

GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA

NUMBER 109
SUMMER 2018
\$8.95



CURRENT PHOBIAS

Meeting The Master
The Tool That Goes Boom
Postcard Contest Winners





DISCOVER YOUR NEXT BC READ AT

READ LOCAL BC.CA



FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF BOOK PUBLISHERS OF BC



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien

This project is made possible by the support of Canadian Heritage.
Ce projet est rendu possible grâce au Patrimoine canadien.

creativeBC
association des éditeurs de livres du Canada



CITY OF
VANCOUVER

GEIST



WORK SHANTY WRITING CONTEST

In old timey days workers sang songs, known as shanties, to pass the time while labouring away in the mines, hoisting sails or chopping lumber.

Today, more of us work in offices than out in the field or on the high seas—but the dread of labour endures!

We at *Geist* want to encourage the spirit of camaraderie in the workplace by bringing back the work shanty, but updated for new timey jobs: mail delivery, web development, nursing, aromatherapy, dog training, coffee slinging, tow truck driving, Tweet scheduling, etc!

Write a modern day shanty of 500 words or less for a chance to win cash prizes and publication.

Deadline: December 15, 2018

Full details at geist.com



GEIST

Volume 27 • Number 109 • Summer 2018

FEATURES

THE TOOL THAT GOES BOOM

Terence Byrnes

Cowboy Action Shooter Photography

32

STINKY POTATO GOLEM

Cary Fagan

*As a child Hazel got the chicken pox
and then gave it to a willing Malcolm
by rubbing against his bare skin—the
life of twin puppeteers*

41

CURRENT PHOBIA

Tanja Bartel

*Asked for sexy-messy beach hair,
paid for a docile bob*

52

POSTCARD LIT

*Winners of the Geist Literal
Literary Postcard Story Contest*

56



GEIST

Journey to Pleasure

NOTES & DISPATCHES

Carolyne Montgomery
In the Pines
8

Billeh Nickerson
V4G 1N4
9

Kathryn Mockler
I Won't Clean the Tub
9

Carmen Tiampo
What Survives
11



Joe Bongiorno
The Shi Fu
12



COVER: The image on the cover is by Kevin Lanthier. See more of his work on pages 21 and 22.

FINDINGS

16

New Confessor
Life of Weegee
Harlotries & Witchcraft
Bitch Face
Siberian Postcard
Chicken. Chicken. Pigeon. Crow.
Avoid excessive aggression



and more...

COLUMNS

AFTERLIFE OF CULTURE

Caribbean Enigma
Stephen Henighan
61

CITY OF WORDS

Beginning at the Beginning
Alberto Manguel
63

DEPARTMENTS

IN CAMERA
4

MISCELLANY
6

ENDNOTES
66

OFF THE SHELF,
NOTED ELSEWHERE
71

PUZZLE
72

Communion



In 2006, the Toronto photographer Vincenzo Pietropaolo travelled to Mexico and had the opportunity to photograph the Day of the Dead festival, El Día de los Muertos in Spanish, celebrated during the night between October 31 and November 1. It is believed that during that night, the spirits of the dead visit the living. The living attend gravesites, bringing candy, food, drink and music to welcome the souls of their loved ones. While making these photographs, Pietropaolo avoided the use of flash, finding it too aggressive and intrusive for the circumstances. Instead he worked with available light, often just candlelight, so he was forced to work slowly, employing a tripod to get long exposures. He spent time interacting with his subjects as they took part in festivities; he didn't pose them in any special way; he noted their names when he could. The photos demonstrate that the festival doesn't dwell on the macabre; rather, it turns interaction with death into a commonplace event. As Pietropaolo writes, "It is through this momentary gathering of the living and the dead—the duality of life and death—that Mexicans express an affirmation for life, and not without a sense of the ironic."

The photos were shown at the Artscape Wychwood Barns Gallery late in 2017 at the invitation of the Día de los Muertos Collective, a community-based organization in Toronto, to celebrate the festival. More of Pietropaolo's photographs, also shot in Mexico and featuring farm workers, many of whom come to Canada as seasonal workers, appear in his book *Harvest Pilgrims* (published by Between the Lines in 2009). Pietropaolo's works are held in private collections and Canadian institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada.

—AnnMarie MacKinnon



GEIST

PUBLISHED BY
The Geist Foundation

PUBLISHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
AnnMarie MacKinnon

OPERATIONS MANAGER
Jocelyn Kuang

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Michał Kozłowski

ADMINISTRATION
Interns: Fiona Dunnett,
Kristen Lawson
Volunteers: Anson Ching,
Lauren Dembicky, Jonathan Heggen,
Patty Osborne, Jennesia Pedri

BRAIN TRUST
Stephen Osborne, Mary Schendlinger
Co-founders, Consulting Publishers

DESIGNER
Syd Danger

PROOFREADER
Helen Godolphin

ACCOUNTANT
Mindy Abramowitz CGA

CIRCULATION
Larry Wyatt

WEB ARCHITECTS
Metro Publisher

DISTRIBUTION
Magazines Canada

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS
Barbara Zatyko

FIRST SUBSCRIBER
Jane Springer

MOST VALUABLE PUZZLERS
Jim Lowe & Brian Goth

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Jordan Abel, Bartosz Barczak, Kevin Barefoot, Kathy Battye, Trevor Battye, andrea bennett, Jill Boettger, Jasmine Cham, C.E. Coughlan, Brad Cran, Melissa Edwards, Robert Everett-Green, Daniel Francis, Randy Fred, Lily Gontard, Michael Hayward, Gillian Jerome, Brian Lam, Thad McIlroy, Billeh Nickerson, Christine Novosel, Patty Osborne, Eric Peterson, Dan Post, Debby Reis, Kris Rothstein, Norbert Ruebsaat, Jane Silcott, Roni Simunovic, Paul Tough, Eric Uhlich, Michelle van der Merwe

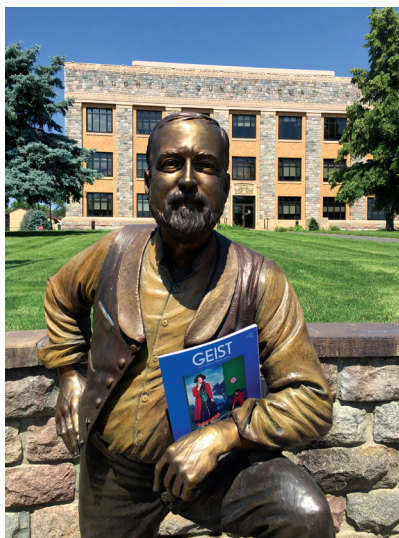
SUPPORT THE GEIST WRITERS AND ARTISTS FUND:
GEIST.COM/WAFUND

WWW.GEIST.COM

MISCELLANY

PIERRELESS GOVERNANCE

Michael Hayward, a long-time contributor and friend of Geist, recently took a road trip. He sent us this from his travels:



Evidently Arthur C. Mellette, the first Governor of South Dakota, was a fan of *Geist*. Photo taken in Pierre (pronounced “peer”), South Dakota.

ON THE WEED WAGON

In *Geist* No. 108 you published (again, I might add) the Marijuana Map of Canada. I’ve always considered *Geist* to be a respite from the dull-headed propensities of the mainstream media, yet here you are, attempting to be au courant with your goofy weed map at a time when everyone in the world is talking about the impending legalization of pot in the great green north. Your track record’s not bad, so you get a mulligan on this one. But please, next time spare us your urge to join the masses by becoming relevant—it’s not your bag.

— Richard Clifton, Halifax, NS

ANNALS OF PREMIUM BRAND YOGURT

Every once in a while, we at *Geist* undertake Very Official Tasks, things such as filing, organizing our twenty-eight-year archive and auditing our social media accounts. We frequently discover all manner of interesting ephemera during these VOTs. One such tidbit: in the course of reviewing some of the available data on our Twitter followers’ interests and proclivities, our intern discovered that some of these followers are highly interested in “premium brand natural yogurt.” Now, according to *Dairy Foods* magazine, it is millennials, 22- to 37-year-olds, who are responsible for an overall market shift away from non-premium products toward more unctuous, extra creamy, premium types of yogurts to fulfill their dairy needs. So given this interest, naturally we began to wonder if a significant portion of our Twitter audience belongs to this “millennial” demographic group. In doing some research into what we around the office have come to refer to as “this premium yogurt business,” we discovered that millennials are apparently a murderous lot, responsible for “killing,” presumably by failing to purchase or having no desire for, doorbells, napkins, lunch, casual dining chains (including something called a “Breastaurant,” which we’re guessing is Hooters), starter homes, bar soap, cereal, mayonnaise, fabric softener, golf, diamonds and goodness knows what else. But what they do want lots of are “indulgent yogurts that offer lush texture and gourmet flavors... rather than the once dominant low-fat fare geared toward dieters.” Lush texture and gourmet flavours. We can only hope our Twitter followers (and all our readers) see *Geist* as the full-fat Olympic Dairy or Liberté of Canadian literature.

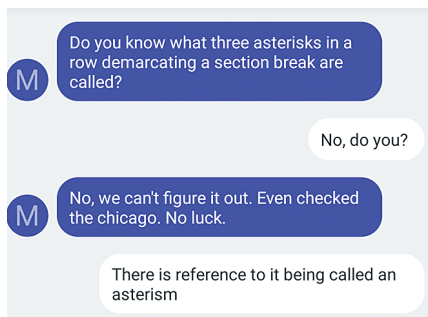


PUZZLED

Our favourite crossword puzzlers, Jim Lowe and Brian Goth, pointed out that we printed the answers to Puzzle 106 not just in *Geist* 107, but also in No. 108. Here is the answer to Puzzle 107. The answer to Puzzle 108 will appear in the next issue.

ASTERISM, MEET DINKUS

Lest you think anyone around here has a life: at 10 p.m. on a Friday evening, a text exchange took place between two *Geist* editors:



After some investigation, and after checking with other literary-minded associates, it was discovered that an asterism is a stacked set of asterisks used to call attention to the text that follows it. Like this: ***. (It's also—according to “Big Blue,” what we around the *Geist* office affectionately call the *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*—a name for a group or cluster of stars. You may think the term for this is “constellation,” but that's not quite accurate. Though the two terms are related, they are not synonyms, astronomically speaking.)

In any case, what M. was looking for was the word used to describe a set of asterisks laid out thusly *** and which are used to delineate a section break

in a written work. Texts flew back and forth; research was conducted. Some time later, M. received a note from a musician friend about an article that appeared in the *Paris Review* in June 2018 regarding the “dinkus,” the true name for the series of three asterisks. From the piece on the dinkus by Daisy Alioto: “The dinkus has none of the asterism's linguistic association with the cosmos, but that's why I love it. Due to its proximity to the word dingus, which means, to define one ridiculous word with another, “doodad,” dinkus likely evolved from the Dutch and German ding, meaning “thing.” To the less continental ear, dinkus sounds slightly dirty, and I can confirm that it's brought serious academics to giggles.”

WRITE TO GEIST

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

The Editor, *Geist*
letters@geist.com
Snailmail:
#210 – 111 West Hastings St.
Vancouver BC V6B 1H4

Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity and decorum.

Geist is published four times a year.

Contents copyright © 2018 The Geist Foundation. All rights reserved.

Subscriptions: in Canada: \$25 (1 year); in the United States and elsewhere: \$27. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

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

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

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

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

Publications Mail Agreement 40069678

Registration No. 07582

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

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

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





In the Pines

CAROLYNE MONTGOMERY

He focuses the camera on the unforgiving glare of his wife

It is the end of a year of fatherlessness, a year of pale blue aérograms and rare transatlantic phone calls. My father is here in Canada studying to qualify for his Canadian medical licence. My mother, brother, sister and I have recently arrived from Edinburgh.

It is a Sunday in August. We drive from London, Ontario, to the Pinery Provincial Park in a new green 1964 Mercury Comet. This is our first car. The children have already found their places in the back seat. My older brother, aged nine, chooses to sit behind my mother. I am the middle child and get to sit behind my father. My seven-year-old little sister is left

between us with her feet on the hump.

We travel in a thick silence administered by my mother, who has just confirmed that her forty-one-year-old husband is having an affair with his supervisor's wife. The children will not know this for a few more years. At the gate, we buy the annual provincial park membership decal. After a careful application to the inside of the windshield, we enter the park.

My father leads us along the path through the windswept grove of pine trees, between the grass-covered sand dunes and onto the blustery shore of Lake Huron. He is an excellent swimmer—my mother is not. She does not

come with us. We splash about in the surf, shivering in our new swimsuits.

Huddling under our damp bath towels, we perch on the thick wooden planks of the immovable benches of our first picnic table. The sky remains cloud-covered. Goose bumps prickles our pasty skin. Under our mother's direction, we strap our sandy feet back into our sensible leather sandals.

My mother has packed some things into the wicker basket that normally belongs to the cat. She also has brought an insulated bag—a cooler, we are told. An oval wrought-iron hibachi with small wooden feet squats on the picnic table. It has two adjustable grills, each not much bigger than a piece of toast. My father extracts little black pillows of charcoal from a colourful paper bag. We watch closely, squinting into the smoke as he struggles to light them. The smells of lighter fluid and burning newspaper mix with the fragrance of the pine trees.

Eventually, we eat warmed-up hot dogs and drink red Kool-Aid. This is the first time we have ever had hot dogs or the special soft buns that go with them. Until today, we have only seen Kool-Aid in advertisements on our new television set.

My father, tall and balding, is peering down into the viewfinder of his camera. Firmly holding the twin-lensed body of the camera at his waist, he focuses on the unforgiving glare of his wife. He doesn't ask us to smile.

My mother says she wants to go home. And six years later, she does.

Carolyn Montgomery formerly worked in the field of medicine. She is an emerging writer of fiction and non-fiction and recent graduate of the Writer's Studio at Simon Fraser University. She lives in Vancouver.

V4G 1N4

BILLEH NICKERSON



If you search
V4G 1N4
on Google Maps,

you'll discover
it's in Delta, BC—
a city named

after the triangular
tract of land
at the river's mouth.

You don't have to be
a delta lover
to appreciate this,

nor should you ignore
the beauty
of the small red knob

that pinpoints
the journey
to pleasure.

*Billeh Nickerson is an editor and educator whose most recent collection, *Artificial Cherry*, was nominated for a *City of Vancouver Book Award*. He's permanent faculty at *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*. He lives in *Vancouver*.*

I Won't Clean the Tub

KATHRYN MOCKLER

He said he just wanted towels. There was no reason to be afraid

I worked as a chambermaid in a small hotel in Montreal the summer I graduated from Concordia University. It was a four-storey grey building near Mount Royal. Maids were instructed to knock on all doors before we entered and not to clean a room if a guest was still in it. Doors were always to be left open. I remember being told these rules when I first started, but I was more concerned about learning how to correctly make a bed. My boss was a harsh woman with straight hair tied back in a bun. She was tall and thin and had excellent posture and looked more like a ballet teacher than a hotel operator. She wore green dresses and a strong-smelling perfume that lingered in the hotel rooms and hallways long after she had checked on my work. She was very strict, very unfriendly and very concerned about my hospital corners, which I always failed to get right. "Why can't you learn to do this properly?" she would say as she demonstrated for me for the tenth time how to make a bed.

Working at this hotel is where I discovered the custom of leaving tips for chambermaids. Once I got a twenty-dollar bill. I was afraid it was too much money, so I took it to my boss.

"What should I do with it? Should I keep it?" I asked.

"Why shouldn't you keep it?" she said. "They left it for you. Of course you should keep it."

Despite complaining about my bed-making ability and that I worked too slowly, my boss left me alone most of the time. Sometimes I would do my whole shift and not see her once. I was the only maid Monday to Wednesday, and she worked the front desk answering phones and greeting the hotel guests. The hotel was empty during the day on weekdays. The best rooms to clean were on the third and fourth

floors. These rooms were the brightest and biggest and had blue and green and yellow floral curtains and bedspreads. Each had a small desk for letter writing supplied with hotel stationery and pens. The biggest room had a love-seat that I liked to sit in. Often these rooms had families staying in them. I always felt envious of the families on their vacations, their tourist pamphlets spread out on the bed or on the dresser. I looked through the pamphlets even though I wasn't supposed to. I wanted to be these people travelling to the art galleries in old Montreal, stopping for lunch, having café au lait on a patio. I did not want to be me, who was not only not travelling but also scrubbing pubic hair off their toilet so it would be clean for them when they returned from sightseeing.

The worst rooms to clean were in the basement. These were single-occupancy rooms where mostly older men stayed for long-term accommodations. The basement smelled musty and was dark. The windows were small, the rooms no bigger than closets. The men that stayed in here never tipped and always left the rooms filthy.

I got to the basement on a particularly quiet afternoon well after three o'clock. I knew I was behind schedule, but also knew there was only one room to clean. I quickly grabbed the metal doorknob and knocked. There was no answer. I knocked again and said, "Maid service," but heard nothing, so I pulled out my key and opened the door. The room was dark and the curtains were shut. A man around forty was sleeping on the single bed near the door. I apologized and retreated into the hall, but he said, "It's all right. Just clean while I'm in here. I want the garbage taken out and new towels. You don't need to vacuum."

I paused for a moment. "I'm not supposed to clean while guests are in their rooms," I said.

"It's fine. I don't mind," he said.

I left the door open and brought my cleaning supplies into the bathroom with my head down.

The room smelled of urine. The toilet looked like it hadn't been flushed in days. I turned away from it almost gagging and stood in front of the mirror. I was about to clean it when I heard the door of the hotel room click shut.

Suddenly the purpose of the open door rule dawned on me. I tensed and felt prickles of electricity in every pore. Anything could happen down here. The tiny window in the room was tripe-paned and sealed shut. No one ever came into the basement unless it was to clean a room. If I screamed, no one would hear me.

I was too frightened to step back into the room but said from the bathroom in a shaky voice, "I'm supposed to leave the door open."

"Oh, I don't need it open. I'm just going to be sleeping," he said.

"My boss wants us to."

He didn't answer.

I couldn't move for a moment. I had to figure out what to do. If I ran out of the room, there was a chance I could unnecessarily escalate the situation. He said he just wanted me to tidy the bathroom. He said he just wanted towels. There really was no reason to be afraid, I tried to tell myself.

I wiped the mirror quickly, my hands shaking. My throat was so dry I could hardly swallow. I said to myself over and over—I won't clean the tub. I won't clean the tub. I won't clean the tub. As if declaring I wouldn't clean the tub would somehow protect me in this situation.

It was when I bent down to empty the garbage that I saw them. Ten or more used condoms strewn haphazardly around the bathroom floor. And in the garbage bin, a stack of *Penthouse* magazines, which were wet.

Fear has no time for disgust in

moments such as these, so I quickly emptied the bin into my garbage bag and picked up the condoms with a paper towel and threw them in too. I gave the sink a wipe, grabbed the dirty towels, and stepped back into the small, stale, dark hotel room where the man was face-down snoring.

Holding my breath, I walked across the room to the door, frightened he might grab me on the way, but he didn't. I silently berated myself for being so stupid as I turned the handle on the door. In one second it would be over, and I would never set foot in a room with a guest in it again. Never ever, ever again.

Just as I was about to make my escape with my cart down the hall to the elevator and back up to the reception desk, with its fake rubber tree plant and my boss waiting to admonish me with a scowl, the man said, as if he had never been asleep, "Did you put the fresh towels in the bathroom, love?"

I hadn't. I forgot.

"Not yet," I said, trying not to sound afraid.

"Could you please?" he asked.

I gathered some towels for him slowly and debated whether I would go back into the room when I heard the basement door creak open.

It was my boss. She was walking toward me. She was furious. I smelled a strong waft of her perfume as she stood before me.

"You haven't finished yet?" she said. "Why are you so slow? You are slower than any of the other girls." Peering into the room, she saw the man on his bed and frowned.

"He wanted some fresh towels," I said in a way that almost sounded like I was defending him.

"Sir, she cannot clean the room if you are in there." My boss took the towels out of my hands and put them at the end of his bed. "If you'd like your room cleaned properly, you must leave before two-thirty."

The man ignored her and turned over on his side with his back to us.

She shut his door loudly and then looked at her watch. "It is half past three. You should be finished by three. I cannot pay you if you take longer than anyone else to do this job. Today I'll pay you until three-thirty. Tomorrow I will not. You must learn to work faster. And you must learn to follow the rules."

I started to cry.

"Why are you crying?" she said.

"I don't know," I said, wiping my eyes. But I did know. I was crying because I was relieved.

Kathryn Mockler is the author of four books of poetry and six short films. She is the Canada Editor of Joyland magazine and the publisher of The Rusty Toque. She teaches creative writing at Western University and runs private creative writing workshops.

Self-Publish.ca

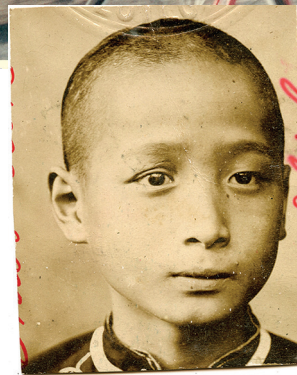


**All you need to know
about
SELF-PUBLISHING**

**Call for a free
consultation
604-929-1725
info@self-publish.ca**

**The Vancouver Desktop
Publishing Centre
4360 Raeburn Street
North Vancouver, BC**

HELPING SELF-PUBLISHERS SINCE 1986



What Survives

CARMEN TIAMPO

My great-grandfather exists now only in memory, unacknowledged even by his tombstone

My great-grandfather was born Chua Tiam Po in the first few years of the twentieth century to a silk farmer in the Fujian province of China. He was not the first son, and because of this he was sent away from home to find fortune elsewhere. He would never see his birthplace again, and perhaps that is why the name that he was born with was not the same one that he died with—Jaime Chua Tiampo.

One story, which I learned only this year from one of my dad's many cousins, says that the boy who became Jaime Chua Tiampo was sent to the Philippines at around the age of eight with an uncle, and that his name was misrecorded by an immigration official at the border. In this story, he may not have taken on his Christian name until many years later. Whether anyone called him Jaime as an adolescent, I do not know.

The story I learned as a child was that the boy born Chua Tiam Po was sent to the Philippines to be the indentured servant of a grocer in Iloilo. The grocer did not have room for him to live, so he boarded with Spanish monks or missionaries. These men were the ones to give him his name and his education.

Whichever story is true—perhaps neither of them—the first known record of his new name, Jaime Chua Tiampo, is in a note from Father Mathias Boonen on the occasion of Jaime's baptism, February 24, 1922.

From photographs I can see how much Jaime loved children; how despite restrained photos with business partners, he was a bit of a goof with family, cycling around a driveway in a full suit, chased by his grandchildren. I never met him; his death preceded my birth by more than a decade. Still

I meet him sometimes in unexpected places: the shape and shade of my brother's eyes; the short knife-edge of my great-aunt's nose; my father as he lets my young cousins bring him to his knees.

My great-grandfather died in Canada in 1980, an ocean away from where he was born. Po, the boy who left China, exists now only in memory, unacknowledged even by his tombstone, which calls him Jaime and is marked with a birthdate that may not be correct. Of his seven children, twenty-two grandchildren and thirty great-grandchildren, four bear his new first name or some form of it; twenty-nine bear his new last name; thirteen bear his old surname.

Carmen Tiampo is a writer and editor. She lives in Vancouver.

The Shī Fu

JOE BONGIORNO

"Do you want to meet the master?" Dino said

This way," my colleague Yang said. She led me into the waffle house on the first level of a high-rise building complex in Zhu Bei, a city of about 175,000 people in the north-west of Taiwan, made up of half-empty luxury condos recently built to house the engineers working consecutive twenty-four-hour shifts at the Science Park. There had been three cases of death by overwork in the previous nine months, yet I had come for peace of mind.

It was a typical August night: 38 degrees with 97 percent humidity. Sweat was dripping down my chin. When I opened the door of the restaurant, a blast of cold air hit me.

"You can sit here," Yang said with a slight bow. We sat at the booth across from a petite middle-aged woman.

"My English name is Chlorophyll," the woman said, bowing her head again.

"Chlorophyll?" I said.

"Chlorophyll," she said.

"Nice to meet you," I said, registering it as another memorable English name I encountered in Taiwan, like Sarin and Hamburger.

"Please order something. My treat," Chlorophyll said in staccato English, handing me the menu. I thanked her, accustomed to having every member of Taiwanese society offer to pay for my meals or undercharge me for a service on account of my white skin. I ordered the ham and cheese waffle and a tapioca pearl mango drink. Yang, smiling dutifully, didn't look at the menu.

"You are English teacher?"

"Yes."

"English is very important," Chlorophyll said and then giggled for no apparent reason.

"Yang and I work together at the

international school," I said, glancing at Yang, who smiled, revealing electric pink braces. "She asked me to come tonight."

I had revealed to Yang my interest in going on a Buddhist retreat and she had assured me she knew just the place.

"So why you want to meditate with us?"

"Happiness," I said, sucking the tapioca pearls up the straw. "Achieving enlightenment, breaking the endless cycle of pain in the pursuit of possessions, that kind of thing. I need, you know, direction."

