



THE
FIELDSTONE
REVIEW

ISSUE 2, 2007

Editors' Note

Holly Luhnig and Deborah Leiter

We know how hard it is to read onscreen. We know how easy it is to wander off to other sites. We also know how unpolished much of the content on the Web is. And so we, the members of The Fieldstone Review staff, have worked extra hard in this, our second issue. We wanted to give you literary journal quality content that would keep you reading all the way through, and we hope we've achieved that goal.

During our selection process, we try to include both emerging and established authors and we do not put weight on where authors reside. At the same time, we're pleased that many of our authors are from Saskatchewan this year. For example, we are delighted to include a non-fiction piece by Governor General's award winner Robert Calder, and to be the first journal to publish work by emerging poet Meagan Wohlburg. We're proud to place these authors next to some voices from around the world. As a journal that's delivered online, we seek to publish traditional literary works next to those that push the boundaries by leveraging hypertext and other qualities that are unique to this medium. We will strive to include more of these innovations as the journal evolves.

So, without further ado, enjoy this, the second issue of The Fieldstone Review. Please let us know if you enjoy reading these pieces as much as we did.

Deborah Leiter, 2006-2007 Managing Editor

Holly Luhnig, 2006-2007 Editor-in-Chief

Prose & Poetry

Of What I Have Always Known

Triny Finlay

For my next trick I will devastate all insects

I'll begin with what I have always known
as potato bugs, though they're called
something useful around here

Then I'll move on to earwigs, centipedes, ants that bite

And the cosmic range of those in flight

And balconies
potted plants
flimsy window screens
patio doors
knives in blocks
heavy televisions
earrings

paper

Another trick will involve jealous cats and cribs
but I can't explain the subtleties here

Another turns junk mail into edible oil products;
another conquers carcinogens (but not cancer)

I will need a volunteer

Epithalamion 2

Christina Mengert

It is a violent restoration. Like song.
Like the first time a child gathers
In the folds of a very long night
And calls the other out of himself
To make escape. We hesitate
Because thinking of new weight
Brought into us, having been split
And grown accustomed to the familiar
Half -- its lips, bones, its mirror
Piercing outward, we find ourselves
Suddenly unequal to this mythology.

If the body is strangled by a mission
Of completion -- if the stars
Yoke the unsuspecting sufficient
Prior to birth, breath, intention,
Do we claim we are sought? Bound?
When all the long while, we sew
Ourselves nets and drag the depths.

Criatura
Jennifer Wynne Webber

It took me more than three weeks of begging and pleading and pounding my heels into the floor before I figured out I'd have to try something else.

Something meeker.

I may only be twelve, but I've seen a lot of things and sometimes they show up as pictures in my head that tell me what to do. This time it was a chameleon. It popped into my head right in the middle of my last freak-out which was doing absolutely nothing to help me get my way anyhow. All it did was give me a big purple bruise that's now turning yellow in the middle. My ankle still hurts when I walk. No way will I be kicking any more hotel furniture for a long time. Lucky for my other body parts, the chameleon showed up and reminded me what I should have done in the first place.

Not only have I seen chameleons on TV like everybody else, I've seen them up close. You probably don't believe me, but I have seen them. Actually just one, but I saw it very clearly and watched it for long enough for my Mum to think I got lost again.

But I'm never lost, I keep telling her that.

She's been weird about things like that the whole time we've been here in Spain. Like I'm going to get lost more easily in a place where people don't speak English. I tell her I speak the same language and have the same brain whether we're here in Spain or in Toronto or Calgary or New York or wherever else we've been on film shoots so it shouldn't matter what *they* speak. I tell her I keep track of where I am. That's the kind of thing that makes sense to me, but not to her. That's because we're different. She gets swept up by places and people; I don't.

"Do you know how big a deal it is for me to have this gig? Three months overseas. On a series, yet? You're not going to blow this for me by getting lost."

This is what I hear from her all the time. Everywhere we go. Every gig is a big deal. Every place is going to change our life forever. So is every guy.

None of it has ever changed me. None of it will. At least not the way it does my Mum. Spain is just another place. Santander is just another city which at least I actually like this time because of the zoo right on the ocean where the polar bears get their pools filled up by the high tide spilling in. The hotel is better here too: the guy in the restaurant brings me as many maraschino cherries as I want, whenever I want, no matter what I order. They're better than jam on toast.

Spain is also where I saw the chameleon. Not up here in Santander; they don't go that far north. I saw it on the shoot with the second A.D. when we were down on the Mediterranean coast side.

The chameleon was on a leaf so lit up by the bright sun it was almost see-through, but it was still very green, almost a cartoon green. The leaf, I mean. But so was the chameleon, sitting there in his green disguise, like he was alone and safe and sound in the world and pleased with himself for his trick. The whole time he was twitching his tongue out of his mouth and if it weren't for that I swear you couldn't have seen him, he matched so well. Later, when he finally skittered over to the bark part in the shade, everything changed and he looked more like a stick. He truly

did. The green was completely gone and he looked like a different chameleon altogether, but then I guess that's the point of being a chameleon. Otherwise he'd be just any other kind of lizard.

Meekness isn't what anyone would think I'd be good at, but it's just another thing you can be, that's what I think. And you can be a lot of things. Actors do it all the time. They have to just change and be convincing about it, enough for everyone to believe them anyway. I'm going to be an actress so I figure it's all training, every time I have to make myself be different. For awhile I thought I might be a marine biologist or a model, but I'm getting better and better at acting so it would be a waste to give it up now.

The most surprising thing I've figured out so far is that getting people to believe something isn't as hard as you'd think. It's actually hilarious how quickly you can fool them. But, the thing of it is, it's not really *fooling* them because when you really do change yourself like the way I mean, like a true actor, none of it is a lie. You actually do change. You honestly feel different inside. When I started the quiet, meek girl act, I actually started to feel more drawn in. My body felt sucked in a bit like I was even smaller than I am, with my arms stuck closer to my sides. My feet walked almost shyly like they didn't belong on the pavement or anywhere else.

Soon, I couldn't help myself. It was impossible to just step along like normal.

The new way I started to walk had definitely gone way past an act the day of my big klutz-out. It must have, because I'm not normally such a klutz and this was a klutzout on a blockbuster scale. And of course it would have to happen the exact day I finally won the battle to take the train to the tutor by myself.

Really it wasn't a train, just a metro, and really the tutor wasn't much of a tutor, but that part I wasn't fighting to change. Just the part about not having to walk to the train holding my Mum's hand the whole time so she could put on her stupid, motherly act in front of her new boyfriend.

I mean, how did he think I got there before? And if she had always brought me to the tutor herself, why did I have to tell her which was the right metro stop to get off at? God, men are dumb sometimes. At least my Mum's boyfriends are.

Before Mr. Early Bird showed up on the scene and started making her coffee in the morning, Mum could never wake up on her days off, not ever, before I left for the train. And when she was working and had to be on set early, I still always went to the tutor by myself. But, of course, new boyfriend man shows up and suddenly we're a Disney family walking all together to the train and he's waving goodbye (like we're the ones going to the war and he's the lonely one on the platform in the wide shot) and my Mum is stepping aboard with me to *take care* of me the whole big seven stops there.

As if.

I can tell you one thing, Larissa (that's my Mum, she likes me to call her that) is definitely not a good actress. Maybe good enough to fool Frank, the early bird, but not me. That's why she's just a production assistant. And that's why he's just a grip and not a director. But they've got dreams like everybody else, right? She wants to get into makeup and he's going to be a lighting guy.

STUpid. STUpid. STUpid.

I walked to the rhythm of those words in my head every stupid morning when they went with me to the stop. I still get mad thinking about it so I just don't.

Especially not now that I've won and can finally go by myself again. The meek act might have helped me a little to get my way, but I think mostly it just turned out to be an acting exercise in the end. The real reason for my freedom was Mum and Frank losing interest in the early morning walks after they got an extra killer batch of the white stuff I'm not supposed to know about.

That's another thing that's stupid. Everybody knows Derwin supplies everyone with everything. He walks on to the set and calls a "safety meeting" and instantly it's party time. Everyone is so cheerful, pumped up. For awhile, anyway. I've learned to clear out and go hang outside when they all need quiet time later on. My Mum is freaky when she's coming down.

But I don't want to talk about Mum's freakiness, I want to tell you about the day I klutzed out and met Lucia, the day I found the best kind of acting teacher you can find, a real *mentor* like they're always talking about. Lucia's the mentor and I'm her apprentice. It's actually like I'm understudying, even though I started out just by being her biggest fan.

It was when I finally got to go to the train by myself again that I wiped out and dropped every single book and my pencil case out of my backpack and almost killed myself. Okay, maybe not almost *killed myself*, but that is for sure what anyone would have thought if they'd seen me trip when the doors of the train started to close on me. It was definitely a stunt that would have fooled the pickiest of directors.

That was when this lady stopped to help. Some guy pushed the button to hold the door while she took my hand and pulled me up and got all my stuff, just like that, in one beautiful motion. Her hand flicked around picking everything up super fast and how she did it was absolutely great, especially since the whole time she was holding a cigarette. She maybe took one puff the whole time, but for the rest of it she just held it in her fingers, just like the old movie stars did all the time, with the smoke all wavering around their heads, looking elegant.

That was her. Totally elegant.

Right then I knew that she was the perfect acting teacher for me. Someone like that is more helpful than the most expensive acting coach because they don't even know they're teaching you. It's totally authentic. All you have to do is make sure you know how to watch and I do. My eyes are open wide all the time. Someday I'll make myself just like her. If I'm good, I'll be an even better version of her. Like the chameleon I saw that popped into my head again then. But not one that turns green just sort of like the leaf and you can still see it a little bit – at least if you've got eyes like me. I mean one that turns the exact same colour so nobody could ever discover its trick. Ever.

She had to be at least twenty-five so I've got lots of time to perfect the whole deal. She didn't have the most awesome face either so I might even have more to work with in the glamour department, at least with makeup. But that elegance and those quick, perfect motions – I'll need all the time I can get to figure that out. And fashions change, but this kind of look was classic as far as I'm concerned, totally classic.

She was wearing a thick, very glossy black leather coat, tightly cinched in at her waist. Her pants were black too, in a drapey kind of smooth cloth, not shiny and not velvet, but totally crushable and rich looking. Never have I seen such great shoes, either, not even on *Larissa* who takes me shoe shopping sometimes on her days off. They were very high, block heeled sandals in lime green suede and I honestly sucked in air when I saw them first. *Oh god* shoes, my Mum – Larissa – calls shoes like that. She would have eaten her heart out for sure.

I even loved that she had the collar of her white blouse flaring out perfectly over the collar of her jacket. Right away I pulled my collar out too, but mine wasn't the right length and there's no way it looked near as good. To be honest, she might have seen me fix my collar like hers, but I didn't feel embarrassed since she just winked at me and then looked out the window which somehow made everything okay.

Like I said, totally elegant.

Men notice that kind of elegance. It's the kind of thing that wins you parts.

I pretended to look out the window, but it was her I kept staring at. In the reflection on the window I could see her hair was swept back in something way cooler than a normal pony tail, but that still looked casual. Like she wasn't even trying to look chic, which is the best way to look chic. I saw a girl's hair exactly like that in last month's British *Vogue*.

That was when the man got on the train and walked straight to the back of the car to sit beside her.

"Lucia," he said, and gave her a kiss. For a second I thought it was just the normal kind of kiss everybody gives each other over here to say hello. But it wasn't. I saw him sneak his hand in under the front of her jacket when he said his hello and gave her the kiss. His hand didn't move off her in a hurry either and then it brushed down the front of her before he sat back in his seat.

This guy was older, definitely at least 35 or 40. Maybe 50. On guys like that you can't tell. Dark hair, thin chin, very slim and wearing an expensive suit: he looked exactly like one of the actors who was in the mafia movie Mum worked on in Brooklyn before she had me. I've seen the movie so many times I know it by heart. I even know how they did the special effects for when his head got blown off. For a second I was sure it was that actor, but when I looked closer I could see the Spanish guy on the train wasn't him. This Spanish guy's nose was a little different, just a little thinner. He has a double, though, in this world, no doubt about it.

It feels weird to know a secret like that and not tell.

You're not the only one of you.

Even if I wanted to tell him, I didn't know how to say "double" in Spanish. *Usted es double?* It was going to be the first thing I asked my tutor.

Lucia sat up straighter and played with her hair while she tried not to smile. He sat forward enough facing her that his one knee was between hers.

Watching them was awesome. It gave me kind of a thrill and I almost missed my stop. Only when I was going up the escalator to the street level did I wonder how that guy knew what car she was going to be on, at what time, and in what seat. But he knew so they had to have planned it all out.

I saw them every second morning after that, always at the back of the third coach on the 9:40 a.m. train to Cabezon de la Sal. And so it shouldn't be any surprise that every second day I was late for my tutor.

* * *

Love scenes I'm not supposed to watch. They clear the set. Maybe not every director is as careful about getting everyone out, but this one sure is. The trouble is filming the scenes in such small hotel rooms. There's no place to hide from the director, *his highness*, or the biggest threat to my acting lessons, the new Director of Photography. The old D.O.P., Earl, never really cared if I was there as long as I was quiet and crouched away somewhere out of view. Creepy, but I think he actually liked me to watch. Yuck. I mean, I liked to watch but I didn't like him liking it. Perv. Anyway, if Earl saw me he'd never tell so I got to watch a lot of them. The new guy, Dwight, doesn't know me at all so has no problem kicking me out of the room. I don't call him the D.O.P.. I call him the D.O.P.E.

"*Out, young lady. It's time.*"

He always says it like it's a big production, exaggerating his eyebrows until they're scrunched up into his low forehead. His voice gets all forced up into a sucky *tryingto-sound-proper* whine when he says it too, but I know for a fact he's just getting sweaty about the scene that's about to start.

But, he won't be *out, young lady*-ing me this time.

This time, for what feels like hours, I've been tucked in the corner down by one of the reflector boards. They've been adjusting the lights forever and it's so sweltering hot I can feel the blood throb through my ears.

The actors will be lucky to be naked.

