Chelsea Novak responds:

In the blog entry I was not just talking about what editors choose for publication. I was talking about what editors read on their own time—which, believe me, has an effect on the work they solicit and accept. That said, should you ever come across a manuscript written by an iguana, do send it to *Geist*—we want to read it!

Read "Women Count" and Chelsea Novak's blog at geist.com.

HAPPINESS AND ORANGES

Thanks to Patty Osborne for reviewing *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* ("Jeanette Winterson: Happy, Not Normal," geist.com). I first encountered Winterson's work by way

of the BBC adaptation of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, presented in Canada by PBS. The best bits of the story for me were the couplings of the young lovers. They seemed to be in a universe unto themselves and they were giddy with what they had, their bodies and their delight in each other.

—Steve F., *Cyberspace*

Read "Jeanette Winterson: Happy, Not Normal" and Patty Osborne's blog at geist.com.

STEERAGE

I was surprised to read that it cost 30 pounds in 1912 to cross the Atlantic in third class ("Too Many Asparagus Tongs Aboard the Titanic?," *Geist* e-newsletter, April). In 1952, when my husband and I came over on the *Queen Mary*, it only cost 59 pounds—also in third class. Hate to think what would have happened if we'd struck an iceberg. If memory serves me correctly, we were on F deck.

—Pam Kent, *Aldergrove, BC*

Read an excerpt from Billeh Nickerson's *Impact: The Titanic Poems* on page 26.

OOPS

Everyone makes mistakes, but some are more embarrassing than others. Here's one: we enthusiastically featured Steven Heighton's wonderful story "Fireman's Carry" on the front cover of *Geist* 84, which goes to thousands of people, and also in our e-newsletter, which goes to thousands more; and somehow we spelled his name wrong in both places. Even more egregious, it was his first name that we messed up. Oops, to say the least.

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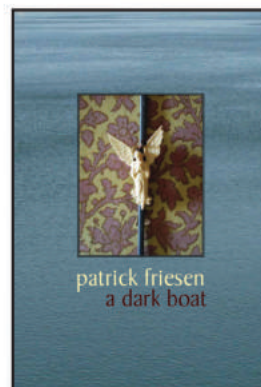
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SUMMER POETRY



Patrick Friesen's latest volume of poetry, *A Dark Boat*, explores the kind of loneliness and yearning that is contained in the Portuguese word *saudad*: a longing for something in the past that can never be found because time has shifted everything away from what it was.

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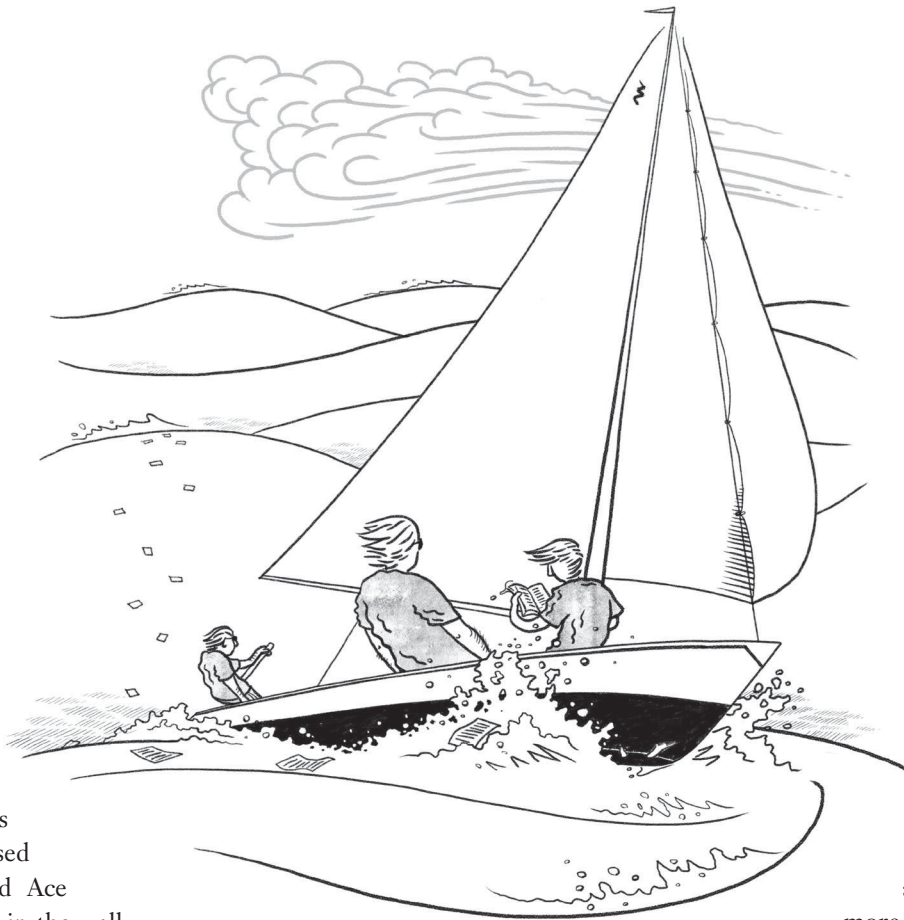
NOTES & DISPATCHES

FROM THE NEW WORLD

Reading in Summer

Where in the used bookstore would mysteries by Raymond Chandler be shelved—in Novels, or in Fiction?

STEPHEN OSBORNE



One summer day in the 1980s I discovered a used bookstore called Ace Books in a hole in the wall on Broadway in Vancouver. Ace Books belonged to the world of the illicit, the underground, the seamy side of literature—comic books and dime novels, Westerns, crime, mystery (slightly more elevated crime), thrillers, sci-fi, romance, and drawers filled with dog-eared back issues of *Playboy*, *Gent*, *Sir* and other collections of what were still called men's magazines

in that epoch, the mid-'80s, before the big box stores destroyed the book trade as we had always known it.

I went into Ace Books that summer in search of novels by Raymond Chandler, author of *The Big Sleep*; *Farewell, My Lovely*; *The High Window*; *The Lady in the Lake*—to name four of the seven novels that were all that he

had ever written and all that I would ever read, and which I had read more than once and which

I would read again more than once in years to come.

Secretly I refused to believe that Raymond Chandler had written only seven novels. Every summer I would search out more copies, another mass market edition from the '40s, '50s or '60s, of *The Little Sister* or *The Long Goodbye* or *Playback*, often with an unfamiliar cover, which would

encourage me to think that perhaps I hadn't read it yet, and then I could set out reading Raymond Chandler again as if for the first time. Cheap paperbacks at that time circulated through second-hand bookstores much like Ace Books, which smelled faintly of gym socks and high school locker rooms; there was nothing about Ace Books of the feminine, and now that I think of it, much of the book trade, at least in second-hand paperbacks, seemed to be mainly a man's world; certainly the few women I saw enter Ace Books never stayed very long to browse.

Browsing was the only way to look for books in Ace Books that summer, as the proprietor, a large silent man of about twenty who was rarely on the premises, had not yet found a way of arranging his stock; the several thousand volumes on display in bins and drawers as well as on shelves were completely unsorted, and one's browsing, or a search for a particular author, had to proceed randomly with each visit, which might be seen as a fresh adventure or another ordeal.

The cash desk at Ace Books was managed by a series of young men even younger than the proprietor, who hunched silently over comic books at the front desk, occasionally springing to life to negotiate with even younger boys who brought in comic books to sell or swap. In those first weeks, the stock at Ace Books began to organize itself into areas of interest, although I never saw anyone moving the books around while I was in the store: crime and mystery titles came to be separated from how-to books; travel books and picture books drifted into their own formations with their own sign-cards on the wall; and then in August, I think it was, smaller cards appeared tacked to the shelves and bearing letters of the alphabet and arrows going in one direction: A → C ; D → E; and then on the next shelf in the opposite direction: J ← H; G ← F; etc. This alphabetic

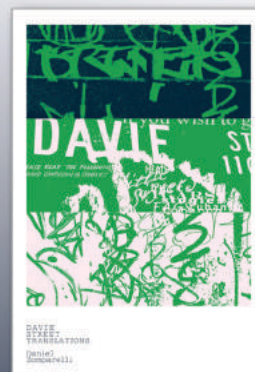
innovation simplified my searches for Raymond Chandler: I could check stock in a single pass through the C-shelf, or two passes through two C-shelves, as I soon discovered when sign-cards appeared designating one set of shelves as Fiction and another as Novels, a distinction that I tried to fathom one afternoon by going back and forth between sections and comparing the books. Finally I went to the counter and said to the young man (apologetically) that I had been trying to grasp the difference between the kinds of books displayed as *novels* and those displayed as *fiction*, and he looked at me and said: I know what you mean, it's hard to say what the difference is. You see, on one hand, he said, you have *novels*, and he held out a hand and paused. Then he held out the other hand. And then there's *fiction*, he said. Now he was staring hard at his hands. Anyway, he said, I'm pretty sure the boss knows. One day I discovered two editions of *Butterfield 8*, by John O'Hara, one shelved under Fiction and the other (with a photograph of Elizabeth Taylor on the cover) under Novels. I took both volumes over to the young man at the counter, who scrutinized them closely, front, back and spine, before looking up in evident relief. There it is, he said. On one of the volumes he had found the word *novel* printed on the spine in the tiniest of fonts; and on the other, in an equally tiny font, the word *fiction*. So the mystery was still there, but now it was no longer a problem for Ace Books.

I had discovered the pleasures of summer binge-reading when I was twelve or thirteen, in the public library and its many shelves filled with science fiction and an apparently endless supply of mysteries by Agatha Christie (hence my later disappointment at the meagre output of Raymond Chandler, whose few works so outclassed Christie and the rest of

the genre writers that I was reading). When I was fifteen I took a paperback copy of Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* on a sailing journey across the Salish Sea (then Georgia Strait) in a nineteen-foot sloop called *Moonraker*, with my father and a sailing friend of his whose name I think was Clem. We set out from Vancouver on a Saturday in July, in a stiff breeze from the northwest that had built up to near gale force by the time we were into the strait; our destination was a bay on Gabriola Island that lay beyond the horizon about twenty miles away. A plume of white smoke rising from a distant invisible pulp mill was our navigation guide; and as the wind remained constant on our beam, we were able to set our course on a single tack across the strait, with the three of us leaning out over the gunwale into the wind to keep the hull level in the water. Once I got settled up against a turnbuckle near the mast, I was able to pull out my

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book and begin to read *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* with my back leaning into the wind; my father was at the stern with the tiller in his hand, and between us, his friend Clem, a tall man, much bigger than me, leaning well out into the wind; between us we were able to keep *Moonraker* on an almost even keel, as we rose and fell on the roiling bosom of the sea, and the sun burnished the surfaces of all that we could see of water, foam, deck and sail, with the salt spray in our eyes and the wind in our hair.

Within minutes the pages of my book, a mass market edition that I later recognized in the Mystery section at Ace Books, were damp from the spray, which sifted over us in blasts as the wind caught the spume breaking at the tops of the rollers sweeping down the strait. Soon the entire book was soaked through and the leaves of newsprint, grown sodden and limp, required delicate holding and turning before they fell away from the spine, and I let them slip into the sea one by one; for the next four hours, as I devoured the story of Hercule Poirot as told by Agatha Christie's duplicitous narrator, page by page, so did the sea that carried the pages away. When I looked up from my reading, I could feel the musculature of the sea in the pressure of the elements advancing, pushing, holding, surging in wave and blast, inches away. My face stung with the salt spray and the wind and the heat from a dazzling sun, and over the stern, behind the figure of my father at the tiller, I could see the trail of pages from *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* rising and falling, swaying back and forth, just beneath the surface of the waves receding from us, drifting apart but still apparently retaining the order in which they had been bound. And so I read on, looking up occasionally at a world bathed in light and caressed by wind and spray and the prickle of salt: froth, spume, the lustrous swollen skin of the sails, the dull sheen of paper leaves undulating

in the ocean. I hoped the book would last out the voyage, and may have paced my reading to help it do so; a few hours later, when the hills of Gabriola Island were looming up over the horizon, I arrived at the chapter in which the narrator of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, in a moment of hubris, hands Hercule Poirot the manuscript account of events as they have unfolded to this point, and that the reader has been following in book form. I felt, briefly, my own hubris in consigning the pages of my book irretrievably to the sea, for now I was unable to review precisely the account that Poirot will read with a more critical eye, before, in the few pages remaining in a damp lump in my hand, he solves the murder and offers to the suspects assembled in an English country mansion—suspects who include poor relatives from the colonies (Canada, in fact), a butler, a maid, young lovers and the narrator—an explanation filled with impossible timings, accidents, poison, a secret marriage, a suicide, two murders and a dagger: all busy accoutrements of the genre, with an extra twist at the end.

Reading books outdoors is one of the pleasures and the benefits of literacy. The day we crossed the Salish Sea recalls itself in glittering detail: the sunlight in my eyes, the salt on my skin, the wind lashing at shirt, hair and the taut sails of the *Moonraker*, the sea rising and falling in great swells, and a sense of latent danger. I was reading in the summer in the heat and the wind and with the possibility of never returning; I was fifteen and, as I think of it now, as fully within myself as one might be at any age. ☪

Stephen Osborne is publisher and editor-in-chief of Geist. He is also the award-winning writer of Ice & Fire: Dispatches from the New World and dozens of shorter works—most recently “1968” (No. 84)—many of which can be read at geist.com.

Oh, Canada

MICHAEL TURNER

A US curator of Canadian art exoticizes Canadian artists while suggesting that they are un-exotic

In May 2012, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art opened an exhibition of Canadian art claiming to be “the largest survey of contemporary



Canadian art outside of Canada’s borders.” The name of the show is *Oh, Canada*. MASS MoCA, as the museum is known in the art world, lies deep in the Berkshire Hills, 240 km northwest of Boston and 350 km southeast of Montreal, in the repurposed mill town of North Adams (pop. 13,708). With more than 100,000 square feet of exhibition space, MASS MoCA is one of the largest venues for contemporary visual and performing art in the United States.

Rumours of a massive exhibition of contemporary Canadian art in the Massachusetts hinterland had begun to circulate in Canada’s bars and cafés as early as 2009, when a MASS MoCA curator, Denise Markonish, then a thirty-five-year-old graduate of the Bard College Curatorial Program, made the first of some four hundred Canadian studio visits, extending from urban centres into remote towns as far east as Newfoundland and as far north as the Yukon. From these visits, she selected work by sixty-two Canadian artists, some well-known, others emerging. In addition, she commissioned a handful of writers to contribute texts to a 450-page doorstopper catalogue. Over a three-year period, Denise Markonish saw more

contemporary Canadian art than anyone else in Canada.

According to a blurb on the MASS MoCA website, “Canada is the second largest country in the world by area and

boasts both a vibrant nationwide arts community and a strong public commitment to culture. And yet Canadian contemporary art has not received widespread attention outside Canada’s borders.” This apparent lack of attention appears to be the only rationale for the show, at least that I could find on the website. A glance at the *Oh, Canada* roster of participating artists (also on the website) reveals but a few of the many Canadian artists who have in fact received “widespread attention outside Canada’s borders.” A case of wilful exclusion? Or are these artists who have received international attention indifferent to an exhibition where all they would have in common would be their passports?

And what to make of the title of the show: *Oh, Canada*? Is this an allusion to the scandalous Broadway play (*Oh! Calcutta!*) or what a host says to someone known to them but who arrives at the party uninvited? Or is it merely the opening of the Canadian national anthem? If the latter, then how condescending is that? At least a subtitle might excite, if not orient, the viewer beyond the banalities of time (contemporary) and space (Canada),

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especially after a three-hour drive from Boston—or a six-hour drive from Ottawa. As it is, the phrase *Oh, Canada* seems to stand in place of a theme, while thwarting any attempt to extrapolate one. One might expect more engagement with the question from someone who has seen more contemporary Canadian art than anyone else in Canada.

Whether MASS MoCA's lack of engagement is reflective of past curatorial endeavours bears mention. Case in point: the Swiss artist Christoph Büchel's 2006 outsized installation *Training Ground for Democracy*, a project that proved too complex and too sophisticated for the museum, which eventually barred the artist from completing the work while museum staff, in public view, attempted to complete it for him. Büchel is a difficult artist, to be sure, and given the content of his piece (based on US military training techniques to help soldiers adapt to unfamiliar cultures) he likely counted on the museum's frustration as a secret ingredient. But it is the cruel and vituperative manner in which MASS MoCA dealt with this artist, both in the media and in the courts (which ruled in Büchel's favour two years ago), that shows the museum closer to its former industrial wasteland than a destination for creative engagement.

A more ominous factor that might explain MASS MoCA's reluctance to present a specific rationale for the exhibition could lie with its underwriters. The lead sponsor of *Oh, Canada* is TD Bank, with "additional support" from the Quebec Government Office in Boston. TD Bank and the Quebec government have been bedfellows since the 1970s, when TD Bank (then Toronto-Dominion) helped finance the draconian re-orientation of the La Grande River watershed, known also as the James Bay Project, which resulted in the

diversion of entire rivers and the displacement of numerous Cree communities. *Oh, Canada* opens as Hydro-Quebec gears up for another expansion of its dams and grids—in order to supply even more power to the New England states. Whether the Aboriginal artists participating in *Oh, Canada* address this historic relationship in their work is indeed something to look forward to.

In a recent interview in *Canadian Art*, Denise Markonish gives a conflicting account of what "triggered" the exhibition. "I had started noticing that a number of the artists I was interested in were Canadian," she says of those Canadian artists who "have all been in Whitney Biennials—biennials of American art," where they "assimilate really easily," an observation that contradicts her museum's claim that "Canadian contemporary art has not received widespread attention outside Canada's borders." However, in the next breath she adds, "At the same time, I was pushing back against what I was seeing as a trend toward a kind of exoticism on the part of many curators, who were saying, 'Let's find the next big. Let's go to China. Let's go to India...,'" a response that suggests Canadian artists are un-exotic while at the same time exoticizing them.

Oh, Canada is not the first large-scale exhibition of Canadian art outside of Canada. In 1978, the German curator Jean-Christophe Ammann mounted *Canadian Artists*, a showcase of sixteen contemporary Canadian artists at the Kunsthalle Basel. In 1982, Berlin's Akademie der Künste hosted *O Kanada*, a perplexing exhibition that paired landscape paintings by the Group of Seven with contemporary multi-media practitioners in an effort to enter Canadian art into the international conversation—an effort that, in straining to convince the world of the relationship between modern and contemporary Canadian art, only alienated those it had hoped

to engage. Although *Oh, Canada* is decidedly contemporary, the Art Dealers Association of Canada chose a much older work for a poster advertising an advance publicity lunch in Toronto: Joyce Wieland's *O Canada* (1970), sixty-eight lipstick traces laid out in a rectangular format, many of which look less like kisses than a more explicit form of oral communion. Is this the kind of engagement MASS MoCA hopes to foster when they write: "Canadian contemporary art has not received *widespread* attention outside Canada's borders"? Clearly not, especially when Markonish has provided evidence to the contrary.