"I see," Chlorophyll said, looking impressed. Yang nodded.

I took a bite of the waffle and chewed discreetly.

"Joe," Chlorophyll said in a low voice and hunched forward. "Do you want to meet the living Buddha?"

"You mean like the Dalai Lama?" I said.

"Who?" she asked, exchanging words with Yang in Mandarin.

"Our master, the Shī Fu, is the living Buddha. You are so lucky to live in his lifetime."

"You're saying the Buddha lives here in Taiwan?"

She nodded. "Maybe it is like, how do you say, destiny."

"Maybe," I said.

"Yes," Yang joined in. "I think you will say that you are changed after you meet the Shī Fu. He change all our lives. Before, my mother and I argue all the time. Now we are daughter and mother again. You will see," she said confidently. "He free us from our pain when we meditate with him."

I pictured the hand of a stranger reaching out and resting on my forehead, releasing me of twenty-seven years' worth of anguish. "Awesome," I

said with a mouth full of cheesy waffle, wiping the crumbs from my mouth with a napkin.

"You will see," Chlorophyll repeated. "Are you excited?"

"Very excited," I said.

"Oh," Chlorophyll said, looking at her watch, "it's time to go. We are getting late."

She paid for my meal and we took the elevator to the eleventh floor of the same building. When the doors opened, two doormen in matching purple tracksuits and earpieces stood inside. One of the doormen placed a blue sticker on my shirt.

"What are the stickers for?" I said.

"Blue is for visitor. Yellow is for member and orange is for the elder brothers and sisters," Yang said, pointing to the orange sticker on her breast.

"This way," Chlorophyll said, leading me through the narrow white-walled corridors lined with queuing members of all ages in identical purple T-shirts. I wore shorts, flip-flops and a tank top that revealed an excess of body hair. We went up several flights of stairs, skipping past more doormen and brothers and sisters.

Before moving to Asia, I'd read the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and renounced the degeneracy of Western values. I thought I'd climb a mountain summit to meditate with om-chanting monks and purge myself of angst and cynicism. Instead, I was in the long hallways of a converted office space above a waffle house. Still, I was willing to ignore my surroundings for a chance at finding something greater than myself. I breathed in, imagining the mental fog clearing out in a moment of cleansing. Maybe by the end, I would have Yang's optimism and calmness of spirit. Maybe I could finally be a better person.

"I want you to meet someone," Chlorophyll said, gesturing to someone standing behind me. "His English better than me. Come, Yang, we must help the brothers and sisters prepare for the next service."

"See you soon," Yang said, flashing her sparkling pink braces.

I turned and looked up, meeting the eyes of a towering, big-boned brother in eyeglasses and a purple T-shirt.

"Hi, I am Jun, but my English name is Dino," he said.

We shook hands.

"This is where you register." He pointed to a group of people, who were lined up at what looked like a checkout. "I will translate for you. I am mechanical engineer, but I also study English."

The woman at the checkout handed me a ballpoint pen and a document written in Mandarin.

"Okay, so write your name here," Dino said.

I wrote my name in big round letters.

"Now, it cost three hundred New Taiwan dollars," Dino said. "That includes permanent use of the facilities."

I handed over the money, the equivalent of fifteen Canadian dollars. The woman at the checkout searched through her fanny pack for change and handed it to me. She typed my name into the computer system. Then she gave me a receipt and a nametag with a barcode and proceeded to the next person in line.

"Remember," Dino said, "it's tax deductible, so keep the receipt."

I folded the receipt and put it in my pocket.

"This way," he said, bringing me to a space walled off by a room divider. "I show you how to meditate. Please, sit down on the mat."

I sat down cross-legged, facing Dino.

"First, back straight," he said, politely clearing his throat. "When you hear this chant," he said, and chanted something in Mandarin I did not understand, "you must bring your hands together, putting your left thumb over your right thumb. This is Diamond Lotus mudra. Raise your hands to your head and kneel forward to show respect to the Buddha. Focus

on the heart chakra in the centre of your chest and curl your tongue. When you hear this chant," he said, and chanted again in Mandarin, "you raise your head and repeat."

I repeated the words and gestures, misplacing my hands and mispronouncing the words.

"Now, when you hear the chant," he said, chanting again in Mandarin, "you repeat, changing focus to the third eye chakra." He pointed to the space between his eyebrows. "Then you will hear the same chant again and you must repeat, focusing on the master's loving kindness."

"What do the chants mean in English?" I asked.

"Gratitude to the master. Praise to you, master," Dino said, his face lighting up with an expression of tranquility. "If you don't speak Chinese, you will not understand in your mind, but you will understand in your heart. When we talk about the master, we are filled with his loving-kindness," he said. "Are you ready?"

"Ready," I said, getting up from the mat.

He led me to the doors of what looked like a tightly packed conference room. Brothers and sisters sat cross-legged on the floor and the old and disabled sat on foldable chairs along the walls.

"You may go in," he said and bowed.

I stepped in, sitting in the first available place. A man on the verge of tears spoke passionately in words incomprehensible to me, repeating "Shī Fu" again and again. He bowed and let a nun dressed in black and white robes standing on the pedestal take control of the service. She spoke slowly and sedately. Behind her hung a life-sized portrait of the Shī Fu. He looked like an average, white-collar Taiwanese man in a white robe and a jade necklace. He posed in the lotus position with palms skyward.

The nun spoke in Mandarin and soon my mind began to wander. After what felt like an hour I was submerged



THE UNIVERSITY
of ALBERTA PRESS

*Poetry, science,
ecological calamity,
and human-driven
climate change.
Where do we fit in
the universe?*



Welcome to the Anthropocene

ALICE MAJOR

96 pages

Robert Kroetsch Series

978-1-77212-368-5 • \$19.95 paper

Poetry / Canadian Literature

ORDERS 1-800-565-9523

INFO ccrooks@ualberta.ca

uap.ualberta.ca

in the undertow of boredom and incomprehension. Thoughts of filing taxes, Pilates and my receding hairline emerged in my mind. Then the meditation finally began and I was caught off guard. I mispronounced the words; my gestures were off cue.

Then it was over.

The brothers and sisters bowed. We left the room.

"Joe!" I heard someone call.

I turned around. It was Chlorophyll.

"How was it? Did you *feel* it?"

"I'm not sure," I said. "I don't think I understood anything."

"You must be humble."

"Humble?"

"Yes, humble," she said. "Be humble and accept the Shī Fu into your heart."

I nodded. I knew I was probably in the wrong place, but nirvana was worth another shot.

A few days later I took a deep breath and opened the temple door. The doorman scanned the barcode on my nametag, checked something off on the clipboard and placed a yellow sticker on my breast.

On the second floor, Dino was waiting with his hands clasped behind his back.

"Hello," Dino said with a slight bow and friendly smile. "Happy to see you again."

"Yes," I answered, taken aback by his sudden appearance. There didn't seem to be anything nefarious about him, no ulterior motive, only a clingy sense of goodwill.

"Right this way," he said, once again escorting me past the purple queues to the doors of the packed conference room.

"See you soon," he said with another bow of the head.

For the next hour and a half, I sat cross-legged in agony, focusing the energy in my being on absorbing the testimonials, prayers, or whatever it was they were saying. Again the first speaker was on the verge of tears.

Then a monk took control of the service. He spoke in Mandarin. I found my mind drifting again. And then it was over.

Dino was waiting for me by the water cooler, polishing his glasses.

"How was it?"

"Good," I said.

"I have great news," he said. "Follow me and we will explain."

I followed him to an office. A scrawny, spectacled man sat behind a desk. Yang was sitting on a couch. A woman with a yellow scrunchy in her hair brought me a cup of oolong tea.

"Hello," said the man behind the desk. "I am Gino. Sorry, my English is not so good." Dino stepped in to the office.

I looked around the room for a second. There was a calendar with a picture of the Shī Fu blessing his disciples; the clock read 10:30 p.m.

Gino began to speak and Dino translated. "You have great fortune. This weekend, the brothers and sisters are organizing a trip to Taipei to meditate with the master."

"Three thousand people," the woman with the scrunchy said.

"Do you want to meet the master?" Dino said.

"Well," I stumbled for a second, glancing at the picture of the Shī Fu. I imagined his hand reaching for my forehead. "Sure," I said.

"You must practise to cleanse yourself of karma," Dino translated.

"So," I interrupted. "If I meditate and follow the path of dharma, can I achieve enlightenment?"

"You must let go and let the master take away your bad karma," Dino said.

"So, if I do that, can I..." I began.

Just then Gino and Dino spoke to each other in Mandarin.

"The Shī Fu," Dino began again, "is like Jesus or Mohammed. He listens to Rú Lái."

"What's Rú Lái?" I asked.

"God," Gino said firmly.

"God?" I said.

"The Creator," Dino said.

I glanced at Yang. She sensed my discomfort, and tried to defuse the conflict with her beaming pink smile.

"We must tell others about the Shī Fu," Dino added, handing me a ballpoint pen and a document with an X on a dotted line. "Sorry, we not have in English."

I looked at the paper.

"This paper say you agree to tell a new person every day about the Shī Fu," Dino said.

"Every day?" I asked. "So this is a contract..."

"It can be friend, family or colleague. Anybody," Dino said.

The pen shook in my hand as I signed.

Yang exhaled in relief.

"Great. Now to see the master you have to wear correct clothes," Dino explained. He opened a box on the floor. "The T-shirt is three hundred NT, the sweater three hundred fifty NT and the tracksuit is five hundred NT."

I took out my wallet, hoping it would spontaneously combust as a warning sign, but I needed to see the Shī Fu and stare divinity in the face. I took out three one hundred New Taiwan dollar bills and handed them over. The woman with the scrunchie handed me a purple T-shirt.

"You have to wash it inside out," she said. "It must not touch dirty clothes. Wash it alone. It has the spirit of Rú Lái."

The tag read 100% cotton, made in Bangladesh.

In a colossal gymnasium at the National Taipei University I sat cross-legged and hungover among three thousand people, focusing on my posture and the gases expanding in my gut. Dino took a seat at my right.

We faced a stage where a lotus-shaped pedestal with a gold-coloured cushion on it sat. A large idol-like portrait of the Shī Fu hung on the wall.

Loudspeakers played what sounded like Chinese pop music, except the only lyric was Shī Fu. Then the music stopped and a woman took the stage.

"She says thank you for being here," Dino whispered in my ear. "Also, there is a donation box in the front. The master isn't working today, so he can't make money to eat or buy clothes."

"What do you mean he's not working today?" I whispered back.

"Miao Chan, our Shī Fu, is a lawyer," he said.

"The Shī Fu is a lawyer?" I asked.

"Yes. For one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in Asia," Dino said. He smiled with pride, not seeming to find anything suspicious or bizarre about worshipping a corporate lawyer.

"I see," I mumbled.

"She is introducing the Shī Fu," he said, closing his eyes. "When the master comes, he will take away our suffering."

The brothers and sisters closed their eyes, but I kept one open, watching the Shī Fu take the stage with slow deliberate steps. With immaculately combed hair and a slim physique, he looked exactly like the man in the portrait, only shorter. Gently, he took a seat on the pedestal and sat in the lotus position. I stared at the guru, imagining him levitating and hypnotizing the crowd with his deep, resonant voice. Instead, he cleared his throat and spoke in a nasal tone. I sat, enduring the pain in my knees, searching for the message, but the longer I looked, the more I felt like I was watching a con artist.

The Shī Fu spoke. The crowd responded in unison. Very slowly, the Shī Fu rose. The crowd of purple-wearing followers bobbed back and forth, eyes tearing with gratitude as their master spoke over the loudspeakers. The moment of liberation had come: the Shī Fu spread his arms like Jesus on a crucifix and his

disciples leaned their heads back and pushed out their chests.

I looked around at the brothers and sisters around me. I watched their jaws slacken and muscles unknot.

"Gratitude to the master."

"Praise to the master."

I closed my eyes, forcing myself to ignore all better judgment. My heart raced but I muted all thought, inviting the Shī Fu to cleanse me of the sorrow accumulated over infinite lifetimes. My muscles unknotted and my jaw slackened. For a single moment, I sat numb and stupefied, but when I opened my eyes all I could see was a diminutive lawyer, posing with his arms open on a university stage. One muscle at a time, I rose to my feet and walked out the back door.

Joe Bongiorno writes fiction and non-fiction. His work has appeared in Carte Blanche, Existere, the Headlight anthology and Writings. He teaches high school and lives in Montreal.



**LITERATURE FOR
THE REST OF US**
Subscribe to *Geist*

Go to geist.com/subscribe
or call 1-888-GEIST-EH

GEIST
IDEAS + CULTURE • MADE IN CANADA

FINDINGS



Photos from No Sleep, a series of photographs of a city bench in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, from Tom Burrows, curated by Scott Watson and Ian Wallace. Published by Figure 1 in 2018. Tom Burrows's work has appeared in solo exhibits, and private, public and corporate collections in Europe, Asia and the Americas. He has been a leading figure in Vancouver's art scene since the 1960s. In 2015, the exhibition at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery was the first major survey of Burrows's work. Scott Watson is the director of the

A New Confessor

ERIC DUPONT

From Songs for the Cold Heart. Published by QC Fiction in 2018. Eric Dupont has published four novels. He is a past winner of Radio-Canada's "Combat des livres," a finalist for the Prix littéraire France-Québec and the Prix des cinq continents and a winner of the Prix des libraires and the Prix littéraire des collégiens. He lives in Montreal.

In the family portrait taken by Marmen the photographer in June 1968, Louis Lamontagne and his wife are sitting on a loveseat upholstered in a magenta floral print on a chestnut background. Irene is dressed in black, and is wearing the look of someone who has lost something important and is wondering wherever it might have gone. Between husband and wife, an

empty space, large enough for a child to sit in. Standing behind them, their two oldest children. First Marc, an attractive, austere young man, looking every bit like he'd just stepped out of a Botticelli self-portrait: the same fleshy lips, the same hungry and languorous eyes, his hand on the frail shoulder of his big sister Madeleine, who's standing tall and proud

as befits a Lamontagne, although everyone knows, without being able to explain exactly how or why, that her mind is occupied with some complex mental arithmetic, as is a Caron's wont. She's wearing a pale-coloured dress. A necklace. Her hair nicely done. Of course she's pretty! Doesn't she look like Mireille Mathieu with her hair cut in a bob like that? The Lamontagne parents, sitting on their love seat, are looking their age. Irene especially. Dark rings, crow's feet, practically ostrich feet. Papa Louis now has a round belly, greying temples, weary eyes. But he's still the best looking of the bunch, closely followed by his son Marc, a dangerous rival.



Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery and the head of the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia. Ian Wallace has taught art history at the University of British Columbia and Emily Carr University of Art + Design. He received the Governor General's Award for the Visual Arts in 2004 and was appointed Officer of the Order of Canada in 2013.

But where has little Luc gone? The dreamy child who needed his meat chopped up for him?

It must have happened shortly after John F. Kennedy's assassination. Luc, then nine, was playing with a Caron cousin, a boy a little younger than himself. Still in the imaginative world they had created for themselves, no one else was allowed into their childish games. Papa Louis had strictly forbidden them from running around the caskets in the basement and from getting too close to the room where he embalmed the bodies. Fear of Luc's father had kept them away, but curiosity had drawn them back. And that's how, during a game of hide-and-seek, Luc had slipped inside a huge oak casket. He'd

had a hard time opening it, but it had closed over him in no time at all. The cousin counted to one hundred upstairs. Marc was looking on, having been vaguely told to keep an eye on the boys that afternoon. Papa Louis had business in town; Irene was out running errands. The cousin began to look for Luc in the upstairs bedrooms, a decision that, many would later say, played a part in the tragedy. Not finding him upstairs, he made his way down to the basement. Nothing. Alarmed, the cousin reported Luc's disappearance to Marc, who helped him look everywhere a second time. It was only when Madeleine came back from Solange's house that light was shed—literally—on the mystery. Generally more observant than her

brothers, Madeleine had long since noticed the youngest child's interest in what went on in the basement and, paying no heed to Papa Louis' warning, Madeleine, with Marc's help, opened the lids of the four caskets that took up half the basement. She found young Luc suffocated in the smallest casket of all, his skin blue, his face scratched. He had ripped his hair out. It was this detail that would haunt Madeleine in her dreams. In the room beside them, a dead body was waiting for Papa Louis to return so that his wake could begin. Madeleine's first reflex was to go get Solange, who could do nothing more than call for help. Soon the shouts of the cousin, traumatized for life, began to alert the neighbours on Rue

Saint-François-Xavier, then the rest of the parish. News of Luc's accidental death flowed across Rivière-du-Loup like lava spreading from above the church of Saint-François-Xavier, running down Côte Saint-Pierre and Rue Lafontaine and passing by the convent, emptying it of its nuns within seconds. The news spread from house to house, making its way in through upstairs windows and out through basement window wells. No one was spared, not even Louis as he sipped his gin at the Château Grandville, not even Irene as she tried to decide between two ties at Ernest & Paul. The further the news made its way down the hill, the more it got distorted. Still in its purest form when it reached the convent ("Little Luc Lamontagne has been found suffocated to death inside a casket"), by the time it was half-way down the hill it had become "Marc Lamontagne shut his little brother Luc inside a casket and he died, suffocated to death." And when it reached the bottom, the news had been completely distorted. Now barely recognizable, it travelled all the more quickly. Now it was "Marc Lamontagne strangled his little brother Luc with his bare hands and tried to hide the body in a casket" and "Marc Lamontagne is coming down Rue Lafontaine armed with an axe—hide your children!" The news finally spilled into the waters of the St. Lawrence, a stretch of the river that forever after would retain a greenish hue, the colour of slander.

Irene arrived on the scene a little before Louis. People still maintain to this day that she raced into the house with a full head of red hair and came back out completely white, like Marie Antoinette on the scaffold. Papa Louis had to push his way through the crowd that had gathered outside his house. A handful of the Sisters of the Child Jesus were praying out loud, hands in the air, as though warding off ill



From Weegee: Serial Photographer by Max de Radiguès and Wauter Mannaert. Published by Conundrum Press in 2018. Max de Radiguès is a comic strip writer and publisher at L'Employé du Moi located in Brussels. His latest book, Bâtard, was awarded

fortune. Outside on her porch, Mrs. Bérubé was staring at the ground.

"A defenceless child," she sighed.

Little Luc was buried in the casket that killed him. His wake lasted only a few hours, the time it took for half the town to file through Papa Louis'

parlour. The religious service, sung by Father Rossignol, who sobbed and spluttered his way through it, stayed with those fortunate enough to attend, not only due to the horror and gravity of the event, but also because they were witnessing on that cursed Sunday

OVERUSED WORD ALERT ►

"Streamline"

HOW TO STREAMLINE YOUR IDEA: In the midst of our thoughts, it is common to experience the so called 'Aha' moments. Such moments happen when you discover how unique your idea is. **APP TO STREAMLINE REC**



the Prix de Lycée du Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême. Wauter Mannaert is a comic artist, illustrator and cartoonist.

the beginning of Louis "The Horse" Lamontagne's decline. The organist, thinking he was doing the right thing, decided to play a solemn, serious piece at the beginning of the funeral service. The Lamontagnes, sitting in the front row and looking the worse for wear,

didn't pay the music the slightest bit of attention, except when Papa Louis stood up, strode from one end of the church to the other, walked up to the jube, and interrupted the musician.

"I want you to play 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring.'"

The organist, a small, spindly man, as dogmatic as he was effeminate, sat dumbfounded for an instant.

"I... no. It's not appropriate. It's not for funerals, Mr. Lamontagne."

The congregation craned their necks toward the jube. Louis' voice rang out, sounding unmistakably like he had more than a few drinks in him.

"Play Bach, I'm tellin' ya!"

The organist stood, and in a scholarly, didactic tone committed the worst mistake of his existence.

"I know you're upset, Mr. Lamontagne, but that piece you're so fond of is simply not played at funerals. It's for Christmas or Easter, not for funerals."

Everyone held their breath. Was Louis on the verge of taking a man's life at the very place where his own had begun? His huge frame swayed back and forth, his arm slowly took the impertinent fellow by the throat, and the shouts—

"You little bespectacled apostle. You're gonna play what I want or God help me..."

Mother Mary of the Great Power, who had immediately foreseen Louis' intentions, raced up to the organist to prevent the worst. By the time her hand came down on Louis' arm, the poor man's feet had already been thrashing in the air for interminable seconds.

"Louis, for the love of God," she murmured.

The giant's hand opened and the organist fell to the ground like a sack of corn. Down below, people sighed with relief. Louis went back to his seat only when he realized that Mother Mary of the Great Power was going to play "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" herself. He sat back down beside Irene, who was paralyzed by grief and hadn't even noticed the commotion. Madeleine was sobbing noisily, accompanied by Marc. The cousin just sat

there, stunned. His eyes never left the casket. Truth be told, he was desperately hoping this game of hide-and-seek would be over very soon. It had gone on long enough. As the congregation looked on in horror, he stood up, walked over to the casket that was much too big for a child, and knocked on it three times. There's no way of knowing just how many people in the church hoped or thought they might see a repeat of Old Ma Madeleine's miraculous resurrection in 1933. But this particular casket remained unmoved. It was Marc who got up to lead his cousin back by the hand, his eyes lost in a far-off world. The music of Bach cast the scene in an unreal light that was both unlikely and magnificent.

Little Luc's death was treated as a tragedy that had befallen the entire community. For the longest time, the Lamontagnes had been the butt of gossip and idle speculation, although they were also admired by their peers. Now they were martyrs, bejewelled with the permanence of tragedy. When mass ended, the casket was carried out by the drama's survivors: Louis, Marc, and Madeleine on one side; Irene, Solange, and Siegfried Zucker on the other (Zucker had happened to be in Rivière-du-Loup on the day Luc died). Their gaze was steady and proud, bordering on presumptuousness, betraying no sign of any effort whatsoever, as they carried the casket out of the church, slow and steady, just like Papa Louis had showed them, like American G.I.s. We are devastated, but we are strong. That was the message the funeral march conveyed to the music of Bach. "Joy of man's desiring." That's what the Sisters of the Child Jesus muttered to themselves under their breath. All had insisted on attending Luc's funeral,

even Sister Saint Alphonse, who was spotted shedding a tear or two as the casket passed by. Outside, fine early-winter snow twirled its way through the air, as though to cover the ground in a white blanket evoking the purity of the soul God had called back. That, at least, is what Father Rossignol maintained once the family had gathered around the grave. One week after the funeral, when the poor boy's body had scarcely begun to decay in the casket that was too big for it, the very same Father Rossignol paid the Lamontagne family a visit. He insisted on speaking alone with Papa Louis and Irene, then alone with Irene. His intentions were clear, and he didn't back down at Irene's incredulous expression. She would have to have another child.

"But, Father. I've just buried one. I mean, how can I put this...?"

"All the more reason to proceed as quickly as possible. Your family is on the decline. Time to restock!"

"I'm thirty-five, Father."

"All the more reason to be quick about it, Irene. Plenty of women give birth at your age. Only yesterday we baptized Louisa Desjardins' eighth child. And she's the same age as you."

"Yes, but I have two already and—"

"Mrs. Lamontagne," the parish priest interrupted curtly. "You aren't standing in the way of the family, are you? Has the television filled your head with such notions? All I can do is express my joy at the prospect of baptizing another Lamontagne next summer, or perhaps he's already on his way? Little Luc was nine years old, after all... I do wonder what you're waiting for. Think of the consequences."

Irene fell silent. The priest left the living room and bade goodbye to Louis one last time, who was busy nursing a gin toddy in the kitchen. Irene no more felt like bringing

another child into the world than she did drinking a bottle of bleach. Without a word to her husband, she helped him finish off what remained of the gin. That's what they'd done best together for the past few months: hit the gin. Papa Louis lit a cigarette and smoked in silence.

Three months later, when Irene's belly remained obstinately flat, Father Rossignol made good with his threats. In front of a packed church, he refused Irene communion. She didn't understand and tried to take the host, thinking it must be some kind of joke as the priest pushed her back. Irene returned to her seat, overcome with shame. A murmur ran up from the nave to the jube and back. The Sunday sermon dwelt on the dangers that new media posed to right-thinking French Canadian families. Irene was dumbfounded. Humiliation slowly worked its way through the rock of her piety like a powerful solvent, leaving behind scars, opening cracks in places once presumed impenetrable. The silence was the final touch to the destruction started by Father Rossignol: Irene could now imagine Sundays without communion. Would she die of hunger? Would she perish, struck by lightning or crushed by a falling block of ice? For the first time, she was tempted to find the answer to such questions. What would be would be. Shame dogged her; people turned their backs on her for months. At last they knew: she was the end of the world. Priests have a knack for making things clear.

And so there was no little Luc in the photograph of June 1968. Five years after he left this world, he still seemed to be everywhere: in the wrinkles that lined Irene's face, in Papa Louis' white whiskers, in his brother Marc's stunned gaze, and on his sister Madeleine's tormented forehead. ☹️



The Crow Commute. From Urban Wildlife by Kevin Lanthier. This ongoing photography project explores the experience of the wildlife living amongst us in our cities. Lanthier lives in Vancouver and at kevinlanthier.com.