Without socks, my feet are sticking to the inside of my runners and, since I'm trying not to move and remind anyone I'm here, I'm forcing myself to hold perfectly still. Inside my left shoe, though, the action is crazy. My toes are squirming away, trying to smooth down the gluey liner that has scrunched itself up under my foot. The heat from all the effort is making my bangs stick to my forehead, silent movie pincurl style. Suddenly I'm feeling pretty sorry for myself that I'm stuck here with no relief in sight.

Already I have a pretty good idea the scene will be a disappointment, at least not worth anywhere near all the trouble I've gone through to hide and watch. The fact is I haven't been learning anything worthwhile at all from this cast.

"TALENT ON SET."

Don, the guy starring in this one is supposedly *on his way up*, but I wouldn't bet on it. He plays a gun smuggler. So far they haven't shot much of the underground smuggling stuff, just all the scenes where he gets naked with the women who stop him along the way. From the scenes I've got to watch – and the day I sneaked into the rushes – Don is way too flashy when he's making love to all these women. I heard Mum say she thinks he's gay. I just think he's a lousy actor.

"MAKEUP. WE NEED MAKEUP OVER HERE."

Some of the women are spies, some aren't, but the point of the show is they all end up naked with Don somewhere along the line. The woman in today's love scene is new to the set. Jan has got a British accent that sounds a bit fake to me, an AWKcent, like maybe she only ever visited there twice and is trying to play it up. When she finally floats onto set, draping her cheap satin robe all over the place, everybody gets all serious and important. Like they are all behind the scenes of some Academy Award winner in the making.

"QUIET ON SET."

I want to burst out laughing.

"SCENE 18A, TAKE 1."

Jan leans back against the pillows with her computer and spy computer discs and rearranges her satin robe.

"MARKER."

Her robe is supposed to have fallen open enough to show part of her boobs while she works on her spy stuff before sexy Mr. Smuggler bursts through the window and takes her by surprise. Typical night of spying, I guess.

"ROLLING FOR SOUND."

Jan wiggles her robe open a bit more.

Big deal.

I already saw Jan naked when she was in makeup, when Donna, the makeup artist, joked that Jan should put strawberry lip gloss on her tits to see how Don would react. Big laugh. But not from me. It was my new Bonne Bell Strawberry Lip Smackers she saw me with and I didn't want any of it smeared on Jan's boobs. I left with it before they could get any other bright ideas.

"AND... ACTION."

The scene is totally over the top, like everything on this stupid movie. They way they gasp for air you'd think they were fish flopping on a dock. This kind of acting might work on Dwight the D.O.P.E, but it just looks fake to me. And looking fake can be okay if it's the right kind of fake, if it's regular movie acting fake – the kind of fake that looks real because we're used to seeing it. This wasn't that kind of fake.

She should have arched her back more, for one thing, when he pulled open her robe and pushed her onto the bed. I saw another actress do that and it looked way better.

It's little things like that I know to look for.

And that's what's definitely going to take me a cut above this kind of movie when I'm the one on the screen.

"CUT."

They stop mid moan from Jan, Don's sweaty butt poised and shiny under the lights. Then, after a bit of head shaking, the director leans in to the D.O.P.E. to whisper all intensely about how to get Don from the window over into the throes of passion just a little more smoothly.

Everybody else relaxes and I do too – a bit too much. My foot squirms a little more than I mean it to and bumps the light stand. It makes a wild clattering against the wall and everybody's heads swing around. Nothing breaks, but I'm thrown out of the room before they even check the gate for Take 2.

As I climb over the cables and dolly track, the British *starlet* looks disapprovingly at both me and my Mum so *Larissa* scowls at me and pretends to be shocked herself for everyone else's benefit. But, just as soon as I pass her, she forgets all about me and eyes Frank instead. With her mouth open and her tongue sticking out, wetting her upper lip. Guess that's supposed to be a little performance just for him and that's lucky because I sure wouldn't buy it.

No Oscars on the horizon for any acting here today. In front of the lens, or behind it.

* * *

I know I'm not lost, but I had no idea they were taking the train so far the days they met. So far it's got to be way over half an hour from where I got on in Santander. Maybe an hour, I forgot my watch.

Every time I see Lucia and this man who meets her, I've been going one stop further on the train. Then I just catch the train going back to my real stop. Not once in all this have they noticed I've been getting off at different stops. A different stop, every single time. Sometimes Lucia even waves goodbye to me. That's how little they see anything outside themselves.

People are so funny; they just don't pay attention to detail.

I've been following them a little further every day before I take the train back to the stop for my tutor.

Today I got off the train where I did last time and again they didn't notice. Lucia didn't even see me at all today, I don't think. But what is totally different about today is that today I got off the train and then got right back on the same train, one car down. There is a door with a window between every train car and I can see them through the glass. No way am I budging again until they do.

I'm not going to the tutor today. She thinks I'm sick.

Instead, I'm going to see where Lucia and the Spanish guy go to and what they do when they get there. I know for sure that following them the whole way to wherever they're going will teach me more than any tutor could in a month. It's always better to learn from real life.

What I had first thought was that they were going just a couple of stops further than I'd ever followed them. They belonged in some trendy, very chic part of town or maybe some really romantic old time village kind of area. Then they would rush to go to make love secretly in some fancy apartment with marble tiles on the floor and painted saints in the doorways.

That's why I'm here. I'm sick of boring scenes where actors make all the typical choices. The *bland* choices, one acting coach calls them. Maybe it's just the fact I've only ever been on North American movie sets, but there has got to be another kind of reality. Another kind of life.

I thought this shoot would be different from the movie-of-the-week shows Mum worked on last year, but it's not. It's worse. I'm starved for some real drama. So, I've decided to make sure I see it, starting with a real love scene. A real foreign film version, not a B-movie, or semi-porn version, and not just the sloppy hanging around in bed that my Mum and Frank get by with.

The real thing.

All I need is to see something once. If I can get a good look at it, I'll have it memorized forever.

I'll have it in my head as a picture.

So far, though, the foreign movie isn't playing out like I had figured it would. The two Spanish lovers are still just sitting there and the stops are getting further and further apart. The train has been jarring itself in and out of tunnels, bumping its way from one set of tracks to another. It shook off Santander ages ago when we came out from one tunnel into a slower, even rhythm of wheels on track and a long, endless stretch of green hills.

For a while I've been starting to think that today, the day I finally decide to follow them all the way, is maybe the day they're not going back. Maybe they're suddenly going to switch to a RENFE line somewhere and head all the way to Madrid to start a new life.

But there's no luggage. I know for a fact Lucia would bring at least one bag with her, even if she were trying to look like it was casual, like it was just another day riding the train to work. She's got too good a wardrobe to leave it all behind.

No, if any kind of new life is beginning, it isn't starting in Madrid, but at the next stop. I finally see them rustling around in their seats, peering out the window at a town that looks no different from the last one. Thick green trees with bark patterned like camouflage, wavy red clay roofs, signs that say "Bar-Restaurante-Saja". Everything dripping wet and slick from the grey drizzle that's been sliding down the windows for the last half hour. The train wheels are squealing but, overtop of that howling, the taped voice comes over the speaker and says "Cabezón de la Sal." The map above the door shows it's the end of the line.

Lucia gets up and Mr. Mafia Movie follows her. He tries to stroke her neck, but I guess she doesn't want to look obvious because she shrugs him off. After they step off and turn to walk down the platform, I climb off too and trail them at a lazy, looselooking distance.

They snake their way along the dark asphalt and curve around what looks like a stone walled fortress, but it's just the church. A man in a long black gown and a priest's collar steps around the side of it and stops to talk to a cab driver. Both guys look familiar to me and then I remember the first movie where I got to be an extra. They both look like they're the hit men discussing the murder in the movie. That's how the story went. The guy in the movie wasn't a priest, but he had the same stocky build as this guy, the same squinty eyes that couldn't care less.

Since I don't want to lose them, I step more quickly past the hit men guys and see the secret lovers turn down a narrow lane made dark by the towering old, grimy looking stone walls. The cloud overhead is still heavy and dripping cold down my neck. I can see my breath. I would stop to get my sweatshirt out of my backpack but that could make the difference between staying with them and losing them, even in a town as small as this.

When you're really interested in something you can never look away, even for a second, otherwise you could miss the crucial moment. At home, in front of the mirror, I practice not blinking just to help me with that. Besides, it looks better on camera if you're not flapping your eyelids all the time.

As they walk, he tries to put his arm around her, but she wriggles her shoulders away to say no. He doesn't get it so he tries again and I hear her say, "José, no!" a little sharply.

His name could be better. Practically everybody here is a José. In fact, if I were directing this, he wouldn't even be Spanish. She would be, but I'd have him be French or Italian.

Lucia has got her arms folded around herself and she's walking quicker than ever. Finally they get to the door of an apartment and José starts to open it, but she just stops short. She stares at him for a second, then swings around and tears off down the street. This sends José hurrying after her, but he's working really hard to make this look normal, like it's not bugging him at all. His voice is low and he never breaks into a run, just strides up and tries to take hold of her arm. She shouts something and immediately his hands spring back, palms facing out, just as if someone said, "Stick 'em up". It's an *I'm innocent, see I'm not doing anything* kind of gesture. At the same time he tries to smooth his mouth into a calm expression, but he doesn't look happy about any of this. He's one of those guys who doesn't like girls who make a scene, you can tell. My Mum went out with someone like that once.

Lucia is practically spitting out anger and tears. She walks one way, then swings around and heads in completely the opposite direction. Where she'll spin off to next, I have no idea so all I know is that I have to stay way back until the scene settles itself down. Which it does. José finally gets her under control and they move to a bench not too far from the big fortress church. Full circle.

After all these mutterings and shouts and foot stamps of anger and hurt, I realize there is one word ringing in my ears. One word I could make out.

Criatura.

And I don't need to open my backpack to look it up in my Spanish dictionary because I already know what it means.

"Here comes the *criatura*." Frank says that to me every time I show up on set, or at the hotel room, or anywhere else they don't want me around. Then it spread to the entire cast and crew and now they all call me that.

Criatura. They think it's hilarious because it sounds like *creature*. Which they also call me. And it means creature too, but it also has another meaning in Spanish that's way more boring.

Criatura.

Baby.

So this drizzly little get-together in this stony, dark town is just about a baby. She's pregnant is all.

And not only am I not going to get to see anything close to a real love scene, the scene playing itself out in front of me is nothing more than the most typical American soap opera.

Lucia's face is shadowy with muddy tear tracks striping her cheeks. She should have worn waterproof mascara. Now that she's a bit calmed down, José keeps stroking his chin and trying to give her what sounds like *it'll be okay* sympathy. Trouble is, his face still can't help breaking into a kind of *what the fuck have you done* look just before he loses it and sounds snappy again.

Either way he loses.

His whispery soft voice only makes more tears rain down her face. This goes on for a good five minutes until her crying gets even more out of control at which point he snaps himself back from her. And, when he gets all annoyed and sarcastic sounding and flicks his lighter to light up a cigarette, she goes wild animal all over again, all raging. Then he has to pull her back to sanity with the soft voice again and the scene replays itself just like it did the first time.

TAKE 2.

TAKE 3.

The rehearsals aren't changing a thing.

I don't need subtitles. The scene is plain and simple boring. As I stomp back to the train station, twice I nearly wipe out on the slippery cobblestones.

* * *

Never have I had so much attention. Dwight the D.O.P.E. gave me a candy necklace like the kind I loved when I was little and the director told me I'd get to have a line in the scene they shoot tomorrow. All I have to do is smile and run to my tourist parents and yell, "Hey, did you see that?" It's going to be shot at the docks. I get to be in one other shot too, when the tourist family boards the cruise ship and we walk past Don who plays the smuggler guy. He'll be talking to Jan, the spy. This is when they first meet.

Mum has been especially nice to me too. She even told Frank to fuck off so she could spend the day with me today and take me back to the zoo. This time, when we watched the penguins line

up and stand at attention, she didn't say it was time to go. She let me stay and wait right till their feeding time which wasn't for a whole hour. The whole time the penguins stood lined up, all orderly, and not budging for a second. They knew what was coming. They knew if they were patient, they would get their reward.

Fish, fish and more fish. Raining out of a bucket like a penguin's dream of heaven. When the seals are fed like that, it's all chaos and craziness, above the waterline and below.

But the penguins just stay calm, gulp one fish at a time, and wait patiently for the next one to be tossed their way. They stand neatly in their places the whole time.

It's not what you'd expect. The penguins are my favourites now, just because of that. Mum said we maybe could come back and watch them again before we change locations. But I don't need to. Now that I've seen it, the penguin feeding time, it's in my head.

All of this, the candy necklace, the speaking part, even the penguins, is because everyone feels so badly about what happened.

It was a horrible, horrible thing to witness.

Everyone says so.

* * *

At first, I didn't know Lucia was behind me. And I don't know what happened to José, but I can guess. After she flipped out and started running back to the station, I'll bet he went into the bar for a beer or at least a *tonica* just to clear his head and shake all the emotion out of it.

I saw her run up onto the empty platform and stare way down the tracks like it was her life she was staring at. I wished she wasn't wearing red. Under the grey skies and considering the scene, it would have been better to be in something a soft dove grey. And with her hair down. Definitely down.

Some of the trains that went by didn't stop, didn't even slow. Maybe they were express. Maybe no one had bought a ticket yet to board at Cabezon de la Sal. Maybe not many people stop here.

So when I saw another one coming, of course I wondered if she'd jump in front of it. It might have been a *bland* choice, given the whole situation, but it still would have worked. I mean, a typical choice like that can work if the stakes are high enough, if the drama has reached a fevered enough pitch.

But she just stood there. She hadn't fixed her makeup and her coat was in her hands and dragging on the platform and she had a run in her tights. It was ugly to see.

She obviously wasn't crushed enough to play the scene out to its natural conclusion. But she wasn't strong enough, either, to push it into a different direction, into some kind of *hold your head up high* scenario that would let me imagine her going on without him, leaving her better off than before maybe.

Nothing. It was a zero. No drama. No climax. No strong ending like you always get, at least with a North American movie.

And I got filled up with this burning kind of feeling, a real raging inside, to see someone with her potential holding back like that, purposely ignoring how to play her own role in her own life story. I didn't completely give up the idea that she'd turn it around somehow, but as the train came down the track it was looking pointless.

That's when I moved straight to the edge of the platform, right behind her. It was like I couldn't help it. But then actors have to trust their first instincts and act on them – otherwise their scenes are fake.

