THE FIELDSTONE REVIEW

BORDERS

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POETRY

The devil's rope

by Miles Kaufelt

couple of years
before your grandfather was born
I suppose that's when Holly first fell
onto that fence. Ate shit one day
when the snow was up around her legs
and when she went to get up —
well, there it was.
A tangle of barbed wire
been pulled from its post,
curling up thru the snow and
now thru Holly's poor red leg.
Gosh, I remember my dad
said they could hear her holler from
over on the other side of the ridge,
two properties over at the Wayne's.
She screamed & pulled & — well,
she was just a little girl then,
not enough sense to stay put or
take a look at how to get the barb outta her.
She thrashed & writhed, Holly arced
like something electric and that bit
of wire got so wrapped up
in & around thru her
and the snow pooled cherry
round the fence and her little face
never did stop scrunching like a lemon taste,
how hard she screamed
got her stuck that way. Well,
they heard her screaming
but it's a long walk
out there to the edge
of the old Smith property,
especially during a storm like that
and it took them maybe half the day just to
find her once she stopped yelling.
Oooph, and
by that point they had to go get the doctor
and really, he was quite busy
with all the folks who'd gone and slipped
on the ice that day
and he'd had enough doctoring
for the week by the time they
pulled up to his house,
so once they'd gotten anyone
out there to see what to do about the wire,
Holly'd been bleeding since last Tuesday.
All the folks been bringing her bits of food,
and I'm sure by then a few fellas
decided she'd been thru enough
to warrant a stiff drink or two
young tho she was,
and by the time doc came
to have a look she wasn't cold any more
in the dried brown snow what smelled
like a US mint & had men gagging
when they came to offer whiskey.
Well, the doctor came up
to see what could be done
and Holly wasn't too concerned
I guess,
didn't even look at the man
when he touched & turned her knee and
when he had to run off & heave
down by the next post, well
I guess more than a few of the men
had already pulled that maneuver.
Now, the doc said
I'd reckon Holly we gotta
take the leg.
And he said it looking at her face
so she'd look at him not down
and she was little thing & a wild one
but still it struck him cold
when she didn't look a little scared.
She nodded & said I reckon
you sure do,
and old Ginnie Smith thought well
it was her land so it was her responsibility
what went down on it,
and she agreed to sit with them
hold the little girl still.
Someone brought something a little stronger
and they did their best to heat some water
and all that.
But when doc took that toothy creature and
bit her leg, could barely draw blood—
cut down & scraped through her
and it looked like they were getting
somewhere, and I suppose
that made it all the more nervsome
when the saw screamed harsh
against metal, not half-inch
into the poor girls leg.
They tried all around & all angles —
wire up in girl's leg
bent saw to smithereens.
Doc grabbed his other saw and
tried further up and the wire
was further up.
All the way at her hip, wasn't nothing
could be done.
they tried cutting the barb
but wire cutters broke
like they were putty and the wire was,
well, it was hard & fast
as the day Ginnie hammered the staples
into the post.
Doc lay down in snow
and said no more.
Ginnie held that girls hand
hard as she could, white
as clean sky skating by,
but Holly didn't flinch.
The girl said
guess you tried
well good doc, and I'm sorry
to be imposing Gin,
but what can ya do.
Ginnie figured you couldn't evict a girl
who could no means get up & go,
and anyway, she was right
by the edge of the property so
Gin guessed she wouldn't be a bother.
The men left their whiskey
and wished Holly the best,
and old Ginnie Smith
tipped her hat & turned tail —
after all
one has responsibilities
of her own and can't go
taking every little girl under her wing.
Now,
I guess you've heard all about
the doctor and how he laid there despairing
in the snow, face in cold wet
until the night fell and the cold got colder.
I suppose we've all heard
the sing of saw on barb
when wind picks up,
seen his red face
up against us when
cold stings out in the fields.
I guess he must of pulled his face up
eventually, red from
where Holly had laid
and seeing her thru her
own blood in his eyes they say
he finally screamed & whined
like his saw against metal insides
And well, there are all kinds of stories
about what happened,
but I gotta figure they're downright old
wives tales or just silly stuff
children tell to get frightened,
as no one saw doc after that
and we got no one to ask
but Holly, and, well.
Once a man joins the whiskey bottles
at your feet
I figure you don't got much choice
but drink him up,
but that's just old man's trying to
make sense of it all.
Well, we kept going up to bring her drink
or two, you know how cold it can get
up there and all,
and she kept thanking us.
Snow melted away slushed into the ground
and Holly's leg stayed up
in that frayed barbed wire,
grown in and around it and
her other leg stayed by the ground and
well, grass and all that
started grow over it
as it will grow over any thing
that waits long enough.
Holly grew a woman
with I suppose
only the company of cows what
wandered far enough out
& Ginnie every once a moon or two
going round to check make sure
the fence wasn't broken,
& later Ginnie's son, you know, Hank,
good boy, & the folks from town
who'd come up the hill with a bottle,
& some of the girls
began to first good luck watering the grass
by leg curled up around
like twisted bark
So they'd trek up with a couple glasses
& a can and look into her
scrunched screen face,
maybe lug up
their folks' old wire cutters to see
if they could snip Holly free & make a bride
of barb wire beauty.
Now that wire's mighty dangerous
to handle and it don't like
getting messed with,
so I'm sure you're not surprised to hear
that taking blades to fence
never brought nothing but trouble
on those poor young fools,
I mean, even Hank won't go near the fence
anymore.
It doesn't rust, posts stay high upright,
from up on that ridge it seems
to go on forever East & West
over scrubby land.
They say Osage Orange don't grow too well
out here but I say what else you gonna use?
Gonna mess with the devil's rope
when we of all people know
how deep that spitting snake can gouge?
Huh, fools all around this town.
You lay at Holly's feet, ask stone woman
what she knows of land, well,
you'll be singing one thing tomorrow
that's for sure, that's all
I can say. One thing for sure
you'll be singing.