Bitch Face

ANDREW BATTERSHILL

From Marry, Bang, Kill. Published by Goose Lane in 2018. Andrew Battershill is the fiction editor of This magazine. His first novel, Pillow, was longlisted for the 2016 Scotiabank Giller Prize and the 2016 Sunburst Award, and shortlisted for the 2016 Kobo Emerging Writer Award. He splits his time between Vancouver and Quadra Island.

For Tommy, it was only possible to rob someone when they appeared to him a blurry, Caucasian shape rather than a living, 3-D teenage girl whose life was just as unique and special-feeling to her as his was to him.

His bad eyes were a big reason Tommy had gotten into mugging, as

opposed to any other kind of theft, since it was the kind that didn't necessarily involve night vision. The kind where somebody with experience will tell you your first time: just close your eyes and do it. For Tommy, that was perfect, since he could stare people in the eye like a wild dog, and just be seeing what

most people see when they relax their whole eyeballs.

Tommy wasn't sure what the exact definition of legally blind was, but he felt confident it would be insensitive to call himself that. He'd had too many prescriptions to keep track of, and none had fixed his vision all the way. Most helped most of the way, got him seeing straight with his glasses on or his contacts in, getting by, driving a car. But he never got the perfect pair—his vision always stayed that little bit askew, tilting off into swirls and vagueness. So he was not, probably, legally blind. Just very, very shitty at seeing things within twenty feet.

He'd prepared for the girl to be a bit of a tough nut, thirteen years old, bright

concerned with streamlining the squad rather than adding to it today. COLD BREW TEA IN LEMONADE FOR A STREAMLINED ARNOLD PALMER: Lemonade and iced tea are two refreshing beverages and, when combined, they get even more so. FOOD AUTHORITY STREAMLINES IMPORT PROCEDURES: ABU DHABI: The Abu Dhabi Food



Olympic Village Beavers. From Urban Wildlife by Kevin Lanthier.

blond hair and dark black eyebrows, leaving her crumbs on the table, shoving her way out the door and scowling into the welcoming brightness of the late afternoon. Already looking mean enough to teach middle school, let alone be in it. He reached her in perfect stride, at the perfect spot, and slid an arm over her shoulders, subtly twisting his body around to block her (and the fact that he was covering her mouth) from the street. She immediately bit his hand, and Tommy sucked in breath quickly, removing the knife from his pocket and directing her eyes towards it with his own.

"Okay, Bitch Face, give up the bag. Give it up. Give it up. I will stab you if you scream."

He retracted the hand and wiped it on his shirt, only succeeding in spreading her thick spit further across his hand.

The girl didn't look even a little scared, just grudging. She probably reacted the same way to movie theatre ads about turning off her cellphone. Her demeanour bluntly depressed Tommy. If he couldn't even put a scare into a thirteen-year-old girl, it really was time to get out of the game. She sullenly dropped the bag to the ground, and Tommy scooped it up with one hand, replacing the knife in his pocket with the other.

"It's not even my computer. You smell like onions."

What a little shit, Tommy thought,

everyone smells like onions—calling people out on it was breaking the agreement we all make with each other each day. He turned to go.

"And I know I have a bitch face. People don't need to keep telling me."

This stopped Tommy, and he turned back to her. "How many people have called you a bitch face? I was just doing a thing here."

There are two personality traits required to stay in action as a street mugger for as long as Tommy had. The first is the one most people would think of: being careless or vicious or callous enough to threaten people with a knife and rob them. The second is just as important but more counterintuitive: being nice

and easygoing enough to make and keep friends who are willing to help sell what one steals, and not dime one out if they get pinched.

These two traits exist on a spectrum, and Tommy was about as far as one could functionally be to the likeable side. He would have absolutely no problem fencing this computer and having a pleasant, personally meaningful afternoon

with Bill, his computer guy. He would also, it was starting to seem, have trouble leaving Bitch Face without feeling bad about himself.

She toed the ground and tossed a heavy, limp chunk of hair over her shoulder. "But it was the first thing you thought of, right? Like, randomly, it popped in your head. Everyone calls me a bitch face. Or says I have one."

Tommy was spending much too long in the open here, but something about Bitch Face's prematurely jaded manner tugged at him. He scanned the street, and finding it empty, he looked her in the face, a vague chinook of paternal warmth wafting weakly through him. "You're young. Just... uh... it's also a posture thing. Like, hold your shoulders differently, maybe." 🌿

Retreat

RANI RIVERA

From All Violet. Published by Dagger Editions in 2017. Rani Rivera was a poet. She worked as a community coordinator at Progress Place. The works from All Violet were discovered among her papers after her death.

Mark was the first one to speak at the centre. The first one to break the cardinal rule of observing absolute silence. He had snuck in a couple bars of dark chocolate. The kind you buy at gourmet cafés for five bucks apiece. He told me later that he had noticed a certain sweet smell in my hair after we left the train station to join the others.

"So how many smokes you got?"

"Well, that depends on what you have to trade," I said.

We snuck away after afternoon asanas to take in the scenery and negotiate the terms of our illicit goods. He decided four squares of 75% cocoa for two cigarettes was a fair deal; after all, we were going to be there for ten days and it seemed prudent to ration out the smuggled excess we came there to escape.

He told me later he had been a lawyer for the past ten years and had recently become so disillusioned by the corporate world, he decided

to take a sabbatical and find some semblance of meaning in his life. I looked at him the same way I looked at my sister's friend Dave when he told me he was leaving for Thailand to volunteer for an AIDS organization but didn't actually have to touch the people.

Each time we bumped into each other in the common room, he would find some way to accidentally touch me. He started placing his yoga mat directly behind mine, and grunted heavily after a particularly strenuous pose. Commented to the yogi, since he was the only one we were allowed to speak to, that his hamstrings ached after downward dog and asked if he was allowed to retire early to his room to rest.

So it became a daily routine for us, strolling the grounds solemnly before dinner until we faded out of plain sight to savour his sweets and my smokes. Joined the others in the dining room for brown rice

and beans, both of us conspiratorially full. On the second-last day, I had only one cigarette left and he still had half a bar of chocolate. He asked to kiss me instead. And I let him. I don't know if it was out of sheer boredom or my lifelong addiction to good chocolate.

But nine days of observing almost complete silence, twice daily yoga practices and endless hours of meditation will make even the most earnest adept crazy. Maybe it was some kind of twisted foreplay, extended to ten days of unsought solace and horny sugar and nicotine highs.

After our last communal meal, our guru brought around a donation basket for the centre. Any monetary amount or simple thanks would suffice. Karma was the lesson we were supposed to have learned. Our own and how everything affects everyone at some point. We were finally allowed to speak and Mark asked me why I had really come to the retreat, while slipping me his business card. I told him I had just lost a lover and needed some peace, some time on my own, and placed his phone number in the karma basket when it finally came my way. 🌿

Coyote Heading West

Selected texts from June 2017 to July 2018 of the Coyote Sightings and Attack Log Text Alert Group, a group of East Vancouver residents whose aim is to alert members of coyote attacks via text message. Members text coyote sighting information—time, location, number of coyotes, direction of travel—to a moderator, who relays the text to the entire group. For more information or to join, email vanyotes@yahoo.com.

Solo coyote with black cat in jaws shortly after dawn.

Solo coyote with small tortoiseshell cat in jaws at about 6:15 a.m.

Resident walking two large dogs late in the evening when they came near two coyotes on 1200-block Lakewood just south of William. The coyotes were walking calmly, one on each side of the street, completely undisturbed by the presence of dogs behind them.

Cat collar found on front lawn of its house on 1200-block Lakewood; remains of cat found in 2100-block Lakewood next day. Cat owner always called cat in before dusk.

Solo coyote with cat in jaws, around 7:15 a.m.

Solo coyote with young-looking grey tabby in its jaws running north on Garden around 9:40 p.m.

Solo coyote around 10:20 p.m.

Two young coyotes in Pandora Park, when hazed they separated, then ran at high speed going north from the corner of Franklin Street and Templeton.

On 1700-block East 3rd, about half a block east of Commercial Drive, a coyote walked up the steps to a front porch at about 5:30 a.m. within 2 feet of a cat with its owner having coffee. The owner yelled and gave chase to

the coyote, which ran east toward Victoria.

Solo coyote heading north on Semlin at 3rd.

Two coyotes at Clark and 8th.

Remains of cat, fur and tail, found in 2100-block Semlin; cat had gone missing the previous morning from a neighbour's house across the street.

Two coyotes headed east on Charles Street from Lakewood, one checked alley where resident owns several cats while other sat and waited, then both turned on Templeton heading north at 5:45 a.m.

One coyote spotted at Lakewood and 3rd heading east just before 8 p.m.

Two coyotes at Grant and Semlin at 11:15 p.m., heading north.

What sounded like approximately four to six coyotes "yippping" and howling extremely loudly in the park/bush across from a house at Renfrew and 21st at 2 a.m.

At 8 p.m. a coyote described as very healthy was spotted heading east from the corner of 6th and Garden.

One coyote at 8 p.m., East 1st Avenue and Semlin Drive, last seen heading east on Graveley.

At 12:59 a.m. one large and healthy (not scrawny and skinny) single coyote spotted at the intersection of Garden and East Pender.

At 6:30 a.m. one big coyote crossed the running track at Templeton Park Pool heading from the northwest to the southeast corner (Garden Drive).

At 9:45 p.m. three adult coyotes spotted on Charles Street heading from Kaslo Drive towards Renfrew.

Two coyotes at Pender (2300-block) and Garden, heading west, at 12:08 a.m.

At 10:15 p.m., one coyote was sitting on a driveway at William and Garden. It was chased and took off heading east.

At 8:30 p.m. a coyote was heading east on Charles Street and Commercial Drive.

Just before midnight, a coyote was seen at Templeton and 4th by a person walking her dog. The coyote looked like an adult and stared, not moving, at the dog and person as they walked away.

At 6:50 p.m. a large coyote was seen on William Street between Slocan and Penticton heading west towards Nanaimo.

A cat's remains were found in the 3700-block of East 17th.

Coyote spotted in the 700-block of Campbell Street in Strathcona at 11:30 p.m. It was eyeing a dog but she got away when the owner spotted the coyote.

A coyote was seen killing a cat at Fraser and 8th at 2 a.m.

SHIPPING LANE: Land O'Lakes is a large shipper, and like most shippers its size, moving volumes of freight across the country requires a complex shipping solution. **FDA WILL STREAMLINE DRUG SAFETY EVALUATIONS:** The Food and Drug Administration will soon standardize the way it handles data on the safety and effectiveness of

Member's cat was eaten by a coyote on Sunday, May 13, at Napier and Victoria.

Pet cat killed by coyote at Grant and Penticton early Monday night.

Two coyotes were spotted in the Renfrew neighbourhood near Boyd Diversion at 4:30 a.m.

A group member asks that the group be informed of a TV report of a 3-year-old boy attacked outside his home by a coyote at Duthie Avenue and Kitchener Street in Burnaby, late afternoon. The child needed more than 100 stitches to the scalp.

A coyote was seen at Rupert and 22nd just after noon, heading west.

A non-member informed a group member that their 15-year-old Siamese cat who went missing on June 3 was almost certainly killed by a coyote. They found huge amounts of her fur at William and Penticton near their home.

Group member reported that her friend saw a huge coyote by the Clinton Park playground area (Grant and Slocan) at 4 p.m. on Friday, June 8.

Email report from non-member advised that she saw a coyote a few days earlier running along Parker Street near Renfrew at 1 p.m.

Coyote spotted at 1:30 a.m. at Fraser and 35th entering cemetery.

Coyote seen at Kaslo and Adanac at 1:30 a.m. Member chased it (in car) to Notre Dame School parking-lot.

A non-member emailed that on June

HARLOTRIES, WITCHCRAFTS, COMBAT BOOTS

Excerpted from the Wikipedia entry Maternal Insult.

A maternal insult (also referred to as a “yo mama” joke) is a reference to a person’s mother through the use of phrases such as “your mother” or other regional variants, frequently used to insult the target by way of their mother. Used as an insult, “your mother ...” preys on widespread sentiments of filial piety, making the insult particularly and globally offensive. “Your mother” can be combined with most types of insults, although suggestions of promiscuity are particularly common. Insults based on obesity, height, hairiness, laziness, incest, age, race, poverty, poor hygiene, unattractiveness or stupidity may also be used. Compared to other types of insults, “your mother” insults are especially likely to incite violence. Slang variants such as “yo mama,” “yo momma,” “yer ma,” “ya mum,” “your mum” or “your mom” are sometimes used, depending on the local dialect.

Although the phrase has a long history of including a description portion, such as the old “your mother wears combat boots,” the phrase “yo mama” by itself, without any qualifiers, has become commonly used as an all-purpose insult or an expression of defiance.

HISTORIC EXAMPLES

In the Bible, King Joram is greeted by the rebel Jehu with a hostile expression concerning Joram’s mother:

When Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?”

And he answered, “What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”

William Shakespeare used such a device in Act I Scene I of *Timon of Athens*, implying that a character’s mother is a “bitch”:

Painter: “Y’are a dog.”

Apemantus: “Thy mother’s of my generation. What’s she, if I be a dog?”

Also in Act IV, Scene II of *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron taunts his lover’s sons:

Demetrius: “Villain, what hast thou done?”

Aaron: “That which thou canst not undo.”

Chiron: “Thou hast undone our mother.”

Aaron: “Villain, I have done thy mother.” 🐾

14 they found the remains of a (leg and fur) cat in the bushes in the mid-1700-block of East 7th, sniffed out by her dogs while walking.

Coyote seen in 3000-block Parker Street, back alley, at 8 p.m. heading east towards Rupert Park.

A non-member emailed that he saw two coyotes with a cat at 7 a.m. in the Champlain Heights area.

Coyote seen in 3000-block Parker Street, back alley, at 6 a.m. heading east towards Rupert Park.

Coyote running along Parker Street past Nootka, heading west, around 8:30 a.m.

At approximately 11 p.m. a coyote went right near a woman and her cat on northwest side of Dude Chilling Park.

Two coyotes on Parker Street at Hazelton, 11 a.m.

Black and white shorthair cat remains found at Osler and 70th.

Remains of a black cat (back half, legs and tail) found after dawn on Lakewood between Graveley and 1st. (Front half of same cat was found elsewhere and arrived at Vancouver Animal Control two days later, location found not given; owner was located and lives on south side of 1st Avenue, just west of Lakewood.) [Photos available]

Cat owner emailed that she intervened to rescue her cat from two coyotes at Sherbrooke and 35th in the early morning. She heard a noise on the front porch and opened the door to find one coyote had cornered her cat on the porch while the second coyote was waiting on the sidewalk. She grabbed her cat and screamed and the coyote ran off.

Member heard probable coyote barks/aggressive noises just after midnight coming from the back alley of Parker and Nanaimo.

Friend of member found the back end of a shorthair black cat in her yard in the morning, St. George Street between 16th and 17th.

Remains of an all-white cat found in the morning at Parker and Templeton.

If in Doubt, Cut

A list of instructions to program personnel and film editors to guide the selection and editing of CBC children's programs with respect to the CBC's policy on violence in children's programs.

- 1) Avoid excessive aggression, including all torture and sadistic beatings.
- 2) Avoid animals being hit, or cruelty to animals in any form.
- 3) Children identify themselves with other children. Accordingly, avoid all cruelty shown by adults to children, or children to other children.
- 4) Verbalized exclamations of panic or pain should not be emphasized.
- 5) Avoid lingering close-ups of faces in pain.
- 6) Avoid lingering on painful death scenes, especially when shot in close-up.
- 7) Edit out sequences intended to induce irrelevant tension consequent upon unfulfilled threats or other situations which do not directly advance the story line.
- 8) Avoid scenes in which tension is prolonged without relief. Heavy music, dead silence, and ticking clocks enhance tension, as do scenes shot in shadow or half light. Watch for cumulative tension-building effects, and avoid sudden dramatic noises after a long period of silence.
- 9) Avoid scenes in which wild animals on the loose may come upon a child or pet animal.
- 10) Edit out sequences of ugly or frightening faces emerging from shadow to close-up light.
- 11) Avoid weapons that are easily obtainable by children. These include clubs, razors, knives, bottles, rocks. Avoid hanging scenes, trip wires, booby-traps—things which children can easily imitate. Guns and swords are acceptable if the camera shot is long and there are not multiple intercut close-ups.
- 12) Cartoon material is justified generally by the need for comedy and laughter. Emphasis should be on comedy effected through the sudden reversal of expected action. Avoid comedy that achieves its effect through human indignity. Avoid aggression linked with sexual overtones, or aggression linked with physical or racial stereotypes. Emphasis in cartoons should be on beauty of animation and movement and pleasurable situations.
- 13) Serialized items must not end with tense or bewildering scenes. Editing of segments should provide for natural reduction of action and motion.
- 14) If in doubt, cut. 🐾

Video surveillance replay from a few streets south (Charles and Templeton) shows a solo mid-size coyote trotting south on Templeton, east sidewalk, at 2:06 a.m. carrying (part of) a white cat. It crosses Charles Street and continues south through Lord Nelson School. 🐾

The Scientist

JOCELYN PARR

From Uncertain Weights and Measures. Published by Goose Lane in 2017. Jocelyn Parr's work has been published in France, Germany and Canada in magazines such as Matrix, Grain and Brick. Uncertain Weights and Measures is her debut novel and was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for English-language Fiction in 2017. She lives in Montreal, QC.

In the fall, just a few months before meeting Sasha, I had met Dr. Vladimir Bekhterev, a man who very quickly felt like a father to me. Earlier that same year, I'd lost my own father in a manner that was all too common at the time.

Then, as now, the single most important factor determining one's access to everything, from a job to an apartment to a good man to work on your teeth, was connections. In the early years of Lenin's rule a temporary but insidious capitalism was reintroduced (small shops and tiny plots of land for individualized farming were permitted again, a good thing I suppose, but it made some people very rich). Those were the NEP years, after the innocuously named New Economic Policy, and we called the newly rich class it created the NEP men and NEP women. In those years two incompatible systems further complicated the power of "knowing a guy." Under NEP, the first system concerned one's identification as a member of the proletariat; the second concerned one's ability to contribute to the revolutionary effort. For this reason, a soil scientist from the upper classes could still, in the early to mid-twenties, be considered useful to society, despite a bourgeois background.

By the time Lenin died, it was clear the era of bourgeois experts was coming to an end. Anyone with a damning background had taken

whatever measures possible to rewrite family histories. Faces were scratched out of family portraits. Loving couples divorced. Children denounced parents. People moved from country to city or city to country and, in the process, changed names.

So, a soil scientist could work in the office of the People's Commissar for Agriculture, could even have worked at the same desk in the same office for so long that he remembered the days under the Tzar when it was called the Ministry of Agriculture, and then one day, he might decide he ought to change his name and move far, far away.

My father was that kind of soil scientist.

One day he stopped being my father. He told me about it in a letter, which I read, and then, following his instructions, lit on fire. I was eighteen years old. Whether he'd decided to leave or had been forced to, I don't know. Apart from the salutation, which read Dearest Daughter, the letter barely mentioned me at all. In as few words as possible, he explained that his situation at work had changed and that if he stayed, his future (and mine) would be compromised, which was something he couldn't bear. The letter was written with such concision that I could hear the anguish behind every word. In life, my father had used all the words, all the stories, all the time. Never in my life had he been so cold, never so reasonable. It

was as if he were already gone when he wrote that letter. I cried in angry confusion as it burned but shared my feelings with no one, this also according to his instructions. The only thing he left behind was his pocket watch and something less tangible: a belief in hard work. Amazing how lucky you get, he always said, when you work really hard.

When he was my father, he helped me with my studies and said that, of the sciences, it was the only field of study that would not be corrupted by politics.

In his letter, he admitted that he had been wrong.

It was his friend, then, a man I'd met only once, who got me into university on the strength of Communist connections I did not have and, as such, into one of the only classes Dr. Bekhterev ever taught in Moscow. I called this man my uncle, but we were not related. Connections were different than beliefs. I believed in the Revolution and I believed we could sacrifice our way to progress, but I never joined the Party, so I had no real connections. I couldn't have. In those years, getting into the Party was harder than becoming an academician. I'd attended the Communist youth meetings before the loyalty tests became a standard rite of passage, which was a good thing, because if they'd asked after my loyalties I would have said I believed in what my father had believed: science, and science was separate from politics. Like him, I would also come to realize that I was wrong. Unlike him, I came to believe the reason science wasn't separate from politics was that nothing was separate from politics. Not science. Not art. Not love. In this way, I was like my mother.

So, that first class with Dr. Bekhterev was held in the fall of

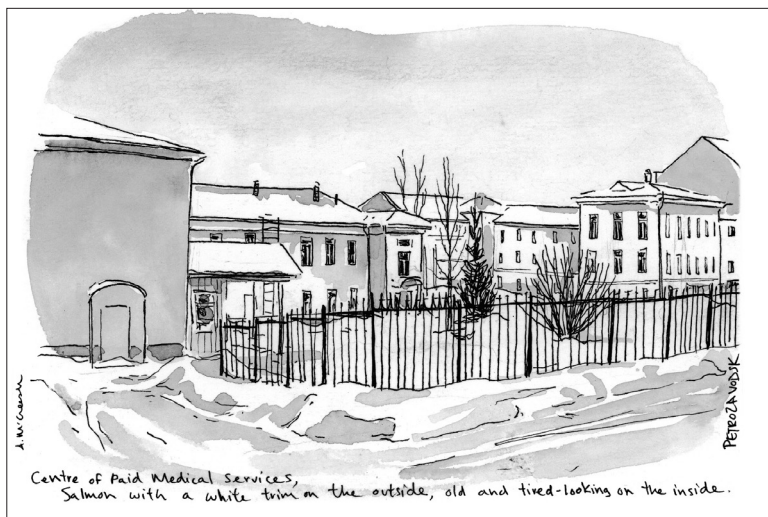
1921, two or three years into my studies. The lecture hall, shaped like an arena, seated about fifty students. The wooden desks perched on steps cut of an ever larger semicircle, so that sitting in the front row felt like being on stage, and sitting in the back row felt like joining the orbit of one of the outermost planets. When the clock shuddered past nine o'clock, a student below me turned back to whisper that Dr. Bekhterev was always late. That student's name was Alexandr Lev Luria. That was how he introduced himself, with all three names. His accent told me he was from Leningrad, though back then we called it Petrograd. Later, we became friends.

Luria was right. Bekhterev was almost an hour late for that first class, but not a single student left the room. I would have left if they had, but they didn't. He arrived carrying a bundle of manuscripts and an overcoat. He was in his early sixties and had the shape and heft of a butcher: broad shoulders, thick gut. From his neck up, he was all hair. His beard, moustache, nose hairs, eyebrows, and the hair on his head sprouted out of him as if from an unrelenting spool of thin, pepper-coloured wire. I imagined someone brushing up against him might come away with small cuts and scrapes.

When I try to describe the force with which Dr. Bekhterev entered my life I feel certain I will fail. I was practically a child then: too young, for example, to know anything about the reputations of my professors. From where I sat, on the outer ring, in my tenuous orbit, ready to be flung out into the deepest black, I had the vague notion that my professors existed only where I saw them: in the lecture hall, in the lab, in their offices. They'd been born with their specializations, just as they'd been born with their eye

colour, fingerprints, and dispositions. They had not studied. No commissar had appointed them, no colleague had denounced them, no experiment had failed, no book had been rejected. They had never been intoxicated by the smell of a woman passing them on a darkening street, nor had they ever experienced rage. They'd never been left off the guest list, nor put on. They had been born professors and would die that way. In short, they were not people.

That year, I had started to lose my eyesight. Nothing cataclysmic. Indeed, the loss occurred so imperceptibly that I hardly noticed it at all. I mention it now because it correlated with the period in which I started to sit closer and closer to the front of the lecture hall, as if being drawn in by a stronger and stronger gravitational pull. Month by month, ring by ring, I approached the front of the room, until one day, I was



Centre of Paid Medical Services, Salmon with a white trim on the outside, old and tired-looking on the inside.

Feb 3, 2017

Dear Kate,

HOSPITAL VISIT

DURATION - 138,5 minutes

52 minutes of combined wait time.
4,5 minutes of consult with physician.
10 minutes of getting lost down halls
and creepy stairwells.
12 minutes of ultrasound.

COST - 1600 RUB (approx \$38 CAN)

700 RUB for initial consult
900 RUB for ultrasound

OUTCOME - The diagnosis

I leave the hospital with a bunch of papers and printouts I can't read. Varvara translates: The bump is nothing to worry about, just something to do with a milk gland. It should go away when I stop nursing.

I am mostly reassured.