With the squeal of the brakes and the roaring sound of the blood in my ears, it was all a bit of a blur. Everything happened so fast. In a film, this would be the kind of thing they'd normally do in *slo mo*, but if I directed something like this, it would be quick cuts. You'd hardly know what happened.

I remember her shoulder blades felt weird under my hands for the quick second they felt them, like little bird bones.

I remember the scream ended as soon as it began.

I remember I picked up her coat from the platform afterwards, when the people came running.

No one asked. They must have thought it was my coat.

Then they were all freaking out and comforting me. And even without dictionaries or subtitles I could understand how awful they thought it was for a young girl to witness such a thing.

Such a horrible, horrible thing.

I even cried. And it wasn't just turn your head and cover your face crying, either. It was crying with real tears.

And it was so cool to feel the salt in my mouth, totally authentic, in a scene like that. A scene that totally went for it, that went where it had to go with nothing held back.

I can see still exactly how I must have looked on the train platform, like there was a crane slowly pulling away for an extreme wide shot that showed me standing there, small and sweet, right in the centre of it all, Lucia's coat over my shoulders, me surrounded by people crossing themselves, and the policeman holding his hand up to wave people back from the edge.

I can still taste the real salt tears in my mouth.

Sutemi Waza
Yi-Mei Tsiang

My brother was seven when he choked me
faint flutter of carotid artery
thrummed against the bones of his wrists
before my two panicked fingers tapped out of
Okuri-eri-jime.

Moment before constellations
of veins flash: a brilliance of darkness,
my heart would clench,
a closed fist of panic.

Our *Sensei* knew this unbalance
that any muscle can forget to release
tighten against itself; blood furious,
implode.

He moved along his students,
always danced away his favorite,
the sacrifice, *Sutemi Waza*,
falter, a show of weakness that would
pin surprised boys under the weight of him

it was the *Sutemi Waza*,
in a moon dark motel room
that unbalanced him --
his body stiff against *Uke*
the sound of bone breaking
-kossetsua
mouth open in soundless surprise

Snow White and the Seven Latin Lovers

Roseanne Harvey

Colette takes a place at the row of mirrors along the wall and looks at her reflection in the mirror: purple velvet dress, long black wig, the make-up on her face starting to wear off. Jesus Christ, she thinks. On her left, Cleopatra traces a line around her eyes with a charcoal pencil, and in the corner, the Little Mermaid adjusts her tail then attacks her hair with a curling iron. Gretchen, cloaked in her Little Red Riding Hood outfit, skips out of a change stall and lands at the mirror on Colette's right.

"Hello, princess," Gretchen says, smiling at Colette's reflection in the mirror. "Are you finishing work early? Aren't you supposed to get off at four?" Gretchen is here for the two o'clock shift; Colette has been here since ten.

"I can't take it anymore," Colette says, pouring make-up remover onto a small cotton pad. "My head is throbbing. I can't talk to people. I'm useless out there. I told Hayashi-san that I'm sick and need to go home."

"You always do that," says Gretchen, painting her eyelashes thick with mascara. "The last I saw of you last night, you were salsa dancing with that Spanish guy." The two women and some of their German Village co-workers had been at the Wonder World nightclub for staff appreciation night. Cheap highballs and free shots for theme park staff, no access for guests. Thursday nights at the club are the most genuinely international time at the theme park. "Is he the same guy you met last week?"

"No, that was Ferdinand. He was celebrating his last night in Japan. This guy--" Colette leans into the mirror, smearing the cotton pad across her face, removing the white powder, the shadow caked onto her eyes. "What was his name? Enrique? Eric? Something like that. He's Don Quixote in the Spanish park."

"Another red hot wild stallion Latin lover," Gretchen sighs.

"It was the way he said it: Key-ho-te. That's when I knew I'd sleep with him." Colette soaks another cotton pad and rubs it across her face, getting rid of the last traces of make-up. Her skin is blotchy and red; her eyes look squinty, as though she'd just woken up. She feels that way too. Everyday as she's getting off work, she feels like she's waking up from a dream. "I'm getting too old to be waking up in somebody else's bed. Or futon, as the case may be this morning. All I know is that I woke up next to a sleeping Spaniard in the staff accommodations on the other side of the theme park, threw on my clothes and came straight to work." This is the seventh time this has happened in the three months since she came to Japan.

"It must be some strange form of culture shock," offered Gretchen. "If it wasn't for Joachim, I'd be doing the same thing."

"Instead, you work out obsessively and have a huge long-distance phone bill." Colette pulls the wig off her head. Her long blonde hair is braided and wrapped around itself in a loose bun. She undoes the elastics and runs her fingers through her hair, combing out the braid. Colette turns around and opens the locker behind her. She grabs her jeans and sparkly tank top, which smell of smoke and liquor and male sweat. "God, Gretchen," she says, dropping them on the floor. "I can't wear this."

"I just came from the gym," says Gretchen. "You can borrow my work-out clothes." She pulls a tangle of fleece from a black Puma bag and gives it to Colette. They're similar in size, so the grey track pants and black hoodie with 'Superlovers' written in pink check across the back fit Colette fine.

"I guess this is better than my stinky slut clothes," says Colette. "But I can't believe I have to go out in public in track pants."

Colette works in the German Village, although she is not German. Her father is French, her mother is English, she grew up in Belgium. That seemed to be close enough and nobody has ever questioned her authenticity. After Johan broke up with her, she spent a week locked in her apartment in Antwerp, drinking cheap gin and scouring the Internet for jobs overseas. She wanted to be anywhere in the world, as far away as possible from her life, her teaching work, the city breathing memories of Johan. Colette considered nannying in the US and bartending on a cruise ship, but the theme park in Japan seemed to be what she needed. Something inside her called out to be something else, anything else, assume an alien identity. She needed to be in a foreign environment where nothing is familiar so she could recreate herself each day.

Usually she walks around inside the village, holding a basket of fake apples and smiling at children and old people. Today she walked around the front gate, handing out flyers for the wooden roller coaster as a string ensemble played Mozart. The German Village is loosely based on the Brothers Grimm stories. It's a replica of the village in Germany where the Brothers were born, and there's some other German stuff thrown in for good measure.

Colette actually didn't even know Snow White was German, or European for that matter. She has always associated Snow White with the image of the Disney character: short black hair, long dress with puffy sleeves. She didn't know, or had somehow forgotten, that Walt Disney's contrivance was based on a Brothers Grimm story.

After she gets dressed, Colette needs to go shopping. She starts to make her way to the station at the front entrance, a twenty-five minute walk away, to take the train two stops to the *depat*, department store. There's a sale at Hysteric Glamour right now, she thinks about the black vinyl pants she saw there on the weekend. Colette is making more money than she's ever made in her life, and she's discovered the joys of consuming. At home she only wore secondhand clothes, but since she's moved to Japan, she thinks nothing of spending hundreds of Euros on a shirt or pair of shoes.

On the walk to the station, the theme park feels as foreign as another planet. It's almost empty, with the occasional couple or family with small children strolling along the causeway, eating ice cream and deciding what country to go to next. There are no groups of school children. Colette had read in the monthly newsletter that the park is marketing itself to the schools as an opportunity for cross-cultural education. Public schools couldn't afford to travel to a foreign country, but a field trip to the *gaikoku-mura* is within their budgets.

On her way out of the European Village, Colette passes by only three people: a couple in designer clothes, a delivery person, and Johnny Ramone Guy, the shaggy-haired designer from the wax museum, holding a Styrofoam cup and onigiri in his hands. Even though he walked past her four times during her shift, taking a rollercoaster pamphlet each time, no glimmer of recognition registers in his face. She had read about Johnny Ramone Guy in the theme park

newsletter, how his wax statues had been nominated for awards and his work is gaining international recognition.

Colette walks past the lake and the entrance to Treasure Island, set on a boat rather than an island. Some bored pirates hang around the ticket booth. The pirates are the wild children of the theme park's three hundred employees, known to start food fights in the staff cafeteria and steal things from other pavilions. When Colette walks past, they whistle and shout, "Hey baby!" She doesn't look at them, avoiding the guitarist from The Long John Silvers, the punk rock band that regularly plays at staff appreciation night, whom she hit on a few weeks ago.

As she follows the shape of the Great Wall of China, Colette thinks about her latest Latin lover. She can hardly remember what he looks like, and she's slightly dreading the possibility of seeing him around the theme park or at staff appreciation night next week. The further she gets from the European Village, the more comfortable she feels, somehow protected by the plaster bricks of the Great Wall stacked beside her. This replica is a quarter of the height of the real Great Wall, and it stretches only about 750 metres, representing one tiny part of the wall.

The Great Wall ends just before the entrance to the Far East. Outside of Turkey, Colette is beckoned by a woman sitting at a small table. On a purple velvet cloth splattered with silver stars sits an illuminated crystal ball and a card that says "Fortune" in gold lettering, with a cluster of kanji characters below.

"I tell your fortune," the woman says in English with a Japanese accent. This surprises Colette. Wonder World is full of fortunetellers, but this is the only one who has ever aggressively pursued Colette. Most of the theme park's clairvoyants sit demurely behind their little tables, filing their nails or discreetly dozing.

The sign reads seven thousand five hundred yen. "No thanks," says Colette.

"I can read your palms or cards," says the woman, batting her long glued on eyelashes, which make her look like she could actually be from some far eastern country.

"I don't have time," says Colette, turning away.

"You drink too much and you make sex with men you don't love." Colette stops. The woman points to a small folding chair and says gently, "Suwatte, kudasai." Colette sits down.

"My name is Kumiko. And you?"

"Colette." Saying her own name brings her back to the moment, makes her feel real, concrete.

"Co-ret-te. Where are you from?" She extends her palms, her long red nails inviting Colette's hands.

"Shouldn't you know that?" Kumiko only looks at her and rolls her eyes. "Belgium." Colette places her hands palms down in Kumiko's, feels warmth and a slight charge run across her skin.

"Why did you come to Japan?"

"To work here."

Kumiko runs her thumb across Colette's knuckles and Colette knows that this isn't just some woman in a fortuneteller costume.

"You leaving man in Be-lu-gi?"

"I didn't leave him, he ... Wait a minute."

Kumiko smiles, then closes her eyes and places the backs of Colette's hands on the purple velvet cloth. Her hands hover above Colette's and she mutters to herself in Japanese. Colette can understand only an exclamation of "Ii, na?" *Isn't that good?* Colette's hasn't studied Japanese at all since she started working at Wonder World, but she's picked up enough to identify the fortuneteller's strong Kansai accent. Her direct questions suggest she's from Osaka, rather than Kyoto or Kobe.

Kumiko wears a red, billowy shirt with flowing sleeves. Large silver hoops hang from her ears and big, jeweled rings adorn her fingers. Curls spring away from her head in all the right places, bouncing around when she moves. Most impressive about Kumiko is her exquisite make-up, which is perfectly flawless. Her lipstick is the exact red as her shirt and her skin is without lines or creases. It's difficult to tell her age, she seems old and young at the same time, well preserved, over thirty but younger than sixty.

"Your hands covered in man," Kumiko finally says.

"Man? One man?"

"No," Kumiko laughs. "Many man. Belugi man, many dark-haired man. And there is another man. You don't know him. He looks you."

She closes her eyes and Colette wonders what she is invoking, what she is communicating with. The crystal ball sits between the two women, smooth and silent. It has to be just a prop, nobody actually uses these things, Colette thinks. The ball looks dense and solid, and Colette tries to imagine a halo of soft smoke circling the clear globe, lights swirling inside and scenes of her life rising to the surface.

Finally Kumiko says, "You are not moving. You stay in one place."

"What?"

"You are just going to circles. Around and around."

"What else do you see?"

"A donkey."

"A donkey? What does that mean?"

Kumiko shrugs. "This is just what your hands say. I only translate."

"What else do they say?"

Again she closes her eyes and guides her fingernails across the soft white skin of Colette's palms. "Here you are alone." Her hands come to a stop and Colette doesn't say anything.

"Is this true?" Kumiko asks.

"I don't need this right now," Colette says, gripping the edge of the table with both hands and pushing her chair back. She stands up, turns around and starts walking away.

"Hey!" yells the fortuneteller. "Hey! Okane! Okane!"

Colette drops two thousand-yen bills on the ground and picks up her pace, galloping away from the purple velvet table.

She has no idea where she is. Nothing looks familiar. Colette doesn't know the structure of the theme park, the logic with which the attractions are laid out, how the continents and geography reflect the world. Colette walks east and sort of north, ending up in *Roshia*, or Russia. The controlled climate is a few degrees cooler than the rest of the theme park. The staff wears furry parkas, which look far too warm despite the cooler temperature.

Bloody fortuneteller, Colette says to herself. She looks at her betraying hands--the indecipherable codes across her palms, fingerprints containing a secret identity she can't unlock. Colette wonders what else her hands could tell her, if she was to bother asking; she curls her fingers into fists and walks faster, pushing deeper into *Roshia*.

In the middle of the cold vastness, Colette finds a carousel, lit up and shining like the North Star. The painted horses circle around and around, riding up and down the poles to a soundtrack of calliope music, a creepy carnivalesque "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." Nobody rides any of the horses. Colette walks up to the attendant, who is reading a newspaper. He jumps when he sees her, stuffs the newspaper beside his chair. Colette flashes her Wonder World staff card, the attendant nods, and she pushes through the turnstile as the carousel pulls to a stop.

A black horse stops in front of Colette, red eyes flashing. The mane and tail look windswept, and the horse appears to be rearing. Colette puts her foot in the stirrup, climbs on, and the carousel starts to revolve again. The horses move in time to the music, up and down with the tempo. Colette looks at the horses around her, each one pink or yellow or baby blue with intricate illustrations on their hindquarters. She looks at the rump of the horse she sits on, and finds that it has no illustration. Just pure black, slight definition where there should be muscles.

The horse rides the pole, synchronized with the motion of the horses around it. When her horse is low, Colette can only see the sides of the horses around her, but after rising up the pole, she can see over their heads, out past the fence around the carousel. The horse passes replicas of Russian landmarks and architecture, and the attendant in his seat has resumed reading his newspaper.