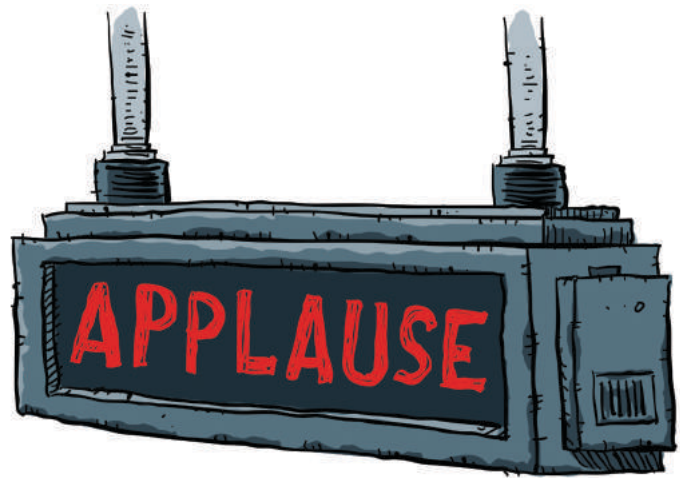
Ever since the United States emerged victorious from the Second World War (a victory whose swag bag included the keys to Modern Art), artists from that country have enjoyed the privilege of being modern or contemporary artists, and not "US" artists, which explains why we never see exhibitions of "contemporary United States art" in Canada. So why must artists who live and work in Canada accept anything less? (Are we not one big NAFTA family?) Indeed, the absence of the many Canadian artists who *have* achieved "widespread attention" in *Oh, Canada* is as relevant to this exhibition as its lack of a more focussed *raison d'être*. The last thing anyone who follows contemporary art wants to "discover" deep in the Berkshire Hills, regardless of the art on display, is an exhibition that has non-Canadians looking not at the work but at why this work was not known to them before. 🍷

Michael Turner is the author of 8x10, The Pornographer's Poem, Hard Core Logo and other works. In 2011, he was one of six writers invited by the Association of Book Publishers of BC and the City of Vancouver to select ten classic Vancouver books to be brought back into print, in honour of the city's 125th birthday. Read other work by Michael Turner at geist.com.

National Boyfriend

CHELSEA NOVAK

“Are you single?” a woman called out. “I don’t know how to answer that,” said Strombo



In a warehouse-like sound stage in the CBC Vancouver building, George Stroumboulopoulos took off his blue sports jacket and, in his black dress shirt, recorded the opening for the Friday episode of *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight*. Then he put the jacket back on and was ready to film the Thursday episode, to be aired that evening. He greeted the audience, then said, “I’m your boyfriend, George Stroumboulopoulos.”

The west coast set of *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight* features wooden beams, reminiscent of Vancouver’s many bridges, that surround the stage and the iconic red chairs. Bleachers filled the rest of the warehouse, seating the audience of about two hundred people.

My family and I filled out audience surveys while we waited for the show to start. Under “What brings you here today?” my mother wrote “my daughter,” my husband wrote “my wife,” and my grandmother and I both wrote “George.”

Later, George pulled surveys from the suggestion box, a large black cardboard box with SUGGESTION written on every side in white letters. George read out some of the suggestions, including one saying that George should take a *Twilight* tour of Vancouver.

George took questions from the audience during breaks in the taping.

“Are you single?” a woman called out. “I don’t know how to answer that,” he said. “He’s married to his job,” his stage manager answered.

As a camera swung over the audience, giving us a glimpse of the teleprompter, the stage manager coached us all to cheer, and George welcomed his first guest, the Canadian actress Sandra Oh. The stage manager moved around the set, making hand gestures at George. One signal clearly meant “Change how you’re sitting,” because George immediately sat up straight and shifted his legs to the left. Watching the show in the weeks following, I noticed that George makes these swift changes in position all the time.

George said goodbye to Sandra and the crew carried in a standing desk. The Debrief, a rundown of the events of the day, started with a clip from the House of Commons in which John Williamson, MP for New Brunswick Southwest, celebrated the death of the long gun registry by (mis)quoting Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Free at last, free at last, law-abiding Canadians are finally free at last.” The audience emitted an “Oooh” of shame. “You know how sometimes people struggle with the application of the word *irony*?” George said. “Here’s one: a white guy celebrating the death of a gun law by quoting a black man who preached non-violence, who was killed by a white man with a long gun.”

The crew set up a wheelchair ramp and the next guest, Master Corporal (ret) Paul Franklin, rolled onto the stage amid cheers from the audience. The stage manager jumped up on the platform to help Franklin adjust his wheelchair so that he faced both George and the audience, while the crew dragged away the ramp. Franklin has worked as an advocate for amputees’ and Canadian veterans’ rights since losing his legs in Afghanistan in 2006, when, as he explained to George, “I exploded.”

As they concluded the interview, the cameras pulled back for a wide shot, and then the crew rushed the wheelchair ramp back into place. Ian Hanomansing appeared on the TV screens to tell everyone Something You Might Not Know about Canada and the taping ended with thunderous applause.

Afterwards, George invited everyone into the next room to say hello. He took the time to talk to each person, posing for photos and shaking hands. It took an hour for my family to reach the front of the line, and my mother said to George, “You must be tired.” Before he answered, he smiled his national boyfriend smile. 🍷

Chelsea Novak is the managing editor of Geist. Her work has appeared in Other Voices and Front & Centre. Read her blog at geist.com.

Hernia Heaven

THAD MCILROY

There's probably no better place in the world to get a hernia repaired.

—Atul Gawande on the Shouldice Hospital, *The New Yorker*

I checked into the Shouldice Hospital in Thornhill, half an hour from downtown Toronto, on a Sunday at about 1:00 p.m. They took my credit card, my weight, my blood and my EKG, in that order.

Then I was ushered in to Dr. Saunders, one of three doctors on duty, for a pre-admission examination.

“So we’re repairing a hernia on your left side,” he said, checking his notes.

“Sorry?” said I.

“We’re operating tomorrow on the hernia on your left side,” he said.

“No,” I said. “My right side.”

“It says here ‘left’.”

And indeed it did. Two months earlier I had signed a consent with the doctor on duty that day for surgery to be performed on my left side first thing the coming Monday.

“You signed the form,” said Dr. Saunders.

“I didn’t read it,” I protested. “I thought he knew what he was doing.”

For a moment I thought Dr. Saunders was going to hold me to the agreement.

“Let’s take a look,” he said, finally.

He began an extensive examination of my right side, but failed to detect any sign of a hernia. He poked and prodded. I held my breath. I strained.

“Nope, I can’t find any evidence of a hernia,” he said. “No, wait. There’s one inside your belly button. Did you know that?”

“Nope.”

“Does that hurt?” he asked, sticking a couple of fingers deep into my innie.

in Room 205. My roommate, an old guy named Fred, had been operated on on Friday and was slated for discharge Monday.

“Don’t worry,” Fred said to me. “It’s not so bad. You’ll be up and about in a couple of days.”

“Oh good,” I said.

I went to the orientation session on the third floor with the other thirty-one patients—middle-aged men and “old guys,” and one who appeared to be in his twenties—admitted that day. Dr. Saunders went over the information in the brochure they had already given each of us, and then Nurse Jane gave us the schedule. Dinner at 5:15 on the main floor. Sleeping pills at 9:30. Nothing to eat or drink after midnight, including water. “Half of you will shower tonight,” she said, “and the other half in the morning.

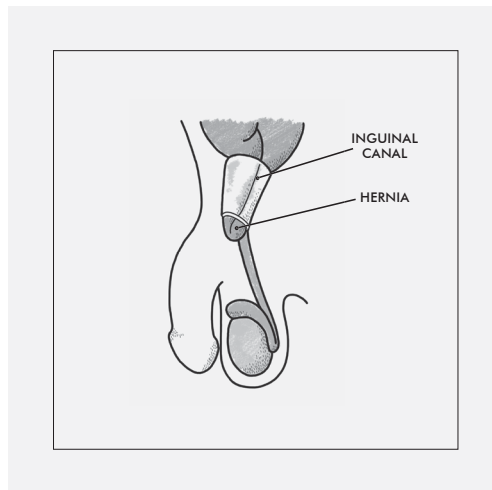
And make it last—you won’t be able to take a shower again for a week after surgery.”

The young man is the only one with a question.

“What happens if I leave before the four days is up?” he said. “Four days is too long to stay here.”

One of the old guys spoke up. “Why? You on the lam?” Another said, “Walk, don’t run.” Everyone laughed, a little uncomfortably.

The nurse said, “If you want to



“Yep.”

“That?”

“Ouch. Yes!”

“Well, it doesn’t matter. If you haven’t noticed it before, we don’t need to fix it,” he said dismissively. But the Chief Surgeon, he said, would examine me first thing in the morning and decide what was to be done.

I offered to go home and come back the next day. Dr. Saunders said I should stay the night.

I got bed number 2, by the window

leave early we can't stop you. Just make sure you let us know. If you go AWOL we call the cops."

Dinner was a fillet of something that once lived in water. I was at a table with two guys in their sixties who looked like brothers, and with a tall goofy guy, about forty, from Thunder Bay, who wore a San Francisco 49ers baseball cap. On one side of him was a handsome South Asian guy, and on the other side, the kid.

The two guys who looked like brothers were in fact cousins from Windsor. They had finagled to get admitted at the same time and to share a room. They were both having double hernia repairs and were scheduled for six nights. The one sitting next to me, the shorter of the two, said there had been some controversy about his diagnosis. One doctor had said he didn't have a hernia at all, another said he had one hernia on the left side, another two doctors had agreed that he had two hernias, and yet another doctor said that whether he had a hernia or not, if so many people believed that he did then he probably did have at least one hernia and he should get it or them looked after.

I asked him whether he felt any discomfort.

"Nope."

"Can you feel either hernia at all?"

"Nope, I can't. But the doctor's convinced that I'll need them looked after eventually. So I'm here." He shook his head.

Beyond that the stage was pretty much shared between the guy from Thunder Bay and the kid. Thunder Bay was rich with the wisdom of fresh experience and eager to share with us newbies. He'd had one side stitched last Wednesday and the other side on Friday and had just one more night to go. The South Asian guy had had a belly-button job last Friday.

"I'm having mine there too," said the kid, pulling up his sweatshirt to

reveal a small X just north of his belly button.

The kid was the only one in the group who had asked for a full anaesthetic; the preference at Shouldice is for a local anaesthetic only, with lots of Valium. So why the full anaesthetic? The kid said he had tried a local for an operation on one of his hands and he had looked over and saw what he said was "the flesh flapping." "That was enough," he said. "Never again."

I doubted that he would be checking out before me.

After dinner I went out for a walk, but it was already too dark to admire the twenty-six acres of lawns and woods and the putting green, surrounding the hospital. Thornhill had blossomed since I'd last been there. Across the street there was a new mall and a community centre with two skating rinks and a library. The mall hosts a Shoppers Drug Mart, a CIBC branch, a physiotherapy clinic and a Java Burst coffee shop.

A large crowd of slightly dissolute-looking men and women were gathered outside the arena, smoking cigarettes, a couple of them in wheelchairs, puffing heavily.

The foyer was packed with ex-smokers of similar age and disposition, and kids jumping up and down and making too much noise, hoisting duffle bags filled with skating equipment, anxious either to leave or get their turn on the ice. A Zamboni was gliding over the rink to my left. On my right a game was in full swing.

It was league competition, a Home team and an Away team, and the parents were screaming. A slightly less disreputable-looking group filled the bleachers and intermittently screamed at their sons at the tops of their lungs. I stepped in and found myself next to the boys' change room. Kids were coming and going. The air smelled of sweaty socks.

People seemed to eye me suspiciously. I couldn't imagine why.

Probably everyone knows everyone else around here and they could see that I didn't have a child on or near the rink. I left after a few uncomfortable minutes, after Home scored a goal.

I bought a Colgate toothbrush for \$1.99 at the Shoppers. It featured extra gum-scrubbing action.

Then I took some money out from the bank machine at CIBC. The coffee shop had closed so I went back to Shouldice.

I'm sitting now in the piano lounge downstairs next to the dining room. Water falls gently from the fountain nearby. No one is playing piano; it's not clear what it's doing here. But we were told that the wireless signal is strongest down here, and sure enough, it's good. The loud guy in the bright red jersey sitting on the couch five feet from me can hold his iPad on his lap and talk loudly to his wife, whom he can see on-screen, and who, I assume, can see him on her screen. They're catching up on what's happened since she was here in the afternoon, and what might happen between now and nine o'clock tomorrow morning, when she'll be back again.

A few minutes later the man in the red jersey has found another friend with whom he's now discussing his Internet data plan. He screwed Bell over because Bell screwed him over, he says. Though sometimes he feels bad for Bell. Shaw, on the other hand, does one thing only, and does it well.

It's going to be a long night.

First of two parts ◊

Thad McIlroy is an electronic publishing analyst and consultant, author of more than two hundred articles and several books on the subject. For three years he has been named one of Canada's fifty most influential people in graphic communications. He lives in Vancouver and at thefutureofpublishing.com.

Against Efficiency

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

Efficiency has become a core value that heightens social divisions



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Like many yuppies, I'm proud of being efficient. I write from six to nine every morning. Between nine and ten-thirty I have breakfast and commute to work. From ten-thirty until six or seven in the evening I'm in the office. At night I read, prepare manuscripts for submission and work on projects for a small publisher whom I help out on a volunteer basis. Everything, even art, is precisely scheduled. In my writing I take aim at the conformism of contemporary society, yet my life exemplifies, if not conformism, then a certain worshipping at the altar of middle-class values such as diligence and productivity. "Live like the bourgeois," Gustave

Flaubert counselled writers tempted by the Romantic image of the artist as dissolute vagabond and eternal outsider. The advice has some merit. As Gabriel García Márquez, having starved in Paris as a young man, told fellow writers in later years: "You write better when you've had a meal."

The problem is that the cost of the meal keeps rising. The bourgeoisie that Flaubert knew was a more leisured class than are harried twenty-first century yuppies, who are dependent for employment on institutions that face constant compression before the demands of efficiency, or companies straining to maximize profits. In my office, sixteen full-time

employees now deliver the same programs, plus a couple of new ones, that were delivered by twenty-four full-time employees four years ago. This means that my efficient daily schedule now applies not only to weekdays but also, during much of the year, to at least one day during the weekend. This crunch is impossible to avoid because, as those who promote these ideologies keep telling us, it does not originate in a particular office or institution, but in the structures of globalized finance.

The changes wrought by these structures have replaced that comfortable, easy-to-despise clique, “the bourgeoisie,” with the frenetic, scrambling professional, who works in a company that must be lean and mean, or a public institution that is subject to perpetual budget cuts; who must demonstrate that she is a model of efficiency in order to retain the middle-class salary required to pay an urban or suburban mortgage that has been inflated to staggering proportions by the real estate speculation of the same transnational forces that promote “efficiency.” In this context, “efficiency,” no longer a term of approbation, has become an expression of exigency: a first principle against which no argument can be brooked because, like such sacrosanct, if fading, values as democracy or freedom of information and expression, it is deemed to be one of the cornerstones of our society. The rise of efficiency as society’s fundamental moral value hastens the waning of democratic institutions. Its elevation to a universal pursuit rules the welfare state out of order. Reducing daily life to a succession of tasks to be performed, efficiency seeps into our

veins like a sedative that distorts our notion of time and dulls our capacity for enjoyment.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first use of “efficiency” occurred in 1593, in the work of Richard Hooker, a theologian whose statue stands in Exeter, in the south of England. Efficiency did not enter our language as the bully it is today, but rather as a philosophical term to describe “an operative agent or efficient cause.” Hooker, now admiring the world from his plinth in front of Exeter Cathedral, marvelled at “divine efficiency.” His expression spawned half a dozen meanings of the word. It is telling that when most of us speak of efficiency today, the sense that we invoke is one that was developed in the nineteenth century by the fathers of liberal thought, such as John Stuart Mill, who supported “the greatest dissemination of power consistent with efficiency.” This, in turn, morphed into a banner of liberal economics in 1906 when Arthur Shadwell published a book called *Industrial Efficiency*. At this point, “efficiency” began its inexorable transformation from description to prescription, from a compliment one could make to an imposition one cannot refuse. In the twentieth century, “efficiency” became a core value that justified program cuts and demanded ever longer working hours.

I travel to work on the municipal bus system in Guelph, Ontario. On January 1, 2012, the city scrapped bus routes which, according to transit veterans, had existed for a quarter of a century, and brought in new routes. These routes, the head of Guelph Transit announced, promoted “greater efficiency.” Dozens of neighbourhood

bus stops were removed (including the stop in front of my house, which was one of the reasons I chose to live there). Major routes, such as the trip between the main suburban mall and downtown, were cut back. Before, there were nine buses an hour between downtown and the university during the hours when most students travel to campus; now there are four. The new system resulted in buses streaming past the ever scarcer bus stops with Sorry—Bus Full announcements on the front. Like any measure driven by efficiency, the new routes heightened social divisions. Travel to the factories in the city’s north end became more restricted and circuitous. In mixed-income districts such as mine, where over a six-block stretch housing ranges from low-rent low-rise apartment blocks to bungalows to three-storey red-brick Victorian homes that overlook the nearby park, people with lower incomes and no cars, now unable to commute to their places of work, began to move out. People complained furiously about the many drawbacks of the new system, but the authorities, convinced of their mission, refused to budge. In the midst of this upheaval, I spotted a uniformed transit supervisor downtown and gave him an earful. Other irate commuters joined me. We harangued the man with our complaints. The supervisor listened and shook his head. “Yup. The new system’s crazy, everybody hates it... but it’s efficient!”

I knew we could say nothing in reply. ●

Stephen Henighan’s books include The Streets of Winter, North of Tourism and A Grave in the Air. Read more of his work at geist.com and at stephenhenighan.com.

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Among The Curious

FRANÇOIS-MARC GAGNON

From The Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas, edited by François-Marc Gagnon and published by McGill-Queen's University Press in 2011. Gagnon is director and chair of the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art and a member of the Order of Canada.

The “curiosity” mentioned here has nothing to do with a kind of mania for the unknown or any form of indiscretion. To be “curious” in the seventeenth century meant to care for something. Curiosity is a form if not of solicitude at least of interest in something, the opposite of indifference about things.