Kate ~~_____~~

~~B. 1234~~

Yellowknife, NT

~~YIA 2113~~

Place
Stamp
Here

From *Norths* by Alison McCreesh. Published by Comundrum Press in 2018. Alison McCreesh is the author of the graphic travelogues *Ramshackle*, *A Yellowknife Story* and *Norths*, *Two Suitcases* and *a Stroller Around the Circumpolar World*. She lives in Yellowknife.

sitting in the very front row. When Bekhterev spoke, he spat.

I don't remember the name of the course I took with him, nor even what the university thought we were studying. The discipline was yet to be named, meaning it had no rules. Bekhterev explained the novelty of the discipline metaphorically, that is, by way of the telescope.

We know nothing! he said.

Bekhterev used the word *neuropsychology* and compared the field to that of seventeenth-century astronomy when Kepler's observations of the universe, which had been made with the naked eye, led to a revolution in our understanding of the solar system and our place in it.

When he lectured, Bekhterev paced back and forth. Kepler had deduced from what little he could observe (his eyesight had been severely damaged by a case of childhood smallpox) that the solar system was heliocentric, thus contradicting centuries of astronomy that placed the earth at the centre. A man with blunted sight, said Bekhterev, looking at us with a fierce intensity, think on that.

We are, said Bekhterev, at that very same threshold. Kepler had no telescope to speak of. We have no telescope. He had reason and imagination. We have reason and imagination. To date, about the brain, we know nothing.

The way he talked about what we were doing had its effect: his pursuits became mine.

During Bekhterev's lifetime, we started to think we knew something, but now, I'm not so sure. A little bit more than nothing is still, essentially, nothing. The mathematicians would disagree. They would say that the difference between nothing and a little bit more than nothing was like that between night and day. But I am not a mathematician. 🐼

Chicken. Chicken. Pigeon. Crow.

JAMES WITWICKI WITH 5-YEAR-OLD ANNA

From From the Heart of It All: Ten Years of Writing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, an anthology of work that was produced at the Thursdays Writing Collective meetings at Carnegie Community Centre. Published by Otter Press in 2018. James Witwicki has lived in the Downtown Eastside since 2010. He has documented his journey in poetry, prose and photos as part of the Hope in Shadows project. Anna is now seven and has lived in the Downtown Eastside her whole life.

Organic, free-range, heritage chickens.
Garden-grown, wild raspberry eaters.
Peck. Peck. Peck. Peck.
Each has a different egg.
"Egg, beg, fegs, wegs, legs, lags!"
It's a pecking order.

Cherry tomato gobblers.
Heads upright. Heads foraging in dirt.
Two pigeons and a crow. Sentinels.
"Pigeon, wigeon, stijeon!"
Feathers of many colours,
Many patterns.

Beautiful chickens. Difficult to describe.
Variegated. Var-I-Gay-Tid.
Like the big, brown, beautiful
Speckled eggs.

Is it ironic that the all-white chicken rules?
Her luxuriant feathers cascading
Over muscles that move.
Authoritative. Precise. In charge.

The others may feel that she
Is a nit-pickin', peckin' chicken.
We cannot know.
They pick their way around her.
Obedient. Cautious. Slow. 🐼

Dear Geist...



I have been writing and rewriting a creative non-fiction story for about a year. How do I know when the story is ready to send out?

—Teetering, Gimli MB



Which is correct, 4:00, four o'clock or 1600 h?
—Floria, Windsor ON

Dear Geist,

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



—Dave, Red Deer AB



Advice for the Lit-Lorn

Are you a writer?

Do you have a writing question, conundrum, dispute, dilemma, quandary or pickle?

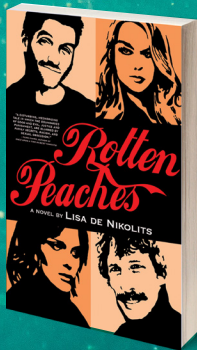
Geist offers free professional advice to writers of fiction, non-fiction and everything in between, straight from Mary Schendlinger (Senior Editor of *Geist* for 25 years) and *Geist* editorial staff.

Send your question to advice@geist.com.

We will reply to all answerable questions, whether or not we post them.

geist.com/lit-lorn

GEIST
FACT • FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



Love, lust,
greed. How far
will you go?

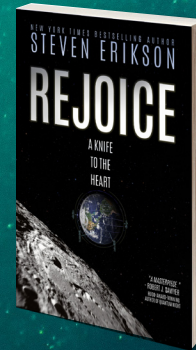
INANNA PUBLICATIONS
FICTION | 978-1-771335294



"...an epic,
rambling...
vastly
entertaining
book."

—Miramichi
Reader

BARAKA BOOKS
FICTION | 978-1-771861472



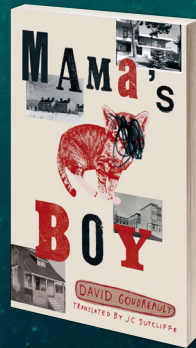
Imagine if we
lost the ability
to hurt each
other.

PROMONTORY PRESS
LITERARY SCI-FI | 978-1-773740126



Three
generations
of women
are shaped
by Toronto's
Hurricane
Hazel.

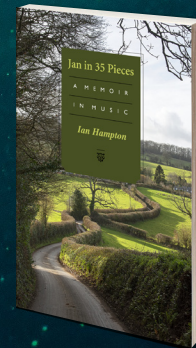
COTEAU BOOKS
FICTION | 978-1-550509335



"Will captivate
you from the
first line!"

—Kim Thúy

BOOK*HUG
FICTION | 978-1-771663823



Jan in 35 Pieces
is smart, playful
glimpses of a life
in music.

PORCUPINE'S QUILL
MEMOIR | 978-0-889844131



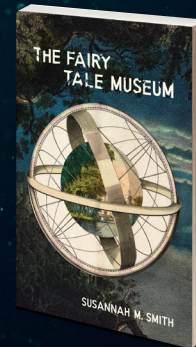
Sometimes it
feels as if the
world has to
end before you
get that new
kitchen.

PALIMPSEST PRESS
FICTION | 978-1-926794969



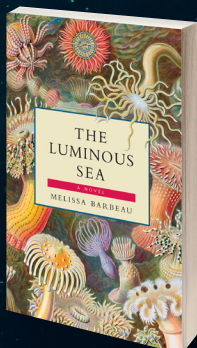
A cartography
and a geography
of Edmonton,
a black-billed
magpie's nest.

THISTLEDOWN PRESS
POETRY | 978-1-771871693



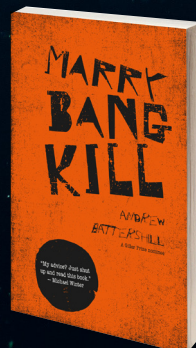
A celebration
of hybrids,
creativity, and
transformation.

INVISIBLE PUBLISHING
FICTION | 978-1-988784069



A stunning
debut,
magically told.

BREAKWATER BOOKS
FICTION | 978-1-550817379



Reservoir Dogs
on a Gulf island.

GOOSE LANE EDITIONS
FICTION | 978-1-773100029



depending on how generous
you're feeling." —Eleanor Wachtel

PEDLAR PRESS
CHILDREN'S POETRY | 978-1-897141878

**DIVE INTO UNFORGETTABLE
READING EXPERIENCES**



lpg.ca

**FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE
LITERARY PRESS GROUP**

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERENCE BYRNES

Underdressed and under-armed, a photographer spends a day with Single Action Shooters

THE TOOL THAT GOES

On a crisp morning late in summer, I drove from Montreal to the Eastern Ontario Shooting Club, where the Ottawa Valley Marauders had donned their regalia for a day of live fire competition and high cowboy fashion. The shooting club sits off a rule-straight gravel road running through dense forest in eastern Ontario farm country, about fifty kilometres southeast of Ottawa. Beyond decorative iron gates at the entrance, rough buildings with galvanized roofs display signs that prohibit early morning or nighttime shooting. A sandy road winds past a single outhouse toward shooting “bays”—flat rectangles of land banked high with earth and sand on three sides to stop bullets. Shooters using rifles, pistols and shotguns stand in the open end of each bay and fire at paper and plastic targets downrange. One of the bays is reserved for the use of the Ottawa Valley Marauders and their dressy theatre of “cowboy action shooting.” A metre-tall, plywood caricature of a suspicious-looking cowboy with pistols sticking out of every pocket, a knife in his boot, and a shotgun behind his back guards the entrance to the Marauders’ bay.

When I arrived, Tim, the Marauders’ Match Director, sporting a broad-brimmed cowboy hat, leather cuffs, studded chaps and a pair of six-shooters, looked worried. He was addressing a group of about twenty men and women—many middle-aged—and a few boys and girls. “Studies have shown that lead is everywhere around your loading room,” Tim warned, sounding more like a health and safety officer than a range hand. “Wash your hands before you eat lunch!”

Some of the Marauders held copies of a glossy chapbook titled *Return to Deadwood* that Tim had

written to dramatize the day’s competition. The story—a loosely connected sequence of scenes about rustlers, “north of the border cowboys,” cattle and Comanches—was a playbook, a rule book and—almost—a play. Each Marauder was expected to deliver a scripted line before firing. The first of these was, “By damn, these are all MY cattle” and the last was, “I knew ya wouldn’t leave me, darlin’!”

When he introduced me to his genteel, costumed gang, Tim announced that I had to have an alias, and a role, like all the others (Tim’s alias is “Highwall Drifter,” after the 1885 High Wall buffalo gun). The group looked at me in a friendly way, but an uncomfortable silence followed. What was my cowboy identity? The Marauders were got up in chaps, long-sleeved shirts, boots, bandannas, leather hats and fringed skirts. Their waists were ringed by hand-tooled leather holsters, Bowie knives and ammunition belts. Days before, Tim had told me that trousers with that newfangled device, the zipper, were discouraged at a match, as were T-shirts or sneakers. He encouraged me to play along.

To prepare for the meet, I consulted the 51-page *Cowboy Action Shooting™ Shooter’s Handbook* for sartorial guidance and found this advice in the “Clothing and Accouterments [sic]” section: “Men, remove the belt loops from the slacks, add suspender buttons, and presto, you have a pair of Old West trousers. Ladies, take the old satin, silk, or whatever formal, add a little lace, change a hem line, add a feather boa, and a hair comb... voila, you’re a saloon girl.”

Although I had worn a brown suede cowboy hat and a tin star proclaiming “Sheriff” to the shooting club, I was clearly an underdressed, as well as under-armed, outsider. There wasn’t much to base

BOOM







a cowboy identity on. As the uncomfortable silence lingered, I opened my camera bag, mimicked a fast draw with my Nikon, and declared myself “Kid Kodak” to everyone’s relieved laughter.

I first heard about cowboy action shooting while on a trip to the US, when an American acquaintance showed me the “studio” where he kept his western movie posters, guns and cowboy duds, as if they were holy objects in a reliquary. His devotion to the old movies and movie stars, to his quick-draw practice and to the sanctity of his weapons ownership was deeply heartfelt, if perhaps a bit loopy. When I high-handedly suggested that cowboy action shooting was a distinctly American game, he twirled a .44, looked at me pitifully and declared, “We’re all over the world.”

He was right. Even in Europe, Australia and South Africa regular folks are duding up as cowboys to bang away at steel targets with antique weapons. Wherever they are, these groups operate under the aegis of the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS), which is based in Edgewood, New Mexico. There are dozens of SASS groups across Canada, including the Ottawa Valley Marauders, whose website extends

a welcome to “*cowboys francophones*.” In the US, SASS adherents hold fairs, build cowboy storefront towns, collect donations for a SASS museum and a SASS scholarship, and are affiliated with businesses that sell SASS merch. Canadian Match Directors’ aliases—“Frenchy Cannuck,” “Sgt. Fearsome NWMP,” “Bear Butte” and others—suggest a more ironic outlook on the roles they play, and drizzle a little maple syrup on this distinctly American approach to frontier-taming, but the play is the same. Cowboy action shooting is highly organized, full-dress cosplay, but—unlike wooden swords at Renaissance fairs or light sabres at Comic Con—cosplay with lethal weapons and a politics that leans in the direction of the National Rifle Association, whose publications speak highly of SASS’s armed “family fun.”

My curiosity about the politics of armed family fun in Canada, the Peaceable Kingdom, was what had drawn me to the Marauders and the gun club. Didn’t our universal horror at dreadful events like the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre, in which fourteen women were murdered by a man with a rifle, and endless stories about the boundless, unhinged zeal for weaponry in the US set us apart?



The Marauders' match began when a woman wearing a pink shirt ringed with a belt of yellow shotgun shells was called to the firing line. She delicately placed her fingertips on the brim of a straw hat that looked more Panama than Pecos, and waited. At a signal, she dropped her hand to her sidearm, angrily yelled a line from Tim's *Deadwood* story—"If there's shootin' to be done, I'm in it!"—and drew her weapon. As her bullets found home, the steel targets rang with tones that were deep and throaty with impacts near the centre, and higher near the edge. Occasionally, I heard a melody in the rhythmically ringing steel. First, "Frère Jacques." A moment later, "Ding Dong Bell." As the shooter lowered her weapon, holstered it, and stepped back, acrid but not unpleasant black-powder smoke drifted in the air.

While I waited for the next shooter to unholster his weapon, the urgent stuttering of modern, semi-automatic rifle fire suddenly erupted from the long-distance rifle range on the other side of the safety berm. In this disciplined group of cowboys and cowgirls slowly cocking, aiming and firing nineteenth-century handguns, it sounded like a signal from the distant future.

There was no talk of gun politics during the Marauders' match. Shooters approached the line in orderly succession and banged away at their targets. One cowboy wearing thick leather chaps and button-fly trousers adjusted his crotch and said, "How the hell did they take a piss in these things?" When I approached the wrong side of a table lined with empty weapons, I was gently upbraided. "Think of lasers coming out of the muzzles," I was told. "Don't get in front of the lasers." One Marauder showed me a small wooden coffin he had made. Grinning, he opened the lid—which was painted with the title "Ruff Justice," his alias, in the form of a cross—to reveal embracing plastic skeletons. Others studied Tim's *Return to Deadwood* chapbook while waiting their turn to shoot.

After the awarding of certificates for best shooting, the Ottawa Valley Marauders concluded their match with a noisy display called "Rolling Thunder," for which the cowboys form a line, shoulder double-barrelled shotguns and fire them sequentially. It was a formal, ceremonial moment like a curtain dropping after a play. Tim policed the line, keeping a close watch to ensure that everyone

maintained a safe muzzle angle. He fretted that the sound effect he wanted would be hard to achieve. To my ear, the first volley sounded pretty ragged. The second wasn't much better. The thunder was there, but the roll was wanting. Nonetheless, everyone seemed pleased. After that, the weapons were checked, sheathed and tucked into cars and trucks. The site was scoured for litter, targets were put away, and costumes were doffed and exchanged for the ordinary clothing of middle-aged men and women who work as farmers, clerks, salespeople, or retirees immersed in their hobbies. The only firing I could still hear was crisp, intense bursts from the semi-automatic rifles beyond the grassy berm.

A short drive away, at Boboul Restaurant & Pizza, in the small town of Limoges, everyone tucked into a late afternoon snack, sitting along either side of a long table. This was the time, Tim had judiciously advised me, for the political discussion. I expected to hear rancour and rage about gun control, but that didn't happen. A few people borrowed notes from the orthodoxy of the Canadian National Firearms Association (NFA)—a virtual NRA proxy that asks, "Why do you support the NFA?" on its website, before supplying the answer: "For freedom"—but no one gave it full voice. Instead, the Marauders repeatedly told me about their adherence to the law, their scrupulous storage of their weapons in gun safes, and their scorn for American products like bedframe mounts for shotguns, and pink .22s for little girls. Dave, an articulate young mechanic who had brought his ten-year-old son to the match that day, recalled that he had had difficulty choosing between the Liberals and the NDP during the last election. None of Dave's fellow shooters cast so much as a disapproving glance when he voiced this opinion. Tim even growled that "the Liberals would be in power forever" if they had a more reasoned and less emotional approach to gun laws. Reason and emotionality, however, were left undefined.

One subject that did catch fire, though, was Kevin Vickers's heroism as Sergeant-at-Arms in the House of Commons. Vickers ended the attack by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who killed Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the National War Memorial in 2014. The Marauders retold the story of Vickers's irreproachable calm and self-control, and his skill with his weapon, with enthusiastic admiration. Although no one seemed to be aware of it, the



irony was obvious. Far-right American dogma calls for gun ownership to protect against government; the Marauders admired the man who protected the house of government.

At the end of the day, Tim handed me a thick manila envelope. It held twelve booklets with match protocols, photographs and wild-west stories that he had written for each event. In full regalia, Tim—already tall and rather stern—had looked larger than life. As he shed his Highwall Drifter identity, his vaguely harassed manner and bald spot, which looked like a monk's tonsure, spoke of his stressful job running live replays for *Hockey Night in Canada*.

When I talked to him about the small number of young people in the Marauders, Tim told me that they were a tough sell. Young people, he said, were taken with so-called “black” weapons, those made of black metal, like the AK-47 or the AR-15, a civilian version of an American military weapon, weapons of choice in current Hollywood movies. Moreover, few of the young people had likely even seen the movies—from *High Noon* to *High Plains Drifter*—that might inspire them to pick up cowboy weapons.

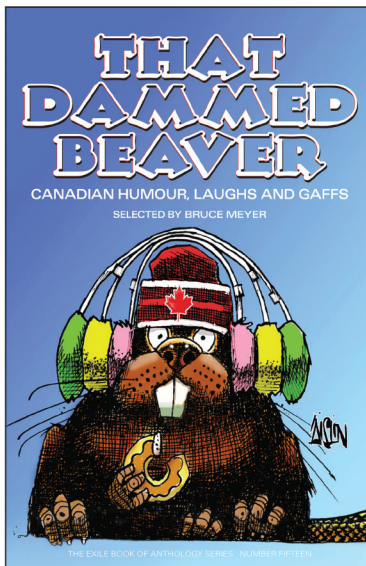
It struck me that these old movies, even if they were grotesque misrepresentations of life in the American west, were often a version of the Kevin Vickers story: a good man (or woman, in the case of *High Noon*) uses the power of the gun to protect others. If the Marauders couldn't have the heroism, at least they could have the style. As I heard Tim,

heavy with weapons and leather, gruffly tell a fellow Marauder earlier in the day, “Look. It's not about how you shoot, it's about how you look.”

By the end of the day, it had become clear to me that firearms don't have intrinsic value or a meaning. They're just “tools that go boom,” as Dave, the young mechanic, said during our post-match snack at Boboul. Their meanings come from the stories, approving or condemning, we make for them. For the Ottawa Valley Marauders, it's the elaborate theatricality that brings them closer to an atavistic sense of heroism and justice. History and Hollywood meet, the past becomes sentimentalized, and pop culture—with the politics it engenders or embraces—follows. However, the experience I couldn't shake after this day of cowboy action shooting wasn't of the cowboys. I recalled instead the sound of semi-automatic fire from the hidden shooting bay at the gun club. It appeared that someone was learning to pull the trigger of his rifle as quickly as possible. This is a skill not useful for a hunter or a marksman, and it was hard not to wonder about the story that shooter might be imagining.

Terence Byrnes is a writer and photographer. He teaches in the Department of English at Concordia University. He won gold at the National Magazine Awards for his photoessay “South of Buck Creek,” which appeared in Geist No. 103. He lives in Montreal.



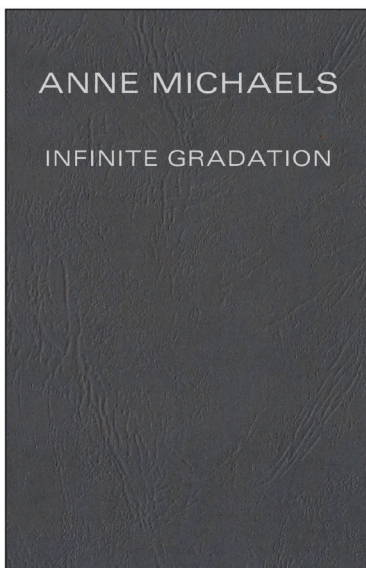


“What exactly makes Canadians funny? This effort from long-standing independent press Exile Editions takes a wry look at what makes us laugh and what makes us laughable.”

—*Toronto Star* books editor, Deborah Dundas

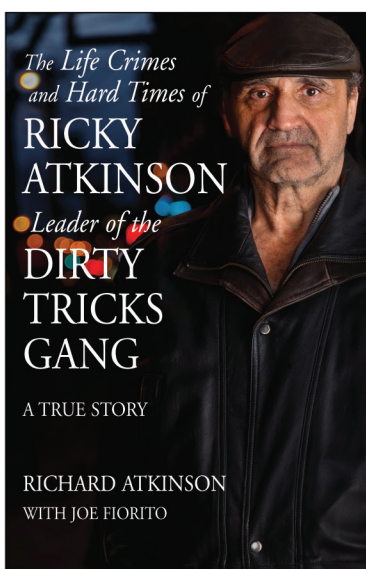
A unique collection of stories and art:

Margaret Atwood, Austin Clarke, Leon Rooke, Priscila Uppal, Jonathan Goldstein, Paul Quarrington, Morley Callaghan, Jacques Ferron, Marsha Boulton, Joe Rosenblatt, Barry Callaghan, Linda Rogers, Steven Hayward, Andrew Borkowski, Helen Marshall, Gloria Sawai, David McFadden, Myna Wallin, Gail Prussky, Louise Maheux-Forcher, Shannon Bramer, James Dewar, Bob Armstrong, Jamie Feldman, Claire Dé, Christine Miscione, Larry Zolf, Anne Dandurand, Julie Roorda, Mark Paterson, Karen Lee White, Heather J. Wood, Marty Gervais, Matt Shaw, Alexandre Amprimoz, Darren Gluckman, Gustave Morin, and the country's greatest cartoonist, Aislin.



At a time when facing death has become an unavoidable topic around the world, this book is an astonishing meditation on death which is to be read as a celebration of life.

Infinite Gradation is a meditation on what art makes of death, and the moral, emotional, and philosophical implications of love and the creative act, especially those creative works that, as George Steiner has said, “make a deposit in the bank of terror.” In lines as precise and profound as any Michaels has written, it is also a lyrically compelling praise-song to love and the enduring mysteries at the core of existence. Michaels considers the lives of certain artists and writers — Paul Celan, Jack Chambers, Eva Hesse, Etty Hillesum, Nelly Sachs and Claire Wilks — who have made work at the limits of experience, in remarkably different situations. Asking urgent questions, she explores how art might serve as a witness *in extremis*, and she examines the nature of responsibility, and the form it takes in poetry, fiction and image-making when everything is at stake.



“Atkinson’s memoir is as riveting as true crime gets... It’s a revelatory and fascinating story told from a rare perspective.”

—*Publishers Weekly Starred Review*

This is the life story of Ricky Atkinson, leader of the Dirty Tricks Gang, who grew up fast and hard in one of Toronto’s toughest neighbourhoods during the social ferment of the ‘60s, during the fledgling Black Power Movement in Canada, and on through the ‘70s and ‘80s. His life was made all the more difficult coming from a black, white and aboriginal mixed family. Under his leadership, the gang eventually robbed more banks and pulled off so many jobs, that it is unrivalled in Canadian history. Follow him from the mean streets to backroom plotting, to jail and back again as he learns the hard lessons of leadership, courage and betrayal.

Today, after reconciling his past and life, he works to educate youth and people from all backgrounds about the no-win choice of being a criminal.

Available in print and ebook formats

Stinky Potato Golem

CARY FAGAN

“What do you really want to do?” Emily asked. “Besides falling in love, because that one is obvious.”

They had been secretive children, with a language of their own, giving each other knowing looks and making other children uneasy. Fraternal twins, they didn't look much alike. He was squat, square-faced; she was round, with bulging eyes and cavernous mouth. They were shunned rather than bullied.

Their parents pushed them to take the usual lessons—swimming at the Jewish Community Centre, piano and violin at home. But they hated any kind of instruction and conspired to lose their bathing suits or get simultaneous stomach aches. Once, he glued two googly eyes and a fake moustache to the back of her violin and pretended it could talk. She laughed uncontrollably, grabbed the violin and beat it against the piano keys until it splintered.

What they loved most were stories, the fairy tales and picture books read aloud by their mother until the girl, who learned to read at four, took over. They didn't like the popular books based on TV shows; they wanted the Brothers Grimm and La Fontaine and Hans Christian Andersen. They never grew tired of hearing about children left to starve in the woods, a stranger arriving at the door with a gift, humans turned into trees, beautiful youths made ugly.

Their parents, Herb and Eleanor Stone, ran a fabric store on Queen Street: cotton, linen, silk, polyester; and also buttons, zippers, knitting supplies, patterns. The store had been started by the twins' paternal grandparents, survivors who had met in a refugee camp after liberation. They had been late to start a family and so they were old grandparents. After they died, they were remembered by the twins as a pair of trolls who kept pockets full of sour candies and spoke to each other in underground troll language.

The family lived on a quiet, leafy street south of St. Clair at a time when every house was filled with three, even four children. The twins were named Hazel and Malcolm, and as soon as they were old enough to run up and down the sidewalk they were encouraged to make friends. Instead, they preferred to play together on the porch, a winter sled turned on its side to bar the step from intruders.