In the distance she sees the Eiffel Tower, rising up from beside the German Village. She has no idea how to get there, or how she got where she is. The carousel continues its circles and Colette wonders how many times it will go around. She remembers when she got separated from her parents at the Space Mountain ride at Paris Disneyland when she was six years old. At the beginning of the line, her parents pushed through the turnstiles, smiling and waving at her as they stepped onto the ride. The turnstile came up to her eye level; she tried to slide under it, but her older sister held her hand and prevented her from following.

"Twinkle twinkle little star," Colette sings along with the music, which also picks up pace. "How I wonder what you are. Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky." It's been a long time since she saw the stars, which are obscured by Japan's litup urban centres. The carousel starts to pick up speed; Colette reaches for the reins but there aren't any. She wraps her arms around the steed, slides her fingers across cold smoothness, and holds on to the horse with everything in her. The carousel feels like it's going to spin right off its axis, launch into space, the horses around her also gaining speed. She feels like she's gotten caught in a race, but nobody seems to be winning, they just keep spinning faster and faster, like a discus flying and spiraling.

The music accelerates and increases in pitch. Colette digs her feet into the stirrups and grips the horse's neck. The carousel whirs past the attendant reading his paper, past the Kremlin and the giant mammoth, the statue of Dostoyevsky. She imagines the carousel snapping off its axis and rocketing like a flashing marquis sign across the bright blue sky, soaring over entire continents. All she can do is keep herself from sliding off the horse's smooth fiberglass back and hold on for the ride.

Submerging
Meagan Wohlberg

As you wade out
you leave no wave or ripple;

there is only
what my hands make:
slapping against the surface
like a beaver's tail,
a martyr's
warning
to shut all eyes
against acidic spray.

I see you go under
with the forks and spoons,
your mouth
gaping
in an air bubble below
in the base of a whiskey glass;

we tighten
our lips (respond)
against the fruit flies,
the oily sediment:
built up
while we have been sleeping (all along)

somewhere else.

Acoustic Phonons
Mari-Lou Rowley

Listen ear to heart thumb to Vega nervous
oscillations simply mechanical and fine
machinery of body parts of quasiparticles.
The problem is complicated. Squealing frequency
of acoustic phonons due to elastic deformation.
Imprints on skin white or red depending upon
thermal fluctuations at room temperature
or some kind of violation. The literature filled
with erroneous formula, tongues embedded
in a solid matrix such as glass, sheets littered
with charged particles. Noble metals in particular,
sound speeds varying drastically with direction.
Remove the ring and this won't matter. Take off
the watch and you won't hear a thing.

Cause and Effect

Susan Hayton

The stretcher came flying through the emergency room doors, gloved paramedics steering the unwieldy vehicle along the crowded hallway, enroute to the trauma room. The chubby, mostly naked, man, his hairless chest crisscrossed with patches of drying blood, lay flaccid and unresponsive as the stretcher swiveled around the corner and down the hallway. His body bounced along and the blanket that had been hastily draped over him shifted down off his protuberant abdomen and was left lying between him and the side rails of the stretcher, exposing a set of torn, navy blue bikini underwear, incompletely covering his meaty buttocks.

The trauma team was able to get a better idea of the source of the blood that was coating the neck and chest of the victim as he was wheeled into the resuscitation suite. A knife had been inserted into his head just above his ear and behind his left eye. The handle had been snapped off in the process, leaving about an inch of the shiny, broad blade sticking out above skin level- the remainder of the shaft resting deep in the skull. The paramedics moved the patient onto the trauma room bed and the medical staff began their primary survey. Multiple other stab wounds peppered the head and chest of the victim; evidence that a more prolonged struggle had occurred before the final, impressive blow had managed to penetrate the skull, putting an end to any resistance.

Randy planned to stay home, have a couple of beer and watch t.v. It was Monday night after all. He had to get the kids- the two who still bothered to attend- ready to go to school in the morning; a job that had been abandoned by their drug-addled mother long ago. He settled into his favourite armchair and was flipping through the channels, when his sister, Valerie, stumbled in.

She was high again. Not an unusual condition for her, but she generally stayed away when she was so obviously stoned. Randy had been harassing her to clean up her act for awhile now and she should know that he'd be on her case for the next week if she showed up in this state.

Valerie was forty-two but looked more like sixty. Her thin, bruised arms stuck out of her filthy, partially buttoned, blouse like sticks on the body of a wheat field scarecrow. The skin of her abdomen hung over the top of her jeans, stretched beyond recovery by six pregnancies. Bare legs and feet were shoved into an old pair of running shoes, laces missing, and her black hair was greasy, nit infected, and only partially contained by an elastic band that attempted to create a small pony tail at the back of her head.

"Valerie...what the hell!...I told you to stay away when you're like this! Brandon and Clint are still up. They don't need to see their aunt in this condition. And shut the god-damned door, it's fuckin' cold out today!"

Valerie looked mildly confused but spun back toward the door, shoving at it with her dirty fingers as she careened off to the side.

The main room of the house was small and Randy was able to grab hold of his sister by just partially rising out of his chair and stretching out his arm to grasp the shoulder of her shirt. He managed to keep her from hitting the wall but she fell against him, forcing him back into the chair and knocking over the beer sitting on the t.v. table next to him.

Valerie laughed and snuggled in against her brother's chest. She obviously hadn't had a bath for quite some time and her few remaining teeth were cigarette-stained and hung there precariously in her swollen, diseased gums.

"Don't need to grab, baby...I'm a friendly girl..." Valerie giggled and licked Randy's neck as she squirmed on top of him.

Randy burst up out of the chair, pushing Valerie off his lap and onto the floor in front of the door.

"Jesus Christ, Valerie! I'm Randy. Your brother. What the hell have you been into? And do up your blouse. This isn't a fucking whorehouse!"

Valerie was partially sitting, partially lying, on the floor, picking at the buttons of her shirt as she tried to respond to Randy's instructions. Her sedated fingertips struggled with the buttons and their corresponding holes.

Randy leaned over and retrieved the can of beer from under an adjacent chair. He walked over to the tiny, galley kitchen to look for a cloth so that he could mop up the spreading pool of liquid before it seeped further into the already soiled carpet. Valerie struggled to her feet, her pendulous breasts readily visible, hanging unconfined, and uninviting, behind the threadbare bits of material. Deep stretch marks and prominent veins coursed over the well-used skin and an old tattoo, a remnant of a previous era, and happier times, wrapped around her left breast at the level of her nipple. Randy could only see the top of the 'N' from this vantage point, but he knew, from years of Valerie's exposing herself in just such a manner, that the tattoo read 'Nick' and was placed in such a way that the dot of the 'i' was formed, most impressively, by an erect nipple. Much of the name was likely hidden now, by the sagging breast, but Randy hadn't had a look at the entire package for quite some time.

Valerie was digging in her pocket. She pulled out a huge wad of cash and placed it triumphantly in the middle of the t.v. table. Beer flooded the dehydrated paper and Randy rushed across the room to snatch up the sopping mass of bills.

"See what I brought you? See what I got for my baby brother?" Valerie grinned, conspiringly, and grabbed hold of the arm of the chair as she swayed slightly on her well-calloused feet.

"Where the hell did you get this? There must be a thousand bucks here!" said Randy, as he leafed through the sticky concoction of paper and beer.

"Those guys. Those fuckin' guys..." responded Valerie. "They think ol' Miss Valerie is just a stupid, old, doped up, dried up..." her words began to slur a bit and she stopped momentarily to spit on the carpet in front of her. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and Randy knelt down to wipe up the gob of spit from between the t.v. table legs.

"Jesus, Valerie" he said.

"But I got them this time!" blathered Valerie. She giggled and more saliva drooled from the side of her mouth. "They're gonna be pretty surprised when they find they're missing fifteen hundred bucks! Fifteen fuckin' hundred bucks! Did ya hear what I said, little brother?"

"What guys? You took this from some guys? Jesus Christ, Valerie! What were you thinking?" Randy paused. His comments were wasted on his bleary-eyed sister.

"When, Val...when did you take the money?" Randy grabbed his sister's shoulders and straightened her around so that she was looking directly at him. She peered at the fuzzy outline of his anxious face.

"Randy! Hey...good to see ya baby brother! Why the crinkles?"

Valerie was studying the worry lines on Randy's forehead. She reached out a tentative finger toward them before suddenly stumbling on her intoxicated legs and falling off to the side again. Randy grabbed hold of her upper arms and maneuvered her over to his favourite chair. He lowered her carefully into the chair but her head lolled back on her chicken neck, snapping from side to side before it fell forward onto her chest and she began to snore loudly. He hurried over to the window to look out at the darkening street. Wind rustled the dry, stiff branches of the autumn trees and crinkled, orange-brown leaves swirled and danced playfully along the cracked, deteriorating sidewalks of this poor Saskatoon neighbourhood.

Since he stopped drinking...well, heavy drinking anyway...since then, things had been better. Oh sure, he still had the occasional beer. They said you couldn't do that...couldn't be a part time drinker...couldn't have just "the occasional one". But it seemed that he could. Maybe it was his age...or the presence of the kids in his life...or the fact that he stopped cold turkey for almost three years, before starting to have the occasional few again. Whatever. He seemed to be able...so far...to have one or two in the evening, by himself, and then go off to bed, still reasonably clear-headed.

Plus he had moved. Out of the apartment, away from the old crowd and the endless partying. Into this tiny, three-room house in Riversdale. A bedroom for him. A room for the kids. And the main room. More than he'd ever had before. His. Well...sort of his. The bank still owned most of it, but his name was on the title. Randy Cote. House owner. Land owner. Employed. Sober. Now if he could only convince his sister to do the same.

Valerie had tried her best to fill the role of parent when their chronically depressed mother had given up the fight and taken herself to an early grave. But money was short and guidance was non-existent. Before she was fourteen, Valerie was working the streets, her pretty face a magnet for the underbelly of Saskatoon. First baby at fifteen. Into the drugs by sixteen. Hard drugs before she was twenty. Only her aging body gave her a break from the endless demands of the slime slinking along the streets of the city. But the hunger for the drugs remained and she gradually lost every one of her kids to social services.

Randy had helped get her back on the methadone program over the past year but he couldn't seem to get her to stick with it. She missed the euphoria, the high that "real drugs" provided and it wasn't long before she was back with her old crowd, looking for the rush, the life-sucking exhilaration, that came with a fresh hit.

Randy let the tattered drapes fall back against the window. Valerie was huddled into the chair. A few more strands of hair had come loose from the unsatisfactory ponytail and they lay across her thin, angular face, looking like deep trench marks biting into the fragile, anemic skin. The beer-soaked wad of money had dropped from his hand when he moved Valerie into the chair. Multiple little piles of bills were scattered around the foot of the chair, sticking to the carpet with a slightly gluey consistency. He knelt down and began to pick up the individual bills, straightening them, counting them and piling them neatly on the adjacent empty chair.

He jumped up and rushed to the window at the sound of a car door slamming. He jerked the drape open and closed it just as fast as he realized, too late, that the warm light of the room had burst forth into the dusk-filled front yard. A beacon. Signaling their presence.

Three men were walking along the sidewalk. One was already turning onto the gravel path leading to the front door. Randy scooped up the pile of money from the chair and ran into the kitchen, pitching the whole mess into an empty drawer. He picked out a wide-blade knife and rammed it into his back pocket. He pulled the rest of his shirt out from where it was partially tucked into his jeans, letting the shirttail fall down and cover the handle. A loud bang on the door made Valerie stir in her sleep, but she didn't wake up. Randy hadn't locked the door after Valerie wandered in and he could see the knob turning.

The three guys ranged in age from late teens to mid-twenties. The two older guys had black and red bandanas wrapped skullcap-like around their heads. All three wore identical black leather jackets and had tattoos carved into the skin of the right side of their faces. The youngest was short and stocky with bad acne and red hair. He was through the door first and spotted Valerie slouching in the chair.

"Here's the bitch, Jack. Sleeping it off, looks like. Want me to wake her up and get some answers?" He glanced back at his boss and moved forward when he got the confirmatory grunt. He reached out and grabbed Valerie by her skimpy ponytail, jerking her head up against the back of the chair. He slapped her hard across the face in an attempt to rouse her. Randy restrained himself from immediately rushing over to his sister. Instead, he moved slowly and carefully into the main room from the kitchen where he had been standing, partially obscured, behind the hanging upper cupboards.

"Hold it, Charlie," warned Jack. "We got company. A big fucker."

The gang turned to look at Randy. Six feet tall. Two hundred and fifty pounds. He was wearing an old checkered shirt and jeans. His shirt was stretched tautly over his barrel-like midsection. His broad shoulders and sturdy frame caused the group to momentarily rethink their approach. The pimply-faced youngster let go of Valerie, allowing her whimpering form to slip back into the folds of the chair.

"This stupid fucking whore took our money. We want it back."

Jack was clearly the leader and the other two men moved into position, slightly behind him.

"That's my sister, asshole. We don't know nothing about no money" Randy responded. He watched the faces of the three men.

"Your sister has our money" continued Jack. "We'll just ask her a few questions. Get her to think on it a bit-think about where that money might be." He nodded at Charlie who moved over to the chair again, grabbed Valerie by her shirt collar and dragged her out of the chair, toward the open door. Valerie screamed and began swinging. She grabbed the arm that was holding her shirt collar and pulled it to her mouth, sinking her decaying teeth into the firm flesh. Charlie shouted and smashed his other fist into Valerie's head, jarring her mouth away from his aching arm. Blood soaked through the sleeve of his shirt. He gripped the ragged wound and proceeded to kick at Valerie where she had fallen on the floor at his feet.

Randy started forward, having decided there was no way he could avoid direct confrontation with these guys, when he heard the scared voice behind him.

"Daddy, daddy...I heard a noise."

Brandon, his five-year-old, was standing in his pyjamas in the hall. Clint, the nine year-old, was hanging back behind his brother, meeting his father's eyes...his face frightened...more aware than his little brother that something serious was happening.

"Clint, get your brother back to the bedroom. Get out of here!" he shouted, as he turned and saw Jack and the third gang member rushing toward him.