New Nomads

by D.J. Tyrer

Why do nomads wander?
There may be wanderlust in their soul
But, no, necessity and need
Drive them to journey.
Borders slammed shut
Families halted at the point of a gun
Tribes parted by lines on a map.
But, even as governments said 'no'
To the rootless, lacking geographic ties
New nomads were born
By their very same actions
New nomads driven by new needs
Constantly on the move
Desperate for water, food
Seeking safety in new homes
Far away from where they were born
In constant motion
Not allowed to settle
Unwelcome, they move on
New nomads driven by new necessities
Replacing those forced to halt
In the madness
Of the modern world

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Myself and Her Majesty's Government

by Nancy Cook

Hunger led my ancestors out of Ireland's silver mists to the tumbling hills
of Pennsylvania. There Patrick Healy got work on the railroad. Heartbroken
Peg O'Leary gave to her sons the names of Irish patriots and swore
she'd return to Ireland to die, although she did not. A different hunger
leads me back to this place, green-gold island held aloft by a rainbow handle, where fists of clouds press upon the earth
and God's own tears fill the hollows to overflowing. Here I am making friends, many but lately returned to the soft turf
weighted down by heavy stone and remembrance. Some twenty-five,
thirty-five years past, an instinct for survival drove their younger selves
across noose-shaped borders, borders conceived in the razored language
of laws, borders sustained by so many ancient, ungovernable passions.
What do we have in common, these new friends and myself? What
brings us together? Somewhere beneath these fields of grass our roots
are intertwined. Our journeys intersect at White Tailor's Cross in Cork,
at Galway's Eyre Square, at a common sheeps' crossing in Donegal,
at Market Street and Dublin Road in Omagh. What have we in common?
This: Blood memory. Unreliable mercy. Lust for words. Hunger.
And where does Her Majesty's Government enter in? Never
a minor character. Tight-lipped, dry-witted, her understudies
speaking determined carry-ons!, wreathed in impossibly
unfashionable ties, sated, satisfied, drenched in certainty, though
ankle-deep in bogs beyond the borders of their knowing. What
shall we read between the lines? I don't know. This is not, after all,
that poem. These are merely lines in a poem. This is not the story,
only scenes from a story whose plot is yet to be uncovered.