The Abbé François de Marsy defined the *curieux en peinture* as a “man who collects with discrimination whatever is especially rare in drawings or pictures; these rarities are called curiosities... that is why Mr. Mariette was able to say that the name of Mr. Jubach will be remembered for a long time in curiosity, meaning among the curious.”

This definition of curiosity will also be found in Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*: “*Curieux*. Adj. Subst. A *curieux, en peinture*, is a man who collects drawings, pictures, engravings, marbles, bronzes, medals, vases, etc. This inclination is called curiosity. Not all who are taken by it are connoisseurs; and this is what makes them often ridiculous, as people always are who speak about what they do not understand. However curiosity, this need to possess which is almost never without limits, and often upsets material well-being [*la fortune*]; & this is why it is dangerous.” In the nineteenth century, the “curious” was called an “amateur,” and today is called a “collector.”



La pesche des Sauvages p. 15

passinassiogek Je decris cette pesche ailleurs. qui est une des
choses tres nouvelles touchant La F. 19 Pesche



THIS BIRD FLIES WITH OTHERS

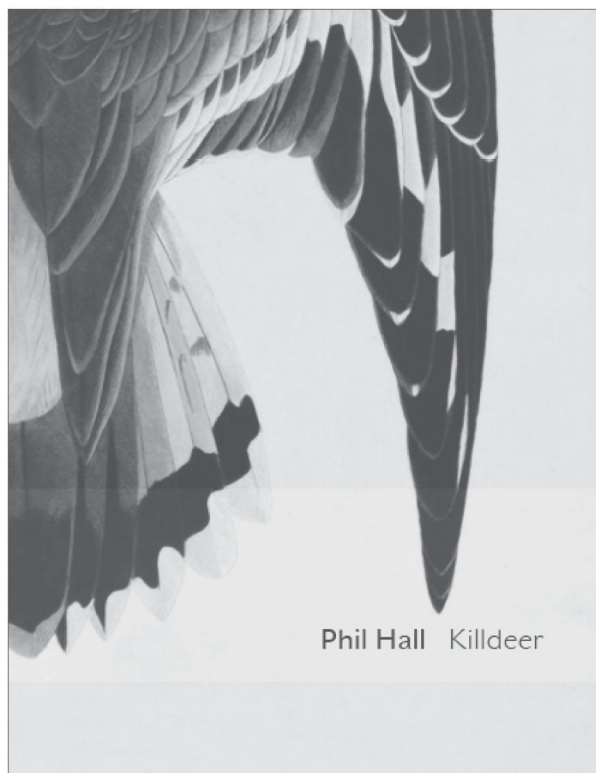
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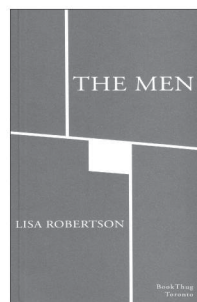
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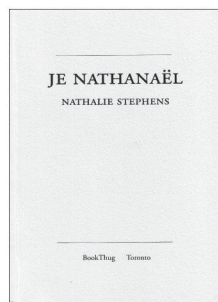
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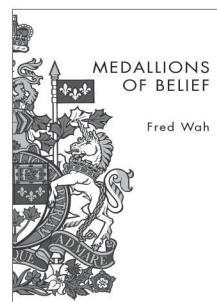
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FINDINGS



Portrait of Singer/Songwriter Veda Hille. By Frank Vena. *From The Drive Project: Vancouver Artists, a continuing series exhibited at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre in 2011. Vena is a freelance location portrait photographer who lives in East Vancouver. See more of his work at frankvena.com.*

That Beautifully Unworldly, Reasonless Rampaging of My Old Self

CLAUDIA CORNWALL

From At the World's Edge: Curt Lang's Vancouver 1937–1998, published by Mother Tongue in 2011. Claudia Cornwall has been a freelance writer for twenty years and has written three books. She teaches at Simon Fraser University and Douglas College.

Curt, Al and Jim converged on Montreal in October 1955. Curt, who hitchhiked, arrived first. He showed up on Irving Layton's doorstep, introduced himself as a poet from British Columbia and wangled a

place to stay. "I would never have had the nerve," said Jim. Then Al came, having spent a few days visiting his mother in Ontario, and Jim, who rode the bus (through the United States since the Trans-Canada Highway was not yet built).

Their grand tour of Europe was about to start. The three men had saved for a year to afford the trip. Al had tried to persuade Doug Kaye to join them, saying, "Doug, we're not getting any younger, you know." Doug, now eighty-four, chuckled as he told

me that. "I didn't want to go," he said.

After a short visit in Montreal, the friends crossed from Montreal to Le Havre on the creaky *Ascania*, a Cunard liner. The *Ascania* was truly at the end of its life; it was scrapped after this voyage. The passage was rough. At night, the rolling vessel bashed them into the walls of their cabin, and their arms, still aching from recent inoculations against diphtheria and smallpox, throbbed with pain. In other respects, the week at sea was boring. According to Jim, "It was a British ship and old ladies organized sing-songs on the deck—'Knees up Mother Brown.'"

Curt, Al and Jim had made no prior arrangements about where to stay in Paris, but they found a hostel near

Place Pigalle. This was the heart of Paris's red-light district—made famous by nightclubs like the venerable Le Moulin Rouge, which opened in 1889, the year the Eiffel Tower was completed. In the past, many artists had lived in the area—Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, whose prints immortalized it, but also Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir (who waited on tables here in his youth), Edgar Degas, Maurice Utrillo. Curt's impressions inspired his poem "Paris 55."

After some time in Paris, the trio went south to visit Gary Ness, a

painter they knew from Vancouver. He was living in a ruined church in Chémery. When Ness decide to return to Paris, Al went along, to help carry Gary's paintings. Curt and Jim did not see Al in Europe again. Though they had been planning the trip with great anticipation, their relations had turned rancorous.

After Curt and Jim toured the rest of Spain (visiting many gypsy nightclubs along the way), they returned to France. Curt's brother, Greg Lang, lent me a diary which Curt started on this trip. A brown and battered,

water-stained volume stamped, "Richardson and Co., 176 Charing Cross Road," it smelled musty. The first entry is from Saturday, March 23, 1956, when Curt was back in Paris. It was raining slightly that day, a bit sombre. Curt wrote: "The past is always so alive. It encroaches like a green tide on every hour and day, breeding a sadness in everything. A summer sun reminds me of lost summer suns, the rain of misspent days." Two days later: "All the usual discontents and doubts banging around inside." But not everything was lost—at least not yet: "I went into the

Malarky

ANAKANA SCHOFIELD

From Malarky, published by Biblioasis in 2012. Anakana Schofield is an Irish-Canadian writer of fiction, essays and literary criticism. Malarky is her first novel.

There's no way round it, I'm finding it very hard to be a widow, I told Grief, the counsellor woman, that Tuesday morning.

—Are you missing your husband a great deal?

—Not especially. I miss the routine of his demands it's true, but am plagued day and night with thoughts I'd rather be without.

—Are you afraid to be in the house alone?

—Indeed I am.

—Are you afraid someone's going to come in and attack you?

—Indeed I am not.

—And these thoughts, do they come when you are having problems falling asleep?

—No, I said, they are with me from the first sup of tea I take to this very minute, since three days after my husband was taken.

—Tell me about these thoughts?

—You're sure you want to know?

—I've heard it all, she insisted, there is nothing you can say that will surprise me.

I disbelieving, asked again. You're sure now?

—Absolutely.

—Men, I said. Naked men. At each other all the time, all day long. I can't get it out of my head.

—Well now, she said and fell silent.

She had to have been asking the Almighty for help, until finally she admitted she could think of no explanation and her recommendation was to scrub the kitchen floor very vigorously and see would a bit of distraction help.

—Pay attention to the floor and mebbe they'll stop.

I recognized the potential a widow has to frighten people. I had frightened the poor woman something rotten.

The next week I returned.

—I have scrubbed the floor every day and I am still plagued by them.

Grief was silent another good while.

She had to be honest, she'd never come across a woman who'd experienced this. Usually a woman simply missed her husband without this interference.

—Are you turning to your faith?

—Oh God I am.

The two of us would now pray for some guidance because she was at a loss.

—Were they still the same images?

—Worse, I said. Even more of them and at filthy stuff together and now they all seem to be bald regardless of their ages. Did she think the devil might target widows?

—He might, Grief said. He very well might.

—Would it be worth looking into them Nigerian preachers, the black fellas I seen on the telly who can exorcise them from the place?

—It might, she said, it very well might.

GEIST ALERT ►

Google Alert results for "Geist."

THE TOYS ARE GONE, BUT IT'S STILL HOME: Dan Geist, 44, grew up in a one-bedroom apartment in Morningside Heights, the only child of artist parents who had arrived as renters in the late '60s. He pedaled his

street wearing sandals and very proud to see them covertly admired.”

By early April, Curt and Jim were in England. Then Jim returned to the continent while Curt stayed on in London. Curt met a woman—Adrienne, a waitress in a restaurant called the Stock Pot. When he first saw her, she was wearing an attractive black dress and had her hair wound in a thick plait. Curt wrote: “It is not that fable of love one hears of, but I like her, am a little content with her, her face fascinates me endlessly, she is passionate and entirely womanly, and

needs my help. Why not her?” In a letter to Curt, Al commented: “Your Adrienne sounds attractive. I mean a person that dreams such dreams...” Jim told me that she was very nice—blonde and plump. She was also pregnant—although Curt was not the father of the baby.

On April 26, Curt wrote: “Still no money, porridge and poverty.” The prospects of escaping grinding destitution seemed better in Canada. Britain was slowly emerging from its post-war economic slump; rationing only came to an end in 1954. By

contrast, Canada was riding a mega-project-fuelled boom, constructing the Trans-Canada Highway, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Trans-Canada pipeline from the East to the Leduc oilfields in Alberta.

Curt said goodbye to Adrienne at Euston Station on June 13. As he left her there, he was struck by the expression on her face. “She does care for me, and I for her,” he later wrote in his diary. He boarded a steamer for Montreal.

As the ship ploughed west, Curt contemplated what attracted him to Canada, especially the North Pacific Ocean. He wrote about the coast so alluring to him, his language almost trance-like:

The Queen Charlotte Islands, cedared, rich, breathing a perfumed wind in long audible sighs. The sea becomes green, the islands are named after Indians as the others are named after Spaniards. The tiny bays have brown clay banks with forest starting up immediately, and birds—crows, gulls, runners, fish hawks—endlessly patrol and crowd the shores. Then farther north to Kamano [Kemano]. A glacier pours into the sea, making it an opaque milky green. The islands are rock-granite, and have no trees. Only a sheathing of ice that glitters all summer long. And finally Prince Rupert where it rains and rains and rains.

But he was also bothered by the idea that he was taking the easy way out, and wrote: “And I? I am becoming safe. No more burning itch of discontent, no more seeing the wall fall down and the weather come in. Where is that beautifully unworldly, reasonless rampaging of my old self?” He needn’t have worried. He was hardly becoming safe. 🌧️

.....
Do ya think if you see your child at something you don’t want to see you can ever be shut of it? I ask Grief the counsellor.

—Well it depends what they were at and how you felt about what they were doing?

—Let’s say you didn’t feel good.

—Well now if we don’t feel good it’s best if we go through it all over again and try to understand why we don’t feel good. In fact I’ll tell you something, to be free of something you’ve to get closer to it than you might imagine.

Jesus Janey Jesus Janey.

—But when I was seeing the naked fellas you told me to scrub the floor?

—That’s right. I did. And did it work?

—I dunno.

—Are you still seeing naked fellas?

—No.

—Well now.

—I am now seeing half clothed ones.

—The half clothed ones may need a new approach, she admits. They’re

a different formation. It would be like trying to move a square to a pyramid.

I’ve had a change I told Grief in the last session before she turned me over to them.

—That’s great. What kind of a change?

—They’re not naked anymore the fellas I am seeing.

—OK. Great. This is good.

—No, they’ve clothes on them.

—Hats and coats is it?

—No, little red underpants.

—Right?

—And I am wrestling with them.

—Whatchya mean?

—You know wrestling.

—Wrestling?

—Yes one at a time.

—And do you like it?

—I do, I assured her, I like it very much indeed. I can’t get enough of it. It’s keeping me awake all night thinking about it.

She grew quiet and then issued some terminal words.

—I am beginning to worry about you, she said. 🌧️



.....
tricycle around the living room and swung from a tension bar. CAR CRASHES INTO ANIMAL HOSPITAL DURING DOG’S SURGERY: A 1999 Ford Taurus sits hidden under rubble after crashing about noon today into the Geist Station Shopping Center on the Indianapolis Northeastside. INTENSE RIVALRY EPITOMIZES FEEL OF HS

Wage Slaving

JOSHUA GLENN, MARK KINGWELL
AND SETH

From The Wageslave's Glossary, published by Biblioasis in 2011. Joshua Glenn is a writer, editor and cultural semiotics analyst. He lives in Boston. Mark Kingwell is the author of Better Living, The World We Want, Concrete Reveries and Glenn Gould. Seth is a cartoonist and designer. His books include George Sprott, Palookaville and The Great Northern Brotherhood of Canadian Cartoonists. The three of them previously collaborated on The Idler's Glossary.



BRAINSTORMING

In the 1920s, the Surrealists invented various parlor games to challenge bourgeois certainties; one of these, a group creativity technique designed to generate a large number of ideas for the solution of a problem, was dubbed *brainstorming*. The bourgeoisie weren't slow to discover a profitable application for the game: in the '40s and '50s, Alex Osborn, cofounder of the now-huge ad agency BBDO, published bestsellers like *Your Creative Power* and *Applied Imagination*, which showed how groups could increase their creative output via brainstorming. NB: Researchers have found no evidence of the technique's effectiveness for enhancing either quantity or quality of ideas generated.

Impact

BILLEH NICKERSON

From Impact: The Titanic Poems, published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2012. Billeh Nickerson is the author of The Asthmatic Glassblower, Let Me Kiss it Better: Elixirs for the Not So Straight and Narrow and McPoems. He teaches creative writing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, BC.

IMPACT

One passenger believed it was her husband,
the ship's jolt just another expression of their love.
Others thought it was an earthquake
or a mishap in the galley—
a runaway trolley, a stack of fallen dishes.
The baker wasn't sure what happened
though he hoped his loaves would not fall.

While airtight after airtight compartment filled,
a second-class passenger ordered his drink
with chunks from the berg.
A small child sucked pieces of ice
as if they were candies,
and her brothers scraped up snowballs,
their mother worried only
they could lose an eye.

SOMEONE'S LUCKY PENNY

slipped out
of his pocket
and drifted
down
for two
hours

THE YOUNG WIDOW

Of all the widows, newlywed Mary Marvin
had the unfortunate distinction

of being able to watch
her wedding after the fact,

for her husband's father owned
a motion picture company

and made theirs the first wedding
filmed for all to see.

Although she would see her eighteen-year-old self
grow older over the years,

her nineteen-year-old groom was forever
on a film loop, never to change.



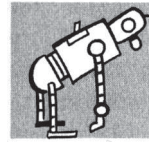
FOOTBALL: North Schuylkill coach Rick Geist summed everything up quite succinctly when asked about trying to keep the Red Tornadoes stuck at 799 all-time wins.
POLICE: CAR SMASHES THROUGH BAKERY: Indianapolis Fire Department officials tell 24-Hour News 8 the elderly man and his wife were in the car when it smashed

DEVIL



Archaic slang verb meaning “perform routine work for another.” Mostly encountered in the form of a noun, as in *printer’s devil*, an apprentice in a printing establishment who mixed tubs of ink, fetched type, and did other grunt work. (Benjamin Franklin disliked being a printer’s devil so much that he ran away from Boston to Philadelphia at 17, where a few years later he set up his own printing house.) Why “devil”? It’s a mystery, though some suggest that it’s because printing ink stained the apprentices’ skin as dark as the devil’s supposedly is.

DOWNTIME



By the 1980s, this midcentury term, which originally meant “time when a machine is out of action or unavailable for use,” had been adopted by managers describing the unavailability of “human capital,” i.e., workers. Which suggests that human beings who aren’t working are best compared to machines being serviced or robots being recharged. Worse, many of us now blithely use *downtime* to describe our own weekends, vacations, and other moments of leisure.

Another Sex Dream

DANIEL ZOMPARELLI

From Davie Street Translations, © 2012 *Daniel Zomparelli*, published by Talonbooks, Vancouver, in 2012. *Zomparelli* is editor-in-chief of *Poetry Is Dead* magazine. He is also the program coordinator for Megaphone magazine Community Creative Writing Program. *Davie Street Translations* is his first book of poetry.

*from the street, each deserving man
would approach for a taste of this
transformation, so by dawn, I'd be raw
and then, by evening, ready and healed.*
—Michael V. Smith, “Salvation”

I keep having sex dreams
of all men. Men of age, colour, time,
travel and work. My sixty-seven-year-
old boss, my thirty-two-year-old boss,
my Muslim co-worker, my
friends, men I don’t even know
and a few women with manly haircuts
for good measure and I
pull them
from the street, each deserving man

could feel the warmth and they
cry tears. Cry love, cry semen, cry
goodbyes and *not-this-times*. They have never
been so pleased. I am a machine
of pleasure, a Fleshlight of hope. Like
a Madonna video, but with fewer feathers.
Like an endless tequila bottle, enough
to go around. I would
be Lil’ Kim, so that everyone
would approach for a taste of this

and l-l-l-l-lick me from my head
to my toes. They would lie back
satiated, and even though
I find them
in their self-loathing, I go back for more.
I go back, even though my heart is a brick
even though they don’t love me
even though this is not for me.
I go until there is a
transformation, so by dawn, I'd be raw

and be tired in my right arm. I used to wonder
why the hell I have sex
dreams against my will, but I traced it
back to Catholic guilt. Like Miss USA, I hope
for world peace, and I can
do that with my mouth. That
the broken men could cry to release
so that I take their pain
and the world can hurt in the morning
and then, by evening, ready and healed.

into an Edward Jones office, made a right turn and continued into Bakery at Geist before crashing into Dr. Arthur Metzger’s office. THE HIDDEN TRAILER SHOWS OFF ITS GHOSTLY AIR: The game puts players in the role of a member of GEIST, Ghostly Entity Investigation and Strike Team, a squad of ghost hunters whose sole

McJOB



Popularized by Douglas Coupland's *Generation X*, this mid-1980s neologism describes an unstimulating, low-paid job with few prospects, particularly one created by the expansion of the service sector. (Want fries

with that?) A song by the Replacements from the same era expresses frustration with McJobbers who actually seem to think they've got it pretty good: "Sanitation expert' and a 'maintenance engineer'/ Garbage man, a janitor and you, my dear/ A real union 'flight attendant,' my oh my/ You ain't nothin' but a waitress in the sky."