Randy pulled the knife from his back pocket. He held it up in front of him, waving it back and forth at the two men. They came to an abrupt stop, looked at each other, and then at Charlie, who immediately left Valerie where she was moaning on the floor, and moved over to join the group. The three of them rushed at Randy and he struck out at the man closest to him. The knife blade managed to avoid ribs and it slid relatively easily through layers of muscle and into Jack's chest. Jack screamed and veered away from Randy, rushing over to stand panting and shivering against the wall. The other two men came in from the left and jumped at Randy, pushing him into the kitchen counter. They held him against the rigid surface and hammered the knife from his grip.

Charlie picked up the knife and began to stab at Randy as he tried to fend off blows from two directions. Several times Randy felt the knife blade penetrate his shoulders and chest as he swung his heavy arms back and forth, but the piercings were never deep enough to cause real damage. Charlie began to jump up and down, aiming his knife arm at Randy's head, hoping to slow him down by hitting an area that didn't have such a thick muscle layer covering it. The blade bit into the skin of Randy's face and he tasted blood in his mouth.

Randy heard his children whimpering in the hall. He turned his head partially toward them, ever so slightly, pulled toward them despite himself, and it was with this slight turn of his head that Charlie was able to find an open, undefended bit of skin through which to powerfully insert the broad blade.

Jack was sitting against the wall, his forehead wet with the struggle to breath, his respiration comprised of short, quick, little grunts.

"Let's get out of here," urged Charlie and he and the third gang member hoisted Jack up onto his feet and partially carried, partially dragged, him out the door.

Brandon and Clint huddled together in the hallway, afraid to move from where they were squatting, until they heard the car squeal away from the curb and rush off down the street.

" It's been forty minutes. I'm going to call it. Stop CPR."

The team leader looked around at the tired physicians and nurses who had been working desperately to save this man's life over the past half an hour. Nothing more to be done. Too much brain damage. Damage at the core. Not fixable.

"What do you think the story is here?" one of the staff members asked another as they began to count the number of stab wounds (eight) on the head and body of the deceased.

"Oh...you know... the usual. Drug deal gone wrong. Pretty violent though...must have taken a lot of force to stick that knife so far into his head!"

Clint peeled his little brother's trembling arms from around his waist and stepped over his father, where he lay on his back at the top of the hallway. He crept over to the phone that hung on the far wall beside the front door. He was scared beyond belief that those guys might burst back through the door at any moment and hack him and his brother to pieces. He took a peek at his aunt as he went by and realized that she was still breathing. She looked pretty sick but not as bad as his dad. He dialed 911 with shaky fingers and gave the information to the emergency operator. It was only the presence of his little brother alone in the hallway that gave him the courage to pass by his father again, step over his bloodied form and proceed on down the hallway but not before stooping over his father's body and looking at the knife embedded in his skull.

He wanted to remove it, wanted to take it away. He grabbed onto the wooden handle and pulled. But the handle snapped off in his hand, causing his father's head to wobble from side to side in a sickening fashion. The shock of this was finally too much for him. He gave an eerie, throaty cry and ran to the end of the hall where he waited, entwined with his brother.

Burnt Sienna
Paula Jane Remlinger

before we learned flesh should not be
turquoise, brick, or lemon;

before thick black lines
divined paths for us to follow;

before Prussian Blue had to duck
and cover beneath a child's desk
sky ringing with sirens,

before Indian Red faded like Indian summer,
and the world became ultra,
electric, neon, atomic---

it was the colour
of cinnamon toast and foxes,
dirty pennies and rusty bottlecaps
thrust in treasure-chest pockets,
leaves crumpled under new shoes,
the brown bottle-brush tails of squirrels.

with it we buried gold on pirate shores,
moulded mountains on Mars,
rode spiny-backed dinosaurs through Mesozoic swamps
until the bells and shouts of recess
called us away.

Note: "Burnt Sienna," "Prussian Blue," "Indian Red" are all names of Crayola
Crayons. For a history of the naming of colours, see
<http://www.crayola.com/colorcensus/history/chronology.cfm>.
"Burnt Sienna" was one of the colours being considered for retirement in 2003.

Weaponry
Matthew Hall

Your talk
of our pyjamaed
and knotty-haired children
screaming, "I am Batman!"
at the foot of our door
and smashing blooming flowers
with a stick
makes me remember
that not long ago
I was a child
smashing flowers with a stick
and it spurs my desire
not for children
but for a more delicate weapon.

Still Life
Susan Stenson

A green stool.
Two pillows.

The only light, one circle
over a corner of a chair.

Father, in his uniform,
lumps the wooden floor
with hulky snores, and blocks
the doorway to the kitchen.

The daughter steps closer,
bends to feel his breath
on her cheek, bristles
at the dark heat on the fingers.

She squats, squints.
Checks his pockets
for change.

It could be a small animal
she is greeting, darkness
this feral dream.

Her hand
rising like a fist
full of coins,
grubby moons
upon his shoulder.

Finding Julie **Michael Spring**

It was only when she was sick over my shoes that I was really sure who it was.

"Julie?" I said limply as she heaved once more into the gutter.

"Bollocks," she said standing straight again, squinting at me and sucking in some air awkwardly. For a second she assumed that pose of dignified respectability that only drunks on the edge can do. It didn't last.

"Jesus. 'Fraid I'm pissed. Pissed backwards." She wobbled and patted the pockets of her coat and concentrated hard. "Wouldn't have a ciggy, would you?" she said quietly with all the colour draining from her face as I watched, and she toppled back towards the queue at the bus stop swallowing hard. She didn't seem to be with anyone.

The easiest thing was to take her home.

I had to struggle with her up the stairs, first from the street and then inside to the front door of my flat. In a moment of not quite clarity, she stared at me with her dark eyes burning with hate and slapped me pretty hard, and then just went limp as though her backbone had dissolved. Her body slumped against me and reminded me of how female she was. Despite the fact that she could be sick again at any moment, I thought she might get affectionate before too long. I wondered whether I would object, and didn't come to a conclusion.

Then, when I was fishing out my front door key to get her inside, with one arm round her to stop her sliding down the wall, she found her backbone again, but this time when she opened her eyes, the hate had gone. She wiped her mouth on her coat collar and slobbered over the side of my face, ending up giggling with her tongue in my ear.

"Come on, big boy," she whispered, her hand snaking round my groin, "See how juicy I can be." Somehow, I got her in through the doorway.

I dumped her on to the sofa and went to make coffee. By the time I got back, she was snoring.

I put her straight on the cushions so that she wouldn't wake up with a stiff neck as well as a hangover, threw her coat over the top and an open sleeping bag over that, and sat down opposite her. Her dark hair was straggling down over her face, and her makeup was smeared round her eyes. A trail of brown saliva was running slowly down her chin.

I tried to remember how long I had been in love with her.

I must have sat there for an hour or so, just staring, because when I picked up my coffee it was cold, cold as love.

Then I went to bed. Sometime later, I woke up and saw her outlined in the doorway to my room. She pulled off her clothes and climbed in beside me, searching me out with her arms. I was tempted to stay, but I scrambled out and went to sleep on the sofa under the sleeping bag. I wondered vaguely whether she knew who I was.

I was woken before seven by a mobile going. She was sitting up and talking to someone when I took her a coffee.

"Yeah," she said. "I'll be there. No, it wasn't anything like that. No. No! Absolutely not. Just catching up with an old friend." She rang off.

I said, "Are you staying awake now? Because if you are, I'll pull the curtains." She shrugged and shook her head to clear it.

"Or would you rather not have daylight at the moment?"

"Mikey. Where is the bathroom?" she asked quickly. I pointed. She scuttled off with a sheet round her.

Despite myself, I thought of the time when I had arrived at her flat to find her dressed only in her mother's fur coat. "Do you find this at all exciting?" she had whispered breathlessly at the door, opening the coat to show me exactly what to expect. We had made love on the floor in front of the gas logs.

When she came back from the bathroom, I had pulled the curtains and opened a window. I gave her a couple of aspirin.

"I'm going to have a shower in a moment. Then I'll be away." She paused. "Mikey? I don't suppose we did, but I just wanted to ask, did we?"

"No. We didn't."

"Sorry. It's nothing personal. It's just that I've been waking up with some very strange people over the past few weeks." She brushed her hair out of her face and smiled weakly. "Christ. The things I do."

Half an hour later, she was on her way, her makeup scrubbed off, her hair washed and still wet, her tights in her bag. She looked vulnerable with the freckles showing on her face. Her eyes looked small and unfriendly. I watched as she skipped past some children, joining in their game for a moment on her way. She was, I thought, impossibly beautiful. And that was the last I saw of Julie for almost a year.

A few days later a parcel arrived. I hoped the bottle might have been a reference to one of our more successful evenings. The card said, "Thanks for the rescue. Keep walking those streets. I may need you again sometime." I sent her a text message to say thanks, and then I got on with my life.

That was around the time when I was travelling around Europe quite a lot. I worked for a software firm in marketing and there were a lot of presentations and events that I had to do my best to make a success of. I used to travel with Chuck, the European marketing VP, our man from Washington. I spent a lot of time in fancy hotels and bag-carrying round the streets of European capitals, which suited me pretty well. Chuck told me one night coming back from Germany that he was hoping to get a new job, opening up the organisation in the Middle East and Africa. He said that if he got it, he'd be happy to take me with him.

I thought then that working abroad for a while might solve one or two immediate problems. I needed to make a dent into the desperation loan I'd taken out to get a deposit on the flat. I could do with making a bit of progress in my career as well, and some overseas experience wouldn't do any harm. On top of that, I just wanted to get away for a while.

I hadn't exactly become a solitary when Julie and I went our separate ways, but girls had come and gone with a frequency that was worrying if you thought about it too much. Maybe they sensed unfinished business. Maybe they shrank away from the uncomfortable frozen knot that I couldn't seem to get rid of. Or maybe Julie had just pissed around my doorposts, marking out her territory like a feral cat. Whatever, I thought I could do with a change of air.

Meanwhile, I heard the odd report about Julie from friends who encountered her in clubs, in bars, in theatres. She seemed to be having a good time.

Around that time too, my Dad came to stay with me to do some decorating in the flat. He liked it in London. It wasn't too far from where he had grown up. He'd been on his own since Mum died a few years before, and I couldn't get down to visit so often with all the time being away working. The first evening he arrived, we went out for dinner at a local pub and somehow we started talking about Julie. He told me then that he thought I was just clinging to wreckage. We talked about the job. He said I should take it. I think he was quite looking forward to keeping an eye on the flat.

He liked Julie. I knew that. They had spent hours chatting on the back porch of his house, looking out over the fields and talking about things he'd seen, things he'd lived through. India, where he'd been not long after independence, or Middlesex cricket in its heyday, or what the sixties were really like.

No, he liked Julie all right. He was just clear-sighted enough to understand it would never work.

Then, Chuck got the job he'd been angling for. We were on the early plane to Amsterdam, blinking in the sharp sunshine above the downy peaks of cloud, when he told me. I said I'd go with him if the offer was still open. I spent the next few weeks tidying up to leave for Cairo.

I was in the midst of that when Julie called and asked if I would go out for a drink with her the following evening. It seemed like a good opportunity to tell her what I was going to do, not that she would have any particular interest, but for me it would keep things tidy. She named a time and a place.

The place was etched in my memory, although she had probably forgotten the evening when we had met there before.

That was when we couldn't decide whether we were together or not. We agreed to meet and talk it through. Something though had happened between her phone call and the bar. She arrived dressed for the West End. When we sat down, she started looking around her every two minutes, almost shaking each time the door opened and someone came in, drinking quickly and twitchily in that way she had when she was excited. And then she had told me about her new lover. Though I tried not to show it, I felt as though I had walked through the wrong door, and instead of finding myself amongst carefree evening drinkers in the bar, I had wandered out onto a polar icecap, the starless darkness swept by a howling gale.

What she might want now was anyone's guess -- a signature on a passport application, the opportunity to pass on news, advice about money -- anything was possible. I didn't much mind. That evening, I was steel. I was adamant.

I was amazed to find her already sitting there when I arrived. This was unheard of. She was always late. Many times she had not even bothered to show up at all. She would phone or text hours later and say that she was going somewhere with someone. By that point, I would try to be too drunk to care.

She poured me a drink. Her eyes were sparkling and for once she showed no desire to talk about herself, instead launching into a reminiscence about a girl who had for years been a particular friend of hers, until there was a row about a man or money or something. Now it seemed that her friend Cassie was some kind of force in television. Julie mentioned the name of a TV show. I didn't know it, but then I hardly watched anything apart from the news.

"Anyway," she said, lighting a cigarette and smiling oddly, "I'll say you said hello when I go hospital visiting."

Cassie was having a baby with her bloke. I remembered him all right, a weak chinned bond dealer with a red Porsche and a laugh like a horse.

I told Julie about my new job, about what I hoped for the future, about Cairo, Johannesburg, Nairobi; the rivers flowing over dark, rich earth; gems waiting to be plucked from the mire. She nodded.

"The funny thing is," she said, "that I've been shagging Cassie's old man for the last six months, and it's just been this week that I've decided what a fucking little shit I am," Julie looked away, toward the carved angel that perched triumphantly on the end of the bar next to the wine list. A tear wriggled down her cheek.

I was amazed at her ability so easily to insert the stiletto deep between my shoulder blades. The metal I was made of yielded like butter. The pain was coming out through my eyes.

Time stopped. Her eyes were like amber. They were deep enough for me to discern another universe in them. She smiled weakly and took my hand across the table. Her fingernails were bitten and her touch set my hand on fire. In Africa, I would resort to voodoo, witchcraft, ancient magic, the life of the will. I would eventually forget, like a legionnaire. The reflections from the candles glittered on her hair. There were flames in her eyes.

"I don't know what I can bloody well do," she said, looking up at me as though I was actually there; as though I was actually sitting there with the glass of wine in my hand; as though I was someone who could say something.

October Light
Sheri Benning

1

Not the flute-song light of April,
of skittish creak waves or
the heart-in-throat jitter
of aspen leaves.

2

When you peel the husk back.

3

Allspice, cinnamon, unwashed hair,
cloves pinned to over-ripe oranges,
sweat of yesterday's labour.

4

Doesn't turn around though it can feel the eyes at its back.

5

Nor is it November's slag-light, the thing said
by a lover that cannot be taken back and now sits
between them broken-winged and awkward.
Not light of the thin-cough after.