 ·

Two skeletons in a cave in France

by gillian harding-russell

Her curved skull reaches farther back
than his more compact bone helmet
(but intelligence, we now amend
our theory, is not necessarily
related to brain size, and we – we aver
– are more intelligent than the elephant
or beluga though I've never mastered
savannah hoot or undersea call). Certainly
her slouch of back tells us she is Neanderthal.
Note how her humerus and radius reach
towards his forearm that seems to grab her,
something sprightly in his knees as if
doing a jig around her seated there in
bone relief on the dirt. He seems to plead
straighter backed, leaning forward
as if to make a reasonable point.
And having broken into the ritual dark
or firelit pathway of her cave, willfully
or by accident, before or after her kind
were threatened– she lacking protection
and a mate – the hollow gaze of eye socket
locked on eye socket tells a story though
the doors to those houses have been open to
the wind these 40,000 years. The way each
faces each, brachial bones outstretched to take
or embrace (or were they placed by some
other for meaning or its irony?)
Whether or not there was a transgression, suffi
ce
it to say, there was a marriage of blood
– we carry her mitochondrial line on our mother'
s
side, from diabetes to pale skin diseases, red ha
ir
and green eyes to sensitivity to the light, dislike
for the bitterer vegetables, the fussier blood
types A and B. She might have danced
to his wishes and acquiesced, impressed by his
upright stature
or fought, cursed him for her own he-man Nean
derthal
slouched and bleeding into the dirt, but somethi
ng we cannot
now deny is random quantum influence (mixed,
enriched?
or sometime incompatible?) on a battlefield of b
ullying genes.

 ·

It's a life like any other

by Nigel Ford

The foot hit the step of shining stone
Far off, a flimsy star lights up the glaze of fright
Old scribe put down the clink in ink
The pen scratched help upon the plight.
Where to go to what surprise
Cold upon the sunrise wait
Creaks and groans throughout the night
When day spurns hungry light.
It’s a life like any other.

 ·

Down Mines of Dreams

by Nigel Ford

Down mines of dreams, as righteous owls seek flight
Wise in copses, wend and wheel claws won
Seek out their right, eyes glower bright
Floodlit prey, scurried lives now done.
While Cinnamon turns pale Bottom to the sun.
Down vines of dreams where boatmen cull the o ars
Of when and want and hurried scum
Hunt for friends and foes among the mores
Of do that and this and never come
Although through want and wait, the day is don e.
Stalk the woods of yesteryear
Smudged with effort, tiny ructions
And here flying lopes arrives the trundled heath er
Curious at these miniscule debouches
Its time will come again and always bear
Away the feeble bundles of life's fear.
Above the ruins strive, develop carbide blues
Whistle to the skies of care and woe
When discharge down the medication of the bo os
Mooted nature shits her dough
Smothers foreign animals with strife
Doomed to ever struggle for another life.
Time was, such condiments were not
Stocking hips ashine, heels whirl against the sk y
Hair cream broils in the moonlit cot
Struggle in the tiny room, endearments fly
Inside the space where questions die.
It is a good master followed
Across torched fields of words and glistening w orm
As the dead disciple searching for a life
Such fallen empty corpse, a mind in fallow
Turns around to suck the juice of empty pome
Hunting for a terminal and bloody strife.
Hails the hail bouncing off a head
Chews raw kale that scours the stomach
Stoops and crouched in nettles of the bed
Searches vain for muddy jewels instead
To stud the message flung wild to the monarch
That benign, slams the door on what was said.
As long-eared wise sit about their council
Pouts of corn grain twist shucks of travel
Looked upon by seedy seats and mellowed ill
Of know-not how or when to ravel
Thrashed by ownership hard bound
Cries and churns of makeshift marvel
At the accidental chorus of bright sound
Beaten black by sweat and charred as evil.
Buds, sods, trunks and gushes
The roars of men and women's flushes
Pour doom over hill down rushes
Crimson filament of dying day
Whittled stems and cracked trunks sway
In the soaring buds of May.
Such burst upon and round the senses
Tickle sneezing lust and disarray
On bracken harvest scooped from fences
While the tenses lost search for Monterey
Beneath the glisten pals of long gone benches
Spitted forth from begin.