UNEMPLOYMENT



A permanent level of *unemployment*, such as exists in every western society, presupposes a population which is to a large extent dependent on a wage or salary for a living; and it presupposes the right of businesses to hire and fire employees in accordance with commercial or economic conditions. Prior to the capitalist era, except in the case of natural disasters and wars, unemployment on a large scale rarely existed. ☹

We'll Take It All

ELIZABETH BACHINSKY

From an email describing what donations the EVENT Book Sale was willing to accept in March 2012. Elizabeth Bachinsky is the editor of EVENT magazine and the author of three collections of poetry.

Quality trade paperbacks are always good. But we'll take it all: cookbooks, self-help books, novelty books, art books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, hardcover fiction, poetry, non-fiction, that weird book your auntie gave you because she knows you are a writer but not what you like. How to have: good sex, better relationships, a happy dog (cat, horse, sheep, etc.), speak Spanish, do your taxes or wax your own eyebrows. Fashion, politics, humour, comic books, graphic novels, *The Artist's Way*, *The Celestine Prophecy*, Stephen King. Those fucking *Twilight* books. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Everyone fucking loves *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Horror. Sci-fi. Romance (not so much, but sure). Kids books! Kids books! Kids books! Just not my book. You recycle my book, you're gonna get a talking-to. ☹

Falling into Misfortune

WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

From Plotto: The Master Book of All Plots, published by Tin House Books in 2011. Originally published by Ellis Publishing Company in 1928. William Wallace Cook was the author of dozens of Westerns and science-fiction novels. He was nicknamed "the man who deforested Canada" for the volume of stories he fed into the old pulp-magazine mill.

- A, after his marriage to B, discovers that B, who had professed to be single, was a married woman and neither divorced nor widowed.
- A, married to B, has not been divorced from a former wife, B-3. A discovers that B has married another man, A-3.
- A becomes the second husband of B, whose first husband, A-3, had mysteriously disappeared and was supposed to be dead. After A and B are married, B's first husband, A-3, appears secretly to A.
- A's wife, B, dies. Tricky so-called spiritualists pretend to materialize the spirit of deceased B in order to influence A to give them money by advice of the supposed B.
- A finds himself under a weird psychic spell because of a birthmark on the face of his wife, B. B craftily gives a birthmark a peculiar significance, and holds A under its power.
- B, wife of A, is craftily persuaded by A-3, the "other man" in a "love triangle," to elope with him.
- B, wife of A, finds herself in the power of an old lover, A-3. A-3 threatens to reveal to B's husband, A, a fateful secret unless B will agree to a certain proposition A-3 makes to her.
 - B, wife of A, persuades A-2, a friend of A's, to elope with her.
 - B falsely accuses her husband, A, of transgression.
- B suffers betrayal at the hands of A, her husband by a secret marriage. B is accidentally killed by a series of maneuvers set in motion by her husband, A.
- B, wife of A, desperately ill, sends A for a doctor. A, sent for a doctor by B, who is seriously ill, does not return—and he does not send the doctor. ☹



mission is to seek out, capture and destroy malicious spirits using a myriad of upgradable weapons. WILLIE GEIST: MY EGGS ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN MARTHA'S: PM Geist went on Stewart's Hallmark TV show and cooked up "Scrambled Eggs with Salmon Roe in Eggshell Cups" and "Baked Eggs with Bacon, Cheese and Herbs."

Seen Reading

JULIE WILSON

From *Seen Reading*, published by *Freehand Books* in 2012. Julie Wilson's writing has appeared in the *National Post*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Taddle Creek and Maisonneuve*, and at *cbc.ca*. She is the host of *49thShelf.com*.

Ticknor

Sheila Heti

(House of Anansi Press, 2005)

P 65

Asian female, early 20s, wearing blue-and-red knitted cap, jean jacket under black vest, and jeans rolled high over black biker boots.

Town House

Tish Cohen

(HarperCollins, 2007)

near the beginning

Black female, early 30s, with shaved head and pencilled-in eyebrows, wearing all black, carrying black-and-hot-pink backpack, black-and-hot-pink padlock attached to zipper.

No One Belongs Here More Than You

Miranda July

(Scribner, 2008)

P 91

Caucasian male, late 30s, with short brown hair, wearing glasses and blue-and-pink striped shirt, carrying folded-over black plastic bag under his arm.

Payback

Margaret Atwood

(House of Anansi Press, 2008)

P 42

Caucasian female, late 40s, with short brown hair, wearing black coat, dark violet scarf and black leather gloves.

The City of Words

Alberto Manguel

(House of Anansi Press, 2007)

P 126

Caucasian female, mid-20s, with long brown hair tucked into knitted cap.



The Sweet Edge

Alison Pick

(Raincoast Books, 2005)

P 153

Caucasian female, early 60s, with short blond hair, wearing glasses, tan coat, white collared shirt, and pale green silk scarf.

The God Delusion

Richard Dawkins

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008)

P 150

Caucasian male, early 50s, with long face, wavy, grey hair parted down the middle, "I Am Salman Rushdie" button pinned on North Face jacket, wearing red jeans and white sneakers.

Lolita

Vladimir Nabokov

(Vintage, 1991)

near the end

Caucasian male, 60s, with close-cropped white hair, wearing black leather jacket, and red, white, and black skull cap, smoking pipe.

Choke

Chuck Palahniuk

(Anchor, 2002)

P 43

Asian male, mid-20s, with short brown hair, wearing broad-framed glasses, pink collared shirt under brown cardigan, and purple paisley scarf.

Atmospheric Disturbances

Rivka Galchen

(HarperCollins, 2008)

P 63

South Asian male, with short brown hair and labret piercing, wearing glasses, grey hoodie under black fleece, low black jeans, and black Converse sneakers.

Sweeter Than Honey

Mary B. Morrison

(Kensington, 2009)

P 56

Black woman, early 40s, wearing white sleeveless shirt, grey dress capris, thick-soled black sneakers, carrying turquoise leather purse. ●

10 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT PRIME MINISTER STEPHEN HARPER

From the Conservative Party website, conservative.ca.

- He can rock
- He seldom passes by a piano without sitting down
- He has been a long-time follower of major curling events
- As a boy, he had his own paper routes in Leaside and Central Etobicoke
- He's learning to speak Spanish
- He eagerly participates in karaoke with family and friends
- He can often be seen cheering his son on at local rinks
- His cinematic tastes are wide ranging
- The Harpers have fostered felines at 24 Sussex
- He still enjoys the odd diversion

GROUP NAMES GEIST A POLLUTED WATERWAY: Geist Reservoir was named on a list of Indiana's polluted waterways Monday by the Environmental Law & Policy Center. NOT WAY "TOO EARLY" FOR GEIST'S STAR TO RISE: Judging by the most recent Morning Joe promo, co-host Willie Geist spends the wee hours of the morning



Hurricane. By Miles Storey. From "The Ex," a photo essay published in Spacing (Fall 2011). Miles Storey is a designer and photographer. He regularly contributes to Spacing and Torontoist.

Canada Day Snapshot, 2004

ALEX BOYD

From *The Least Important Man*, published by Biblioasis in 2012. Alex Boyd writes poems, fiction, reviews and essays. His work has been published in the *Globe and Mail* and *Quill & Quire*, and at nthposition.com.

I'm a part of Canada, maybe a corpuscle
doing laundry, noting the constant position
of the homeless man, laundromat rambler,
standing rigidly on guard, looking out the window
saying *got no tools slap the bitch*, and so on
before he walks over to politely ask, *Excuse me,*
do you have the time? as though he takes fifteen-
minute breaks, goes back to having an exposed heart
like a plum on the sidewalk. Out there, streetcars,
a red and white blur of steel, grumbling

and hushing, giving birth to people all the way
down the street, tucked into the effort of their lives,
the difficult bloodstream of a proud nation.

Down the street I smile at a bald man in a window
putting soup into his potato face, fire trucks with
boots in overalls squatting on each side as though
firefighters dissolved. Another piece of Canada
close to home, in the shape of an old woman
on her way to Chinatown, arms around groceries,
a tiny receipt flutters in her hand, celebrating wildly.

drinking with models at New York nightclubs before stumbling to 30 Rock. GEIST: THE "GREEN SPACE-COWBOY" SUPERHERO: Clad in a long trench coat, cowboy hat and a green scarf covering his face, Geist's disguise is often described as "green space-cowboy chic".

THE 2ND ANNUAL GEIST
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Erase a narrative by the celebrated Canadian author
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Big cash prizes and a literary trophy!

Winning entries will be published in *Geist* and at geist.com.

Deadline **August 1, 2012**

Details and an excerpt from Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?*

at geist.com/erasure

or call **1.888.434.7834**

GEIST

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Hashtag Summer Reading

Tweet us your #SummerReading picks @geistmagazine.

THE MAYOR AND HIS CUSTOMERS

Geist sent out a summer reading survey, asking writers, authors, politicians, hockey players, TV personalities and other Canadians which books they were or weren't planning to read this summer. Mayor Rob Ford of Toronto sent the following response:

Thank you for your email.

As I promised during the mayoralty election, I am dedicated to delivering customer service excellence, creating a transparent and accountable government, reducing the size and cost of government and building a transportation city.

I will continue to work on behalf of the taxpayers to make sure you get the respect you deserve.

This note is to confirm that we have received your email and that we are looking into your matter.

Please feel free to follow up to check the status of your email.

Thanks again and have a great day.

Yours truly,
Mayor Rob Ford
City of Toronto
We're all in this together.

Note: Mr. Ford sent no further response.



SUMMERTIME READING

I haven't had the opportunity to while away a summer reading books since I was sixteen. I remember it well. For reasons inexplicable, I had decided in that year that I might die (not imminently, but in that woebegone sixteen-year-old way) before having had sex and reading *all* of the literary classics. Not being able to do much on the sex front, and because I am a Virgo, I organized my upcoming summers into the great themes of literature so that I might plow through all of the classics. That year the theme was war, the following year it was utopia and then the following year I had to get a job—well, two jobs. So summertime reading was effectively done.



I wondered who, besides people in cottage magazines, does this summertime reading thing? Is it real? Is it something that only people with cottages do? Is it a pastime of the rich?

I started to ask questions of those around me who I knew were readers. My informal survey revealed this:

1. People sigh with longing and regret when you ask about summertime reading.
2. Self-employed people don't seem to take much time off. If they do, it's for Christmas back east with strange families.
3. When people say, "Let us repair to the cottage," they mean that literally. Most vacation time seems to be spent not pottering about so much as doing vital structural work on cottage-like places.
4. "W.G. Sebald is dead, so what's the point of reading anymore?"
5. I don't know any of the idle rich.

—Faith Moosang

TOP 5 BOOKS TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR VACATION

I never vacation away in summer. Why trade the West Coast for airports, crowds, traffic, bad moods? Instead, we pretend the house is a cottage—drag the supper table onto the lawn for that "hang loose with the meals" thing that happens at cottages.

We also drape wet beach towels out the windows, track sand in the house, dangle those disgusting mosquito coils from every light fixture and leave a couple of empty opened suitcases lying around for that "just arrived" ambience.

This summer, I plan to sit in an old Cape Cod chair beneath the willow tree in the backyard and read five exceptional writers and their latest books:

1. *Empire of the Beetle: How Human Folly and a Tiny Bug Are Killing North America's Great Forests* by Andrew Nikiforuk (Greystone)
2. *Come from the Shadows: The Long and Lonely Struggle for Peace in Afghanistan* by Terry Glavin (Douglas & McIntyre)
3. *Living in a Dangerous Climate: Climate Change and Human Evolution* by Renée Hetherington (Cambridge)
4. *My Year of the Racehorse* by Kevin Chong (Greystone)
5. *You Exist. Details Follow.* by Stuart Ross (Anvil)

—M.A.C. Farrant

The covers are enticing. The paper is sturdy & the type is big enough to read. The content is meaningful. The reviews are good. Yet there they sit, day after day, gathering dust & inducing guilt. They are...

THE UNREAD

One Thousand Years of Manga
Checked it out of the library 3 times, still haven't finished it

Lifespan of a Fact
Really good deal at Pulpfiction Books, last January

Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning
Don't ask

Diary of Frida Kahlo
Bought it as a present and selfishly kept it—in 2003

Reading the Funnies
Borrowed it, can't remember who from

Anne of Green Gables
Never read it, never tempted, feel unpatriotic

Blue Nights
Afraid to read it



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BOOK THAT YOU LEAVE AT THE BEACH

The Cat's Table by Michael Ondaatje (McClelland & Stewart). Just walk away, and you'll be fine.

—Gregory Betts

From This Moment On by Shania Twain (Simon & Schuster).

—Jane Silcott

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood (Anchor). In the hopes that some future civilization digs it up and thinks that it's an actual chronicle of the end of the world.

—Doug Savage

5 BOOKS THAT GEIST STAFF PLAN TO READ WHEN SUMMER IS OVER

1. *Jerusalem* by Guy Delisle (Drawn & Quarterly).
—Eric Ublich
2. Liner notes of every Leonard Cohen album.
—Michal Kozłowski
3. *Who Could That Be at This Hour?* by Lemony Snicket (Little, Brown).
—Kelsea O'Connor
4. *Womantology: Heroic* by over 150 amazing women (IDW).
—Chelsea Novak
5. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic). I know nothing about it, but it seems to complement the fall consumption of Hubbard squash pie.
—Lauren Ogston

MOVIE YOU'LL WATCH INSTEAD OF READING THE BOOK

The Avengers. (Few people know that it is actually loosely based on *Beyond Remembering: The Collected Poems of Al Purdy*, published by Harbour.)

—Doug Savage

TOP 5 THINGS TO DO INSTEAD OF READING THIS SUMMER

1. Buy books you want to read.
2. Make space for these books on your bookshelf.
3. Introduce these books to house guests and explain to them why these books caught your eye.
4. If someone expresses interest in one of these books, give it away.
5. If, by Easter the following year, any of these books remain unread, try reading one.

—Michael Turner



1. Suntan. Block the sun from your eyes with a book.
2. Fashion your books into planter boxes. Grow tomatoes.
3. Re-create the plots of your favourite books using finger puppets.
4. Dust your books. Check their pages for mites.
5. Forget this. Read a book.

—PRISM international

1. Braid what's left of your hair.
2. Work in a bookstore.
3. Play Margaret Atwood Monopoly.
4. Fall in love.
5. Stare at your phone like everyone else.

—Aqua Books, Winnipeg

BOOK YOU PRETEND TO READ WHILE CHECKING SOMEONE OUT

A Queer and Pleasant Danger: The true story of a nice Jewish boy who joins the Church of Scientology and leaves twelve years later to become the lovely lady she is today by Kate Bornstein (Beacon Press). Ideal because if the person I'm checking out doesn't recognize the cover and at least give it (and me) the good nod, there's almost no chance I want to step up my flirt.

—S. Bear Bergman

BEST BOOK AND BEER COMBO

Moby Dick by Herman Melville and Fat Tug IPA by Driftwood Brewing Company.

—EVENT

Derek McCormack's *Haunted Hill-billy* (ECW) and a Pilsner Urquell. Something about how McCormack writes creates an overwhelming sense of being on a bad bender—one where you know things are going wrong, but you don't have your wits about you enough to do anything about it. You have no choice but to lurch along for the ride, not seeing enough to completely understand what's happening to you, but knowing that whatever it is, it's bad.

—David Milne

Bigfoot, a graphic novel by Pascal Girard (Drawn & Quarterly), and Sasquatch Stout, a yummy chocolate beer by the Old Yale Brewing Company.

—Doug Savage

BEST ONE-HANDED SUMMER READ

With a Rough Tongue: Femmes Write Porn, edited by Amber Dawn and Trish Kelly (Arsenal Pulp).

—EVENT

Any of the *Marketplace* series by Laura Antoniou (Mystic Rose Books). Bring your brain. That 50 Shades of Whatever business is a sad, bad-perm situation compared to Antoniou's dirty, dirty, hot stories.

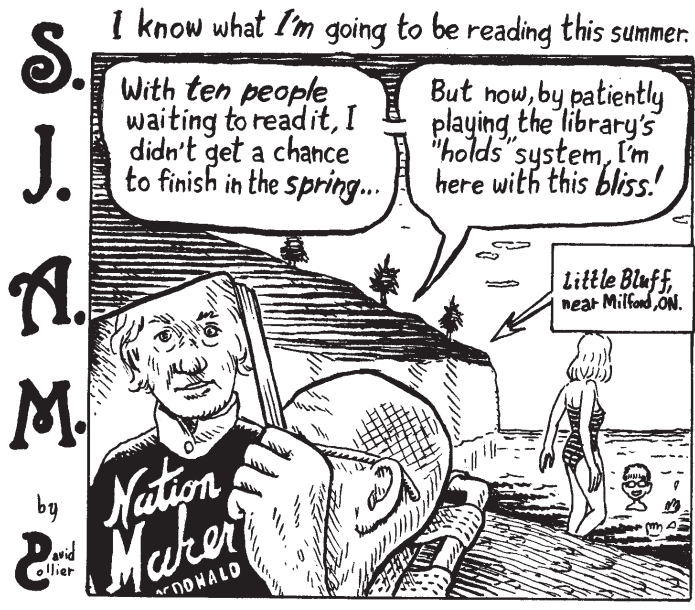
—S. Bear Bergman

monkeypuzzle by Rita Wong (Press Gang).

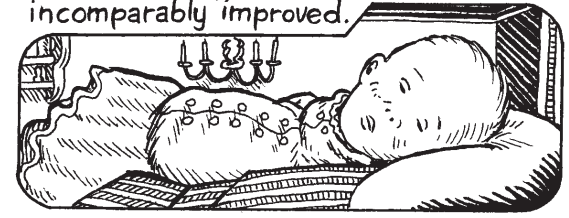
Poetry only needs one hand.

—Ricepaper Magazine





Richard Gwyn's book is much more than a biography of North America's wildest politician, Sir John A. Macdonald. The work's wide scope takes us back to the Canada we love, when pin-neat little homes attracted more praise than big, ostentatious houses. And it also reminds us of the past as a country we're glad we've left. Mary, the daughter of Macdonald and his wife Agnes, spent her whole life disabled by what was then called water on the brain. With a shunt inserted into her skull—the way this affliction is treated today—her life would have been incomparably improved.



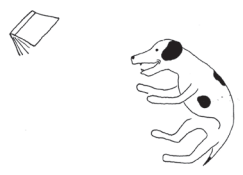
In this book is an epic tale that includes the Macdonalds making one of the first trips on the new transcontinental railway, with Agnes riding from Banff to Vancouver on the cowcatcher.