6 Inward light --

viscous magma, lamp in a night window,
light of a thought you can't yet say, blood, embers
through the seams of an old wood-stove. Light that invites,
go deeper.

7

A thick-tongued drunken prophet, light
that spills long-shadows at your feet as if to slur.
It knows how to come to grips with the darkness
that is coming, but it's not going to say.

Non-Fiction

Confessions of a Re/Deformed Academic **Robert Calder**

For almost all of my nearly fifty-year academic career--that is, from when I was a senior undergraduate beginning to learn the craft of writing scholarly essays until recently--I have operated on the principle that the measure of my writing always should be the degree to which it reveals truth. Since I was writing non-fiction for an academic audience--and for a general readership comprising intelligent, well-read people--this meant basing as much of my argument as possible on evidence: primary sources such as manuscripts, letters, diaries, official documents, autobiographies, memoirs and other materials. It also meant bolstering my own positions or coming to terms with the opposing views of other commentators by referring comprehensively to secondary sources.

In part, this concern for accuracy and authority was a defensive reaction to a battery of examiners ranging from university instructors to thesis and dissertation committees to book reviewers and scholarly peers. It probably dates from one day in my third year at the University of Saskatchewan when I looked at an essay I had written for Edward McCourt's British novel survey course. When, as our first assignment of the year, he had given us the topic of "Reading I Like," I nearly did a cartwheel. Being a pompous young aspiring intellectual with copies of Camus and Hesse hanging conspicuously out of my back pocket, I knew that all I had to do was rattle off titles like *The Plague*, *The Stranger*, *Siddhartha*, *Walden*, *Zorba the Greek*, *Buddenbrooks*, and many others to show how far I was outstripping my illiterate fellow students.

I was astonished and stung, therefore, when Professor McCourt returned my paper with a grade of C and the simple comment "banal and superficial." I had, as I recognized when I calmed down, simply written a catalogue of names and titles without offering any justification for their literary worth or even their particular meaning for me. Lulled into a sense of false security by my pretensions, I had allow myself to be exposed in all the poverty of my scholarly substance.

After this humiliation, I never wrote an essay, paper, thesis or dissertation without seeing an examining committee in front of me ready to spot the unsubstantiated assertion and the unproven argument which would allow it to consign me to the second-rate or, God help me, the failed. Similarly, when I began to publish books I always wrote as if a battery of reviewers and well-read general readers were looking over my shoulder at my text, eager to humiliate me publicly in the pages of a newspaper or a journal over the slightest error in attribution, dates, terminology, or other facts.

In my biography *Willie: The Life of W. Somerset Maugham*, for example, there is hardly a line that does not have some authority behind it. If I said that Maugham was in Manila in 1916, I had a copy of a letter he sent from that city on that date. If I claimed that his stammer intensified whenever he was tired or agitated, I could point to a number of witnesses who had written about it or spoken to me in an interview. If I argued that he was the chief Allied agent in Russia just before the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, I had British Foreign Office files, gleaned from the Public Record Office, to prove it.

In other words, for every observation made in the book, I could produce substantiating evidence from a variety of sources: letters, interviews, articles, government documents, court records,

marriage certificates, wills, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and critical books. The reader thus can question some of the assertions made in the biography, but he or she cannot claim that I have not gone as much as possible to the best sources on which to base those assertions.

My concern for truth, however, went beyond self-defence, beyond satisfying the probing eyes of examiners, critics, and knowledgeable readers. I have always believed that there is fundamental truth to be revealed, that a body of authentic knowledge can be created if enough people work honestly and scrupulously toward it. That is, as time goes by, the human race should be able to develop an absolutely truthful record of what has happened and why people behaved as they did. My contribution to this process, in the case of my biography, would be to provide as comprehensive and accurate a rendering of Maugham's life as possible. This would then become a block on which others could build: those writing about the British colonial experience, for example, could find an accurate record of one author's travels and writing about the Empire; those examining the history of homosexual art might find useful material in an reliable account of a prominent homosexual author's experiences; and those examining the roles of writers in wartime would learn from one author's work as an intelligence agent and propagandist in two world wars.

All of this, of course, presupposes that my biography is, at least in the very large part of it that is factual, entirely precise and accurate. If dates are wrong, people misidentified and misquoted, historical facts incorrect, and other essential information erroneously stated, the book will contribute, not to an advance of authentic knowledge, but to a false historical record.

These were the principles by which, as an academic, I was guided for most of my career. Then, in the spring of 1996, I was handed a writing project which challenged my approach and forced me into a new way of presenting the "truth." Quite unexpectedly, an eighty-one-year-old veteran of the Second World War contacted my family and gave us a suicide letter written to him by my uncle the night before he killed himself two months after the end of the war. The letter, and the recollections of this man, about an incident that had affected the direction of our family's life in so many ways, were so striking and so revealing about the widespread problem of battle fatigue that I knew that I would have to write about it.

Given the dramatic nature of my material, I first conceived of my book as a novel, but I quickly concluded that the importance of the story was that it was real: my uncle had been a real Canadian soldier who had endured what thousands of young men had gone through in the war. The book would have to be a biography, a work of non-fiction solidly grounded in the reality of life in Saskatchewan in the early decades of the twentieth century and in the social, economic, and political contexts of the time. So I set about doing my research in my usual way: locating and combing through archives, finding and interviewing those still-living people who knew my uncle, and studying the history of the Canadian involvement in World War II and the conditions in which the soldiers lived. The notes piled up; the file folders grew.

After three or four years of research, I was ready to begin writing. During that important digestion process, when one lets the material and issues of one's work simmer and percolate, however, something had happened. It became increasingly obvious that this project was unlike anything I had undertaken before: so much of the story involved my own family, and, in ways that I had not anticipated, myself. I was not dealing with a long-dead author and his work. My wife, Holly, was the first to point this out, and Maggie Siggins said the same thing: "You have to abandon the stance of objective, disinterested biographer; this is as much your story as your uncle's and you have to tell the story from your perspective."

I was persuaded, and so I began the book by describing the only time I ever saw my uncle: when he was back in Moose Jaw after five and a half years of war and I, at the age of four, walked over to my grandparent's house to see him one June morning.

One of the earliest memories of my life, I now remembered only the outlines of the event and more of my own general response than of the external details. Taking great pains, and often much rewriting and polishing, I produced an account of the experience and of my uncle's subsequent suicide, his funeral, and the effect of his death on his family.

I gave these early chapters to three writers whose judgements I respected--David Carpenter, Warren Cariou, and my daughter, Alison--and I waited to hear how impressed they were, how bowled over they were by the intensity and gravity of my writing. What I got in return was a uniform shout of "Stop writing like an English professor!" I needed, they said, to abandon my stance of objectivity (or pseudo objectivity, since I was, in fact, writing about my own family and myself), and convey my own feelings about the event. In particular, observed Warren, the meeting with my uncle needed to be fleshed out, to be made more vivid, so that the reader could vicariously re-live it with me. Were there other details--facts-- that I could add?

No, I told Warren, there were no other details; everything that I remembered (as fallible as that memory might be) was already in my account. "Well," replied Warren, "can you fabricate some descriptive material?" What?????? Fabricate? Fictionalize? Foist unsubstantiated "facts" on the innocent reader? I might as well have been asked to smuggle illegal explosives, start a pyramid scheme, or bilk innocent investors with worthless penny stocks. This was a game, to paraphrase some hopeless duffer's description of Jack Nicklaus's golf, with which I was not familiar. Still, Warren's own memoir, *Lake of the Prairies*, had been widely acclaimed and had won the Drainie/Taylor Prize for non-fiction, so his advice was not to be discarded lightly. And Carpenter argued that any fictionalizing of my material simply made it a more effective vehicle for communicating essential underlying truths about my story.

Persuaded by my trio of critics, I revised my opening chapter, describing more fully the terrain - the flowers and weeds that attracted me along the path through the vacant lot, the lilac hedge with its few remaining blooms at the front of my grandparents' lot, my uncle's appearance as he sat smoking a cigarette on the front steps, and my playing with building blocks on the kitchen floor while the family drank coffee and caught up on five and half years spent apart. I cannot prove that any of these elements were actually present in the experience. I can, however, say in all honesty that each of these details was true to the time and place and plausibly present on the day. Like most children, I was fascinated by the plants that grew in any untended space around my home; the lilac hedge was always a joy when it was fragrantly in bloom in early summer; my uncle would have looked that day as he did in my photographs of him taken during that visit home; and it is entirely likely that, after the excitement of my arrival at the house, the family would have sat down together while I amused myself with my toys.

Similarly, later in the book, when I was describing my grandparents receiving the telephone call telling them of my uncle's suicide, I created a scene which I could not possibly have witnessed. I described my grandfather home on a Friday evening after a week of travelling as a salesman for the Co-op Creamery, and my grandmother waiting to hear whether she had yet again won prizes for her baking and knitting at the local fair. I wrote that they were still grateful that their son had returned from Europe without apparent injury and that they were wondering how his reunion with his wife in Vancouver was going. I have no proof that this is exactly how they learned of his death. I do know that this is how they spent many a Friday evening in the summer in Moose Jaw during fair week, and I do know that the reassuring predictability of their peaceful

and assuming lives was shattered by an entirely unexpected telephone call. My account of their experience, though fabricated from what I knew of their habits and their behaviour, can be argued to convey this shattering in a very effective way.

In many other places in the book, I embellished accounts of one particular family— my own—with details drawn from general sources: newspapers, memoirs, historical and social studies, military histories, and interviews. The result was a book that has been widely praised for the authenticity and realism of its portrayal of the effect of my uncle's tragedy on my family—and on several other families that were affected by his suicide. Many older readers, moreover, have commented that the description of Saskatchewan during the Depression years and of their lives during the Second World War is absolutely as they experienced them. So, perhaps Carpenter is right: it may be that, by some discreet and careful fictionalizing, one can fabricate a portrait that will in the end communicate a fundamental and important truth.

I dislike the term "creative non-fiction" because it implies that there is a body of non-fiction prose that is not creative. In fact all non-fiction, like all poetry, fiction and drama, is creative; some is just much more creative than others. My book— which was called *A Richer Dust: Family, Memory and the Second World War*--was thus offered to the reader as non-fiction, that is, as "real" and as "truth." Unlike Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, it was not called a "non-fiction novel;" and unlike Lois Simmie in her fine book *The Secret Lives of Sgt John Wilson*, I did not warn the reader in a preface that I would be contriving scenes which would be imaginative extrapolations of hard evidence.

Does the reader, then, have a right to complain that I have offered fiction disguised as fact? If not, are readers justified in complaining about James Frey's offering a highly fictionalized version of his life as a true history? Should non-fiction writers, as Alberta Manguel suggested at a recent Saskatchewan Writers Guild Conference, forget about nagging details like dates and place names and write what they want?

As always, the difficulty in such matters is where the line is to be drawn. I'm still enough of a historian to believe very strongly that any non-fiction writing should be firmly grounded in as much verifiable fact as possible. Those facts should not be ignored or distorted in and rendering of experience. The "truth" of that experience, however, may lie beyond the factual level, and it may be best communicated by techniques and strategies of fiction. And, if we were to look closely enough, we would see that memoirists and autobiographers have always done that. Ultimately, we would even have to admit that authors of scholarly books have always done that, but they have learned to hide their subjectivity more cleverly.

I'll Be Seeing You

Susan Hayton

Intermittently, I think that I see my father. Walking down a street in the summer. Jogging across a field, or strolling over a bridge; his arm linked with a stranger, laughing down into her face as she says something clever and endearing. But usually, I catch him by himself. Fracturing my world when I least expect it. Disrupting the normal flow of my day with a primal, emotional blow. And so it was today, when I saw him on the sidewalk, as I followed the rush hour traffic home.

I slowed down abruptly. Not slamming on my brakes. No screeching of tires; just lifting my foot from the accelerator. A sudden halt in the forward motion of my vehicle. Unexpected. With no warning...like the sight of him...tossed into my day...grabbing my attention, away from the road, away from this massive, metal monster, hurtling down the street, momentarily out of my conscious control.

I drifted by him. He was hunched over; a non-descript, dark coat enclosed his form as he scurried along the sidewalk, his profile the only portion of skin available for my assessment. Thinning, grey-brown hair. Large, somewhat hooked nose, with what we would call a reverse 'ski-jump' kind of take-off at the bridge, flowing down to the familiar lips. Thin but soft. Gentle but sometimes hard. His broad shoulders were folded under the coat, sort of creased over, as if his arms were supporting a great weight, dragging him down toward the ground as he struggled to maintain balance.

Turn and look. Turn and look at me. Let me see your eyes. The clear light, the intelligence, the humour, emanating from behind the bright blue, crinkling up with love and amusement as you take me in. But you do not turn.

A sudden movement off to the side causes me to swing around and look back at the road. The light ahead of me has turned red and several cars have stopped, less than ten feet from the front of my car. I am creeping now, my speed almost nothing as I pause to observe the man on the sidewalk. I can slam on my brakes and avoid a collision with no more than a fleeting surge of panic.

Okay, okay. Pay attention. Turn off the radio. Readjust the seatbelt. Wait for the light to turn green. A little boy in a navy blue jacket and blue and green wool toque lopes across the street, overwhelmed by a too-large school backpack swinging off his shoulders and back on again as he runs; his small face attentive, energetic, enthusiastic as he races for his friends on the other side of the street.

As the cars in front of me begin to ease forward, my eyes do an automatic, unasked for readjustment, leaving me momentarily dizzy. The feeling is similar to the jarring, uncomfortable sensation that smacks your brain when you move suddenly from your position over a microscope, staring fixedly at the tiny, entrancing world, only to be dragged back, acutely, to the actuality of the boringly staid, fixed, immobile world of the everyday room around you; summoned when a colleague requests your attention.

The streets, the buildings, come rushing at me; growing rapidly larger as my focus is swallowed up by the immensity of the anonymous city. It was raining only a few minutes ago and my tires splash through muddy puddles that have collected along the sidewalks; the tires squelching on the gravel and spraying dirty splotches of water up onto the grimy cement walkways.

It's late fall in the city and at five thirty in the afternoon the sun has fallen low behind the tall buildings, leaving the streets in early evening shadow; the darkness compounded by the grey, slightly swaying, ceiling of dense clouds. My driving lights bounce along the road in front of me as the car tires dip into the ubiquitous potholes, interrupting the smooth, damp pavement every ten feet or so. I shiver slightly and turn on the car heater, wrapping my fingers around the nearby vent and drawing the initial, tentative warmth up into my palm.