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A waste of beauty chimed

by Nigel Ford

A waste of beauty chimed
Fools paradise so charming
It waits for any suit that rhymed
Upon my wet sweet darling.
Furies set the furried mind
Of envy sparks and drones of marks
Laugh hard upon the dowry
Of my whimper morning.
So rang the horn of candour
Naked shores of fury gander
Up the clotted artery of rage
Not now is time said lewdy sage
Wait for better with a newer page.

 ·

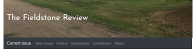
Winnie

by Atar Hadari

When we came back from the other world
And first put you in a different bedroom,
We bought you a little something for first night
–
A single bedroom set of Winnie the Pooh, as co
nsolation.
With his round tum and extended arms
For the honeypot on the duvet
And Christopher Robin on the pack,
Kanga and Roo on the pillow set.
Now you are all grown up
Though not yet leaving that next room,
I wonder who will console whom
The night you go across the landing.
Will you buy us pictures of Santa Claus
Or maybe a tea-pot of the Dead Sea?
Or is there no hiding the loss
Once you have shuffled past the WC
And from there to the open plan
Living room, from there to the garden?
What will we need across our pillows that night
We know you're gone, out of our realm?
The stars and moon or just a last
Note before bed-time:
"Mummy, Daddy – sorry I burnt the toast.
I love you," – and no more melt-downs.

 ·

FICTION



Hidden Message

by Peter Freeman

As I walked along the warm sand towards the pair, I saw Halim sitting on the small sandy beach that lay to the north of the barnacle-encrusted piles supporting the old, timbered wharf. His arms were wrapped around his knees and his head rested on his knees. Jasmine knelt beside him with one of her arms around his shoulders. Halim wore a bright blue, long-sleeved dress shirt, khaki chinos, and dress shoes, an outfit at odds with the vacationing family picnicking nearby. Halim was a creature of habit, and neither the weather nor the landscape were enough to cause him to cease the habits he said soothed him.

"Halim!" I called, when I was still some distance away.

Jasmine turned to me and waved, her inky black hair gleaming almost blue in the sunlight. I closed the remaining distance and stopped beside them. Halim did not look up at my approach.

"Hi, Daniel. Nice to see you again. Glad you could make it," she said.

"I'm happy I was able to get away. How was your trip, Halim? I haven't seen you since you left for Africa."

Halim had just arrived back in Canada and had arranged to meet us at the ferry terminal before he crossed the channel to his home on the other side. Jasmine and I had become close friends with Halim as we helped him navigate his way around adjusting to life in Canada and gaining citizenship. Apparently, Jasmine had reached him first.

"I could not find her," he said, looking up for the first time, his cheeks slack and his eyes red.

"That's unfortunate. Is there some other way? Perhaps the Canadian consulate?" I suggested as I walked around to Halim's other side, shoving my hands in my pockets.

He shook his head slowly. "No, my friend. I spent many days at the consulate, and they worked very hard to help me, but they did not have any information about her."

"Were you able to go through any records?" I asked.

"Yes, what little were left. So many records were destroyed during the war. I found nothing," he said sadly.

"What was it like...when you were there this time?" Jasmine asked as she sat back. "It must have changed a lot."

"It was different, very different...and much safer than before. There were soldiers with guns, but this time I walked among them as a Canadian, and I did not feel afraid," Halim said.

"Where did you go? Did you visit the camps?" I asked.

"Yes, but there were so many refugees this time, and they were from all around," Halim explained, holding his palms out in a gesture of futility. "Most did not want to speak of people they knew before...before the war. It was too painful," he said, clasping his knees again and rocking slightly.

I chose a dry patch of sand close to Halim, brushed away a piece of wind-blown seaweed, and sat down beside him.

"Was it dangerous to travel in Sudan?" Jasmine asked as I sat down.

Halim turned to look at her.

"Yes, but I travelled with the peacekeepers, and I was dressed in western clothes, so people showed respect. They believed I was a government official," Halim explained.