BEST BOOK AND WINE PAIRING

The Thirteen (Random House) by Susie Moloney, born in Winnipeg, and Gimli Goose, a pop wine created in the '70s to compete with Baby Duck and named after Gimli, Manitoba.
—*Aqua Books, Winnipeg*

Love in the Time of Cholera by Gabriel García Márquez (Vintage) and an Argentinian Malbec.
—*Room Magazine*

Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures by Vincent Lam and Tesco Reka Valley Bulgarian Merlot (\$5.29 per bottle).
—*Ricepaper Magazine*



TOP 5 BOOKS NOT TO READ THIS SUMMER

- Anything by:
1. Michael Ondaatje
 2. Margaret Atwood
 3. Naomi Klein
 4. Michael Ignatieff
 5. Stuart McLean
- Does this make me a bad Canadian?
—*Connie Kubns*
1. *A Good House* by Bonnie Burnard (HarperCollins)
 2. *Leaven of Malice* by Robertson Davies (Penguin)
 3. *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (McClelland & Stewart)
 4. *Lives of the Saints* by Nino Ricci (Cormorant Books)
 5. *Larry's Party* by Carol Shields (Vintage)
- George Bowering*

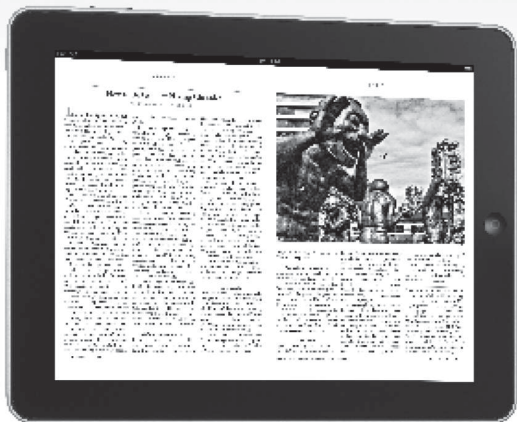
TOP 5 BOOKS YOU WANT TO READ THIS SUMMER, BUT WON'T

The five books I want to read this summer, but won't, are the same books I had on last summer's list:

1. *Remembrance of Things Past*, Volume 1, by Marcel Proust.
 2. *Remembrance of Things Past*, Volume 2, by Marcel Proust.
 3. *Remembrance of Things Past*, Volume 3, by Marcel Proust.
 4. *The Year of Reading Proust: A Memoir in Real Time* by Phyllis Rose (Scribner).
 5. *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read* by Pierre Bayard (Bloomsbury).
- If I were to add a sixth, it would be Facebook.
—*Michael Turner*

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Spooning

DAVEY THOMPSON AND CAMERON TULLY



Nobody wanted to take care of the dead guy's bed but the rest of the staff were all new kids from university mostly just on for the summer what did they know about grief? he'd been gone three days now Mrs. Nazarenko his wife hadn't left the suite since they'd wheeled his body out I opened the blinds got into his bed inclined to a forty-five with the remote "can I get you anything?" I shook one of his pill bottles morphine "anything at all? this stuff's all going back to the pharmacy by the end of the week" she didn't even let on that she saw me come in I took one of the tabs the clock on the bookshelf chimed eleven times Wheel of Fortune was coming from the suite next door she shifted and Kleenex fell off her comforter like ants being sprayed with a garden hose "back in the heyday he used to love the Oilers" she said "he used to think he could communicate with Grant Fuhr telepathically like the games would come on and he wouldn't let me say a word to him 'I have to concentrate' he'd say 'Grant needs to know where the puck is at all times' but the Oilers hardly ever make the playoffs anymore Fuhr retired the kids who drop off my meals don't even know who Grant Fuhr is and the telepathy well it stopped he said he didn't feel a psychic connection to the players anymore" she looked at the pill bottle then at me for the first time "maybe I will take one of those after all" "why don't you crawl in with me?" I said "the sheets still smell like him there's a hair on the pillow I won't tell anyone" my chest pressed against her back she had the warmth of a woman who

FIRST PRIZE

Davey Thompson is an illustrator and teacher from Edmonton. Her paintings are executed in watercolour and ink, and have appeared in a range of publications in Canada and the US including Harvard Business Review, Maclean's magazine and the Wall Street Journal. She works collaboratively with Cameron Tully, a teacher and writer in Edmonton. Thompson and Tully's collaborative work can be found at postcardstories.ca.

hadn't been out of bed in days "I should call Grant Fuhr" she said "see if there's any way just an off chance you know that Grant could talk to him" her heart raced against my forearm she turned her head our faces pressed against each other our lips touched not kissing as though testing the temperature on a sick child's forehead we held each other for a long time like that I was drifting in and out what the hell I thought I owed it to the guy I'd borrowed two hundred bucks from him a few months back when I told him about my daughter and first wife he carried it to the grave "why don't you tell me more about him?" I said "lying here in his bed and all I think I'm getting something your husband wasn't the only telepathic one you know I can't talk to sports stars just

regular folks not that Mr. Nazarenko was just a regular guy but let's try it" so we lay there spooning I told her anything she wanted to hear that he was thinking of their first kiss moving to Canada small-town Saskatchewan drifts of snow up to the eaves and the '84 Oilers her breathing slowed heart slowed for a while I thought she might check out too right there in the bed with me but she started snoring her eyes fluttered Gretzky was tipping the puck up to Kurri in the slot a surgeon's hands gingerly ricocheting it to the back of the net the crowd on its feet foam fingers draft beer sloshing over plastic cups I levelled the bed cleaned up her dishes for a moment we were all in a better place 🍃

The Paper Dress

SUSAN STEUDEL



Sheila had a paper dress. She took it out to show us. Light pink, just thick enough to block the light. It neatly scraped the hanger, falling flat. How would Sheila wear this dress? Wouldn't it rip? I didn't understand the dress. It seemed cut from a single sheet, front and back. A pleat effect: four darts folded into a seam at the waist. Slight perforation. I thought of poppies blowing open, streamers unrolling. Wouldn't this dress do the same? It would refuse to fall correctly. I imagined going out in it, the risk of it catching in bus doors. Or wearing it on open sidewalks, no awnings. And if it began to rain, how it might feel more shadowlike. More like skin. 🍃

SECOND PRIZE

Susan Steudel is the author of New Theatre (Coach House Books, 2012). She lives in Vancouver, where she belongs to a local writing collective and works as a court reporter.

Layover

MICHELLE ELRICK

A woman sits on a bench outside the Edmonton VIA Rail station. 11:36 p.m. Behind, the train hums and sighs. Service attendants huddle in long blue coats, smoking. Fresh passengers wait inside the station for the boarding call. In the parking lot to the east, a young man runs and skids on hard-packed snow, enticing his German shepherd to play. The dog sniffs the ground and tracks a line toward the lamppost. The seated woman lights a cigarette. Pockets the lighter. From around the corner a second woman approaches. She stops at the bench and looks around, squinting. Turns a full circle and then stops. She gestures to the empty portion of the bench.

—Is anyone sitting here?

The first woman shakes her head, no. The second woman sits down. Fidgets. Time passes. She looks the first woman over. Looks away. Looks back. Finally she speaks.

—Where are you from?

—Seattle. Sea-Tac, actually.

—The airport?

—Yes.

—Oh.

They both look aside.

—Like, you work there?

—No. I'm from there.

—From the airport.

—Yes.

The second woman leans back. Uncrosses her legs. Crosses them the other way.

—Like, in one of the hotels there?

—No. In the terminal. On the bench beside the stairs underneath the glass pyramid.

—Oh.

Pause.

—I didn't realize that was allowed.

—It's a loophole they created with overnight layovers.

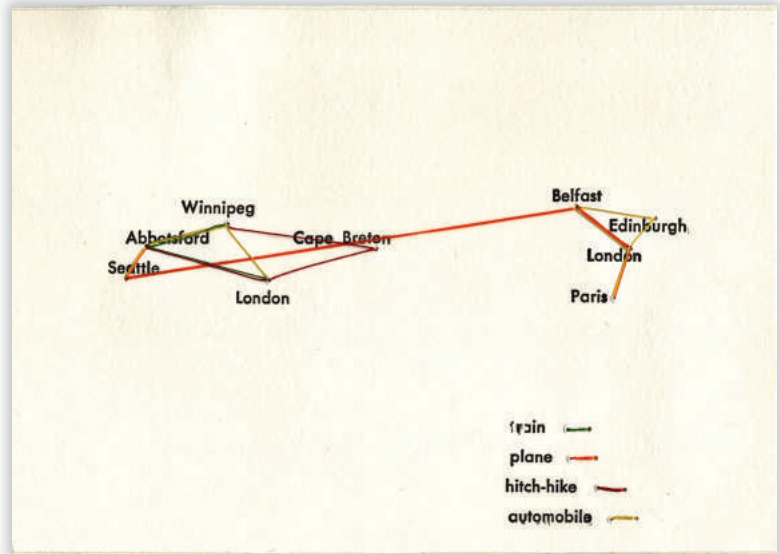
—Aren't you coming from Ontario?

—Most recently.

—But you're American.

The first woman shakes her head, flicks a dry leaf of ash off the end of her cigarette and resumes smoking.

—How long did you actually live at Sea-Tac?



—Just one night.

Pause.

—It was a long night.

—So you're not actually *from* there. You just slept there between flights.

—I guess if that's how you want to see it, yes.

The dog across the parking lot pauses, head raised, and stares intent at some hidden point beyond the realm of light. The station door opens and closes. Luggage wheels begin to roll and scrape across gravel-salted pavement. The second woman speaks again.

—Where are you headed now?

—Abbotsford.

—What's in Abbotsford?

—That's where my family lives.

—Is that where you grew up?

—Not really, no.

—Let me guess. You grew up at Vancouver International?

The first woman smiles. She tosses her cigarette into butt-pocked snow covering a concrete planter.

—I'd say I grew up on the Trans-Canada Highway. Though my true adolescence was spent in Beacon Hill Park in Victoria.

—What did you do in Beacon Hill Park?

—I slept on a rock next to my puke.

—That's disgusting.

—I'm just glad it didn't rain. ☁

THIRD PRIZE

Michelle Elrick is the author of To Speak, poetry editor of Geez magazine and coordinator of In Dialogue, the Manitoba Writers' Guild reading series. Her work has appeared in Prairie Fire, Canadian Literature, Event and other journals.

Everyday Heresies

RENÉE SAROJINI SAKLIKAR

I
seen you at the Tim Hortons,
at the Canadian Auto Workers Hall,
and even heard you on the CBC:
you telephoned Rex Murphy.
I seen you in David Zieroth's poetry class.
You marked up Saturday morning.
Douglas College, off Royal Avenue.
An airless room, one window sealed—forever?
And I seen you years ago. Yes, it was 1980.
College Place pub, New Westminster.
You wore a Band-Aid over your temple.
You'd popped a zit right up against the bathroom mirror.
At the pub you said, "I was hit with a field hockey stick."
I seen you standing in the Vancity bank line-up.
You pull at your nylons. You pull on anything
you can get a hold of, time
and time again—
in Safeway, you dump three TV dinners into your cart.
First, you check the sodium levels.
And time levels off and I seen you—
Trout Lake Farmers Market.
You handle organic heirloom vegetables:
carrots, apples. Name all the names of the apples.
I seen you at Costco's.
You heave 20 water bottles into your cart
you cart away the night so late. Later,
I seen you in an office at a desk—
your right hand rests on a palm-sized mound of plastic
index finger points, lifts, click, click,
the sound releases out of your 2008 XPC small-form computer
click, click on the Inner Net you write anonymous complaints
about other people. Misspelled words roll into time like a joint about to be smoked—
I seen you clear through to the summer of '79, your hair in a high ponytail.
You drive out on Highway 99, South Surrey—
You drive a Ford pickup truck. You overtake a brown Chevrolet.
Gas tank leaks all over the place. You open your mouth. Your head hangs.
Out the window of your truck, you scream: where did you get your fucking licence,
you fucking Punjab? Your words, grit
thrown into the years and—
I seen you standing on a platform.
It is the first five years of the first decade.
This new century.
You are the star of your own political confession.

Your silver hair swept back, wife at your side.
You do not smile. You choke back tears.
Forgive me, you ask.
I seen you, female iteration, in a strata council meeting.
Downstairs in an apartment building.
You yell at your neighbours.
You refuse to pay for a new roof and say the word, roooff, like it should be said.
In the elevator, your key cuts
powder coated brushed steel brushes time and I seen you—
You walk your dogs on a lonely stretch of beach on the edge of an island,
somewhere in the Gulf you see a piece of flotsam—
No. It is not someone's foot. It is plastic and you home in on it.
Your tongue behind your teeth. Tsk, ts. Pick it up. Pick it up.
You lecture the people who bought the land.
They did not turn the land into a park.
You park time and its dimensions,
and I seen you again: you do not move for hours in the damp parts of a church hall.
You do not want to give up your seat, where you sit every month:
choir, board of stewards, Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, United Church:
so few now—grey, spent and stooped—
you refuse to acknowledge that really, there is no preordained seating arrangement
just because in September you sat down on the chair that now holds your person
does not mean that someone cannot sit there in that space close to the Very Reverend—
time shifts, again and again I seen you on Howe Street.
You wear a suit. You carry no umbrella.
In your ears, ear buds implanted. You work your electronic device. Busy, busy, thumbs. Your
eyes look down to your hand. Your hands erase time and its dimensions.
You do not see me but I seen you:
You walk uptown, night of snow, hail, rain. Spring on the West Coast.
You search for a café where a man speaks about politics.
You like this man, even though some call him a socialist. You, too, have been called
and you want to find the place where the man speaks.
You walk eight blocks in a night of snow, hail, rain.
You are eighty-eight years old.
You anticipate finding the man. You peer into steam-stained windows.
You recognize no one. You walk back home.
You are eighty-eight years old.
You sit in your kitchen, walls painted buttercup yellow.
You celebrate your 65th wedding anniversary. Alone. Alone.
Your husband died decades ago. I seen you. I seen you.

*From thecanadaproject, a life-long poem chronicle that includes fiction and essays.
Renée Sarojini Saklikar is at work on an elegiac sequence about Canada and Air India.*

P H O T O E S S A Y

Memory of Winter

MICHEL HUNEULT



In the spring of 2011, the Richelieu River and Lake Champlain overflowed and flooded much of southern Quebec, damaging more than three thousand homes and businesses in twenty municipalities and forcing more than a thousand Quebecers from their homes.

That spring, the photographer Michel Huneault travelled to Venise-en-Québec, a town of some fourteen hundred residents on the shore of Lake Champlain, to observe and photograph the flooded town. While he was there, Huneault conceived the idea of returning to the flood zone after the waters had receded to photograph the same sites later in the spring, summer and fall.

These paired images, selected from Huneault's photo essay "La memoire de l'eau," reveal a small town that, like many others in Canada, faces the possibility of



disaster each spring when the snow melts. Huneault's diptychs point to the very root of the threat: humans' ambivalence about bodies of water and the irresistible attraction to places bound by nature's unpredictable forces. The photographs taken during the flood evoke a sense of serenity; the water is calm and the world bright and clean. Only after the waters recede do marks of the disaster appear.

Michel Huneault began photographing while working abroad on international development and peace-building projects. He now photographs for magazines and for OXFAM, World Food Program and other international organizations, documenting their field work. His first solo exhibition, *Histoires normales*, toured the United Kingdom in 2011. See more of his work at michel-huneault.com.









S H O R T S T O R Y

Show Business

ANGELA MAIRÉAD COID

*In wafts of carbolic soap, whiskey and fart, the farmers and labourers
paid to see Sleeping Beauty, lying under glass in a tent*



Fifty years ago I was in show business. True, only for the week of my Easter holiday from school, and true, my employers were tinkers. Only you can't use that word these days. But in those days it was quite all right, and country entertainment in Ireland was both ruder and more rudimentary than today.

Trudging home from school one fine spring afternoon, I turned the corner of our road and saw a brightly painted red and green cart parked outside our house, with a pony grazing on the grass verge. Somebody was visiting my mother, but I didn't know that pony or cart. I felt hot, sweaty, like a sack of potatoes in my school uniform and not like being polite to any of my mother's callers.

"They've come to buy Biddy," my mother said.

Biddy was my pet Alpine goat: the runt McNabb the farmer had given me and Gerry, McNabb's gawky, carrot-coloured son, had carried in a cardboard box to a place by our kitchen fire.

For months she was the prop in my fantasy of Heidi, and then the horse I dreamed of. I taught her tricks, called her Circus Goat. My mother found two old silver thimbles to put on her budding horns, to give her head "magic tips." But Biddy, fully grown, became a "bloody nuisance," eating what-should-not-be-eaten by a goat in our garden, attacking the postman, and I grew tired of walking the roads with her for more grazing on the grassy verges. I would be fourteen in a month and having a pet goat was childish. My mother had put an ad in the paper, "Young Alpine nanny goat with training and personality for sale," and here were the buyers. Jesus!

I opened the door to a kitchen full of tinkers, drinking tea, laughing and enjoying big slices of my mother's caraway seed cake, rubber Wellington boots rolled down to their ankles like d'Artagnan. One big old man, with a good head of salt and pepper curls, was doing the talking and my mother was making up to him like he was Rockefeller.

"Patsey here wants to buy your Biddy. She's going into show business. Gypsy Rose Lee, the fortune teller, needs a new goat."

By the fire, a ruddy-faced woman waved her piece of cake to acknowledge that she was the fortune teller. I comforted myself. At least Biddy would not be a breeding farm goat, but close to humans, for she was used to being treated like a pet dog, not a goat. My eyes took in my mother's guests, the olive-skinned young man especially, who helped himself to another slice of seed cake, which I knew to be on the road to staleness. There was always cake seasoned in a tin in case visitors called, but the vintage of the cake didn't seem to worry him. Tinkers I had never seen up close. You'd see a mess of old vans, carts and ponies camped by the roadside, and the word out was to take in your washing or your best linen might go travelling. The women, babies wrapped in their plaid shawls, came selling artificial flowers and wooden clothes pegs. God knows they never used pegs; they spread their washing on hedges and the grass around their camp. Trust my daft dealer-mother to invite them in if a

bit of profit was involved. Half-mortified and half-fascinated, I eyed the young man and his genuine Romany look, so different from our weather-beaten Irish nomads.

"Is that your daughter then?" asked the auld fellow, Patsey. "Would she like a wee job?"

"I'm at school," I answered. "I have my exams in June."

My mother would love to have me earning. Every year was a battle to stay in private school, where I was a scholarship girl, and to stay out of the secondary school, training for some drudgery the day I turned fifteen.