At the age of seven Hazel got the chicken pox and then gave it to a willing Malcolm by rubbing against his bare skin. Bored by the third day at home, Malcolm took a potato from the refrigerator and pushed it onto a fork. He made eyes from different coloured thumb-tacks, a broken pencil nose, an oval red mouth cut from a perfectly good shirt. It came to life when he bobbed it up and down, making guttural noises. Hazel demanded one too so he got an apple, buttons, black wool for hair. On the porch they crouched behind the sled while the two grotesque creatures roared and cackled, spat out strange words, sang and danced. Neighbourhood kids, returning from school, stopped on the sidewalk to stare. Hazel found a voice for hers that sounded demonic. *“Stinky potato golem! Stinky potato golem!”* When the twins were nine, their parents went away for a desperately needed weekend in the Catskills. Upon their return, the twins jumped about their parents, demanding presents. Herb opened a suitcase and brought out two hand puppets. A gentleman in black tie and stiff collar, a princess in a tiara. Hazel and Malcolm snatched up the puppets and ran to Hazel's room. An hour later the parents settled onto the living room sofa to watch a puppet show.

Hazel announced “The Old Crone and the Bum.” From behind the overturned coffee table one puppet and then the other appeared. They had already been messed with, the gentleman’s tie cut jaggedly, jacket stained, and painted cotton balls glued on his face. The princess had lost her tiara and gained dark eyebrows and several warts. The dialogue was shouted, the movement violent. Each accused the other of stealing, spying, lying and farting. They chased each other, battling with a hairbrush and a doll’s plastic leg. At the climax the bum bit a wart off the crone’s nose and ate it, laughing in triumph. But then he trembled and fell over. Poisoned by the wart!

The next Saturday the twins walked through the neighbourhood Scotch-taping signs to the telephone poles.

See a real live show!

Saturday at ten o’clock

89 Winnett Avenue

The Stinky Potato Golem Puppeteers

25 cents

Twelve neighbourhood kids showed up to sit on the floor of the finished basement and witnessed a show about a badly behaved dog, played by a stuffed animal taped to a ruler. The dog howled, tore up newspapers, and almost caused a riot when it peed on the audience (squirt gun). At his wit’s end, the dog’s owner called to life the Stinky Potato Golem, which promptly ate the dog with loud smacking sounds. Then it ate the dog’s owner. The golem made loud burping noises until a human-sized rubber boot came down to squash it. The end.

The children cheered.



Malcolm grew into a burly young adult. For the first time, he separated from his sister (“out of the Soviet sphere of influence” he told his new friends) by choosing Queen’s University for earth sciences. Hazel was now tall and willowy and almost pretty, if rather intense-looking. She stayed in Toronto, going to U of T for theatre. Malcolm came home for the summers and it seemed like a good idea to go along with his sister’s idea of making their own summer jobs by starting a puppet theatre for kids. He wanted to stick with their original name, but Hazel insisted they would sell more tickets as the Merryland Puppet Company. They presented adaptations of *The Ugly Duckling* and *Little Red Riding Hood*, advancing from hand puppets to the more mysterious realm of marionettes, with their fragile gestures and ethereal walk. Malcolm built the skeletons of wood and wire and carved the heads, hands and feet from basswood. Each had one particularly expressive feature—a long nose, sailboat ears, dimpled chin, doe eyes. Hazel designed the costumes, sewing them on a Singer machine that she recovered from the basement of their parents’ store.

They rented the small theatre in the Palmerston Library and built a plywood stage with a curtain. With so many families living downtown and wanting artistic experiences for their kids, they had no trouble selling enough matinee and early evening tickets to pay themselves more than minimum wage. The following year they added a two-week Christmas season. A story in the local section of the *Toronto Star* called the Merryland Puppet Company “a holiday institution in the making.”

The marionettes became more refined, even beautiful. Malcolm, however, suffered from nerves before every performance. Five minutes to the start of the show he would make a stiff-legged walk to the washroom. “Jesus, not the shits again,” his sister would growl. She was a natural performer and the better puppeteer; Malcolm thought her movements a kind of breathtaking visual poetry. But he always got the biggest laughs. Hazel, too, knew her limitations and gave over the clowns and buffoons, audience favourites.

It was Hazel who had the ambition. As soon as they were comfortable doing a show she would say, How about *Rumpelstiltskin*? How about *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*? While they worked in their parents’ basement carving and sewing he would talk about opportunities in environmental risk assessment, but she never mentioned her theatre courses except to call the other students “a bunch of pretentious twats.” After third year he wanted to travel with friends, but she had already arranged for them to take a two-week tour of Europe before starting their summer season. Instead of museums and churches, they visited the Théâtre Luxembourg in Paris (where children still laughed at *Little Black Sambo*), the marionette theatre in the Schonbrunn Palace in Vienna (“Das ist Fleisch?” the wolf asked Red Riding Hood about the contents of her basket), and the National Marionette Theatre in Prague (gorgeous costumes, execrable manipulation). More exciting to Malcolm were the small companies doing shows in fifty- or hundred-seat spaces, adaptations of Kafka and Babel and Gogol that were melancholy, anarchic, surreal, heart-breaking.

“Sure, they’re artists,” Hazel said on the plane home. “But how are they ever going to make a dime?”

During the twins’ fourth year of university, their father had a serious heart attack. He was forty-seven. Malcolm got a deferral of his exams so that he could help run the store while his father convalesced. But his motives were also selfish, for he had met a woman. Her name was Helen Untermeyer; she was six years older and a massage therapist. He worried about telling her—confessing was how he thought of it—of the Merryland Puppet Company, but she found it more charming than peculiar. After all, she said, it was just while he was in school, wasn’t it? He thought working in the store would prove that he could have a regular life, with a respectable job and a decent income. The truth was that he had no affinity for the earth sciences and the store looked like a good bet.

His father recovered and Malcolm stayed. He learned about ordering, inventory control, dealing with the bank. He rented an apartment in a high-rise on Eglinton. Helen found a massage clinic in Toronto for half the week to be with him. His own life began to feel real. And then one evening Malcolm’s mother called to ask whether the two of them might have a little talk.

He went over to the house and they sat in the kitchen, his father having made himself scarce. Of course, she said, they were thrilled by his interest in the business, and they also liked Helen, even if she did have strong opinions. But she and his father were worried about Hazel. Ever since Malcolm had told his sister that he wasn’t going to do the puppet shows this summer, she had fallen into what had to be recognized as a depression. She had grown even thinner. “Hazel needs a little time to adjust,” his mother said. “To figure out other options. In the meantime, I don’t see why you can’t do one more summer. The store isn’t going anywhere.”

Did he have any choice but to agree? And perhaps a part of him wanted to. His mother got up and telephoned Hazel, who came straight over, as if she’d been waiting in the garage.

“You’ve always wanted to do *Hansel and Gretel*,” Hazel said.

Malcolm closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead hard. He tried to imagine telling Helen he was going to be a puppeteer again. It felt as if he might have a heart attack, too.

"All right," he sighed. "But not with a stepmother. With their real mother, as in the original."

"I'll get your sketchbook," Hazel said.

H*ansel and Gretel* became a perennial favourite. *Toronto Life* declared the Merryland Puppet Company a "theatrical rite of passage." There were mentions in guidebooks, blogs, websites. School groups purchased blocks of tickets. Hazel and Malcolm received invitations to perform at theatre festivals in Winnipeg and Albany.

It was Hazel's idea to teach a course on puppet-making for the Toronto School Board. They ran it in a high school shop class and it was Malcolm who proved endlessly patient with the students. Here was how to keep a rasp straight, here was a way to make the marionette's movements feel alive rather than merely realistic.

Helen became just another painful memory. Malcolm earned a wage equivalent to a bookstore clerk or supermarket cashier. He began a relationship with an actual bookstore employee named Monica, who eventually grew bored of him and her job at the same time. Why was he always the one to get dumped?

Due to Herb's continuing fragile health, their parents decided to retire early. They closed the store and sold the building to be converted into loft-style condominiums. The money was more than they needed for a house in a Boca Raton retirement community. Malcolm and Hazel both went down to help them move, and when Malcolm returned he discovered a deposit to his account of four hundred thousand dollars. Hazel had received the same. "Why wait until we're dead?" his mother said on the phone. "We don't need it." For the first time in his adult life, Malcolm had more than what he needed for food and rent and Walmart shirts. He spent three days dreaming of what he might do.

His cellphone rang. "I want you to see something with me."

"What is it, Hazel? I'm kind of busy."

"Busy picking your nose. I want you to see a house."

"You're thinking of buying a house?"

"I'll come by and get you."

The house was two streets west of the Dufferin subway stop, a narrow three-storey semi with a fake-brick face and cement garden. The agent showed them the inside, which looked as if it hadn't been renovated since the Depression. Hazel sent the agent onto the porch and spread some sheets on the kitchen counter. "I had these plans made up. See, we can take down the wall separating the living and dining room to turn the whole front into a theatre. At this end we build a dedicated stage, with wings and flies, a light and sound system, the works. I calculate fifty seats for the audience. We'll be free to run shows for as long as we want. No more dealing with the library schedule. The second and third floors can be separate apartments, one for each of us. No more paying rent. The basement is half finished already. We can make woodworking and sewing rooms. Forget about the school board—we can run our own classes right here."

"What about the zoning?"

"I already checked. We're close enough to Bloor Street to be zoned mixed use."

Malcolm shook his head but he went to pace out the front rooms. "How much money are we talking about?"

"Six fifty. That leaves enough for the renovations. We'll be mortgage-free."

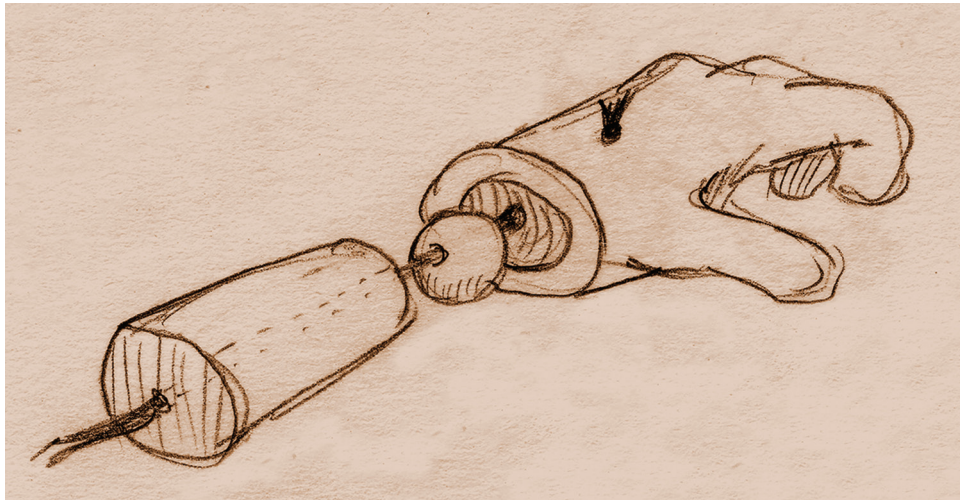
"I was thinking of going back to school."

"For what?"

"Or maybe travelling."

"You don't like travelling. But hey, it's up to you. I mean it."

Was it really up to him? Did he even want it to be? Maybe he'd avoided being the director of his own life.



He took a deep breath. “We have to rake the audience for better sight lines. But we can get sixty-five seats if we plan right.”

He wanted the look of a Victorian theatre in miniature: plasterwork ceiling, velvet wallpaper, light sconces on the walls, brocade curtains. But the mechanical workings—music and lighting, set changes, trap doors, fog—had to be computer-controlled so that the two of them could run an entire show without stage hands. He and Hazel argued over every detail but the results were always better.

Each got to lay out a basement workshop. She needed drawers for fabric, long tables for sewing and painting. He needed sufficient power to run the band-saw and drill-press, rows of chisels and carving knives, heavy worktables with vises.

A high-school kid designed a new website. They began to advertise the inaugural season of the Merryland Puppet Company in its permanent new home. A new show was needed and so, as well as doing the renovations, they had to create marionettes and sets, design the musical soundscape, rehearse the script of *Puss in Boots*. The opening night sold out a week in advance. Parents and kids lined up at the door while Malcolm took the tickets and Hazel worked the concession booth. The audience filled the folding wooden seats, purchased from a demolition company. Backstage, Malcolm dimmed the house lights and Hazel tapped the laptop to start the music. The curtains opened to show a three-dimensional French countryside. A jewelled bird on an apple tree opened its beak and trilled. Then the tree blossomed with white flowers. The audience applauded. Malcolm moved along the platform behind the stage with the controls in his hand as *Puss* entered stage left, tail up. The cat stopped to lick himself, the movements gracefully feline, and then gazed out at the audience, eyes blinking.

A month later the first two weekend courses began, Intermediate Marionette Construction and Performance Basics. Teaching was stressful as they figured out how to make the new spaces work for twelve students, but it was a pleasure to be looked on with a kind of awe, as if they were master artists. Meanwhile, reviews of the new show in the dailies, the arts papers and on CBC Radio were ecstatic. Emails came from puppeteers in South America and Japan, asking if they might visit. The second season was even more successful than the first. Malcolm’s income had risen to the level of a bookstore manager. He tried to judge his level of happiness. There were artistic satisfactions, if compromised. The children of the city were benefiting, so they were doing some good. He was no longer nagged by dreams of a different life; perhaps it was simply too late for that.

At the end of each show they would step out from behind the stage, a marionette in each hand. They and the marionettes would bow as the applause grew louder. Happiness, however, must feel like something else.

Driving home from a Cracker Barrel in Boca Raton, Herb and Eleanor stopped at a red light when a young man in a hoodie reached through the open window to grab Eleanor's purse. The purse was looped on her arm and either she couldn't or wouldn't let go. The man smacked her across the face. Leaning over to protect his wife, Herb took his foot off the brake and the car rolled through the intersection, up the opposite curb, and into a stand of mailboxes.

"A *white* man," Malcolm's mother said when he flew down to see her. "I saw his face." They both had suffered bruises and cuts and sore necks. He could only stay two days, for they were opening a new production of *Alice in Wonderland*. It was the first production for which they had adopted the complicated Salzburg string system and they needed several more rehearsals.

The car still had a large dent in the fender but they insisted on driving him back to the airport. "I made a mistake," said his mother.

"Not letting go of your purse?"

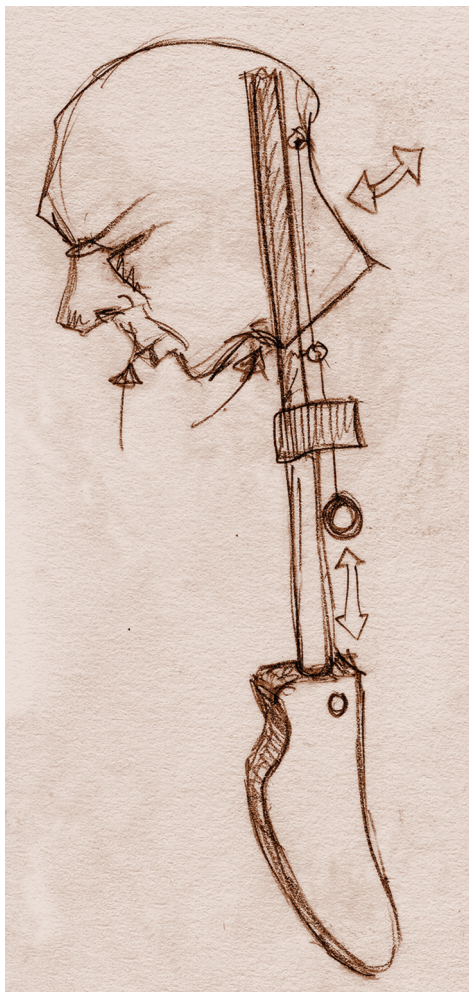
"Feh, not that. Telling you to do one more season with your sister. You could be married to that woman by now. Sandra."

"Her name was Helen."

"I could be a grandmother."

"It probably wouldn't have worked out anyway."

"I thought if you really loved her you wouldn't listen to me. But I should have known how easy you are to push around."



A photographer for *Macleans* came to take portraits of the marionettes as if they were Shakespearean actors, close-ups of sorrowfully tilted faces, beautiful innocence, sly menace. The accompanying article played up the fact of them being twins, but to Malcolm they seemed more different than ever. Hazel was almost gaunt now; her head and hands looked overly large, not unlike a marionette, yet she moved with the grace of a dancer. He had a half-volleyball under his shirt and was losing his hair. Not infrequently she brought a man home (they would have to walk through his rooms to get up to the third floor) and he could hear them rattling her old bed frame. For three months he dated a city hall clerk who couldn't stay over because she had to administer to her aging cats. Then he went back to his one-pot suppers while watching TV or searching eBay for vintage men's hats.

Performing, at least, continued to provide some pleasure. He carved a new wolf for *Little Red Riding Hood*, with deep-set eyes and a more predatory jaw. He altered the voice to match, making it lower and breathier; now when the wolf spoke the children in the audience stopped squirming and became silent with awe.

Hazel's offer of dinner one evening made him suspicious, as she disliked domestic

chores even more than he did. He walked up to her apartment for a meal of roast chicken and potatoes, take-out from the Portuguese place around the corner. Malcolm picked up a *pulke*, as his mother had always called a leg; whatever this was about, he might as well end up with a full stomach.

"There's a festival in Amsterdam coming up," she said, pouring wine.

"In June. I got a notice, too. It's a good lineup, I wish we could afford to go."

"Actually, they've asked me to be an artist-in-residence."

He looked up, the chicken leg posed before his mouth. "How did that happen? Who recommended you?"

"I did."

"You didn't suggest the both of us?"

"They were looking for one. Besides, you hate travelling."

"And you didn't tell me."

"Come on, Malcolm. We're not stuck together like Chang and Eng. It's just for three weeks. We're not performing then anyway and you can run the workshops without me and keep the profits."

"Exactly how do I manage that?"

"Hire an assistant. How about Mark Zelman? He'd be thrilled."

"Mark Zelman still gets his T-bar tangled. Never mind, I'll figure it out for myself."

He felt his face burning and would have stormed out of the house, or down to his own apartment, if the chicken hadn't been so good. Mostly he was angry for not having the courage to do anything by himself.

He remembered they had received a resumé from an Australian woman travelling in North America. He found the email in his trash file; her name was Emily Ravenscourt and she'd already done an internship in Paris and been an assistant puppeteer on a small television show in New Zealand. He emailed her to offer a short-term job, all the while imagining whether there was any chance she'd be attracted to him.

This exciting idea vanished as soon as Emily Ravenscourt appeared at the door. She was just under five feet, piercings in her ears and nose, a tattoo of some Chinese symbol on her neck and another of Elmo above her left breast. Mostly it was the *Dykes Do It Down Under* T-shirt that zapped his fantasy. She unslung an enormous backpack and gripped his hand.

"Malcolm. I'm stoked to meet you. The YouTube clips of your shows are fucking amazing. I'm roaring to get to work."

"Right, well, come in," he said. He had never heard such a thick Aussie accent. Grabbing the straps of her backpack, he could barely drag it into the house.

Emily had agreed to work in exchange for room and board and spending money. He led her up to the third floor, temporarily vacated by Hazel. "Crikey, it's like a dungeon. Who lives here, Morticia Addams?" Emily proved herself a natural puppeteer and it didn't take her long to get the hang of their string systems. She was a much better teacher than Hazel, although his sister would have sneered at how she praised everyone's work. The two of them fell into an easy routine, working side-by-side during the day and eating humble suppers together—bean tacos, scrambled eggs, spaghetti. She told him about growing up on a farm, moving to Sydney for school, her first romance to her present girlfriend back home. She had already decided to return to Australia and train to become a paramedic and ambulance driver. He was all simple admiration for her ability to reinvent herself.

"So, tell me," she said one night when they were eating tuna melts and drinking beer.

"Tell you what?"

"What makes you crack a fat. You know, gets you excited. What do you really want to do? Besides falling in love, because that one is obvious."

"You see this as the night to humiliate me?"

"Come on, do I look like somebody to be embarrassed in front of? I've taken my knocks, I can tell you. It just seems you're less than satisfied, that's all."

"If I could change my life—if I could change myself, I would." He took a swig of beer.

"But I can't. So I'd just like to do some little thing for myself."

"What little thing?"

"It's ridiculous."

"I like ridiculous."

"Fine. Sometimes I think about making a stage that I can carry on my back. Then I'd wander from town to town, setting it up in a square or in front of the town hall. I'd perform for whoever wants to watch, it wouldn't matter how many or whether they were kids or adults. Then I'd move on to the next place. Travel the country. Not with marionettes but hand puppets, like the ones Hazel and I used when we were kids. It's childish, I know."

"No, it's ripper. I wish that I'd thought of it. We can start working tomorrow, after classes. Make your gear."

"You think that's what I want to hear. But it's not."

"Have you got a design for the stage? Something that's light and comes apart. I have a feeling you've got it all figured out in your head."

"Maybe."

"Remind me when your sister gets back."

"Another ten days."

"That should give us enough time. Grab that notebook of yours and start sketching. How many puppets will you need? I'll get us a couple more beers. This is going to be fun."

His idea was a four-sided fabric stage that he could stand inside, the inner supports made from aluminum tent poles. At Mountain Equipment Co-op they bought a two-person tent that had enough orange fabric to repurpose. Fortunately, Emily was a whiz with the Singer. Malcolm tried it out by slipping it over his head.

"It works well but looks a bit boring," Emily said. "What should we decorate it with? A moon and stars?" But for Malcolm that was too obvious. Instead they used overlapping fabric remnants to make a swirl or wave sweeping around the sides. Now it looked as much like a homeless person's tent as a stage.

As for the puppets, he knew what he wanted: characters that could perform an endless variety of improvised little dramas. He sculpted the heads from modelling clay and then layered papier-mâché over them. When they were dry he sliced them apart to remove the clay and then pasted them back together for painting and hair application. Emily helped him to make a boy, a girl, a witch, a man (king) and a woman (queen), a policeman and a fox. They had unevenly placed eyes, crooked noses, fat lips, faces that were lurid green or yellow or blue. Then he made one more, a cloth body with a sharpened stick instead of a head.

"What in the world is that for?"

"I'll have to borrow a potato from a house near every stop. Then stick it on for the head. That's the stinky potato golem."

"You've gone way past me," Emily said with a whistle.

Two days before Hazel's return the workshops had their final classes. Emily packed for her return, happy at the prospect of being reunited with her girlfriend. Malcolm pulled his parents' Oldsmobile out of the garage to drive her to the airport. In the terminal she gave him a fierce hug. "You better keep in touch. I want to hear about that trip of yours. And don't back out! You promise?"

"I was up all night sweating," he said, looking at the departures board, the security gate, anywhere but at Emily. "Who am I kidding? I can't do it. I hate travelling. It was always Hazel who arranged our trips. I have a phobia about sleeping in strange beds. I can't talk to strangers or—"

"That's rubbish. You can figure out how to make it work. I know you can."

"Maybe just planning it was enough. Making the puppets was enough. You better get on that plane already," he said, his eyes tearing up. She looked at him and sighed, tried to say something but for once nothing came to her.

Malcolm waited until he couldn't see her anymore and then took the escalator to arrivals to wait the two hours for Hazel's plane from Amsterdam.

Sitting in a row of chairs, a television nattering above his head, he dozed off, only to wake suddenly as another wave of travellers rolled their luggage out the sliding doors and down the ramp. He didn't know it was Hazel's plane until he saw her emerge with a cartful of luggage and a man helping her push it.

Hazel saw her brother and said something to the man. They pushed the cart toward him. The man was tall, straw-haired and significantly older. "Hey, you're still alive," Hazel said as they approached. "This is Johan. We met the day I arrived. I'm sorry that I didn't let you know he was coming but I wasn't sure how you'd take it."

"Are you a puppeteer?" Malcolm asked.

The man's long face wrinkled around his eyes as he laughed. "No, no, I am not that special."

Hazel said, "Johan is a city planner. His specialty is bicycle routes and something to do with drains."