"Were you able to find your old friends?" Jasmin asked.

Halim sighed, slowly shook his head, and then dropped it and stared at his feet. He absently scuffed the soft white sand before he spoke.

"No. I fear they are dead."

"You've not spoken much about those times. Was it painful to go back?" Jasmine said.

Halim nodded, looking at me for support before turning his sad gaze back to Jasmine.

"I was frightened at first as I left the airport, but I shared a taxi with some officials from the United States, and they reassured me I would be safe at the hotel."

"What will you do now, Halim?" I interjected.

"I do not know. I do not know if Eufrasia is alive or dead. It was many years ago. A long time ago."

"You were lucky," I commented.

"Yes. But by the time I was able to flee my old country and get to a refugee camp, many months had passed since Eufrasia and I had been separated. Then I spent a year in the refugee camps before I was accepted by Canada. I was lucky there was an organization willing to sponsor me."

"You haven't mentioned that before," I said. "When you first came to Canada and Jasmine and I met you at the airport, you said you had been living in a hostel."

"Yes," Halim answered, nodding his head slowly. "I was ashamed...perhaps a little proud. I did not want you to see me as a burden. You were so good to sponsor me, my friend."

Halim turned his brightening gaze to Jasmine. "Jasmine, my soul is forever bonded to you. You gave me hope when you got me my first job."

Jasmine gently took hold of Halim's shoulder. "I could see in your eyes you would become a wonderful Canadian," Jasmine told him. "And you have. But Halim, I had no idea you had endured such hardships."

"I wanted to forget, to move on, as you say in Canada. It was good that I was an oil and gas engineer in my country. I think that helped."

"We're all glad you're here now, though, Halim," I put my hand on his arm, "...and safe," I added.

"Halim?" Jasmine asked. "Is it hard to talk about it...about Eufrasia?"

"I do not know...sometimes it is...it is easier to talk about it than to think about it. When I am alone..." Halim said, lowering his eyes.

"I understand," Jasmine murmured.

He lifted his head and I saw his jaw set firmly as he looked far away across the water, sparkling in the sun, towards the distant firs standing as sentinels on the opposite shore.

"As much as I want to forget the pain, I will not forget Eufrasia because she cannot be gone. I feel it...here!" Halim said, pounding his clenched fist against his heart.

"Nor should you," was all I could think to say, weak though it was.

"How did you first meet Eufrasia? I mean, did you meet her through your work?" Jasmine asked, wanting to soothe Halim's anguish.

"Oh, no. We grew up in the same village. She and I played as children. There was an old acacia tree in the centre of our village, and we would chase each other around it. She squealed so much when I caught her, I had to let her go for fear her mother would be angry and not let me see her again. We just stayed together as we got older."

"That's so sweet!" Jasmine said.

"When did you get married?" I prompted.

"It was just before the war started. Those were good days. We were very happy, but we were both troubled by the rumours that we heard every day in our village. We hoped there would be no conflict, and for a while the rumours stopped. We thought there was peace. That was just before the soldiers came."

"You don't have to tell us," Jasmine said softly.

"No. It is all right. I have told this story many times, and it is easier now."

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"Yes, my friend."

Halim paused, looked out over the water towards the ferry, which had recently left the opposite side of the passage. It was slowly inching its way closer, its small profile getting larger by the minute.

"The soldiers separated the men from the women and children, and I was both angry and terrified. One soldier started dragging Eufrasia away. She was screaming as I ran towards her. I was hit very hard with something, maybe the butt of a rifle, for I fell into a bush. Before I lost consciousness, I saw many men break free and heard gunfire."

"Oh...that's terrible..." Jasmine murmured.

"When I awoke, there was a lot of blood on my head, and on my face, from where I had been hit."

"So that's how you got that scar," I noted, as Halim slowly lifted his arm and absently touched his temple.

"Yes. It reminds me of that time. I was lucky to be alive. When I fell into the bush, my body was concealed, and they did not shoot me afterwards like they did the others. There were many bodies on the ground. They were my friends, yet I could not mourn them. I had to find Eufrasia, but I never saw her again."