"Och. Only for a week till we move to the South," said Patsey. "Our Sleeping Beauty is expecting and she's beginning to show. Her wee sister will take over 'the role' in Monaghan."

"Sleeping Beauty!"

Aware of my "puppy fat" and the odd pimple, I did not feel any shape of beauty.

"A blonde wig, makeup and the right fairytale dress, and you'd make a great wee Beauty," said Patsey. "Half a crown an hour and her food," he told my mother. "Nine o'clock to nine o'clock with breaks when it's slow. We're in the Castle grounds next the circus Big Top. We'd run her home in the car at night."

"Not the cart?"

Money tempted me immediately, but I wanted details; I wanted things clandestine and not to be paraded home on a cart.

"Aye, we *have* a car. Tito here'll run you home." He gestured to the olive-skinned boy. "Just be in the Castle grounds at nine in the morning on Good Friday and we'll get you ready."

My friends wouldn't miss me for one week, and in any event with no spending money I couldn't share in the Easter holiday pleasures: new clothes, the chance to go to a dance. Might as well be sleeping on my first job. Biddy and I were both going into show business, even if only a sideshow.

"Ready for what?"

The dress was smelly and pale blue, and the black velvet waistcoat pushed my breasts up to make a cleavage. Pregnant predecessor had stretched the material so it fitted my puppy fat perfectly. Gypsy Rose Lee applied makeup

The kitchen was full of tinkers, enjoying big slices of my mother's caraway seed cake

With the
makeup on,
I was more
Sleazy Slut
than Sleeping
Beauty

and adjusted the wig. She handed me a mirror and I gasped. More Sleazy Slut than Sleeping Beauty, but she assured me I was perfect. It wasn't too uncomfortable. The open-topped case had glass on only three sides, and a matress to feign sleep on.

"Tito here takes the tickets. You'll get breaks between gawkers. Don't worry. You'll just have to play dead asleep for about ten minutes at a time."

Down I lay on the dirty white sateen sheet, and after a few adjustments to my hair and clothes, Rose Lee had me ready for my audience.

My first "gawkers" were a bunch of children with a woman.

"Is she really Sleeping Beauty?"

"Is she dead?"

"Is she sleeping?"

They believed it! I was charged with enthusiasm. In my glass case, I lay and dreamed of Hollywood and me in a Marilyn Monroe dress on Tito's arm and him wearing black patent leather shoes, not Wellies. More gawkers came and went. I changed my daydream to exam strategies and what might come up in the final papers. My bladder filled. I longed for a break. Just when I thought I was bursting, I heard Patsey call for Tito to shut up the tent and for us to come for some tea. Off to the latrine I rushed, and holding up the princess dress, I peed long and loud into the stinking pit.

In the huddle behind the carnival tents there was smoky, sweet billycan tea and cold bacon sandwiches. Bidy ignored me, already making up to Gypsy Rose Lee for a nibble at the bread. No faithfulness of the dog or horse there.

The day was long, but the novel situation and thought of money at day's end made the time pass. I hung up the dress, fluffed out my hair from the weight of the wig, but kept the makeup on.

"Tito here will give you your run home," said Patsey, as he handed me the promised three pounds in crumpled notes.

In the car, I could feel the closeness of Tito. I breathed in his halo of male sweat and tobacco. I wanted him to touch me and I leaned close on the turns in the road, but he ignored me until we came to a stop outside our house.

"Get out. You're home," he said in a tone not Irish and not that interested.

So days passed and the weekend came. More men—farmers and labourers in wafts of carbolic soap, whiskey and fart—paid to see the Sleeping Beauty in the tent. Some put their hands in their pockets and jerked in a rhythm of their own. One leaned over the glass and kissed me on the lips: a dirty, salty, disgusting kiss that made me sit up and push him away with a scream. Tito sauntered into the tent and firmly pushed the decrepit old prince outside.

"I keep better eye on you now."

But that was not enough to stop three young men, sodden with Old Spice and beer, hawking up on me the very next night. I recognized them from the boys' private school: Sixth Form boys, their fathers pillars of society in our small town, but they were happy to get drunk and spit on who they thought was a tinker while Tito skulked in the flap of the tent. He wiped the phlegm from my face with a cloth and said something in his language. I returned to my princess bed and willed my last nine o'clock to come.

Tito drove me home and when he stopped the van he leant over and kissed me on the cheek.

"Those boys rubbish. You good Beauty. You make good money this week."

My eldest sister was in when I got home. She was married with a baby, but no job and no money to spare.

"Ah! Here's my wealthy baby sister! Goin' to take us out for a drink to celebrate your first job!"

My mother, my agent, was dressed, ready to go. I took them to the Widow's Pub and I bought them sherries and myself a lemonade. No one questioned my age, and no one but me saw Tito and a skinny young woman with a burnished face and a swollen belly sitting in the corner sipping porter. He was stroking her hand just as he had stroked mine the night the randy old farmer had given me his salty, sordid kiss. 🍷

Angela Mairéad Coid was born and educated in Northern Ireland. Her work has been published in Ireland and Canada, most recently in the Special Filth issue of the Windsor Review.

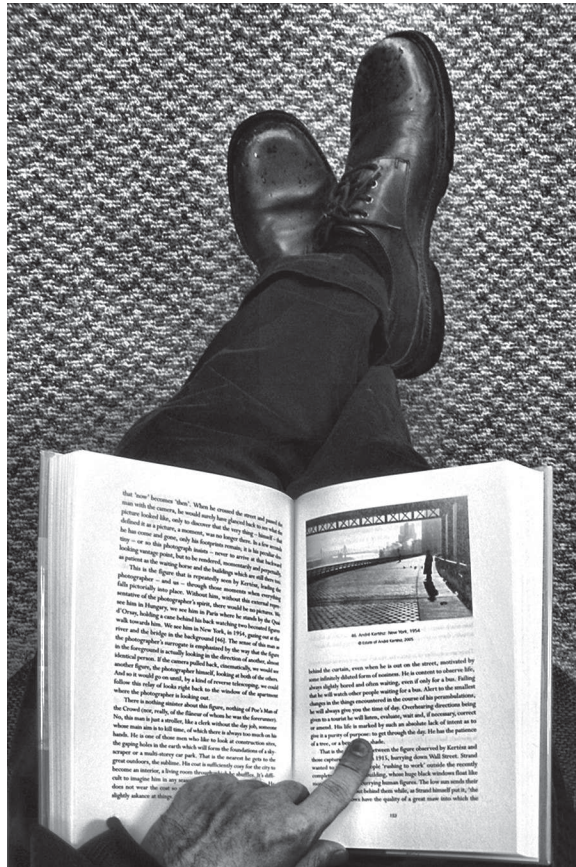
Power to the Reader

ALBERTO MANGUEL

Words are dangerous creatures

For reasons that are still mysterious, and that, if revealed, might seem banal, in the eighth year CE the poet Publius Ovidius Naso was banished from Rome by the Emperor Augustus. Ovid (his three names reduced to one by centuries of devoted readers) ended his days in a backwater village on the west coast of the Black Sea, pining for Rome. He had been at the heart of the heart of the empire, which in those days was synonymous with the world; to be banished was for Ovid like a death sentence, because he could not conceive of life outside his beloved city. According to Ovid himself, at the root of the imperial punishment was a poem. We don't know what the words of that poem were, but they were powerful enough to terrify an emperor.

Since the beginning of time (the telling of which is also a story), we have known that words are dangerous creatures. In Mesopotamia, in Egypt, in ancient Greece, the person capable of inventing and recording words, the writer, whom the Anglo-Saxons called "the maker," was thought to be



the darling of the gods, a chosen one on whom the gift of writing had been bestowed. According to Socrates, in a legend that he either retold or imagined, the art of writing was the creation of the Egyptian god Theuth, who also invented mathematics, astronomy, checkers and dice. In offering his invention to the Pharaoh, Theuth explained that his discovery provided a recipe for memory and wisdom. But the Pharaoh wasn't convinced: "What you have discovered," he said, "is not a recipe for memory but for reminder. And it is not true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance, for by telling them of many

things without teaching them, you will make them seem to know much, while for the most part they know nothing, and are filled not with wisdom but with the conceit of wisdom."

Ever since, writers and readers have debated whether literature effectively achieves anything in society; that is to say, whether literature has a role in the making of a citizen. Some, agreeing with Theuth, believe that we can learn from

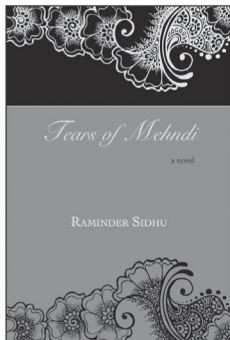
literature, sharing the experience of our predecessors, making us wise by granting us the memory of centuries of knowledge. Others, agreeing with the Pharaoh, believe, as the poet W.H. Auden said, that "poetry makes nothing happen," that the memory preserved in writing does not inspire wisdom, that we learn nothing through the imagined word and that times of adversity are proof of the failure of writing.

It is true that when confronted with the blind imbecility with which we try to destroy our planet, the relentlessness with which we inflict pain on ourselves and others, the extent of our

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— Colin Holt
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greed and cowardice and envy, the arrogance with which we strut among our fellow living creatures, it is hard to believe that writing—literature or any other art for that matter—teaches us anything. If after reading lines such as Larkin's:

*The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said,*

we are still capable of all such atrocities, then perhaps literature does make nothing happen.

In at least one sense, however, all literature is civic action—because it is memory. All literature preserves something that otherwise would die away with the flesh and bones of the writer. Reading is reclaiming the right to this human immortality, because the memory of writing is all-encompassing and limitless. Individually, humans can remember little: even extraordinary feats of memory such as that of Cyrus the Great, king of the Persians, who could call every soldier in his armies by name, are nothing compared to the volumes that fill bookstores. Our books are accounts of our histories, of our epiphanies and our atrocities. In that sense all literature is testimonial. But among the testimonies are reflections on those epiphanies and atrocities, words that offer the epiphanies for others to share, and words that surround and denounce the atrocities so that they are not allowed to take place in silence. They are reminders of better things, of hope and consolation and compassion, and hold the implication that of these, too, we are all of us capable. Not all of these we achieve, and none of these we achieve all the time. But literature reminds us that they are there, these human qualities, following our horrors as certainly as birth succeeds death. They too define us.

Of course, literature may not be able to save anyone from injustice, or from the temptations of greed or the miseries of power. But something

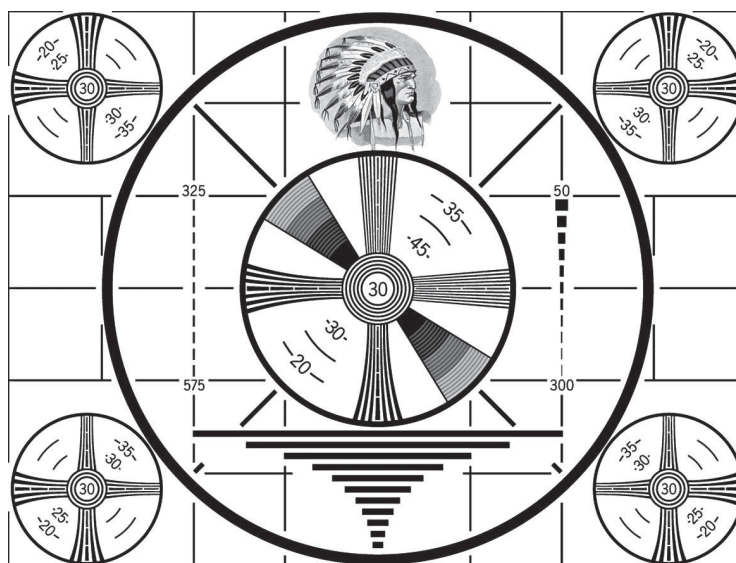
about it must be perilously effective if every dictator, every totalitarian government, every threatened official tries to do away with it, by burning books, by banning books, by censoring books, by taxing books, by paying mere lip service to the cause of literacy, by insinuating that reading is an elitist activity. William Blake, speaking about Napoleon in a public address, had this to say: "Let us teach Buonaparte, and whosoever else it may concern, that it is not Arts that follow and attend upon Empire, but Empire that attends and follows The Arts." Napoleon was not listening then, and minor Napoleons are not listening today. In spite of thousands of years of experience, the Napoleons of this world have not learned that their methods are ultimately ineffective, and that the literary imagination cannot be annihilated, because it is that imagination, and not the imagination of greed, that is the surviving reality. Augustus may have exiled Ovid because he knew (and was probably not mistaken) that something in the poet's work accused him. Every day, somewhere in the world, someone attempts (sometimes successfully) to stifle a book that plainly or obscurely sounds a warning. And again and again, empires fall and literature continues. Ultimately, the imaginary places writers and their readers invent—in the etymological sense of "to come upon," "to discover"—persist at all because they are simply what we *should* call reality, because they are the real world revealed under its true name. The rest, as we should have realized by now, is merely shadow without substance, the stuff of nightmares, and will vanish without a trace in the morning. ●

Alberto Manguel is the award-winning author of hundreds of works, most recently (in English) A Reader on Reading, All Men Are Liars and The City of Words. He lives in France. Read more of his Geist work at geist.com.

Boob Tube

DANIEL FRANCIS

Richard Stursberg's memoir of his years in CBC programming raises the question: How did someone so fundamentally out of sympathy with public broadcasting get the job in the first place?



"Indian head" test pattern first used in 1952 by the CBC in Montreal.

When Richard Stursberg took over as head of English services at the CBC in July 2004, he was determined to set a new course for the Mother Corp's television operations. As far as he was concerned, CBC TV was plagued by elitism, mediocrity and, worst of all, indifference to its audience. Stursberg launched a new strategy to attract viewers by providing programming that was above all else entertaining. "There would be only one measure for success: audiences," he writes in his new memoir, *The Tower of Babble: Sins, Secrets and Successes Inside the CBC* (Douglas & McIntyre). "Everything would be pinned on rebuilding the audiences."

As he looked around for ways to implement this new strategy, his eyes fell on a docu-drama already in production about the 1970 FLQ crisis.

In his view the show was going to be everything he hated about the "old" CBC. "It felt news-like, fact-oriented and not very entertaining," Stursberg writes. "Besides, the events had taken place almost thirty-five years earlier. The only people who could remember them were more than fifty-five years old, hardly the demographic that was going to renew the CBC."

At this point Stursberg had what he calls "a great brainwave" but what I can only describe as a great brain cramp. He approached the producer of the program with his idea: the events of October 1970 should be re-staged just as they happened but in the present. Less docu, more drama. Instead of history it would be fiction, and therefore "immediately more relevant," at least to Stursberg. "The promise of the series would be that

these things really happened, but now it's not just boring old history, it's of the moment."

Where to start? This story, intended by Stursberg to show how hidebound the CBC was when he took over, is depressing in several ways. First of all, it confirms that my public broadcaster has abandoned me because I am too old (something I've been suspecting every time I turn on Jian Ghomeshi anyway). Second, it means that the CBC has no interest in "boring old history"; that is, anything that happened before the current crop of twenty-somethings came of age. The only people thought to be interested in an event are the people who lived through it. But most important, as his comments make clear, Stursberg has no sympathy at all for the objectives of public broadcasting.

The real question his book raises is not why he was fired, which he was in August 2010, but how the hell he got the job in the first place.

Stursberg begins his book by laying out the problem as he saw it when he took over his new position. Canadians were not watching their own television programs. All the most popular shows were American. (Not so for radio, but that is a different subject.) “The truth is that English Canada’s situation is unique in the industrialized world,” he writes. “Nowhere else... do the citizens overwhelmingly prefer the television shows of a foreign country.” Now, there are good reasons for this—chiefly the fact that Canada shares a language with and an immediate proximity to the American media empire, a situation that does not afflict France or Italy or any of the other countries Stursberg cites. Of course we are going to be swamped by “foreign” programming.

But no, Stursberg believed that the only reason not enough Canadians were watching CBC television was that the programs were so awful. Having identified the problem, he set out to solve it by adopting a straightforward strategy: make programs that attract viewers. In his opinion, the size of the audience is the only thing that matters. He is essentially an accountant. He counts numbers. For Stursberg, *quality* is an elitist term, a four-letter word. Let the audience decide. If a show is popular, then it is by definition good. The only way to determine quality is to count the number of people who are willing to watch. Everything else, he says, is “self-absorption and entitlement.” Public broadcasting is really just a case of doing the math.

As he set about transforming the CBC in his own image, it is difficult to tell who Stursberg disdained more, his employees or his board of directors. In his telling, both conspired to keep him from achieving his grand plan and both come in for heavy criticism in

his book. First, the employees. Shortly after he began his job, the corporation became locked in a labour dispute with its workforce, most of whom were represented by the Canadian Media Guild. The most important issue was the use of contract labour. Stursberg argues that rapidly changing technology required a more skilled and “flexible” labour force; i.e., he needed the option to use more contract workers. The union reasonably supposed that this was an assault on job security and bargaining rights. After making the (dubious) point that the CBC shouldn’t be unionized to begin with because unions strangle creativity, Stursberg describes how he decided to lock his employees out rather than wait for them to strike. It was a matter of timing: he assumed the union would wait for the autumn and the beginning of the hockey season, when a strike would inflict maximum damage on the corporation, so he acted first, locking them out in mid-August. In Stursberg’s version of events, the lockout ended in victory for the corporation. The union, naturally, does not agree. I’ll leave that debate to the experts. What I was struck by in Stursberg’s account was his condescending, at times sneering, attitude toward his own workforce. It is no wonder he found himself the target of so much dislike within the corporation.

As for the board of directors, Stursberg describes them as a group of patronage appointees with no experience in media who barely watch any television at all. His favourite whipping boy is Peter Herrndorf, a board member, perhaps because Herrndorf actually does know something about the media, having been a television executive and a magazine publisher. Stursberg describes Herrndorf as “a guy with a reputation for wanting to be liked by everyone,” not something you would ever accuse Stursberg of. But Herrndorf’s greatest sin was being too fond of *consensus*, another of the book’s four-letter

words. Stursberg much preferred to manage by diktat and intimidation.

In Stursberg’s telling, he is always the smartest person in the room. He suffers from an over-developed sense of his own worth and writes with considerable, and off-putting, arrogance. His book is basically about how he tried to save the CBC from the elitist highbrows who dominated it, only to be dumped by an ignorant board of directors before he could complete his far-sighted revolution.

But personalities aside, there is a fundamental problem with Stursberg’s mantra that only size matters. “If not audiences,” he asks, “then what?” Well, what about that dreaded word *quality*? During his term, Stursberg filled the television schedule with shows like *Battle of the Blades*, *Dragon’s Den* and *MVP*, a soap opera about hockey players and their girlfriends, all shows that undeniably were popular but also shows that were simply Canadian versions of programs that were already available on the commercial channels. Stursberg wanted to make the CBC popular by making it look like everyone else. But if it becomes like everyone else, then why bother to have it at all? The conundrum seems to be that if the CBC accepts Stursberg’s standard of success, it may be ensuring its own irrelevance and ultimate demise.