Where did he go? How did the object of my intense focus vacate the premises so completely and so quickly? He disappeared around a corner...missing before I had even accepted the reality of his presence. Maybe if I circle around the block, I can interrupt his progression down some side street, cut off his inadvertent escape route, and confront him in the fact of his unbelievable, unacceptable presence. What are you doing here? How is it possible? Why have you chosen to be here, without us, without me?

I have dealt with death more than the average person in our society has; in our western world, where good health and longevity have become expected by much of the general populace. As a physician, I have witnessed the grief displayed by family members of dying patients. I have delivered bad news of inevitable, imminent demise to other souls as they searched my face with their anxious eyes; looking for some sign of hope that they might find, emerging from behind the cold, stark, matter of fact statements about the reality of the situation. And I have called out to a number of pale, rubbery, slightly damp bodies, lying still and unresponsive, bits of caked-on drool stuck to the corners of the dry, motionless lips, cracked and swollen from hours of respiratory effort; lids partly open and a film of egg-white-like solution marring the previously clear stare of the now unmoving eyes.

"Hello...Mr...Mrs...Miss...hello" ...shaking the rigid shoulder...my stethoscope sliding over the bony frame, listening for a heart beat, a respiratory effort, any sign of the residual effort of life. Standing quietly in the empty room. Just me and the recently dead. Anxious to confirm death...to not miss a still slowly beating heart. To be absolutely, irrevocably sure that my pronouncement of death is not premature.

Your death, however...your death, as might be predicted, led me to a much deeper understanding of the experiences of my patients; a more thorough realization of the despair that accompanies the notification of imminent death. And it left me with a feeling that I hadn't really thought about - hadn't expected: the feeling of irrational disbelief. It still doesn't seem quite real. I still haven't accepted the finality of your death on an emotional, rather than an intellectual, level.

I circle back around, looking for you, looking for the person that I thought...that I believed, could be you, against all odds, possibly...I need to check for sure. I remember the *you* of years ago, the more recent, deteriorated, form relegated to the background; pushed out of the way in favour of the being embraced in my mind with love and happy, cherished, memories.

I see you running down the dock at the lake, laughing, grinning..."watch...watch me do this"...flipping off the end of the dock, your long 'comb-over' flying through the air in an arc, following your compact, energetic form as you push out into the airturning- your tanned figure spinning and then stretching out, embracing the splash and the coldness of the water as it swallows up your vibrancy, momentarily, before you surface, laughing once more, looking for me, and my brother, looking to see if we were watching. "You try now!"

Tears suddenly obscure my vision and I brush away the drops with my left hand, steadying the wheel of the car as I turn down fifteenth street and start back toward the center of town, my ridiculous obsession with your look-alike still holding strong in my mind. I could have been home in ten minutes but instead I'm chasing this recurring fantasy that grips me whenever I see someone with your body type, walking with just your stride or moving their head with that characteristic little, purposeful jerk.

There he is. There goes the man I saw on Central Avenue. He's walking quickly now, holding a newspaper over his head as he attempts to ward off the cold rain, spitting down on him. I slow my car until I'm creeping along at about ten miles per hour, oblivious to the stream of traffic gradually backing up behind me. The man hasn't noticed me, hasn't realized that he's causing a traffic jam in the late afternoon as he tortures me with his astonishing familiarity.

Someone honks a horn. I glance in my rear view mirror and see the row of cars behind me; a line of flapping windshield wipers synchronously beating out a message of intense irritation. My quarry turns and glances briefly over his shoulder. He sees the line of traffic and then looks back at my car, and then at me...staring at him...obviously pursuing him as he pads along the pavement.

Could it be? No, it's not quite right. His hair is a bit too grey. His chin has softened at the edges with the extra weight he has put back on since...since he escaped from the nightmare that consumed him, returned to the real world, and started living again.

My father was young when he began to forget. The deterioration was so gradual that, at first, we didn't recognize it. You can be too familiar with someone. Too accepting of their small foibles and weaknesses. Complacent...tolerant...as their odd behaviour becomes a bit more extreme.

"Oh that's just Dad. He's always been like that...always forgetting things...never quite sure where he left his keys, his papers...his car. That's just him. I don't think there's been any significant change."

Not that we really discussed it. Out loud. Analyzed my father's behaviour. It was only in retrospect, when I looked back on some of the things that I had accepted as 'normal', as just an extreme of his usual idiosyncrasies, that I realized how gradually the decline in this person I loved had occurred. And living away from him magnified these abnormalities for me...brought them into focus, measured them, unfavourably, against the more normal world that I was now, regularly, inhabiting.

Where did you go? Where is the *you* that I saw disappear, so gradually? Tiny fragments of your personality chipped away, sliced off of the whole and blown away into oblivion. Never to be reclaimed. Not housed in thousands of tiny boxes in some far away place. Not waiting, like a puzzle, to be put back together again at the end of it all.

I don't anticipate that you'll be waiting, slightly worse for wear, neatly reconfigured and realigned, at the end of my time on this earth. Waiting to embrace me and smooth away my distress.

Your death only confirmed the rational, the unavoidable, in my mind. Painful, irreversible, deterioration. Almost ten years, watching the demolition of a human mind, and the associated physical destruction that accompanies it. You tried to resist. You were young and strong, and incredulous...when you were still well enough to grasp what was going on. But this horrible

disease lingered, waited for you, ultimately, to give in to its persistence, to accept that no attempt at resistance could forestall the fucking inevitable....

On the last day, mom and I sat with you. Wiped the spit away from your open, slack-jawed mouth as you panted toward the finish line. Rearranged the sheets and soothed your oblivious, exhausted shell with proclamations of love. You didn't answer. You moaned and sighed and struggled against death. You fought to live on in this hell. Tried, irrationally, to continue on living in this stark, ascetic environment, with its linoleum floors, washable furniture and automatic locking doors. Unwilling to give in, physiologically, to the permanence of death.

You are, fundamentally, irretrievable. You live on, figuratively, in the memories of those who loved you. Hard wired into our perceptions of reality. Etched into our beings; the exact memory of you, sought out in every other person who, briefly, temporarily, replicates some well-remembered facet of you.

I moved along. I pressed on the accelerator and sailed on by, leaving your spurious twin behind; allowing him to disappear around the next corner, unable to find an exact duplicate of you, in him.

Reviews

'An Unromantic Story' *Once in a Blue Moon: An Artist's Life* by Marie Elyse St. George

Kevin Ziegler

Once in a Blue Moon: An Artist's Life. Marie Elyse St. George. Regina: Coteau Books 2006. ISBN: 1550503383 270pp.

I get the impression, only a few pages into *Once in a Blue Moon: An Artist's Life*, that Marie Elyse St. George is a woman of many interests, of many talents. Always, though, she is devoted to the creation of art, through her painting and her poetry. Her creations are as much a part her life as her siblings or parents. It's as though the only way she can tell her story, to convey any sort of information, is through the language of painting and poetry. Appropriately her autobiography is filled with the artistic endeavors that have consumed her years. You find the usual assortment of photos -- grainy still images of St. George's family and friends -- but alongside them are her paintings, vibrant and captivating. It's a pity most of the book contains only black and white reproductions of her otherwise rich and colorful work. Without considering their artistic merit -- I must confess my own ignorance as an artistic scholar -- these paintings give the reader a window of St. George's mind that rarely comes across in her prose. As an autobiographer she is distant, giving the reader only the barest glimpse of her personality and motivations.

Sometimes St. George uses her paintings to elaborate on important moments from her life, a sort of visual extension or augmentation of her memories. Other times, the artwork itself becomes the focus of the written word. She begins the section "Speculation as to the Origin of Angels" with one of her paintings (titled, predictably, "Origin of Angels") and explains how earlier artists have influenced her work. Her poetry follows a similar pattern, appearing intermittently throughout her autobiography to enrich her prose. The combination creates a dimension to her storytelling that would be impossible (or incredibly difficult) to convey otherwise, such as her use of the poem "Cutting Spring Asparagus" to convey memories from her rural childhood: "Their cracked shells cup swatches of slick wet feathers, claws curled, delicate as sprouting ferns, embryos alive with fat red maggots turning in a slow roil. Ice crawls along my spine. I turn, grab the asparagus knife, run out into the light" (79). *Once in a Blue Moon* matches the recent autobiographies of other Canadian writers, such as Al Purdy's *Reaching for the Beaufort Sea*, where the poet's life and art similarly play off one another. Together, they work in unison, but rarely in an uncomplicated way. By her own admission a bit of a chaotic spirit, St. George often leaps from one thought to another; the reader catches glimpses of "An Artist's Life" but never the whole picture.

As you might expect, *Once in a Blue Moon* progresses through a chronological account of St. George's life: a rural childhood in Ontario, frustrating adventures in Britain, a marriage, children, and a move to Saskatoon and induction into that city's bustling arts community in the 60's and 70's. She spends the majority of her time -- more than half her autobiography -- recounting moments from her early years, explaining how this formative time shaped her creative spirit. She speaks of later accomplishments (along with the obligatory name dropping), but it only seems as though she's going through the motions of writing such an autobiography. She does not dwell on her successes; as she moves along she is just as likely to focus on her inadequacies as her triumphs. What captures her attention is her personal and professional failures, such as dropping out of college in England and then being unable to enter art school.

Nevertheless, there is little bitterness in St. George's recollections; she maintains a consistent level of good-humor and mild detachment. Despite working among the avant-garde, she lives a life of stability and comfort, a peaceful time full of art, family, and friends. So much so that she often turns to the lives of others for her more entertaining stories. If you were looking for a sensationalist memoir of scandal and intrigue, this is not the place. As she writes at one point, "The 70s and 80s were an electric time not only in the arts, but in society generally. I was aware that, while all this freedom was liberating and exciting, I needed to keep myself grounded in my home, children, and marriage, because it was easy to get carried away" (216).

Disengaged from her city's artistic community -- at one point she tells the reader, a bit dejectedly, that she can't even count on an invitation to the party celebrating a book she helped create -- St. George is able to look over her life with (relative) objectivity and to focus only on the people who made valuable contributions to her personal success; she spends as much time talking about her associations with famous poets (such as Lorna Crozier) as she does describing Minny, one of cats she owned growing up. St. George is content presenting herself simply, without lavish praise or over embellishment, an unassuming person who cringes at sentimentality or grand, overblown statements. Even as I write this, however, I realize my description of her is misleading. She's also a person who has the audacity to write a poem that attempts to describe the history of all art ("Art History 101"). Hers is a 'plain' life but it is nonetheless remarkable. It's only afterwards that you appreciate the uniqueness of her autobiography, the easy artfulness in her writing.

**Writing 'the gaps between what really happens:' *Phobic*, by Triny Finlay
Jennifer Still**

Phobic. Triny Finlay. Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2006. ISBN 1554470331

In the first words of *Phobic*, Triny Finlay's latest collection of poems, we are posed with a psychological challenge: "how to not be obsessed with progress // The fear of panic for no precise reason." From these first lines we are given a clue of Finlay's poetic reach, her ability to take the isolation of a particular, *Phobic* state and translate it into a cultural concern, a universal panic. In *Phobic*, fear is a subtle, insidious, part of everyday life. It is inside dreams and our inability to order dinner from a menu, in the baby names we weigh and choose. The phobia Finlay writes about is institutionalized, inside language and expression, a way of seeing the world, learned as early and unquestionably as penmanship, our first careful attempts at putting words to a page "using a finger as measure, / then our eyes."

In *Phobic* Finlay subverts typical notions of progress by writing the reality that takes place inside "the gaps between what really happens." The poems are a dissection of moments, a hyper-awareness of environment, the ritualistic study of a waiting-room clockface and its magnified second hand. Finlay writes the split of a moment into its own dimension, resisting, in some way, modern notions of time, what she cleverly refers to as "the mathematician's advances." The future is seen as something broken, unreliable, to be "breathed in particles." Fear is in the waiting, in the anticipation of particular moments: a tracker stalking his target, a player strategizing in the game of clue, the suspicious van that always follows, and as the narrator reminds us, "[t]he following is key." The poems hover in moments that for one reason or another have become halted, that exist somewhat outside of the action, moments that are composed of, "[a]lways the Shangaan tracker raised at the front of the jeep in a jump seat and the others chilled and still and ready."

Phobic pulls the reader inside the metaphorical waiting room, in the tension of what is to come, stuck on "the next move." The poems anticipate, fret, hunt for movement. In "Of What Passes Between," we are given a type of *Phobic* paralysis where the poem writes the unevent, what happens in the invisible moment of decision before dinner is ordered, the "stories we couldn't hear," "that cruel elephant" in the room. It is in this waiting, in these gaps, where reality happens. The antithesis of progress is in the unresolved, in a dimension of time that moves ahead with an anti-progression: "eight-thirty came and went, the baby / fell asleep on my shoulder, and we ate nothing."

Finlay presents a phobia that is the productivity of a culture cut-off from itself, a world that plays out like the constructed reality of a "Truman Show." The poet transcends the particular into the universal by showing us a fear of inheritance, something we are not only bound to, but that we participate in, unconsciously, and pass on: "Think of the son who built bridges / but dreamt of swallowing the sea // whose motor skills crumbled whose heart / lost pace // His hands are my hands." The notion of inheritance is subtly yet precisely, rendered through the ominous use of "the son" who is at once grandfather, father, grandson and child. Along with notions of inheritance is the cruel irony of hope, the steadiness of a bridge arching over a drowning. And that both this hope and fear belongs to the past and present, the hands of the drowned and the hands of the living.

The cultural phobia Finlay suggests in this work is subtle, but potent. In "Of Being So Careful," notions of being bound to fear are supported not just in subject, but in linguistic play. Here cultural identity, particularly in regards to domesticity, economics and marriage, is embedded in

language: "we are tied to it, tied / to apron strings / purse strings / rings on our fingers." The "rings" in "strings" subtly, beautifully resonates the oppressive learnings strung through the language of a patriarchal culture.