Jasmine wrapped her arm around Halim's strong shoulders and pulled him close to her. I watched a tear run down his cheek, across his glistening dark skin, and onto the bright blue cloth of his shirt.

"Don't speak of that anymore. Tell me more of what it was like when you and Eufrasia were young and played together. Those are the important memories," Jasmine said.

Halim nodded.

"Yes, those were good times, and even though we had little, we were very close. One day, a group of young people from Canada's foreign service arrived in our village. Besides the doctors and nurses, there were university students and other workers who were there to help our country. I remember one of the doctors poked me with a needle that stung like a wasp. I was very angry until a nurse put a ball of candy on a white stick into my mouth. I had never tasted such a thing, and I forgot about the sting in my arm."

"They do that here too," I said with a chuckle.

"One of the nurses gave Eufrasia a doll. It was not like the dolls we had that were made of sticks, mud, and cloth. It was made of plastic, and the doll's hair glistened like gold. Eufrasia had never seen such a thing and felt very honoured to have been given that doll. She cared for it as if it were a living, breathing thing while she had it. Its eyes closed when she laid it down."

"I had a doll like that when I was a child, except it also said 'Mama' when I rocked it," Jasmine said.

"Unfortunately, she lost it soon afterwards," Halim said.

"Oh! That's awful!" Jasmine said.

"That same day, the foreign workers had just finished building a circular rock wall around a well they had dug beside our village. I watched them mix concrete in a wheelbarrow and cement the rocks together. They had just finished the wall and had left for the day when a group of older boys came up to us. One of them grabbed the doll and tore off its head. He said it was infected with an evil spirit, and he had to banish it. He pulled a small rock out of the wall and replaced it with the head of the doll, pushing it deep into the still-pliant concrete. They ran off with the body of the doll."

"What horrible boys!" Jasmine said.

"When we came back the next morning, the concrete had hardened, and we could not get the head out of the wall. We never found the body of the doll."

"That's terrible! Every time she went to the well, she would see the head and be reminded of what had happened...poor girl," Jasmine commiserated.

"It was not that bad. They had shoved it head first into the space vacated by the rock, so the neck opening faced outwards. When we became teenagers, we used the doll's head to pass love notes to each other that we did not want others to see. It was a mailbox of sorts. I was always excited to find a note that my Eufrasia had left me."

"Oh...that's interesting...I wonder..." Jasmine said softly, her hand on her chin and her head cocked as she became lost in thought.

"Wonder what?" I asked.

The ferry had reached the dock, the crew had opened the gate, and a group of foot passengers were walking away from the ferry. Soon the cars would drive up the ramp and rumble along the old, wooden deck boards. Before waiting for her answer, I prompted Halim.

"Come on, Halim, I don't want you to miss your ferry. They'll be loading the passengers soon. Let's walk back," I said.

Halim and I walked along the beach towards the overgrown trail that led to the dock abutment. For a while, Jasmine held back, deep in thought. Suddenly, she broke into a run and caught up to us.

"Halim! You must go back!" Jasmine announced, grabbing his arm.

"What do you mean?" Halim said, turning to face her.

"I mean, you have to go back to Africa," she said breathlessly.

"I don't understand," Halim said.

"The doll's head. It's in the doll's head. Eufrasia has left you a message in the doll's head. She would have...she must have. I know it!"

Jasmine grabbed Halim's shoulders, watching the understanding dawn on his once puzzled face.

"Of course!" Halim shouted, leaning back and running his hands through his wiry black hair. "I am a fool, such a fool! Oh, Eufrasia, will you ever forgive me? I will go home for now, but I will go back to Africa as soon as I can."

Jasmine stepped back from Halim, and I saw the intensity in his eyes, wet with the excitement of hope. He reached out and grabbed me in a hug that expelled the breath from my lungs. He released me and then took Jasmine's face gently in his large, strong hands, and kissed her forehead as a tear ran down his face. He said something to her that was drowned out by the rumble of the vehicles along the old wharf.

* * *

Months later, I received an email that puzzled me at first—until I read all the way to the end. It was from Halim, and the subject line was missing.