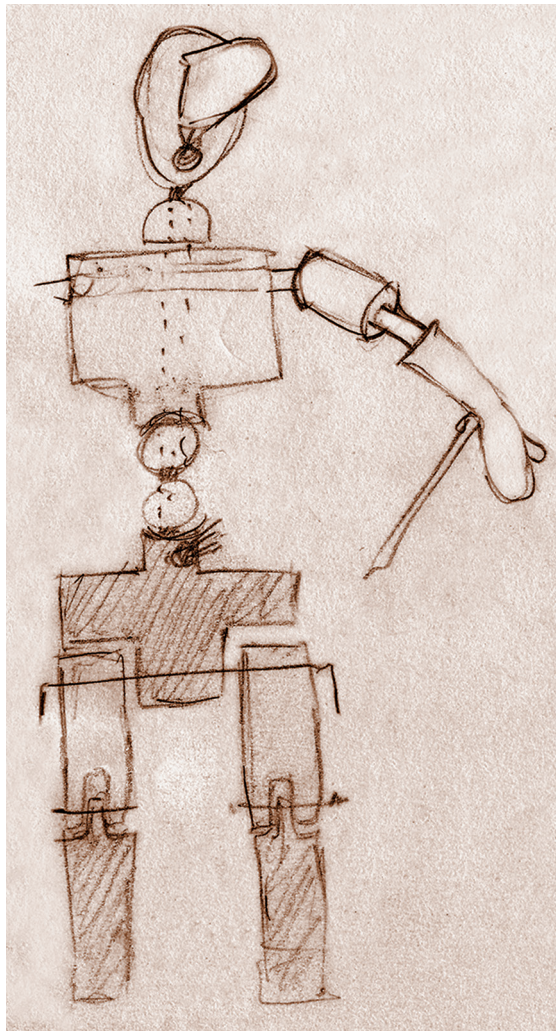
"But I'm retired. Malcolm, I've heard a good deal about you. Especially about when you both were children. But of course I've only known Hazel a short while. I hope we can also get to know one other."

"The car is parked at the back of the garage," Malcolm said. He began to walk, letting them push the cart behind him. That he felt hurt, even betrayed, was to be expected. But that it was also of no use to him was an insight that he attributed to Emily's lingering presence. He told himself to let it go.

Johan was so unfailingly good-tempered that he had the effect of making brother and sister treat each other more courteously. He and Malcolm sometimes had coffee in the morning while Hazel slept in. A few times they went to a nearby pub. Malcolm helped Johan find a Dutch-style bicycle, upright and heavy. One morning Johan came down wearing a suit and tie and bike helmet, mentioning casually that he was going to do some consulting work for the city.

It was to Johan that Malcolm told of his aborted plan to travel across the country with a stage on his back. Late July, a humid summer night, and they were standing on the porch listening to the urban trill of cicadas. "You sound very disappointed with yourself," Johan said.

"I guess. More than that, I'm just sorry not to do it. I need something different, something that I do myself. I just thought this was it. I imagined surprising people, making them laugh, shocking or moving them. I saw myself having interesting conversations after. Probably none of that would have happened anyway."



"Are you afraid to perform alone?"

"No. Nervous but not afraid. That wasn't my problem."

Johan pressed the cold bottle to his cheek. "Maybe you can just take out the part that is holding you back. It's the travelling, yes? But why do you have to travel to do it?"

"I have to find the audiences."

"You can't do it here? Toronto has many neighbourhoods and even more parks. I have been studying them, you see. Why not go to the Beach or to Cabbagetown, to Parkdale or Leslieville or the Junction, Etobicoke or Scarborough? All you need is a Metro pass. You are unlikely to see anyone you know. It will be just as if you've gone away."

"I thought of that at the beginning. It seemed too modest, that I needed something bigger. But maybe I don't. Maybe that would be big enough... I guess it's about as much as I can handle."

"Let's see. Hazel told me she isn't expecting to do any work until late August. So you still have time. Today is Wednesday. Perhaps you could begin on Saturday."

"That's in three days."

"Yes it is," Johan smiled.

They were silent for a while. "All right. I'll do it. But maybe you'll tell Hazel for me."

"If you really want me to."

"Tell me what?" Hazel said, letting the screen door slam behind her.

"Your brother is about to embark on a little adventure of his own."

Perhaps the hardest thing was really telling Hazel. She had questions. Would he pass a hat? (No.) Would he advertise the Merryland Puppet Company? (No.) What exactly did he hope to get out of it? (He didn't know.) She asked Johan to get her a beer from the fridge and when he was gone she said, "It's about time you did something on your own. Personally I can't imagine wanting to do more puppetry in my spare time but, hey, if that's what turns you on. Stand in a park waving your weird little hand puppets. Knock 'em dead, I say. And then you have to tell me everything about it."

He was surprised by the pleasure her words gave him. He finished his beer and went upstairs to send Emily an email. *Johan helped me figure it out. It's kind of like planning to climb Everest and then deciding to stroll to the end of the block instead. But what the hell, and I even got the queen's blessing. I don't have any more excuses.*

Saturday morning: a clear sky and slight breeze. Malcolm stood on the porch, the modified knapsack on his back, puppets dangling from his belt. He had a flat straw hat on his head, an ash walking stick in his hand.

"You look like Henry David Thoreau," said Johan.

"More like a madman," said Hazel. "Do you have the knife I gave you? I mean it. There are dangerous people out there."

"I'd just stab myself." He adjusted the knapsack straps.

"You're going to have a good first day," Johan said. "Now smile while I take your picture."

He held out his iPhone. Malcolm preferred to look solemn. "Are you sure you don't want to take a potato?" Hazel asked. "This strikes me as the strangest question I've ever asked anyone."

"No, I'd rather have to knock on a door and ask for one. Don't worry, I'll be back before dark."

He touched the brim of his hat and went down the porch steps. He would have liked to jump up and tap his feet *à la* Charlie Chaplin but didn't think he could manage it. So without turning around he raised his cane in salute and then went on his way, heading off for the great adventure of his middle life, to make wild art, to entertain the sad and the lonely and the merely bored, and to be home in time for supper.

Cary Fagan is the author of six novels and four short story collections, among them, The Old World and A Bird's Eye. He lives in Toronto.

brokenpencil presents

THE INDIE WRITER'S

DEATH MATCH

YOUR
PROSE
SUCKS.



SUCK
AN EGG,
GARY.

**THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS
ONLINE SHORT STORY CONTEST
IS NOW ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS!**

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2018

DEATHMATCH.CA

Current Phobia

TANJA BARTEL

DREAM JOB

I came up from under the essays,
longed for sea-soaked beaches. A paper hound,
building-bound, I've overdosed on chalk, talk.
Desks, sweater vests. I'm done repeating,
beating the life out of every dead poet.
Which is to say, I want a new job. I'm at a loss.
Where do schoolteachers go when their eyes dry out?
Trolling the job search sites, sending out resumé's,
I hit only my current boss,
with every boomerang I toss.

Been too long indoors, tracing the same halls
like an Etch-a-Sketch. Security footage: me abandoning
my class, disappearing on one screen, reappearing
on another—now with coffee, papers lost. Large bottle
of painkillers in my tote bouncing against my hip
like a maraca, I plod through the blur
to file report cards like taxes. Isolated in my classroom,
I've inflamed passersby with my rants. Each desperate
colleague who escapes my chamber,
wobbles off to clobber a neighbour.

At a posh resort I'll be a dishwasher, that's what.
I'll stand all day—no sitting at a desk for me!—
arms in a mini hot tub, a half-spa, swirling my cloth
in creamy white mugs, facing the ocean
over a silvery sink where cutlery chimes
like lobsters inside metal traps.

Someone quiet and likeable will pass me plates.
My hands sponge gravy, but worry seeps in,
my mind drifts from scraping scraps,
to my stack of job apps.

Customers crowd into my dream, wreck it.
The clatter of others rushing around me. Bastards in line
waiting to pay, staring me down for my greasy whites.
Bitchy customers, their faces through the horizontal space
between eating area and dish pit, where rubber-gloved
arms cycle in an endless waterwheel.
Clean corporate hands straighten silk ties
this way, then that way. A different job is still a job.
The dream dissipates, uncurls like an eel,
circles back to chain me to this desk of steel.

UNKEMPT

Sprung from the hair salon with a smooth
backcombed flip, I looked like Betty Draper
in her fat phase. Went in unkempt, came out
kempt. Asked for sexy-messy beach
hair, paid for a docile bob. Everyone
is trying to tone me down. Inwardly I scream.
I conjure charisma, inventory my expired
cosmetics caboodle. Create infected
smoldering eyes. I believe in pipe dreams.
I am in the age of ointments and creams.

I wear baggy-shouldered blazers, the same
black loafers with various dull skirts.
Know all about healthy eating, *on paper*. Kale
and cauliflower, good; mini-donuts and wieners,
bad. A skinny boy-principal evaluated me once:
stroking his silky chin hairs he nitpicked
while I bootlicked. For relief I cobbled
together a rhubarb cobbler. I climb out
on the ledge, my resolve derelict.
Sometimes I make it out to the cake district.

Sleep deprivation has become a thing. Except
in meetings, screenings. Dream of my dead friend,
a little plump in a red pencil skirt, curled up
with a glass of wine. She drinks forever
in my head at night. Perspiring
and coffeed-up, a beige upholstered creep,
I roam the hallways' 90-degree angles
in 90-degree heat. My deodorant is a liar.

Lately, I want nothing as dangerous or deep
as a good night's sleep.

Love bite, now there's a term I connect with.
Sideswipe, not as much. Current phobias:
allodoxaphobia, fear of opinions.
A class discussion is me talking; yet,
acousticophobia, fear of noise, includes my voice.
Arithmophobia, fear of numerals, is ample
on my bathroom scale. Atelophobia, dread
of imperfection, cowers with atephobia, fear of ruin.
Each morning I awake anxious but cheerful;
it reminds me renewal (not change) is possible.

INEPT

I feed a careworn buffalo in my sleep. She grazes
on my faux pas all night and won't let me rest.
I introduced my neighbour as "the bastard
who parks his motorhome in the cul de sac."
Now he's erecting a higher fence. Don't worry
yourself awake. One day we'll all be released.
It's possible to hate someone after they're dead.
I do it all the time. The alcoholic's children twice
traumatized: years of yelling, then find him deceased.
Maybe I shouldn't have high-fived the priest.

I'm beading my noose to make it pretty.
A flat-footed angel comes to take me home.
Lilac is not my colour. I chop my wedding
ring on the cutting board. Resentment has its
consequences: a pizza stone can be a weapon
or a shield. I sow what I reap.
My Venus flytrap is full. And you
should see what's in the woodshed sometime.
One catheter in a lifetime is too deep.
Maybe it was a mistake to fall asleep.

I drank beer in an inflatable boat within weeks
of nearly drowning in one. If planets
are idiots stuck circling the sun, what chance
do I have? Criminologists say only pedophiles
are incapable of change. Yet the pile
of hamburgers sold continues to grow.
We're diamonds trapped in the record's rut.
I will always love cheese. But there was no
Asiago at the Don Ho anniversary show.

I crave warmth, but knit holes; build
ladders, but can't climb them; smile,
but look medicated; plant peas,
but can't shell them; adore pizza,
but dread the man who delivers it; keep
my pencils sharpened, but to a nub.
Groom myself with an oversized hairbrush
that shreds my skin into tiny white flags.
I'm a shabby cherub.
Still, I forgave myself at Crookback's Pub.

Tanja Bartel is a writer and high school teacher. Her first poetry collection is forthcoming. She lives in Pitt Meadows, BC.

"Dream Job" references "Dish Bitches" by Gabe Foreman. "Unkempt" and "Inept" reference "Tonight's Episode: The Eyes Lie Twice" and "If Jesus Drove..." by David McGimpsey.



"ONE OF CANADA'S MOST
VIBRANT LITERARY
MAGAZINES" – TORONTO STAR

30TH ANNIVERSARY

ON NEWSSTANDS
IN SEPTEMBER

subTerrain.ca

for more info about
30th Anniversary events!

Canada BC Arts Council Canadian Heritage City of Vancouver

subTerrain gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Canadian Heritage, The BC Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts and the City of Vancouver

PHOTOGRAPH BY JENNIFER BROUSE



Room magazine's Contest Calendar

FICTION & POETRY (Apr. 15 - July 15, 2018)

1st Prize: \$1000 + publication in Room

SHORT FORMS (Sept. 1 - Nov. 1, 2018)

1st Prize: \$500 + publication in Room

COVER ART (Nov. 15, 2018 - Jan. 15, 2019)

1st Prize: \$500 + publication on cover

.....

Entry Fee: \$35 CAD (\$42 USD for International entries). Entry includes a one-year subscription to *Room*. Additional entries \$7.

For more information on our contests and upcoming calls for submissions, visit roommagazine.com.

Room
LITERATURE, ART, AND FEMINISM SINCE 1975

Postcard Lit

Winners of the 14th Annual Literal Literary Postcard Story Contest



1ST PRIZE

Pay As You Play

JANET TRULL

There's a prostitute in the kitchen, peeling potatoes, preparing dinner for the kids playing Grand Theft Auto down the hall. There's a terrorist in the backyard, mowing the grass, applying weed killer purchased in Buffalo and smuggled over the border for a righteous cause. There's a psychopath next door, with three young girls and a baby in his basement. He chats with you over the fence and picks up the mail while you're on vacation. There's a murderer getting

her nails done, acrylic with crimson varnish and geometric designs. She's a favourite of the Vietnamese girls because she tips good.

Pedophiles walk their dogs and thieves push grocery carts full of diapers and frozen pizza while world leaders lock themselves in cubicles, praying for one satisfying bowel movement.

Have you heard this one?

A refugee walks into a bar.

"Just water," he says to the server (a single mom with a heart of gold).

She brings him the special. No charge.

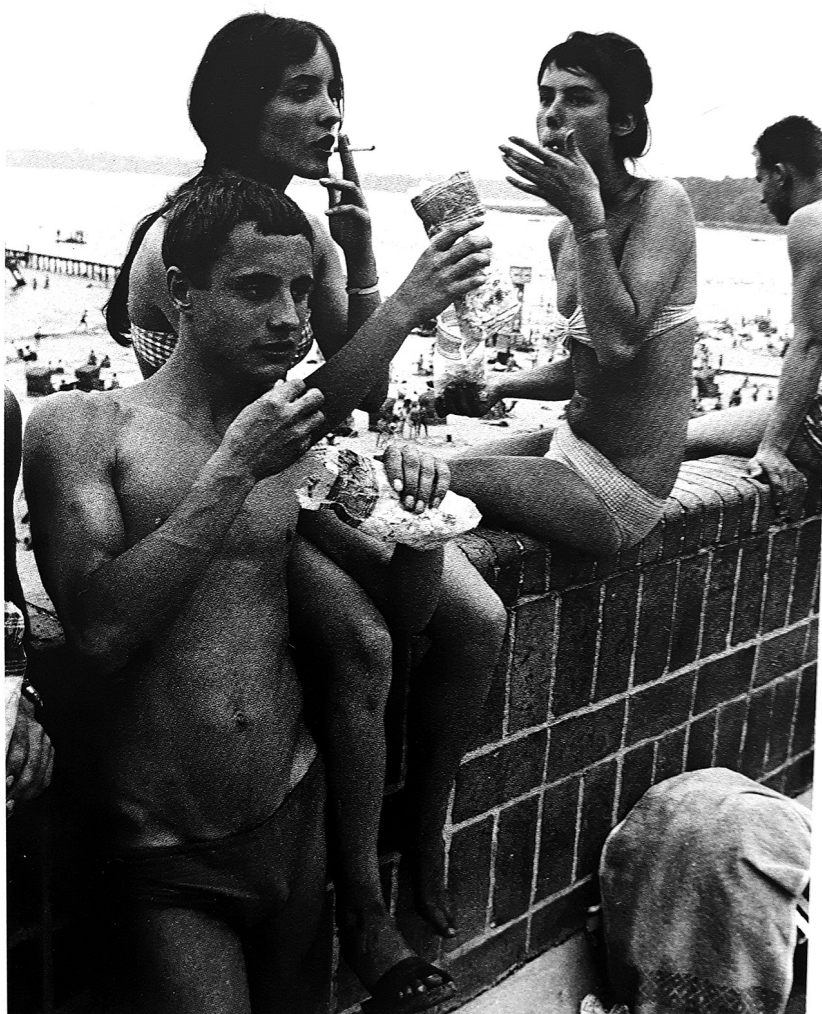
A priest, a rabbi and a pastor capture the good deed from the back booth and post it to YouTube. Then they continue

their heated debate about a golf game they recently had with God.

An officer arrives within minutes. The refugee accompanies him without a whimper. The single mom gets fired. God checks his scorecard and strikes the three clergymen dead. They were right. He did cheat. He can cheat whenever he feels like it.

"It's just a game," he says. "Play at your peril."

Janet Trull's writing has appeared in Prairie Fire, TNQ and subTerrain, among other periodicals. Her collection of short fiction, Hot Town and Other Stories, was published in 2016 by At Bay Press.



2ND PRIZE

Quit

LANA PESCH

Begin by telling no one. Let it happen randomly, like a sneeze. Pick an overcast day in May, cloudy and confined. Make it a Tuesday—a neutral, pale violet kind of day. Cold turkey is too much drama and the patch feels silly, so instead, create a gradual system of elimination. First, you stop the first one in the morning, the most difficult. By Friday, your showers are twice as long as usual and you immerse yourself in work because eleven o'clock can't come soon enough. Busy

yourself by cleaning. Dust behind bookshelves, every single ficus leaf, that mess of cables at the back of the TV. The stereo dials gleam, and when you turn the radio on, a mixed signal blares at you—a Portuguese-speaking newscaster over Adele—because you jumbled the presets in your vigorous wipedown. Three weeks in and you bump the start time. You allow yourself to smoke after lunch. The system is much more difficult than anticipated. Think about wearing the stupid patch. Busy your hands. Bake obsessively. Pinwheel cookies, blueberry muffins, one-bowl brownies. Your colleagues are grateful. Week

six. New start time: 5:00 p.m. Jittery and restless, you can't shake the feeling of a piece of Scotch tape stuck to your finger. You are your own static cling. Popcorn becomes an obsession. Every night you pop a stove-top pot with coconut oil. Add sugar and salt and sometimes cayenne. It's summer now and you remember summers at the beach of popcorn and bikinis, careless and cancer-free. Take up running. Portishead urges you forward on your iPod. It's too hot outside so you run at night. You run like a chicken. New start time. 9:00 p.m. Strongly consider giving up. This is too hard. You don't know this yet, but seven years from now your father will die from undifferentiated-transitional carcinoma. Never smoked a day in his life. Fall. You allow yourself one cigarette a day, just before bed. The patio tomatoes have turned from green to yellow to orange, a miracle of nature. You blow smoke rings that dissolve into the black sky. You can't make it twenty-four hours. Go grocery shopping at 2:00 a.m. and compare ingredients on all the cookie boxes. This takes forty-five minutes. Settle on Oat Crunch, not the worst and you could use the fibre. The apartment is spotless. Rearrange the books, the picture frames, the ficus. Binge-watch three episodes of *The Wire* and stuff yourself with popcorn. Put the books, the picture frames and the ficus back the way they were. No one understands how hard this is. Late September. Ash falls from the morning sky. The neighbour two floors above is on his third cigarette. Grey flecks land on the tomato leaves on your patio garden. The day is overcast and confined—the way you feel—but you did it. You quit.

Lana Pesch is a writer and editor. Her short story collection, Moving Parts, was published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2015, and was shortlisted for the 2016 ReLit Awards.



3RD PRIZE

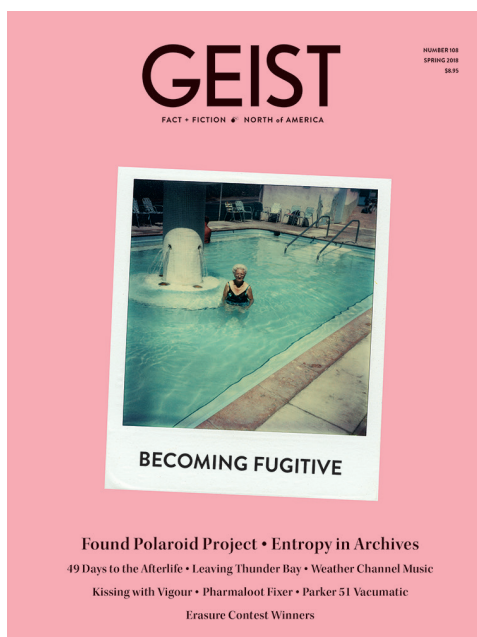
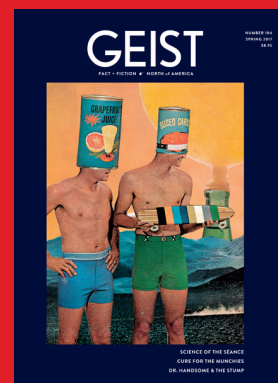
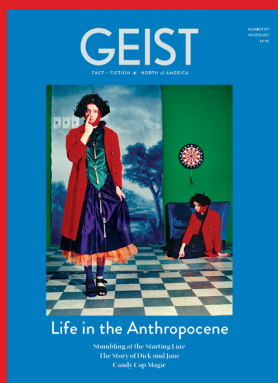
We've burned

TODD BESANT

We've burned the furniture and started on the books. Luckily there's a small library within our palisade. The fuel trucks are still smouldering in what the map calls *terra nullius*. The UN is no help. We were able to clear the orphanage. The toddlers thought it a big game but the infants are not okay. Yesterday we had to repel a scavenger group near the East Gate—I think they were Australians—and one woman was helicoptered out in the night. Something's not right, but the agent offered coupon codes for our trouble. So glad we chose the tinned goods and wild game option. The pool was not as advertised. We'll be home Tuesday afternoon. So sorry you couldn't come with. Next year we'll do something family friendly—maybe Guernica or Sarajevo.

Todd Besant works in book publishing in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He's had stories published by subTerrain and Prairie Fire.

GIVE GEIST. GET LOVE.



Take advantage of the *Geist* Summer offer: give your loved ones the year-long gift of *Geist*—that's four issues of the Canadian magazine of ideas and culture, delivered right to their door.

Order today using the handy form on the other side of this page.

Geist Summer Offer



YOUR INFO...

I HAVE ENCLOSED \$_____ for _____ subscriptions.

☐ Cheque enclosed OR please charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MC

Credit Card # _____

Expiry _____

Signature _____

GIFT FROM

Address _____

City _____

Province _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

☐ PLEASE START my own subscription

☐ RENEW my own subscription

**GIFT CARD
instructions**

☐ Send gift cards to me by mail

☐ Sign cards...

From _____

and mail directly to recipient(s)

GIFT 1 TO:

Address _____

City _____

Prov _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

☐ NEW GIFT

☐ RENEWAL GIFT

GIFT 2 TO:

Address _____

City _____

Prov _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

☐ NEW GIFT

☐ RENEWAL GIFT

GIFT 3 TO:

Address _____

City _____

Prov _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

☐ NEW GIFT

☐ RENEWAL GIFT

GIFT 4 TO:

Address _____

City _____

Prov _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

☐ NEW GIFT

☐ RENEWAL GIFT

US & International: add \$10 US/sub for postage

Geist does not share phone numbers and email addresses but we sometimes share snail mail lists with other like-minded organizations. Check here if you do not wish us to share your address. ☐



FILL OUT THIS FORM

and

give your reading friends the Gift of Geist

Geist Summer Offer

ONE
SUBSCRIPTION

\$23

THREE OR MORE
SUBSCRIPTION

\$19
each

Your own or a gift

4 easy ways to give Geist



Mail this form to:

**GEIST #210, 111 West Hastings St.
Vancouver BC V6B 1H4**



geist.com



1-888-434-7834



subscribe@geist.com

Note: gift rates apply to one-year subscriptions only.
Postage and tax included.

GEIST

FACT + FICTION • NORTH of AMERICA



Caribbean Enigma

STEPHEN HENIGHAN

Unravelling the mysteries of Alejo Carpentier

The Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier wrote some of the classics of the twentieth-century Spanish-language novel: *The Kingdom of This World* (1949), *The Lost Steps* (1953), *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1962), *Reasons of State* (1974). In his fiction, criticism of Afro-Cuban music, and essays on cultural and racial hybridity, Carpentier helped to invent Caribbean modernity. In April 2018 the Nicaraguan novelist Sergio Ramírez, in his acceptance speech for Spain's Cervantes Prize, referred to Carpentier as one of the founders of Caribbean literature. Carpentier's concepts "the Caribbean baroque" and "the marvellous real" inspired Gabriel García Márquez's magic realism and shaped the early works of the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes.

According to Carpentier's book jackets, he was born in Havana in 1904 to a French father and a Russian mother. When he was eighteen, his father abandoned the family and disappeared forever. The young man supported himself and his mother through journalism. By the age of twenty-two, he was the youngest editor-in-chief of any Latin American newspaper. At twenty-four, he left for Paris, where he lived until 1939. The French received Carpentier as a Frenchman. He moved effortlessly through Parisian avant-garde circles, befriend- ing major artistic figures by speaking a French so fluent that Parisians assumed he was one of them.

When World War II broke out, Carpentier returned to Cuba. Here his second marriage ended and his



third marriage, to Lilia Esteban, a much younger neighbour from his adolescence, began. In 1945, Carpentier and Esteban moved to Caracas, Venezuela, where Carpentier wrote three of his major novels. He founded

a public relations firm and became a prosperous businessman. Carpentier collaborated with Venezuela's military dictatorship; his political opinions, as expressed in his journalism, ranged from centrist to conservative.

In 1959, Caracas society was shocked when Carpentier dissolved his extensive holdings and moved back to Cuba to join the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro.