However, these poems are not without hope. There is a cathartic element to the work, as if naming the fear will relinquish it. In a meditative style, the book is a list of phobias: "Of What is Cut or Negative," "Of the One Who Got Away," "Of That Primal Sameness." In "Of the Thaw That Winter You Went Crazy" the narrator finds ultimate hope in words: "as if words might steer you away from the cracking, from slipping between the boards, or drowning."

The poems also have a very distinct cinematic element to them, "synchronizing our focus" on that which has been edited out for gentler viewing. Reading like little films of the discarded cuts, the poems are at once personal and removed, inside and out, watched and lived, resulting in the sense of an existential panic attack. There is a polyphony going on, an "other" witnessing voice of an editor in the background who has cut out "the wreckage," the therapist's moralistic monotone "(describe a typical day, describe any medications, palpitations, indications)", or time itself chanting "your age now / your age now."

But this objective, often clinical tone to the work does not at all sacrifice heart. The poems move forcefully, confidently, with an honesty that has the power to transform phobias into prayer, fear into change. Change is suggested in glimpses, in the recurring presence of a baby. Whether waiting for a name that "(they) sing from the feet / up, testing buoyancy" or sleeping "strapped / to (a) burgeoning chest," or even when referred to in the past "[a]fter the bliss of the baby came the flies," the presence of a newborn fills the work with a quiet hope.

What Finlay pulls off in this slim collection holds the weight of a full-length book. Finlay's *Phobic* is as haunting as it is hopeful. In a world infatuated with technology and materialism, speed and progress, Finlay teaches us how to liberate ourselves from fear by breaking open its pixelated moments: "because we have all been pinned for exhibition / or reduced to a single pixel-point, trapped / in a room." So, "how to not be obsessed with progress?" Clearly, Finlay has found the answer in the asking itself: write poetry.

Published by Gaspereau Press' The Devil's Whim Occasional Chapbook Series, *Phobic* is issued in a numbered edition of 250 copies at the exceptionally-low price of \$4.95. This small collection is handsomely wrapped in a thick stock cover with the title and author's name blocked in magnified pixels.

'Everything is music': *Stolen* by Annette Lapointe
Jessica Antonio

Stolen. Annette Lapointe. Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2006. ISBN:1 895636 73 6. 232 pp. Pbk.

After reading Annette Lapointe's debut novel, *Stolen*, the reader will not be surprised that it took home two awards at the Saskatchewan Book Awards, the Saskatoon Book Award and First Book Award, and was also long-listed for the Giller Prize. Published by Anvil Press, Lapointe's captivating novel takes on various contentious topics, such as urban and rural decay, music, drugs, sexuality, and mental illness--all of which are explored throughout her intoxicating portrayal of the Saskatchewan landscape.

The novel follows the intensely unlikable Rowan Friesen as he criss-crosses the country, thieving, cheating, and selling drugs to teenagers to support his solitary lifestyle on the outskirts of Saskatoon. While his lifestyle is seemingly unorthodox, we soon learn about the complexities that precede his present behaviour: the break up of his parents' unhappy marriage to due his father's mental illness, his mother's subsequent quest to 'find herself,' and Rowan's bisexuality.

The text begins with the lines "[e]verything is music," which serves to (dis)arrange the plot trajectory of *Stolen*. Music, and listening to music, is individual as much as it is meant for public consumption. Music is a source of escapism for Rowan. As Lapointe notes, "[l]ong arms of music stretch out, jointed by mood or beat or something subdural that he doesn't have a name for" (9). However, while Rowan attempts to carefully record or arrange his 'mixed-tapes' [read his life], it is evident that Rowan's life is in a state of discord. Indeed, Rowan's life can be fairly characterized by the title of the first chapter, "Root System." Due to his tenuous connection to his past, Rowan lives on the margins of society, "marking his territory" (11), because his most "destructive urges leave *something* behind" (231): he yearns to find his roots. However, despite his constant wandering, one thing is clear: Rowan has a deep connection to the Saskatchewan landscape. The following passage aptly describes both the addictive beauty of rural Saskatchewan, and Rowan's connection to the prairies:

Snow still lurks back in the bush. Winter was hard; it hangs on for a long time. Low grey spreads out for thirty miles from the South Saskatchewan River before open ground takes over. In that growth, tangled in the snow and shielded from the sun, it's always unreasonably cold. He knows the snow is there, but he can't see it. The night's so beautiful. It's a perfect smoke-colour created by distance and the barest haze of tractor-burned diesel. Dust rising from scattered fields. He's almost exactly one thousand miles south of the Arctic Circle. This night is so beautiful it's like a post-coital high. He last had sex fifty-seven weeks ago (11-12).

Here, Lapointe accentuates the stereotyped harsh and uninviting prairie landscape, which then becomes a character whose beauty Rowan relates to a "post-coital high" (12). This intertwining of sexuality and landscape bodes well for the overarching theme of addiction in *Stolen*.

While I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, I do have a few minor complaints. At times, the characters' actions are elliptical, far-reaching, and slightly unbelievable. Both Rowan's father, and his lover, Macon, suffer from mental illnesses that warrant institutionalization. Sexuality, while not static, is fully explored by Rowan and his mother. Although it could be argued that Rowan mimics his mother's exploration, and therefore embarks on his own, or that due to the exposure to his father's illness, he seeks a partner who suffers from the same illness, the similarities in plot tend to feel a bit contrived. Apart from Rowan, and possibly his father, the characters could have been more developed. There is also an awkward, recurring, subplot in

which Rowan meets/exploits a young Aboriginal woman, which seems extraneous to the text as a whole. Further, while I appreciate Lapointe's creativity, I found that perhaps she was a little *too* free in the naming of a few of her characters. The names of the protagonist, Rowan, and his high-school lover, Macon, are distracting and serve to take away from the gravity of their relationship. This point also holds true with Macon and his unfortunately named sister, Georgia.

As the Winnipeg Free Press offers, "[d]espite the grim rural-dystopian setting of failing farms and strung-out teenagers and dysfunctional families, this is a novel of redemption." Indeed, Lapointe tackles cross-generational concerns that are not necessarily specific to the prairies, without apology or patronization. Although the characters face an overwhelming sense of despair, by the end of the novel, Lapointe contends that if not harmony, at least a sense of natural rhythm will prevail in their lives.

Contributors

Christina Mengert

Christina Mengert holds an MFA from Brown University and is pursuing her PhD in Creative Writing at Denver University. Her poems have appeared in *Salt*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Aufgabe*, and *Phoebe*, among other journals. Her first manuscript, *The Last Night of Polaris*, has twice been a National Poetry Series Finalist.

Contributions:

Epithalamion 2 -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Deborah Leiter

Events in Deborah's life, together with her lifelong addiction to words, have stimulated in her a great interest in what happens when words, particularly creative words, hit the online environment. And so, after seven years spent, not in Tibet, but working for a division of HarperCollins Publishers, mostly with web content and information architecture, and a year spent studying at the University of Saskatchewan, she was delighted to wake up one day to discover she was managing editor of *TFR*. Deborah, who received her BA in English and a minor in journalism from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, spends a chunk of her time studying what T. S. Eliot and Henry David Thoreau have written about simplicity and "the good life" for her MA thesis.

When she's not hammering away at *Walden* and *Four Quartets* (works she finds increasingly relevant in a world of information overload), she can often be found writing fiction or blogging about how technology affects communication and creativity in the English language. In the past few years, she's also served as Book Review Editor of *NightsAndWeekends.com* and as web editor of the now-defunct *WorkingPOET* e-zine. She has published poetry, book reviews, journalism, and creative non-fiction both online and in print venues, and is seeking a home for her first novel manuscript.

Contributions:

Editors' Note -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Holly Luning

Holly Luning is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan. Her poetry has appeared in literary journals and anthologies, and has been broadcast on CBC radio. She is the author of *Sway* (Thistledown, 2003) and a chapbook, *Plush* (JackPine, 2006).

Contributions:

Editors' Note -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

'Luck hassles the strung kite.' *Strung* by Brecken

Rose Hancock -- Issue Number 1, April 2006

Editors' Note -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Jennifer Still

Jennifer Still's first book of poetry, *Saltations*, was nominated for three Saskatchewan Book Awards in 2006. Her poetry has appeared in numerous Canadian literary journals and anthologies including *Fast Forward: Saskatchewan's New Poets*. Jennifer is the regional winner of the 2008 CBC Poetry Face-Off and is currently writing up a flurry in Eastend, SK, with her family.

Contributions:

Writing 'the gaps between what really happens:' *Phobic*, by Triny Finlay -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Boathouse -- Issue Number 3, May 2008

Dream Room -- Issue Number 3, May 2008

Jennifer Wynne Webber

Jennifer Wynne Webber is a novelist, playwright, former CBC journalist, and sometime actor (Shakespeare on the Sask.; Arts Club Theatre, Vancouver; Centaur Theatre, Montreal). She is the author of two books, a play, *Beside Myself* (2001), and a novel, *Defying Gravity* (2000), which was nominated for three Saskatchewan Book Awards including Book of the Year. A graduate in history from the U of S, Jennifer is currently working on her MFA in Creative Writing through the University of British Columbia.

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Contributions:

Criatura -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Jessica Antonio

Jessica Antonio is currently an MA candidate at the University of Saskatchewan. She completed her BA, majoring in English, at the University College of the Cariboo (now Thompson Rivers University) in Kamloops, B.C. Her research interests include Postcolonial women's literature and Trauma Theory.

Contributions:

'Everything is music': *Stolen* by Annette Lapointe -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Kevin Ziegler

Kevin Ziegler is a recent graduate of Queen's University's Master's Program. Before moving to Kingston he spent four years in Saskatoon completing his undergraduate degree in English at the University of Saskatchewan. His primary areas of interest are graphic narrative, cultural studies, and contemporary Canadian short stories.

Contributions:

'An Unromantic Story' *Once in a Blue Moon: An Artist's Life* by Marie Elyse St. George -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Matthew Hall

Matthew Hall drinks too much and constantly fights with his girlfriend. He was a forgettable student at the University of Saskatchewan, and now resides in a fishing village called Patonga, in the South Pacific. His poetry and translations have appeared in various South American literary journals and in the University of Buenos Aires Presses, during his travels. His poetry is featured in the current editions of *All Rights Reserved*, *Sorrowland Press*, *The Hudson Review of Poetry* and *Skyline Magazine*.

Contributions:

Weaponry -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Meagan Wohlberg

Meagan Wohlberg is an undergraduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, pursuing a Double Honours B.A. in Philosophy and English. She is co-organizer of the Saskatoon Anarchist Bookfair and many other free art and activist events. She loves to give workshops on zine-making and self-publishing. One day, she will complete a graphic novel on metaphysics. This is the first time her poetry has been published anywhere.

Contributions:

Submerging -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Michael Spring

Michael Spring lives and works in London. He is a director of a design and marketing company and an award-winning copywriter. For some years now, he has been writing short fiction, a gesture of admiration to some of the masters of story-telling. His work has been broadcast on BBC radio, and has appeared in magazines in the US and Canada as well as in the UK.

Contributions:

Finding Julie -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Paula Jane Remlinger

Paula Jane Remlinger graduated from the M.A. program in the U of S English Department; her thesis was on the poetry of Saskatchewan author John V. Hicks. She has been previously published in *In Medias Res* and *Backyard Ashes*, and is the author of two teacher guides published by Thistledown Press. She also has work forthcoming in the Hagios Press anthology *Fast Forward: New Saskatchewan Poets*. She lives in Saskatoon with her husband Trent and her diabolical black cat, Dickens.

Contributions:

Burnt Sienna -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Robert Calder

Robert Calder is Professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan, where he has taught for forty-two years. He is the author of *W. Somerset Maugham and the Quest for Freedom* (1972), *Willie: The Life of W. Somerset Maugham* (1989), *Beware the British Serpent: the Role of Writers in British Propaganda in the United States, 1939-1945* (2004), and *A Richer Dust: Family, Memory and the Second World War* (2004). He was awarded the 1989 Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction for his biography of Maugham. He has edited and written introductory essays for four Penguin Classics editions of Maugham novels: *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, *The Magician*, and *Mrs Craddock*. In 2005 he was named Distinguished Researcher by the University of Saskatchewan.

Contributions:

Confessions of a Re/Deformed Academic -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Roseanne Harvey

Roseanne Harvey lives in Montreal, where she is the editor of *ascent* magazine, Canada's only yoga publication. She has taught ESL in Japan, served coffee in the UK and studied yoga in the BC Kootenays. Her short fiction has appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, *sub-Terrain* and *Coming Attractions '06*. "Snow White and the Seven Latin Lovers" is part of a collection of linked stories set in Wonder World, a Japanese theme park.

Contributions:

Snow White and the Seven Latin Lovers -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Sheri Benning

Sheri Benning's second book of poetry, *thin moon psalm*, is forthcoming with Brick Books in Fall 2007. *thin moon psalm* won the Alfred G. Bailey manuscript contest, and her first book of poetry, *Earth After Rain*, Thistledown Press, 2001, was the recipient of two Saskatchewan Book Awards. Her work has been published in various Canadian journals, broadcast on CBC radio, and is included in the anthologies *Breathing Fire 2: Canada's New Poets*; *Fast Forward: Saskatchewan's New Poets*, *Listening with the Ear of the Heart*, and *Third Floor Lounge*.

Contributions:

October Light -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Susan Hayton

Susan Hayton is a physician working in Saskatoon. Over the past few years she has been spending more and more time writing. This solitary endeavour has been supported

by members of her writing group and by her family. She recently gave a reading for the Hericane festival and has been diligently working on editing her first novel.

Contributions:

Cause and Effect -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

I'll Be Seeing You -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Triny Finlay

Triny Finlay is the author of *Splitting Off* (Nightwood, 2004) and the chapbook *Phobic* (Gaspereau, 2006). Her poetry and reviews have been published in various Canadian journals and magazines; her work has also been anthologized in *Breathing Fire 2*, *Qwerty Decade*, and *Gaspereau Gloriatur*. She lives in Toronto.

Contributions:

Of What I Have Always Known -- Issue Number 2, April 2007

Yi-Mei Tsiang

Yi-Mei Tsiang lives in Kingston, Ontario. She has previously published poetry in *The New Quarterly*, *Room of One's Own*, *Qwerty*, and *Echolocation*.

Contributions:

Sutemi Waza -- Issue Number 2, April 2007