The CBC is in need of a champion to fight for its survival against a government that is obviously hostile to public broadcasting. Possibly Stursberg sees his book as a manifesto in support of that fight. But after reading *The Tower of Babble* I’d say that with friends like him, public broadcasting doesn’t need any enemies. 🍷

Daniel Francis is a writer and historian living in North Vancouver. He is the author of two dozen books, most recently Selling Canada: Three Propaganda Campaigns that Shaped the Nation (Stanton, Atkins & Dosil, 2011). Read more of his Geist work at geist.com.

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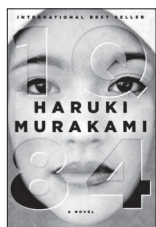
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ENDNOTES

SUMMER FLAVOUR

Michael Hayward

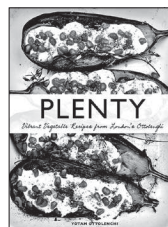
1Q84 by Haruki Murakami, translated by Jay Rubin and Philip Gabriel (Doubleday), is a huge “doorstopper” novel (almost 1,000 pages in hardcover; the paperback edition is three volumes and nearly 1,200 pages), so I decided to read the first chapter



before committing to it entirely. And I must admit, it immediately pulled me in. *1Q84* opens in the year 1984 with Aomame, a young Japanese woman, sitting in the back seat of “a hushed Toyota Crown Royal Saloon on the gridlocked elevated Metropolitan Expressway in Tokyo.” Nothing very dramatic happens: traffic is completely stalled. You get some digressive asides: about the music playing on the car radio (Janáček’s *Sinfonietta*); some background on Aomame (“She rarely read fiction, but history books could keep her occupied for hours”). Specific product names are scattered casually throughout the text in an attempt at authenticity. But things are almost *too* detailed, too precise, and when the driver looks in the mirror and tells Aomame, “Please remember: things are not what they seem,” it only adds to the feeling of unreality. Chapter 1 ends with Aomame walking away from the cab through gridlocked traffic and descending an emergency stairway into the urban chaos of Tokyo below. I decided then that I would have to wait until I had more reading time; as with Alice and Wonderland, I just *know* that something interesting is going to happen to her down there. I hope to find out what it is this summer.

You never “complete” a cookbook, but I’ve only tried one recipe from **Plenty: Vibrant Vegetable Recipes**

from London’s Ottolenghi (Chronicle) and summer seems like a perfect time to sample Globe Artichokes with Fava Beans or Chard Cakes with Sorrel Sauce. We already

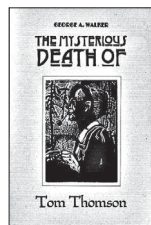


own dozens of vegetarian cookbooks, but this one offers a fresh look at familiar ingredients. The author, Yotam Ottolenghi, operates a small chain of well-regarded restaurants in London, England, that offer “inventive yet honest food.” He’s not exclusively vegetarian himself—but then neither am I; Ottolenghi explains in the introduction that, having been brought up in Israel, he was “exposed to the multitude of vegetables, pulses, and grains that are celebrated in the region’s different cuisines.” I like the way that *Plenty* is organized into sections that each highlight one vegetable or family of vegetables: “Funny Onions” has a half-dozen recipes featuring onions, leeks and garlic; “Brassicas” gathers recipes for cabbage, broccoli, kohlrabi and cauliflower; “The Mighty Eggplant” offers, well, eggplant recipes. And the cover photograph (of Eggplant with Buttermilk Sauce) made me salivate; but what’s with the padded (i.e. quilted) cover?

ACOUSTIC SILENCE

Mandelbrot

George F. Walker, the talented wood engraver and “book artist,” has composed **The Mysterious Death of Tom Thomson** in 109 woodblock engravings presented in a handsome volume by Porcupine’s Quill. While reading Walker’s wordless narrative, one becomes eerily aware of silence: wordlessness itself becomes

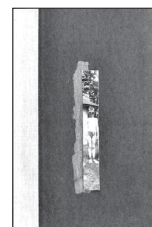


a mode of silence, and an agent of voiceless voicing, unheard dialogue and mute interrogation. In fact, it’s not easy to use words to describe what happens once you are engaged in this sequence of woodblock images: events proceed: a man, Tom Thomson, emerges as an increasingly solitary figure, slowly withdrawing from urbanity and emerging in the wilderness, where, as different versions have it (and Walker’s is one of them), he meets his fate. The effect of the wordless imagery is strangely acoustic: a silence filled with echoes. The book does not want to be put down; instead the reader, the observer, re-engages again and again, returning to read into the images a story that eludes understanding just as understanding seems to elude stories without words. This is a book for the shade on a bright summer day.

GRIEF-IN-PROGRESS

Kelsea O’Connor

The appeal of **Nox** (New Directions), Anne Carson’s collection of poems eulogizing the unexpected death of her brother Michael, is not only its skillful verse but also its unusual format: it is printed on a single long piece of paper, which is folded



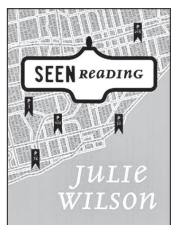
like an accordion into a sturdy box. The book opens with Catullus’s ancient poem of brotherly loss in Latin (“Catullus 101”); Carson proceeds to give a dictionary-length definition of each word in the poem on the left-hand pages, while the right sides are reserved for her poems, black-and-white photographs, collages, graphite smudges and/or fragments of handwritten letters, each appearing to be pasted onto the page. The poems themselves are understated remembrances of

Michael's "windswept spirit" and his absence in her adult life. The power of the collection comes from the juxtaposition of the debris of Carson's sorrow and the Latin vocabulary that makes up Catullus's two-thousand-year-old elegy: Carson suggests that grief, like the work of translation, is forever a work-in-progress.

STRANGER ON A BUS

Caroline McGechaen

A few years ago I saw a man on the bus reading *American Psycho*. In my mind, this was the equivalent of watching pornography on a laptop in public. Having read the book myself, I knew what he was reading, and now I was somehow intimate with him. Julie Wilson's book *Seen Reading* (Freehand Books) riffs on exactly this feeling:



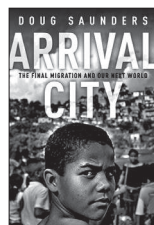
ing: the indefinable connection between reader and watcher and the muddling of private and public spaces. She watches for people reading on Toronto transit and, based only on the book a person is reading and his/her physical description, she crafts a short fictional response. These micro-fictions explode the boundaries between reader, writer, audience and author, allowing the stories to unfurl at oddly unexpected angles: the woman reading *Misery* by Stephen King who has a tub full of stripped bones at home; the man reading *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins who once witnessed his mother and the minister floating naked together side by side in a lake. Wilson's writing takes large leaps at a swift pace—thousands of readers and their own stories whip by on trains, buses and streetcars, and she interprets these readers with the few clues she has. In some uncomfortably intimate way, I knew the man reading *American Psycho*, but as Wilson writes in her prologue, "there is no one way to know a reader." Even if you know the words that are being read,

you do not know *how* they are being read, and Wilson's stories are no more or less real or truthful than reality or truth itself. In a clever way, *Seen Reading* is the frame that gives this idea meaning. And I don't know the man on the bus at all.

ON ARRIVAL

Patty Osborne

In his excellent book *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our Next World* (Knopf), Doug Saunders takes us around the world to neighbourhoods on the edges of cities like Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro, into the middle of cities like Toronto and Los



Angeles, or anywhere in or around cities where immigrants touch down in their quest for a better life. Saunders argues that we are in the midst of humanity's last great migration—from rural areas to cities—and that this does not have to be a bad thing. He labels as "arrival cities" any large area where immigrants (either from rural areas in their own country or from other countries) gather, and he measures the success of an arrival city by the number of its inhabitants who are able to move into the middle class. Success seems to depend on a delicate balance between government intervention and free enterprise: too much government intervention, such as tearing down shantytowns and putting up public rental housing that makes no allowance for tiny business ventures, will deny inhabitants the chance for home or business ownership that is vital to capitalizing on assets; too little government intervention, such as insufficient policing, can lead to a community where might makes right. At each stop in Saunders's world tour, we meet locals who tell us stories of their achievements and setbacks and their ingenious solutions to difficult problems. I recommend this easy-to-read and engrossing book to everyone (even

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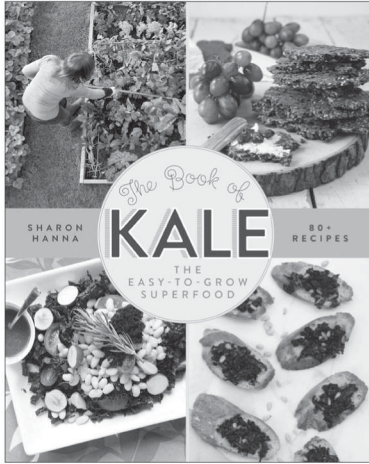
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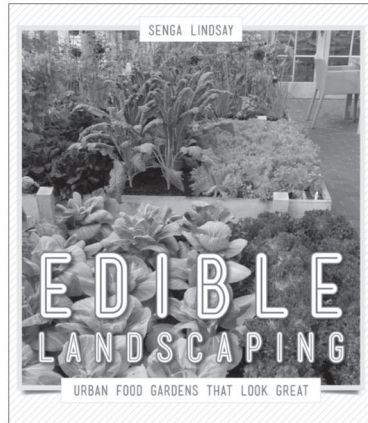


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dedicated fiction readers like myself) because it will open your mind: those people living in shantytowns will almost always be poor, but they don't have to always be the same people.

CRACKING THE GENRE

Lily Gontard

The *Klondike*, a graphic novel by Zach Worton (Drawn and Quarterly), came into my possession in an unusual way: a friend and I were in our local bookstore looking at the northern books display, which included *The Klondike*, and discussing the reviews we'd each read of *TK*, when we decided to share the purchase of the book 50-50. He'd get the first shift and take it on his two-week canoe trip, and I'd get the book when he was done. He likes graphic novels; I'd never cracked the cover of one. Two weeks became six, then eight, during which the book travelled in a canoe on the waters of a



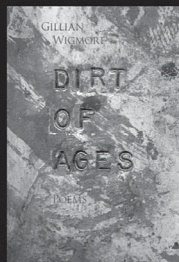
river deep in the Yukon, then back to Whitehorse; it hung out at my friend's house for a while, then relocated to the office of another

friend, where it lay forgotten before finally reaching me. "What did you think?" I asked. He never finished it. "That bad?" No, he just put it down and didn't get back to it. This did not bode well for *TK*. Of my vast collection of books perhaps half are books I've started, lost interest in, put down and never picked up again. I settled in to begin reading. Within the first ten pages I found myself wondering if all graphic novel dialogue was so corny. I wrote an email to another friend who is a graphic novel aficionado, asking if it's the genre: was I missing the point? To which he replied "No," and "Don't abandon the genre!" When a man who makes his living writing for a high-profile men's magazine tells you not to abandon a reading project, emphasized with an exclamation mark, you continue reading. I laboured on. I speed-

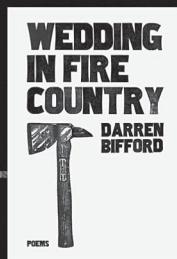
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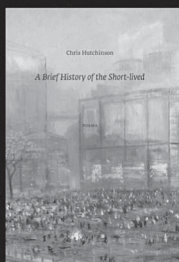
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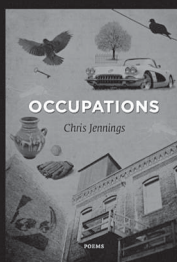
GILLIAN WIGMORE
Dirt of Ages



DARREN BIFFORD
Wedding in Fire Country



CHRIS HUTCHINSON
A Brief History of the Short-lived



CHRIS JENNINGS
Occupations

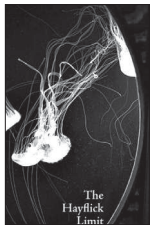


read the rest of *TK*, almost skimming over the crowded black-and-white images. The characters are drawn so similarly, and there are so many of them, that it became difficult to differentiate them and to keep track of whose story ended where and when another character's story began. What struck me most about the characters was how angry they were. Each was short-tempered and pissed off or about to be pissed off. The emotional arc of the story starts at a high pitch and never really lets up: there is very little tenderness or relief from violence, hate and/or anger. Worton set himself a gargantuan task in trying to tell the story of the Klondike Gold Rush in such a compressed form: the characters must constantly explain their actions and motivations in small bubbles of text. All this said, at about the halfway mark in the novel, the dialogue began to shift away from the expository and into the story of a meaty and complex character, Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith, gang leader and terror of Skagway and the Chilkoot Trail. Reading *The Klondike* hasn't turned me off graphic novels, but it has me wondering what else is out there.

TRIANGLES AND ATOMS

Lauren Ogston

The Hayflick Limit, a collection of poetry by Matthew Tierney (Coach House), found its way into the Geist office after it was discovered that a piece of student writing published at geist.com more than resembled Tierney's poem "The Rocket Scientist."



The book is a substantial, meaty collection, printed on thick, stiff paper that lets one know at first touch that this won't be lost behind the toilet. The title, *The Hayflick Limit*, refers to the fixed number of times a cell can divide before it dies—preparing the reader for the science-steeped poetry within. Tierney combines art and science

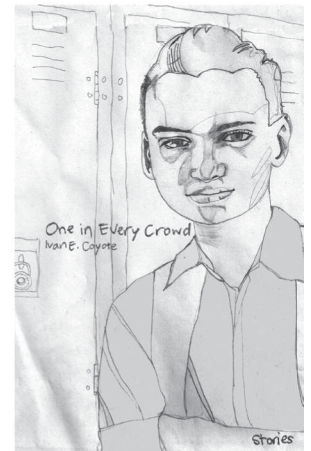
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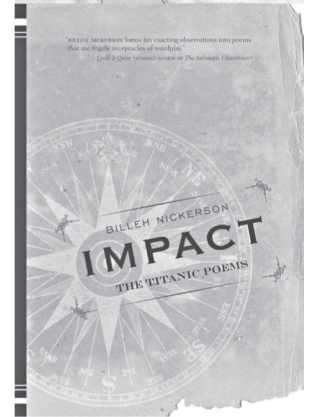


IMPACT

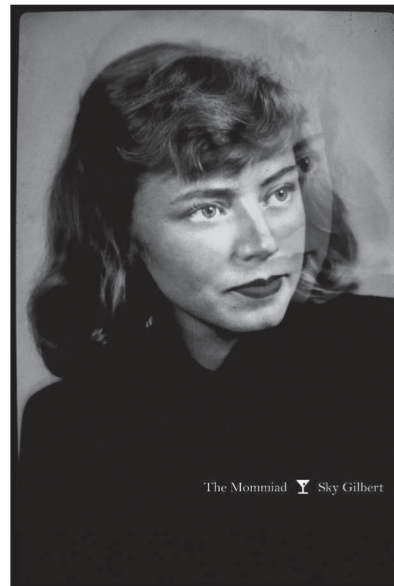
Billeh Nickerson

Evocative poems about the sinking of the Titanic. "Nickerson packs a lot of story into these spare poems."

—*Vancouver is Awesome*



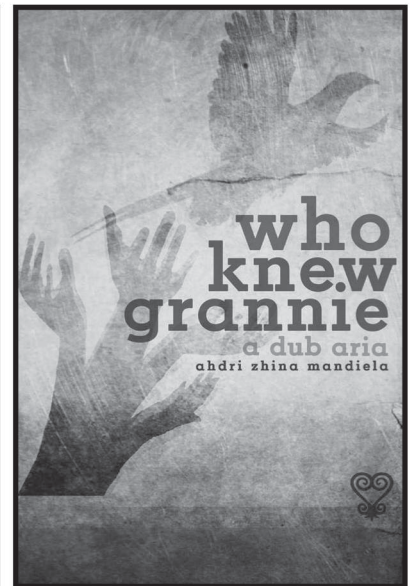
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The Mommiad Y Sky Gilbert

The Mommiad by Sky Gilbert

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(once considered natural enemies) so effortlessly that you forget you're reading poetry and simply wonder at how a story about right triangles and hydrogen atoms can break your heart.

FALSE READERS

Stephen Osborne

“Readers of books are ever more false” is the title of one of four novellas by the Italian writer Gianni Celati, translated by Stuart Hood and collected in **Appearances** (Serpent's Tail), a slim volume that disappeared from my desk the day I brought it home from the library.



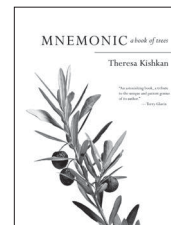
I waited for it to reappear until the renewal periods had run out and then went back to the library and confessed that I had lost it.

The librarian granted a waiting period of another couple of months in case the book should reappear, which it failed to do; eventually the cost of a replacement copy appeared on my account, and I paid the bill. A few days later *Appearances* reappeared on the shelf above my desk, where it must have been all those months. To claim ownership of this “orphaned” copy, which still bears the imprint of the public library, seems an impropriety at the least; but to return it will only cause the over-extended library system more shelving and acquisition headaches. So I have resolved to do nothing until I have read all four novellas, later in the summer, outdoors in the shade. The first story opens with these words: “I shall tell the story of how Baretto, coming home one evening, was bereft of thoughts, and of the consequences of his living as a mute for a long time.” The second story is about a landscape painter who, in the words of the second sentence, “knew very well how the light falls from the sky, how it touches and envelops things.” The last story, “The Disappearance of a Praiseworthy Man,” I intend to read in direct sunlight, well out of the shade.

MNEMONIC DEVICES

Michael Hayward

I first got hooked on Theresa Kishkan's writing via *Red Laredo Boots*, her 1996 collection of personal essays and recollections about camping and travelling through BC. I'd lived my own version of some of those experiences as well, but Kishkan had somehow



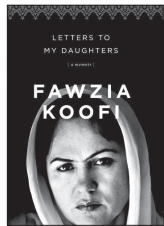
seen more clearly; she had *remembered* better. **Mnemonic: a book of trees** (Goose Lane), Kishkan's newest collection of essays, contains

some of her best writing yet. Each essay takes a specific period or incident in Kishkan's life as its point of departure: in “Young Woman with Eros on her Shoulder,” she begins by recalling time spent in Greece at age twenty-one, and her love affair with a young Greek man with “eyes like almonds”; in “Makeup Secrets of the Byzantine Madonnas,” the core memory is of a time when she was muse and model to an older man in Victoria, BC, a painter who “wore little glasses when he painted, and [...] peered at my body through them in a clinical manner, not missing a thing.” But the essays in *Mnemonic* transcend their autobiographical origins as Kishkan uses the personal as a lens through which to explore a broad range of interests, among them natural history, First Nations culture, literature and music. Memories of camping among the sage and the ponderosa pines on the shores of Nicola Lake (in “A Serious Waltz”) lead naturally to a consideration of the mountain pine beetle epidemic, and to her attempt to fashion a basket from pine needles, inspired by baskets seen “at the Big Sky gas station at Skeetchestn.” There's a wonderful sense of place throughout, and Kishkan's observant curiosity makes you think of Forster's exhortation in *Howards End*: “Only connect the prose and the passion and both will be exalted.” *Mnemonic* exalts.