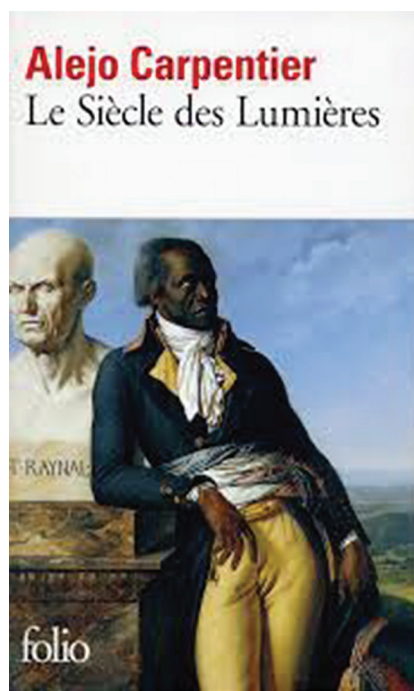
For the next two decades, Carpentier, along with singers like Silvio Rodríguez, was one of the cultural faces of the Cuban Revolution. His brilliant, opaque novels, purportedly nourished by history rather than personal experience, were praised as exemplary Marxist fiction. Carpentier defended the Castro regime tenaciously, even in its most indefensible moments. In 1966, he returned to Paris to work as cultural attaché at the Cuban embassy, a job he held until his death in 1980.

In 1991, Carpentier's second wife faxed his birth certificate to two prominent Cuban exiles. The document revealed that the author had been born Alexis Blagoobrasof in Lausanne, Switzerland. Anti-Castro Cuban exiles welcomed news of Carpentier's foreign birth as proof that he had "betrayed Cuba" by working for Fidel Castro because he was not "Cuban born."

Yet Carpentier's mysteries required deeper explanation. In 1997, I arrived in Havana with a letter of introduction to Lilia Esteban, who was presiding over the Alejo Carpentier Foundation in Old Havana. She gave me a withering look as I entered her office: "Which of my husband's novels have you read?" It took me an hour to convince her I was worth talking to. I spent two days working in the Foundation's archives. Whether Carpentier had been born in Havana, or brought there as an infant, struck me as irrelevant; yet his flawless French niggled at me. Speaking French to his parents at home in Cuba would have taught him the language, but it didn't explain native-level fluency. I was testing a theory that he had spent his high school years in Paris. I knew he had studied briefly in the French capital around the age of ten, as part of a trip his parents had made to Baku, in present-day

Azerbaijan, to visit his mother's Russian family. Had he completed secondary school in Paris rather than returning to Cuba? "No," Doña Lilia said, "my older brothers rode horses with him on the outskirts of Havana when they were in their teens."

Doña Lilia wrote a letter that allowed me to pursue my research in Cuba's national archives. I was exhilarated to get permission to work in the archives, a privilege the secretive



Cubans rarely granted to foreigners. After a day, though, I realized that the material I ordered was arriving in censored form. On a later trip to Havana, in 2009, I found that Doña Lilia had died a few months earlier. The Alejo Carpentier Foundation was under renovation: a new vision of Carpentier was about to emerge.

I didn't think about these mysteries again until early 2018, when I received a padded envelope in the mail. Inside was a book, published in Spanish in Lund, Sweden: *The Enigmas of Alejo Carpentier* by Victor Wahlström. It recounted that in 1989, a suitcase of Carpentier's letters to his mother had been discovered in the attic of a house in France. Doña Lilia rushed to France and, with the help of Cuban diplomats,

reclaimed the suitcase, took it back to Havana and kept the material hidden. This correspondence, made available by the Foundation after Doña Lilia's death, supplemented by meticulous detective work, has allowed Wahlström to establish that after Carpentier's birth in Lausanne, Switzerland, his parents moved to Brussels, Belgium. Carpentier's parents married, separated for two years, reunited, moved to Paris briefly as part of their trip to Baku, then emigrated to Cuba. By this time it was 1914 and Carpentier was ten years old. His late arrival—which he spent his whole life hiding—in the region whose culture he came to exemplify explains Carpentier's native fluency in French, the French *r* with which he spoke Spanish, and even his marriage to Doña Lilia, who was ready to provide the perfect alibi, swearing that she knew the author had been born in Cuba because their families had been neighbours.

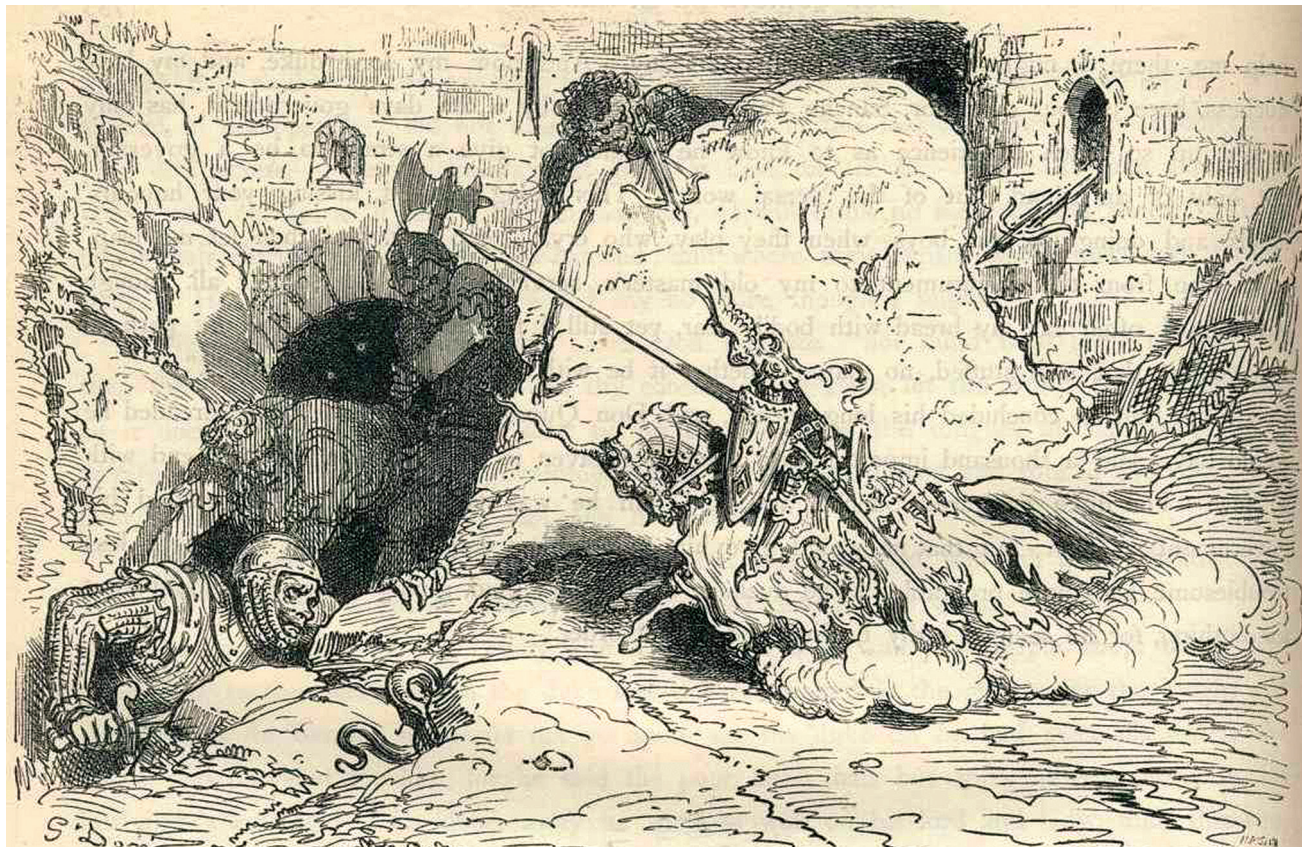
Drawing on these revelations, Wahlström interprets Carpentier's novels not as expositions of Marxist theory, but as expressions of family trauma, haunted by absent fathers and jealous mothers. As Raúl Castro's retirement reshapes Cuba's relationship with the world, the country is reimagining its greatest novelist as an immigrant writer. The nativist rhetoric of the Miami exiles, like the government's nationalism, are yielding to a vision sufficiently flexible to celebrate the fact that one of the defining figures of Caribbean culture—the prophet of hybridity, the grandfather of magic realism, the pioneering critic of Afro-Cuban music—was a European immigrant who was ten years old when he first set foot in Havana.

Stephen Henighan's most recent book is the short story collection Blue River and Red Earth (Cormorant Books). Read more of his work at geist.com and stephenhenighan.com. Follow him on Twitter @StephenHenighan.

Beginning at the Beginning

ALBERTO MANGUEL

To teach us how to read Don Quixote, a text so contrary to conventional literary tradition, the prologue itself needed to break from all traditions



“A story has no beginning or end: Arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead.” These are the first words of Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair*. However, the beginning of a book is not necessarily the one that the author chose to start off the story.

One remarkable example is found in *Don Quixote*, which I have been rereading lately. The beginning that those who haven’t read the book remember starts with these famous words: “In a certain place of La Mancha whose name I don’t wish to recall...,” but the novel itself opens with a number of preliminary pages and a prologue. No

doubt written after the novel itself was finished, the prologue to the 1604 edition of the First Part of *Don Quixote* prepares us for our participation in the great literary game that follows. Cervantes may have realized by then that he had not written a mere parody of novels of chivalry, as was probably his first intention, but something utterly unique, a text that defined itself in the process of its writing. To teach us how to read a text so contrary to conventional literary tradition, the prologue itself needed to break away from all traditional expectations.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the prologue was an expected part of any work of fiction. Conscious of the

need to renew this “custom,” Cervantes begins by taking up the traditional authorial first person singular to address the reader. But instead of an explanatory exordium or a more or less lengthy dedication, as tradition dictates, the prologue that Cervantes produced is presented to the reader as the chronicle or confession of an elaborate lie that begins with declarations of incapacity and lack of inspiration, and ends with a string of commonplace references and apocryphal quotations.

Beginning with an *excusatio propria infirmitatis*, the medieval commonplace of “an excuse for the author’s infirmity,” Cervantes forces the reader to become an accomplice of

the trickery, setting up a scene with three protagonists: the author (Cervantes himself, who explains that he is not the “father” but the “stepfather” of *Don Quixote*, since, as we later find out, the real author is an Arab scholar); the “leisurely reader,” whom Cervantes cordially addresses; and the anonymous friend of Cervantes who will ensure that the book does not appear without “the adornment of a prologue.” In the fictional exercise that Cervantes proposes as an introduction to the artifice that follows, we see the reticent step-author telling how the prologue came into being, to a reader whose expectations seem to respond (as they will respond throughout the novel) to inventions and asides that undermine and disappoint these same expectations. In this tangled web, the notion of authorship is several times distorted. To begin with, the author (Cervantes) seems to obey the authority of the reader who demands, following tradition, a prologue. To satisfy this demand, Cervantes places the authorship of the prologue in the hands of a friend who will explain the procedure to Cervantes and thus be responsible for the ensuing text. However, as everyone knows (and as is made explicit in the ninth chapter), the novel about to receive its prologue is not by the author who signs his name to it (Cervantes) but by a certain Arab writer (Cide Hamete Benengeli) who, in turn, is not the author of the text we read: this third and literal author is the anonymous translator who renders the text into Spanish for “thirty pounds of raisins and two bushels of wheat.” The prologue suggested by Cervantes’s friend is a foretold reflection of the relinquishing of the authorship of the novel yet to be read.

The grammarian Antonio de Nebrija, in his *Retórica* of 1515, defines the prologue or exordium as “the beginning of a speech through which the mood of the listener or judge becomes disposed and ready to listen.” Pretending to praise such classical

prologues, Cervantes ridicules their pompous style, showing how, by reducing them to a formula, anybody can write one. “In a twinkling of an eye,” says Cervantes’s apocryphal friend, “I’ll overcome all your difficulties and mend all the insufficiencies you say hold you back and intimidate you.”

The whole of *Don Quixote* can serve as an example of the friend’s recommended method. After the story of *Don Quixote* has been brought almost to its end, Sansón Carrasco, the pompous intellectual who believes he can cure all this madness, says that he is the Knight of the White Moon and, swearing that his lady is far more beautiful than Dulcinea, forces Don Quixote to challenge him to a duel. Don Quixote charges against his adversary, falls to the ground badly hurt and, unable to rise, hears Carrasco say that he’ll admit to Dulcinea’s superior charms only if he, Don Quixote, agrees to withdraw to his house for a full year “or until such time by me decided.” The defeated Don Quixote gives his consent. A few further events take place on the following pages, further hallucinations and further enchantments, but as a result of the promise, Don Quixote returns with Sancho to his village and asks to be taken to his bed, where, one week later, he will become once again the impoverished gentleman Alonso Quijano, and “give up his spirit: I mean to say, he died.” Borges once remarked that in these plain words so far removed from the literary language of the rest of the novel, Cervantes revealed his very real sorrow at his fictional character’s death.

But there is more. The year of abeyance that Sansón Carrasco has Don Quixote promise him is, for our hero, a period of impossible time. To stop being Don Quixote for a year, or even for a moment, is to demand that time come to a halt. Don Quixote cannot simultaneously stop being himself and go on living. Don Quixote is a creation of the old gentleman’s own reading and his world, materially alive in

all its brutality and violence, is something that he can only know through his activity as a reader. Nothing exists for Don Quixote that has not previously been read, or rather, nothing exists that does not begin and end in his books. Consequently, Don Quixote cannot refuse himself the acting-out of his reading, to continue the story that his life has become, to behave like a knight-in-arms. Because, as soon as Alonso Quijano stops reading his dream book, Don Quixote must die. Don Quixote’s being consists of the moments that Alonso Quijano is willing to grant him.

Don Quixote exists (as Alonso Quijano knows) between the covers of Cide Hamete’s book. For the reader, this is the only true story. This is why it isn’t fortuitous that, in the last chapters of the Second Part, the characters discuss the false nature of the sequel to Don Quixote written by Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda after the success of the First Part of the adventures: there cannot be alternative versions of the true story. The maid Altisidora, who pretends to have died because of her unrequited love for the old knight, describes her descent to Hell, saying that there she saw a group of devils playing ball with books, who tear Avellaneda’s apocryphal opus to bits, “a book so bad,” says one of the devils, “that if I tried to produce a worse one on purpose, I wouldn’t succeed.” Neither is it fortuitous that, when Alonso Quijano dictates his last will and testament, he instructs his executor to apologize to the apocryphal author for having provided an occasion for writing “such enormous and copious nonsense.” Implicit in this apology is that Avellaneda’s book is untrue, unlike the one the reader now holds in his hands. False fiction (wasted time, untruth, fruitless lies) and true fiction (the chronicle of real things, of things as they essentially are) cannot and must not coexist. And Don Quixote, seemingly a believer in witchcraft and magic, never confuses reality

and untruth. In this quest for what is true, full of rich marvels, there is for us, his readers, one moment that, though perhaps not more mysterious than many others, is certainly more bewildering and disconcerting. This is the moment in which the reader forgets Miguel de Cervantes, the author, and believes only in the reality of Don Quixote.

So thoroughly does Cervantes's fiction absorb reality to render it "more real" that it ends up devouring its own self. In the second chapter of the Second Part, Sansón Carrasco lets Sancho know that his adventures are written in a book that Carrasco has read in Salamanca, a town famous for the seriousness of its academic publications, "under the title *The Ingenious Knight Don Quixote de la Mancha*." Hearing this, Sancho crosses himself in fright; much the same reaction is that of the reader for whom, if the first part of the book he's reading has also been read by the characters

of the part he's reading now, then he, a creature of flesh and blood, is also part of that device, that trickery, that imaginary world, a ghost among ghosts, a servant not of his own will but of another man's dreams, a man who is not dust and ashes and who once upon a time was called Miguel de Cervantes.

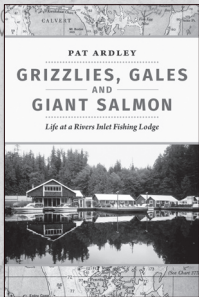
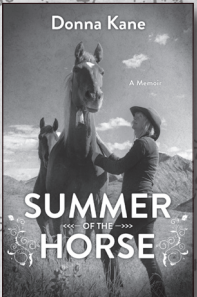
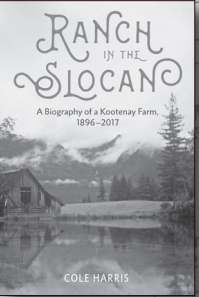
Cervantes was doubtless aware of the mirror he held up to his readers. Toward the end of the Second Part, a scholarly canon tells Don Quixote that he cannot understand how certain books can delight without teaching, unless they are nothing but beautiful. For the canon, "delight conceived in the soul must be that of loveliness and balance seen or observed in things that sight or imagination bring forward; since anything that carries in itself ugliness or imperfection can produce no contentment whatsoever." The world of which the canon approves is that of perfect sterility, meaningless beauty, vacuous

creations, and produces nothing but a state of suspended being in which there is no responsibility and no distress. To this existence without depth and without limits with which society shrouds the real passing of time, Don Quixote opposes a time of ethical action, a time in which every act has its consequences, good or evil, just or unjust. Instead of a vast and anonymous magma in which we exist unconsciously, Don Quixote proposes a time in which we are alive and fertile, in which our consciousness works toward rendering us more fully in our own image, becoming whoever it is the canon's time prevents us from knowing. In this time, in this truly real time, we must live, Don Quixote says, "undoing all manner of wrongs, and placing ourselves in situations and dangers which, once overcome, will grant us eternal renown and fame." This is the great ironic truth: that individual freedom, a freedom necessary to act according to one's personal ethics, condemns the individual to an essential, irrepressible solitude, which is our common lot.

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

ADVENTUROUS OUTDOOR MEMOIRS

from **HARBOUR PUBLISHING**

 GRIZZLIES, GALES AND GIANT SALMON Life at a Rivers Inlet Fishing Lodge PAT ARDLEY \$24.95	 SUMMER OF THE HORSE A Memoir DONNA KANE \$19.95	 RANCH IN THE SLOKAN A Biography of a Kootenay Farm, 1896-2017 COLE HARRIS \$24.95
--	--	--

Available now in fine bookstores ~ www.harbourpublishing.com

GET MORE MANGUEL AT GEIST.COM

Not Finishing; Reading the Commedia; Neighbourhood of Letters; A Brief History of Tags; How to Talk About Books We Haven't Read; Power to the Reader; Burning Mistry; A Fairy Tale for Our Time; Imaginary Places; Dante in Guantánamo; I Believe Because It's Impossible; Jewish Gauchos; Idiot's Fare; My Friendship With Rat And Mole; Cautionary Tales for Children; Van Gogh's Final Vision; Closing Time in the Gardens of the West; Reading at a Time of Catastrophes.

ENDNOTES

REVIEWS, COMMENTS, CURIOSA

OF CATS AND MEN

Manfried the Man by Caitlin Major and Kelly Bastow (Quirk Books) is a modern, heartwarming take on *Garfield*, with the cat/human roles hilariously inverted. Based on the popular webcomic, this graphic novel plays with ideas of masculinity in a world where people-sized cats live in a humanlike society and keep cat-sized humans as pets. Steve Catson is an irresponsible, down-on-his-luck aspiring cartoonist whose joy in life is his pet man, Manfried. When Manfried escapes, Steve must rally the community to bring him home safely. While the cat society mirrors our own, the charm lies in the clever world-building details—Manfried being fed tiny hamburgers and whole turkeys straight from a can, Steve organizing a “man hunt” to look for the lost Manfried, and flash-



backs to a young, svelte Manfried with a full head of hair. The pet men steal the show as they get up to the antics normally reserved for felines, such as hunting birds with bows and arrows, tussling with grizzled strays and being able to uncannily tell when it's dinnertime. Bastow's character design for each man is a delight, as each man has a diverse body shape, colouring and expression that adapt common male features into feline qualities. It's also just plain funny to see a cartoon cat snuggle a small, naked man. Next to the pet men, Steve's storyline is a little tired as it follows the familiar trope of an immature dude learning to take responsibility for his actions to become a better friend

and neighbour. Although every pet man is, well, a man, Major and Bastow use this opportunity to break from toxic masculinity and show the men sleeping nude in a pile, grooming each other, showing affection, and teaching Manfried better social skills. Additionally, each man can only say “hey,” a refreshing change from mansplainers everywhere. This was perhaps what I enjoyed most about the book (besides the novelty of men as pets): the easy way Major and Bastow imagine a world where men—whether it's a male-identifying cat or a cat-sized man—are able to grow into better people without being shamed for stereotypically feminine behaviour. Through humour, Major and Bastow model a new type of masculinity that I'd like to see more of. —Kelsea O'Connor

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

Mention that you've been reading Chateaubriand's memoir, and chances are that you'll soon find yourself talking about steak. But back in his day (the early nineteenth century), François-René de Chateaubriand was known for much more than his predilection for beef tenderloin with a wine reduction sauce. Chateaubriand was an early traveller to America (where he claimed to have met with George Washington), as well as being an eyewitness to the horrors of the French Revolution. During the worst years of the Revolution he lived in exile (and poverty) in England. Chateaubriand's first published works were bestsellers in France, and after his return to that country he became a favourite of Napoleon, who eventually appointed him

the French ambassador to England. Chateaubriand's memoir was a late-in-life attempt to cash in on his fame: he sold the as-yet-incomplete manuscript to a publisher, on the condition that it not be published until after his death (hence the title: **Memoirs from Beyond the Grave**). The American novelist Paul Auster considers Chateaubriand's memoir to be “the best autobiography ever written,” and the *New York Review of Books* has just republished the first volume, in a new translation by Alex Andriesse. Here's Chateaubriand recalling winter evenings from his boyhood, when he lived with his family in a gloomy and isolated castle in Combours, Brittany: “[After



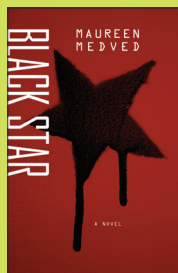
dinner] I huddled by the fireside with [my sister] Lucille, while the servants cleared the table and retired for the night. It was then that my father began a stroll that

did not cease until he went to bed. He was dressed in a thick white woolen gown, or rather a sort of cloak, which I have never seen on anybody but him, and he covered his half-bald head with a tall white cap that stood straight up. When, in the course of this stroll, he moved away from the hearth, the vast hall was so dimly lit, by a single candle, that he was no longer visible. Only his footsteps could still be heard in the darkness. Then, slowly, he would return to the light, emerging little by little from the shadows, like a specter, with his white gown, his white cap, and his long pale face.” Reading passages like this are like looking through an open window into a bygone era. —Michael Hayward



HOT SUMMER READS

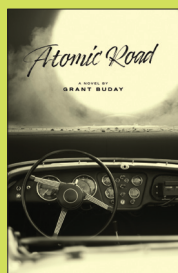
info@anvilpress.com | www.anvilpress.com



BLACK STAR *Maureen Medved*

"*Black Star* powerfully captures the overriding atmosphere of dread that defines much of academic institutional culture, tying it to the anxiety and paranoia that come from feeling that neither your employment nor your expertise is on solid ground." — *Quill & Quire*

\$20 | 232 PGS. | 978-1-77214-112-2 | NOVEL

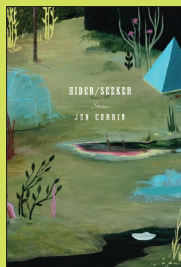


ATOMIC ROAD *Grant Buday*

with a Foreword by John O'Brian

"... darkly comic road-trip bromance, set during the Cuban Missile Crisis."
— *Quill & Quire*

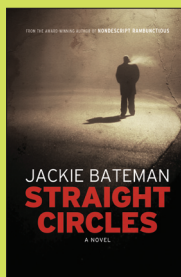
\$20 | 176 PGS. | 978-1-77214-113-9 | NOVEL



HIDER/SEEKER *Jen Currin*

"As a writer, Currin suggests a certain kind of knowing: she understands the aspirations for peace, freedom, and unburdening and yet fully senses the difficulty of attaining any of them."
— *Toronto Star*

\$20 | 218 PGS. | 978-1-77214-117-7 | STORIES



STRAIGHT CIRCLES *Jackie Bateman*

"Just as in real life, the thoughts and actions of damaged and dangerous people do not need to 'make sense' and Bateman shows how prevalent vicious behaviour is, especially when fuelled by drugs, alcohol and morbid projections triggered by a voice, a laugh, a briefcase." — *BC Booklook*

\$20 | 304 PGS. | 978-1-77214-114-6 | NOVEL

LIFE-CHANGING PLAYS
FOR EVERYONE!