DICHOTOMOUS

Kacey-Neille Riviere

Fawzia Koofi's memoir, **Letters to My Daughters** (Douglas & McIntyre), reads like a novel. A village girl from Afghanistan, Koofi survives civil war and the Mujahideen, global war and the Taliban, and the political aftermath of the war on terror. Her journey is compelling because of all its dichotomies: she was born the nineteenth child of a local politician and



her father taught her the value of serving her country, but also largely ignored her as a child; her mother loved and protected her throughout her early life, but also wanted her dead the day she was born. She goes from having her education and freedom torn away from her, to questioning her identity as a woman in her beloved country, to becoming a major political

figure in Afghanistan in the post-Taliban regime, a historic achievement in a country famously hostile to women. Even more incredible is the knowledge that at the time the book was written, Fawzia herself was only thirty-five years old, and yet her words ring with the passion and purpose of a life lived far beyond her age. By the end, I got the sense that this was not just the story of her life, but a story of love and hope for her daughters and her country.

ANTERIOR SHORE

Stephen Osborne

Empire of Signs (Noonday Press), two dozen brief essays by Roland Barthes (translated by Richard Howard) about the fictive nation, the "system of signs," that he calls *Japan*, makes a perfect companion for a summer stroll through the city. Each of these meditations provokes the reader to offer a response, an observation of

particulars, of the nearby, of that which presents itself to the receptive eye. Chopsticks, for instance, which "in order to divide, must separate, part, peck, instead of cutting and piercing, in the manner of our implements." Packages, pachinko, sukiyaki, the eyelid, bowing, writing, wrestling: the Barthesian eye is relentless, and his sentences push on toward surprising destinations; the haiku, which Barthes conceives of as an "awakening to the fact," represents "an apprehension of the thing as event and not as substance, attaining to that anterior shore of language." I found my copy of *Empire* last summer in Portland, Oregon, in Powell's Books, the best bookstore in the world, and itself a sign and proof of the reading life that seems too often to be disappearing from the postmodern world.



Curt Lang, Tobacconist, 1972

CURT LANG: VANCOUVER 1972

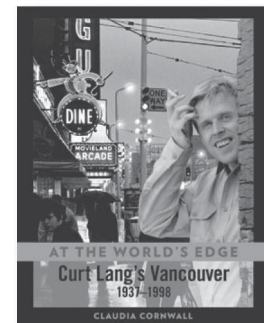
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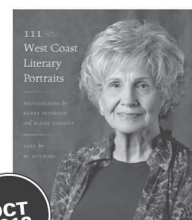
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NOTED ELSEWHERE

Recent news of Geist writers and artists, gathered from here and there.

Writing for the *National Post*, Brett Josef Grubisic says that *Malarky* by **Anakana Schofield** (Biblioasis) “shifts rapidly from point of view and through decades worth of history, necessitating a puzzle-solving state of mind for the reader.” And Chad Pelley of the *Telegraph Journal* writes that it is “a wacky, dead serious book.”

According to Brett Josef Grubisic, writing in the *Vancouver Sun*, **Billeh Nickerson** has “kept comedy respectfully at bay” in *Impact: The Titanic Poems* (Arsenal Pulp), and Liisa Hannus at vancouverisawesome.com says that he “allows [the reader] to simply absorb the words.”

Of **Michal Kozlowski's** *Louis the Tiger who Came from the Sea* (Annick), the *Deakin Newsletter of Children's Literature* says that “you will find yourself reading this story over and over,” and *January Magazine* suggests that you “read this one aloud to your little ones: they'll eat it up.”

Writing in the *Globe and Mail* about **Lynn Crosbie's** *Life Is About Losing Everything* (Anansi), Laura Penny encourages readers to “imagine Courtney Love with the benefits of a graduate education, or Kathy Acker slightly gentled by CanLit prettiness and politesse” and a reviewer at *FASHION* calls the book “a feral creature, full of intense love even when it bites.”

OFF THE SHELF

Books received recently at the Geist office.

The lover can make the folk hero in *Louis: The Heretic Poems* by **Gregory Scofield** (Nightwood), the key can make the lock in *Key in Lock* by **Rona Altrows** (Recliner Books), and you, Holden Catfield, can go back to bed or venture outside in *You Are a Cat!* by

Sherwin Tjia (Conundrum).

Fiona Tinwei Lam illuminates Canadian poems on cancer in *The Bright Well: Contemporary Canadian Poems about Facing Cancer* (Leaf Press) and **Bob Robertson** enlightens and prepares you for collisions with rogue planets, biblical flooding and attacks by swarms of gnats in *Mayan Horror: How to Survive the End of the World in 2012* (Anvil).

Gay detectives slip into the world of e-dating, parking lot romances and menacing blackmailers in *Flight of the Aquavit* by **Anthony Bidulka** (Insomniac) and professors bring Dr. Lacan to British Columbia in *The Only Poetry That Matters: Reading the Kootenay School of Writing* by **Clint Burnham** (Arsenal Pulp).

R. Shalendra writes a novel, *Nathan Dee: Search for the Tree of Life*, with the help of an iPhone app (self-published); **Kim Clark** introduces a character who is capable of only six more orgasms before she dies in *Attemptations: Short, Long and Longer Stories* (Caitlin); and **Ben Stephenson** attempts to make decisions, or something, in *A Matter of Life and Death or Something* (Douglas & McIntyre).

Punk and poetry make eye contact in *Amphetamine Heart* by **Liz Worth** (Guernica) and poetry and science go on a date in *Intersecting Sets: A Poet Looks at Science* by **Alice Major** (University of Alberta). **Manuel Vázquez Montalbán** explores the joys of business in *The Angst-Ridden Executive* (Melville House) and a detective tracks what isn't there in *The Vanishing Track* by **Stephen Legault** (TouchWood).

Yasuko Thanh learns to swim in *Floating Like the Dead* (McClelland & Stewart), **Alex Boyd** wrestles with self-esteem issues in *The Least Important Man* (Biblioasis), **Edem Awumey** considers a bath in *Dirty Feet* (Anansi) and **Pamela Porter** finally discovers that special place in *No Ordinary Place* (Ronsdale).

Two furry friends find their human companion in *Puppy Love* by **Frauke Scheunemann**, translated by Shelley Frisch (Anansi), **bill bissett** attempts to bend, stretch and break the boundaries of prose writing in *Novel* (Talonbooks), **Jenna Butler** blurs the boundaries of identity in *Wells* (University of Alberta), **Marianne Apostolides** collects revealing half-truths and memories in *Voluptuous Pleasure: The Truth About the Writing Life* (BookThug) and *Entry Level* by **Julie McIsaac** (Insomniac) is for advanced readers.

ARTISTS IN THIS ISSUE

David Collier is the author and artist of the comic book *Collier's* and many book-length comics titles, most recently *Collier's Popular Press* and *Chimo* (both from Conundrum). See more of his work at geist.com.

Eve Corbel is a writer and comics artist, author of “Guide to Literary Footwear,” “Some Lesser-Known Phobias of Writers” and many other works published in *Geist*, as well as the gone-viral “Lesser-Known Editing and Proofreading Marks.”

Jake Genan is an artist who lives in New York and at flickr.com/photos/jkejake.

Satoko Kubo is a hairdresser and origami artist. As a child she folded one thousand paper cranes (*senba zuru*) for her grandfather when he was in hospital. She lives in Vancouver.

Sarah Leavitt, a regular contributor to *Geist*, is the author of the graphic memoir *Tangles: Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me* (Freehand), which was shortlisted for the Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction. See more of her work at geist.com and at sarahleavitt.com.

Eric Uhlich, who designs and composes *Geist*, is an illustrator and graphic designer. He created the artwork for the graphic novel *Green Skies* and for several shorter comics. Visit him at oktober.ca.

The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

Send copy of completed puzzle with name and address to:
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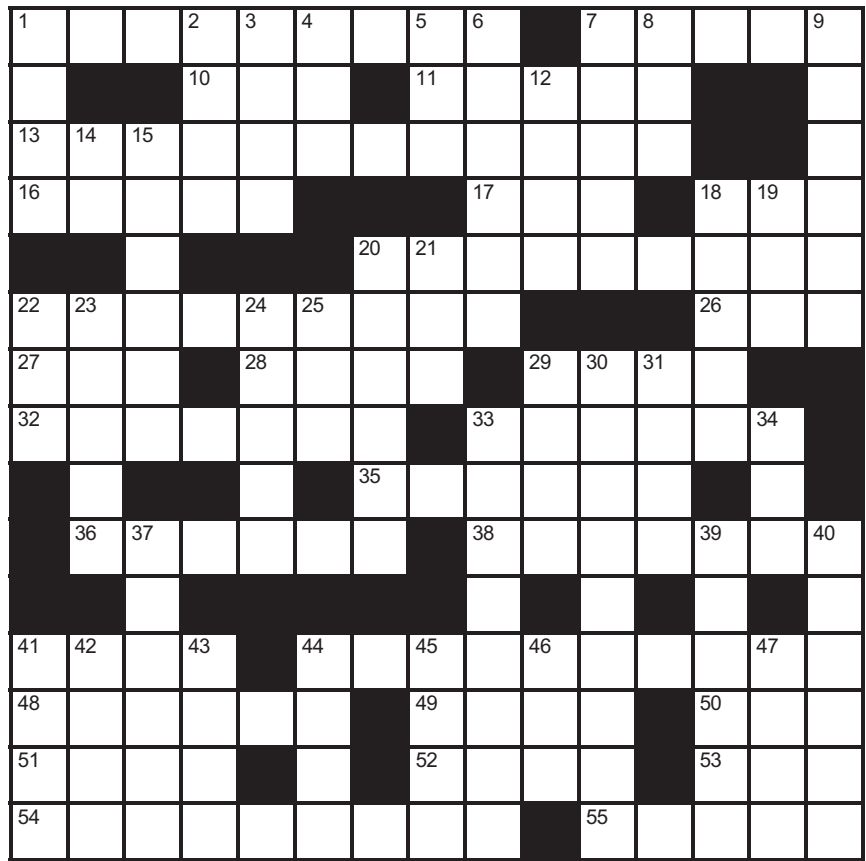
The winner will be selected at random from correct solutions received and will be awarded a one-year subscription to *Geist* or—if already a subscriber—a *Geist* magnet. Good luck!

ACROSS

- 1 We were badly bitten at the beach when we took a ride (2)
- 7 We looked everywhere but could find nought to drink
- 10 On top of Robbie's man getting drunk, he ran into a witch
- 11 Those guys were always dreaming of California but what about their mothers?
- 13 Clam diggers and bullfighters always pant in Italy (2)
- 16 She's so enthusiastic about that plant, I think I'll buy one too
- 17 Why do Brits use word lists at university? (abbrev)
- 18 Try to remember why love was sweet in the ninth (abbrev)
- 20 Was he fit or did he look like a soaped hog? (2)
- 22 It was hot so I changed my mind and bought a couple of thongs instead
- 26 Light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation. Really? (abbrev)
- 27 That's one we won't see for ages and ages
- 28 Small pieces of bait will be somewhat useful (2)
- 29 Knowing you, that royal dancer sounded right on the money
- 32 That summer, Browning always wanted to look good and be equal to an event (2)
- 33 Male exposure can go so deep that it quickly becomes embarrassing
- 35 He's got pluck but why does he pick the steel slide instead of just the electric?
- 36 What a spectacle she made by hiding in the dark
- 38 My aunts always come out for meals in the park
- 41 Last, they damage the high level of maintenance for the prison term (abbrev)
- 44 To boot, a storm came up and moved us so we spilled the gravy all over the vessels
- 48 Good thing he's a Taurus because he's headed for an inflexible joint
- 49 If I was interested I'd probably enter
- 50 Well, that collection of Presbyterians could well direct conditions (abbrev)
- 51 According to Sylvia's dad, the third or fourth tier got passage over the valley
- 52 Jane Eyre wrote some strangely fearful stuff
- 53 Go for the triple if you're gambling on happy trails
- 54 If you get bored, wave at our fab Drs.
- 55 At 38 it's a drag when you have to eat grains

DOWN

- 1 When the chips are down she makes candles
- 2 He, among others, was late (abbrev)
- 3 We had fun going around with that



- 4 At age 3, she made sure they played fair (abbrev)
- 5 How can you find a certain hill of beans in this crazy world without some sort of organized procedure? (abbrev)
- 6 Jon told us he was looking for those uncouth fellows
- 7 They always elect to do long division when in custody
- 8 That fool behind me sure has big ears
- 9 Who is that frolicking in a sunsuit?
- 12 He was eliminated when he passed in the deep
- 14 You know about the Canadian question, right?
- 15 Isn't Rod inspiring when he gets wet?
- 18 In the days when they were young, she dressed up the lads a bit
- 19 That picture came from outer space (abbrev)
- 20 Cummings's departures were often inventive
- 21 My top preference was out so I didn't choose
- 22 What's the charge for servicing that flat?
- 23 Yeah, yeah, yeah, she likes you a lot. Big deal.
- 24 God, it all seems so predetermined!
- 25 Those photo geeks can't help themselves—they keep focusing on purchasing things (abbrev)
- 29 Just where do we learn to make the atmosphere so dirty, anyway? (abbrev)
- 30 I heard they had fun, fun, fun getting around with Rhonda at the seashore (2)
- 31 I got fired when I bought a pocket knife there
- 33 They were tubing when the liquid ran out
- 34 I imagine it's like the wet one in the Okanagan

- 37 Don't horse around with that rope or her top might fall off
- 39 Bo, where's the john? It sounds like I should spell it out (3)
- 40 She's such a square the way she glides around the dance floor
- 41 In his present condition, he may have flaws (2)
- 42 At the dance, Des loved that short short skirt
- 43 They search worldwide for the best breakers
- 44 On hot days, hold this or you might have egg on your face
- 45 Two levels of health care? Sounds sad
- 46 Yup! We're ready to roll and ready to rumble (abbrev)
- 47 That stout fellow could feel the wind weeping in the trees while he went leaping

There was no winner for Puzzle 84! Time to get the pencil lead out.



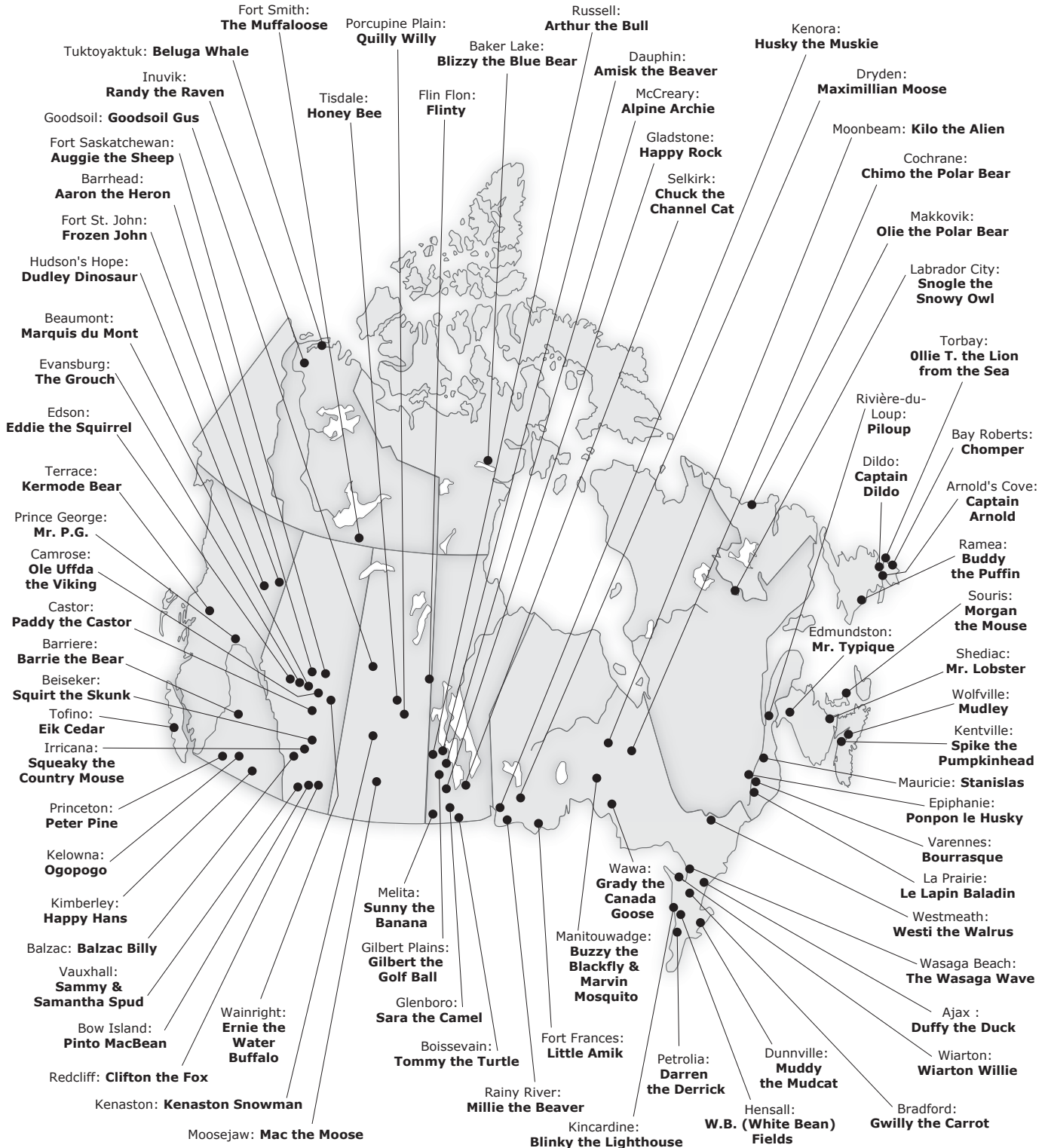
Mascot Nation

The Canadian Map of Local Avatars

by Melissa Edwards



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