FEMFEST 2018

 **SARASVATI
PRODUCTIONS**
transformative theatre

**STAGING
RESISTANCE
15-22
SEPTEMBER**

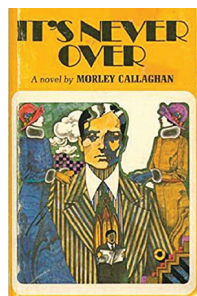
**FOR TICKETS
AND INFORMATION
204.586.2236
FEMFEST.CA**

**ASPER CENTRE FOR THEATRE AND FILM
(400 COLONY ST)**

WHEN BLURBS ARE ALL YOU NEED

*This text appeared on the back cover of **It's Never Over** by Morley Callaghan, Laurentian Library edition, 1972. (Originally published in 1930.)*

In this spare and powerful novel, three young people are profoundly influenced by the death by hanging of a fourth. The dead man is Fred Thompson, who had been convicted of killing a policeman in a brawl. John, Fred's best friend, is the central figure of the story. He attempts to pursue a



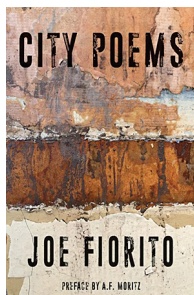
career as a musician and is in love with Lillian. But their affair is blighted by the memory of Fred, and by Fred's sister Isabelle, who

believes she has been destroyed by her brother's execution and is driven to destroy John and Lillian as well. By seducing John, Isabelle ends his relationship with Lillian and ruins his chance of a career. John, alone, impoverished and unbalanced, resolves to murder Isabelle, only to discover that, having become a murderer in his own mind, he does not need to carry out the intent.—*Stephen Osborne*

IGNORED OR UNKNOWN WORLDS

Joe Fiorito's **City Poems** (Exile Editions) portrays the inner city conditions that result from poverty, abuse and neglect. Most of these poems consist of only a few lines, and almost all convey the real hope that something better lies ahead. "Silent Night on Clarence Square" delivers, in only eight lines, a modern retelling of a story from St. Luke; "Karaoke Memorial" eulogizes a man via his supreme karaoke skills in an unnamed pub; "She Walks the Hallway, Singing" tells of a woman who, in her own

unreachable way, rises above the surrounding squalor ("she had the kind of thoughts / tin hats won't prevent"); and "Pigeon Park, Early Afternoon" is about doing your personal care in a not-so-private place, in this case "a fountain on the square." The author, who is both journalist and poet, also interprets bleaker situations. For example, "The Things You Remember" describes a man's recollection



of electroconvulsive therapy. In my opinion, this is the second-best short poem ever written about shock treatment and its effects. (The best short poem

on the subject is "Two Years Later" by the late John Wieners, which begins, "The hollow eyes of shock remain/Electric sockets burnt out in the skull.") Joe Fiorito's poem, with a striking resemblance, ends "Electrodes, mouth guards and— / nothing. All I remember now / is that I forget." The most significant poem in the collection might be "Two Girls, Streetcar." The author references T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, all in a four-stanza poem about two girls at the Ossington bus stop. The lines manage to link older poetry with a younger subject, in a new way to express an age-old encouragement: life goes on.—*Jill Mandrake*

POUNDER DANGLING ON DUQUESNE ISLAND

The Neddeau family have lived on remote Duquesne Island in northern Ontario since the 1700s, when their Acadian ancestors, brothers Elwood and Ellis, were left there by a mutineering band of explorers. The current family members are Bichon (father and fourth-generation

Duquesnian), 'Vangeline (mother and lapsed Catholic from PEI), Elmer (the naïve and sexually frustrated teenaged son) and Eloida and Elène (twin pre-teen daughters who run around the island and torment their brother). In the CBC documentary series **The Neddeaus of Duquesne Island** we follow the family through their daily activities, which include a lot of potatoes, a lengthy list of rules that prohibit "pounder dangling" and "mince pickling," along with their requisite punishments like having water poured down the sleeves of one's raincoat, and religious rituals that call upon one of their ancestors who seems to have become a saint. The Neddeaus speak with heavy accents (subtitles are provided) and their English is sprinkled with French words plus some words that must be unique to this tiny settlement. According to the CBC Media Centre, *The Neddeaus of Duquesne Island* was made in the 1970s but was

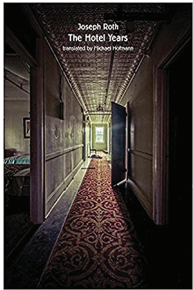


never released, and the old-fashioned CBC logo, plus the soothing voice of the series's narrator and the traditional fiddle music that

opens and closes each episode, certainly attest to that. In a promo video, famous Canadians such as David Suzuki, Graham Greene and even Jean Chrétien talk about when they first saw or heard of this quirky documentary and speculate on why it may have been suppressed. Was the family in the documentary just too weird (or perhaps, feral) for mainstream Canada, or were there hints of incest in the documentary (the son is obviously sexually frustrated)? Whatever your opinion is, you won't be able to stop watching, because *The Neddeaus of Duquesne Island* might just be too quirky to be real.—*Patty Osborne*

CAPITALISM LURCHES INTO EXPRESSIONISM

Joseph Roth was the quintessential observer of cultures in collapse: as he travelled through Eastern Europe in the turbulent years after World War I and the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while “all around stroll the war profiteers with their x-ray vision,” his attention is drawn to details: “a large blond moustache that went out into a couple of butcher’s hooks”; people in the now-divided city of Bruck “come in two types: those in blue shirts, and those in white shirts. The former are police spies, the latter communist agitators. (The locals wear no collars.)” At the seashore, “the wind that billows out the swastika banner does so in all innocence.” In **The Hotel Years** (New Directions), Michael Hofmann has collected and translated sixty-four short pieces written by Roth for the *feuilleton* sections



of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and other newspapers, in the course of which he touches on the aftermath of war, the inflation, the reparations and the French occu-

pation of the Rhineland (a blond-haired African French soldier with a love of German culture), the unrest and instability in Weimar Germany; politics, crime, style, emigration and exile; Communism, Fascism and Hitlerism; train travel, fields of oil wells (“capitalism lurching into expressionism”), interior design, balconies and verandahs. There are singular pieces on two Roma girls met on the street, a musical clown, a near-matricide, a morphine murderess. He wanders the streets of Tirana fearlessly and with some trepidation, meets with the dictator-soon-to-be King Zog, journeys into Galicia and Soviet Russia—all the while compiling an entertaining study of hotel living. In “Fraternity Student,” written in 1924, Roth gives us

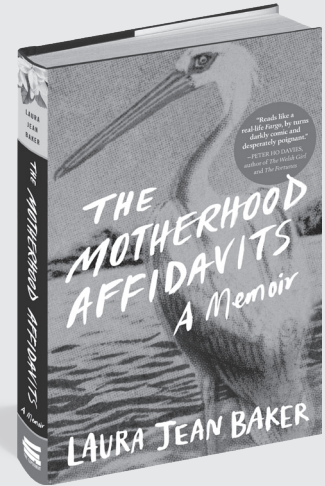
the now familiar type of the hooligan nationalist found in the streets and, as he writes, “in bars, on dueling-grounds and at nationalist meetings. Askew on his closely cropped skull he sports a cap that would be the envy of any American messenger boy. Across his chest he wears a gaudy sash of two or three colours in which may be picked out a ringing phrase, as for example: With God for King and country! So he projects his innermost feelings and convictions, a slogan on two legs, nourished on beer and tradition... he creates tumults and affrays—in the mistaken view that acoustic effects entitle one to exist. Drunkenness that saps others gives him strength. He lives from the mould of the past and decay. His sheen is as that of a dead body that phosphoresces at night. He is a corpse that history has failed to bury. Ideals from the nursery deck out his walls and hang in his brain. One day a young beer drinker becomes an old fart... To his grieving fraternity, he bequeaths beer stein, sabre, swastika, cap, sash and whatever else he may possess in the way of student knick-knacks. Making haste to follow him, the next generation comes along, and plants their hopes, which to us are disappointments, on his grave.”

—Stephen Osborne

DELIGHTFUL, ETC.

I remember going to Gathie Falk’s first retrospective, in 1985, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and falling in love with her sense of humour and her quirky sensibility: pyramids of ceramic apples glazed a vivid red, and ceramic grapefruit glazed in sunny yellow; wooden cabinets filled with handmade ceramic reproductions of men’s shoes: high-top lace-up sneakers, black ankle boots with zippers, two-tone brogues. In one corner, a herd of plywood horses, modelled after merry-go-round horses in mid-gallop, hung by thin cords from the ceiling, swaying gently as people walked past. There were paintings in

“A beautiful and brave memoir of motherhood and its discontents”*—like no other you’ve read before



“Warmly intimate yet intellectually provocative.”
—*JOYCE CAROL OATES

“Emotionally engrossing.”
—LIBRARY JOURNAL

“A gripping blend of family memoir and true crime . . . Reads like a real-life *Fargo*, by turns darkly comic and desperately poignant.”
—PETER HO DAVIES

“Ambitious in its scope, harrowing in its subject matter, and dazzling in its execution, *The Motherhood Affidavits* asks necessary questions about the intersections between the body and the state and between addiction and empathy.”
—SHELLEY PUHAK

“Sometimes tender, often harrowing, always a page-turner . . . not just for mothers.”
—JUDITH CLAIRE MITCHELL

“The most compelling and original memoir I’ve read in years.”—EILEEN POLLACK

THE EXPERIMENT ■ NEW YORK

series: the “Night Skies” series, and “Pieces of Water,” for which Falk described her method: “I took a long sharp knife and cut down into the ocean to lift out a piece, almost a square, of about 30 by 25 feet and I painted the top surface of this piece



of water.” Now, at age ninety, Falk has written an “artist’s memoir” (with Robin Laurence, the visual arts critic for the *Georgia Straight*) which

is just as delightful to read as Falk’s artwork is to look at. In **Apples, Etc.: An Artist’s Memoir** (Figure 1), Falk writes about her impoverished childhood in Winnipeg during the 1930s; she writes about her father and mother, her brother Jack, and her friends. She writes about her early performance art pieces from the 1960s, like the one titled “Some

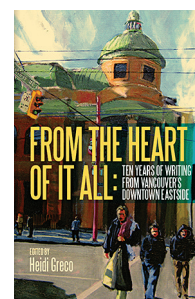
Are Egger Than I,” in which she “chose an egg from [a] white bowl, ate it from a gold-rimmed egg cup, got up, picked up a long ruler, surveyed the scene on the floor, chose a ceramic egg and batted it with the ruler towards a real egg, smashing it.” Awarded the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts in 2013, Falk resists those who tell her that it might be time to “Hang up your runners and rest.” “But no, I told them, there’s still too much to do: too many more things popping into my head, demanding to be seen.”

—Michael Hayward

FROM THE HEART

From the Heart of It All: Ten Years of Writing from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (Otter Press), edited by Heidi Greco, is the latest and final anthology to come from Thursdays Writing Collective, a group of writers who met in a room at the

Carnegie Library at Hastings and Main streets in Vancouver (often referred to as Canada’s poorest postal code) every Thursday afternoon for two hours from 2008 until 2018. *From the Heart of It All* gives us a glimpse of Vancouver during a tumultuous time of hyper-development, as seen by members of a community who are often the first to experience the effects of what some call urban renewal and others call gentrification. A launch for the book was held this past spring at a café in the Vancouver Film School, an institution that has, over the last decade, taken over a handful of buildings on the Downtown Eastside. At the launch, contributors dropped their names into a hat and when their name was pulled they were allotted



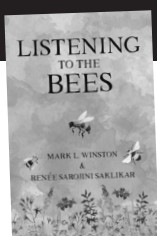
three minutes on stage to read their bit. The evening was emceed masterfully, in a hurry-up offence style, by the Vancouver writer Amber Dawn: no

lingering, just say your piece and give the stage to the next performer. The resulting readings were earnest and often humorous, the mood celebratory and uplifting. The last speaker of the night announced that a new writing collective—the Downtown Eastside Writing Collective—was starting up to replace the Thursdays Writing Collective, and would be meeting at the same time, in the same place—hopefully for many years.

—Michał Kozłowski

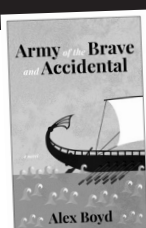


new from NIGHTWOOD EDITIONS



Listening to the Bees is a collaboration between two writers who share a passion for bees and for language.

Mark L. Winston
AND **Renée Sarojini Saklikar**
ESSAYS
& POEMS



Army of the Brave and Accidental is a funny retelling of *The Odyssey*, set in twenty-first century cities including New York and Toronto.

Alex Boyd
FICTION



Our Familiar Hunger is about the strength, will, struggle and fortitude of generations of women and how these things interact, inform, transform and burden.

Laisha Rosnau
POETRY



After the Hatching Oven explores chickens from every conceivable angle; it looks at chicken politics, antics, pretenses and pleasures.

David Alexander
POETRY



Little Wild examines how toxic masculinity relates to mental health, aggression, substance abuse and crisis of identity.

Curtis LeBlanc
POETRY

#ReadNightwood

OFF THE SHELF

In *Small Predators* (ARP) by **Jennifer Ilse Black** a millennial activist cooks up a nitroglycerin bomb from a recipe some high schooler wrote fifty years before. **Francis Dupuis-Déri** and **Thomas Déri** say anarchy is easier when you're young, childless and have no responsibilities in *Anarchy Explained to My Father* (New Star Books), translated by **John Gilmore**. **Helen Rosenblatt** debunks the popular myth of liberalism in *The Lost History of Liberalism* (Princeton University Press). Liberal political commentator **Sally Kohn** talks to @LindaLikesBacon in *The Opposite of Hate: A Field Guide to Repairing Our Humanity* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill). **Freequill** gets to the root of all evil in *What's Going On? How Can We Help?* (Illuminate Press). **Kieran Setiya** writes that "aging is a corporeal symbol of the progressive diminution of prospects" in *Midlife: A Philosophical Guide* (Princeton University Press). Women mediate while eating raisins in order to boost their love lives in *Better Sex Through Mindfulness: How Women Can Cultivate Desire* by **Lori A. Brotto** (Greystone Books). All new hikes, including Lynn Creek, Gold Creek, Podnuck Creek, are field-tested in *105 Hikes in and Around Southwestern British Columbia* (Greystone Books) by **Stephen Hui**. Calgary's Bow River overflows in *A Handbook for Beautiful People* (Inanna Publications) by **Jennifer Sprutt**. Trash and other things float down the McIntyre River in *Thunder Bay in Learning to Love a River* (Signature Editions) by **Michael Minor**. Lana goes missing and then turns up bloodied and bruised during a mother-daughter vacation in *Whistle in the Dark* (Knopf Canada) by **Emma Healey**. Journalists and politicians disappear during Lydia's mother-daughter trip to Mexico in *Where's Bob?* (Biblioasis) by **Ann Ireland**. Philomena

gets a plane ticket to America for her birthday and goes in search of her mother in *Philomena (Unloved)* (Second Story Press) by **Christene A. Browne**. In **David Goudreault's** *Mama's Boy* (Book*hug), translated by **JC Sutcliffe**, a young man searches for his mother after a childhood spent in foster care. In **Lillian Boraks-Nemetz's** *Mouth of Truth: Buried Secrets* (Guernica Editions) Batya resists buying more vodka while unearthing the truth about her family. In *Honestly* (Book*hug) by **Steven Zultanski** Dick attends a séance and spells out evil messages on the Ouija board. In *My True and Complete Adventures as a Wannabe Voyageur* (NeWest Press) by **Phyllis Rudin**, Benjie believes he's really an eighteenth century French-Canadian Voyageur and spends his days looking after The Bay's Fur Trade Museum. The Dirty Tricks Gang rob banks and pull off more jobs than any other gang in Canadian history in *The Life Crimes and Hard Times of Ricky Atkinson: Leader of the Dirty Tricks Gang* (Exile Editions) by **Richard Atkinson**. Women go toe-to-toe with dead grandfathers, beleaguered sons and unfaithful husbands—occasionally alcohol or firearms are involved—in **Vanessa Farnsworth's** *The Things She'll Be Leaving Behind* (Thistledown Press). **Kelli Maria Korducki** turns a Marxist lens on calling it off in *Hard to Do: The Surprising, Feminist History of Breaking Up* (Coach House Books). In *GUSH: Menstrual Manifestos for Our Times* (Frontenac House) co-edited by **Ariel Gordon**, **Tanis MacDonald** and **Rosanna Deerchild** 100 writers take apart bloody instruction on menstruation. Sobering titles: **E.D. Blodgett's** *Songs for Dead Children* (University of Alberta Press), **Jason Heroux's** *Amusement Park of Constant Sorrow* (Mansfield Press); **Jason Freure's** *Everyone Rides the Bus in a City of Losers* (ECW); **Jill Sexsmith's** *Somewhere*

a Long and Happy Life Probably Awaits You (ARP Books); and **Rachel Lebowitz's** *The Year of No Summer: A Reckoning* (Biblioasis)

NOTED ELSEWHERE

Naomi Klein writes *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (University of Minnesota Press) by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson "arrives at the perfect time." Simon Moya-Smith writes "Simpson gives no quarter to colonialism. No quarter to a nasty Western narrative." Big Al on goodreads.com says that Simpson "turns scholarship on its head in the best way possible!" The *New Yorker* says **Sheila Heti's** *Motherhood* (Knopf) "is a novel, or so its publisher claims." The *Baffler* says it "could be described as an essay." The *New York Times* says "it reads like an inspired monologue." The *Guardian* says it's "less a book than a tapestry—a finely wrought work of delicate art" and Gregory Baird on goodreads.com says "*Motherhood* is 300 pages of highly performative therapy." *Blogcritics* calls *Checkpoint* by **David Albahari**, translated by **Ellen Elias-Bursac** (Restless Books) "a tornado of a book." *Kirkus Reviews* says it's "a digressive but attention-grabbing critique of war's horrors" and *Publishers Weekly* writes "his vision of war is a grim fairy tale without a moral lesson." Douglas Glover says *Blue River and Red Earth* by **Stephen Henighan** (Cormorant Books) is "fast-paced, intensely readable." Kevin on goodreads.com says it's like "a terrible travel nightmare where the author slings us around from country to country" and Kim on goodreads.com says "really liked the one about the Russian girl scientist and there's a long one about war in Guatemala that has a strange love story in it." *Quill & Quire* writes "there's a fair amount of sex in this collection—not all of it good, but rarely meaningless."

The GEIST Cryptic Crossword

Prepared by Meandricus

Send a copy of your completed puzzle,
along with your name and address, to:

Puzzle #109 GEIST

210-111 West Hastings St.

Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1H4

Fax 604-677-6319

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

ACROSS

- 1 When Mr. King sang for the kids his
sidekick had to warn them first
- 4 It was crazy! We cooled off the horses,
then they ate brownies
- 8 In future, don't let Stanley show us nasty
inner workings (abbrev)
- 10 Poets, essayists and novelists love using
Maggie's long one
- 11 The web lord is not even raised as high as
a yokel
- 14 At the movie, the chorus member heard
his growl
- 15 That old cow should try vaping!
- 16 After Carmen meets with the barber she
will sing a different tune
- 17 Roger, Nov will be fine for taking over
that state
- 20 Give me some wiggle room or this may go
sideways
- 21 He's going to get it when he comes back
from the bathroom for the 100th time
- 23 According to Marty, Robert's raw yarn was
brownish grey and difficult to handle (2)
- 27 Scotland's going to be a gong show so be
sure to wear a hat
- 28 Let's drum up some enthusiasm for hats in
Montreal this summer
- 30 That's my cool dude sibling
- 32 When they signed my letter in acid, I went
postal
- 34 Cass was a fighter when shopping with Baba
- 35 Dennis once baked an alligator
- 36 I heard that Lang's American idol was no
sucker
- 38 If it's not a Honda, I'm at a loss as to how
to catch one
- 40 Out west they control the drinks (abbrev)
- 41 My grandmother rang me to say she was
getting a sports car
- 42 In this exercise, terrestrial time usually
comes before your vital force
- 43 One of those guys had quite a beef
with Albertans
- 44 Oh dear, have they been wandering around
the stove? (3)

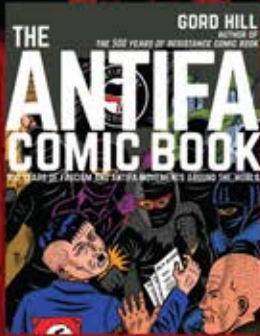
DOWN

- 1 I got tied up as she was luring me in
- 2 It bugs me when I hear that warm metal
made them happy
- 3 Everyone went to the bar in an English
car
- 4 According to the Dutchman, those guys
up north never get high (2) (abbrev)
- 5 With your pen, please circle the wagons
- 6 That global group of Sherlockians make a
pile of money
- 7 The odd gay one lays around in the heat
(2)
- 9 When the cop woke up she hired someone
to push their finger into Angus
- 12 Our dresser contains the world's
reprocessed stuff (abbrev)
- 13 I can't think of anything but the
enthusiasm of those guides who are
coming out into the sun
- 14 At the opera he made a big to-do just
before the aria
- 15 We tried to train the hired hand to get
them off the track
- 18 At 8 I'll have a taco
- 19 Sam took care of his van trim in the bunny
park
- 22 Dale sang all the happy ones to us
- 23 Don't panic, we can still get oiled in
cowtown
- 24 Sounds like that cowboy was a good singer
but his acting was a bit wooden
- 25 Looks like there's a lot of bull going
around. Good thing it's not my first
- 26 That pan flute plays salty stuff but it's
supposed to be good for us!

- 29 I'm a teen so let's have a smoke at the
movie this afternoon
- 30 Did you ever see a watermelon down by
the store?
- 31 Let's get lubed up with Harry's favourite
cola in town
- 33 If we cozy up to them we'll get wet
- 37 Let's take that dirt bag home. I really dig
him!
- 39 I was marginally upset that I took the bait
in my teeth (2)
- 40 Let's take out the bacon and add some of
that bulb (abbrev)
- 41 Where does everyone in Ontario eat
coleslaw these days? (abbrev)

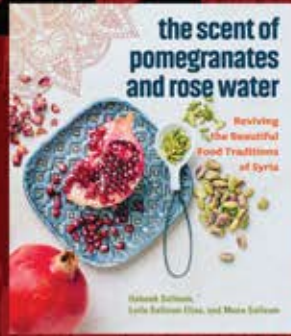
There was no winner for Puzzle 108.

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



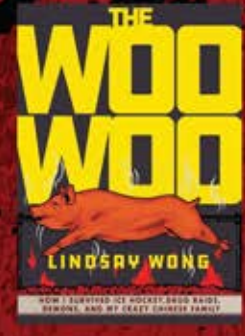
THE ANTIFA COMIC BOOK
Gord Hill

One hundred years of fascism and antifa movements, by the author of *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book*. Foreword by Mark Bray, author of *Antifa*.



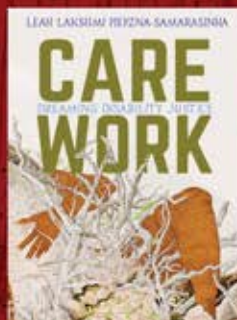
THE SCENT OF POMEGRANATES AND ROSEWATER
Habeeb Salloum et al.

A cookbook of centuries-old recipes and food traditions from Syria. "A hugely knowledgeable, deeply researched and utterly delicious book." —Reem Kassir, author of *The Palestinian Table*



THE WOO WOO
Lindsay Wong

A darkly comedic memoir about Asian ghosts and mental illness. "A riveting, unbelievable family epic told in exquisite, visceral prose." —Elizabeth Greenwood, author of *Playing Dead*



CARE WORK
Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

An empowering collection of essays by the author of *Dirty River*, documenting her experiences in the disability justice movement.



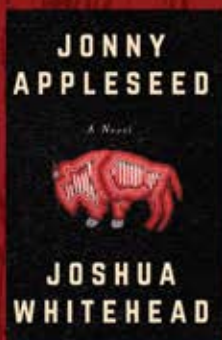
THE TIGER FLU
Larissa Lai

Larissa Lai's first novel in sixteen years. "Blending the surreal and the entirely possible, *The Tiger Flu* is majestically compelling." —Eden Robinson, author of *Son of a Trickster*



SKETCHTASY
Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

A glittering, devastating novel about the perils of queer world-making in the mid-90s. "If *Sketchtasy* doesn't become a classic, we're doomed." —Sarah Schulman, author of *Conflict Is Not Abuse*



JONNY APPLESEED
Joshua Whitehead

"Every so often, a book comes along that feels like a milestone, with revolution nestled beneath every sentence, every word. *Jonny Appleseed* is one of those books." —*The Globe and Mail*



LITTLE FISH
Casey Plett

"A powerful and important debut. Plett has masterfully painted her characters as both deeply complex and relatable." —*National Post*



SODOM ROAD EXIT
Amber Dawn

"As *Sodom Road Exit* queers the horror genre, it also asks what queer horror includes—and how we heal from that trauma." —*The Globe and Mail*

SEVENTH ANNUAL



BOOKS • MAGAZINES
ZINES • PRINT EPHEMERA
TALKS • PERFORMANCES
ARTIST PROJECTS

OCTOBER 18-21, 2018
THE EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY
OF ART + DESIGN



Canada Council
for the Arts



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL



CITY OF
VANCOUVER

PUBLISHING @ SFU

Vancouver
Artgallery

CITR DISORDER

VANDOCUMENT

BEATROUTE

GEIST

Langara.
THE COLLEGE OF ARTS + DESIGN