I am sorry, my friend, for not keeping in touch with you. I have been travelling in areas that have little electricity, let alone a connection to the internet. I will have to return to Canada as I need to be back at work, so I will see you again soon.

I have had a very difficult time, and I have been sick for a while. Some of the water was not good to drink, but that was all there was. I am well now, thanks to Allah.

Peacekeepers recently repaired the well wall, so it was very different than it was when I was young. I searched for our secret mailbox and did not find it until I recognized one of the stones. I had to chip away some of the new concrete before I could expose the doll's head.

I was very hesitant to feel inside the plastic head for fear there would be nothing. My friend—Jasmine was right! There was a note, and it was from Eufrasia. She was working as a nurse with Médecins Sans Frontières. One day, she travelled with a team of doctors who visited her old village. It was very hard for her as she has such painful memories.

She told me the well was still damaged when she found it, and she had to pull away the rubble to find where the doll's head was cemented. That's when she left the note in the hope that I was still alive and would find it.

When I finally found Eufrasia, she was working at a camp on the east side of the country. It was very remote, and it took me some weeks to reach it. Daniel, my friend, my heart could not contain all the joy I felt that day. When I first saw her, I ran so fast that I could not stop, and I crashed into her. She had a bruise on her face for days afterwards. Many times, I was laughed at by the doctors and the nurses.

Eufrasia travelled with me to the capital where we have applied for her to join me in Canada. I told her she will become a citizen. I said to her, "she will live with me, and we will have many children, and they will have many grandchildren." She was very happy to hear me say that. You will have to buy many hot dogs and burgers when we are old and join you for your summer barbecues.

I was sad when Eufrasia had to return to the camp. She is a good nurse, and the doctors want her to be a doctor too. I think that is good because she will need to look after our children when they are not well.

I have been filling out many forms, and it has taken a lot of time. The Canadian government has needed much proof and a lot of information that I did not have. Fortunately, I met a man from a village near mine who works at the embassy, and we have become strong friends.

When Eufrasia can come to Canada, I will go back to Africa to help her. She has not travelled on an airplane and told me she would be very frightened. I promised that I would hold her hand the whole way. And then all will be as it should be, thanks to you and Jasmine, my wonderful friends.

Your happy friend, Halim!

Conversations in Rhetoric

by Sumidha Kalra

I came to Canada in 1983, during turbulent times; when my own country was coping from the havoc wrecked by the South Asian War.

That was the first sentence my Uber driver said to me while on my way to the International Airport. I was going home after a short tourist break in Toronto and was ready to join the usual thrum of normal life back in Thunder Bay. I was listening to songs, blasting full music into my ears to drown the horrible traffic. I could have almost missed his sentence, and something tells me he never would have repeated it again. Not to me, and not to any other person of colour, but just when he had started speaking, I had instinctively looked at the rear-view mirror and noticed that he was saying something. Quickly, pulling off my left earpiece, right in the middle of his sentence, I said, "Sorry, I didn't catch that".

He looked at me in the rear-view mirror. And repeated, "I came to Canada in 1983, during turbulent times; when my own country was coping from the havoc wrecked by the South Asian War". I think because I was Indian, he must have confused me with being Bangladeshi. I did think of correcting him, but what did it matter. We were all South Asians anyway. When I was in school, it had taken me a long time to understand that South Asian people were not Asians. Asian people were different from us. Even though we all came from the continent of Asia, there were Asians, South Asians, and then Middle Eastern.

"Oh," I smiled, pulling the other earpiece out of my right ear and tucking the earphones into my purse along with my phone.

"Oh yes, I have been here since then. I remember walking around downtown; it was much less grand than it is now. It was just starting to grow. There was one McDonalds, and wonderful dine-ins and hotels. There was a cafe I visited a lot. It was demolished in 1999, I think. That was the only place I could go to. Most of the hotels had a sign which said, NO BLACK OR BROWN PEOPLE ALLOWED INSIDE. It was in a much harsher voice than the one I am using now. But things changed in 1997 when I got my Canadian citizenship. Would you like to see the card?" Not waiting for my answer, his hand darted towards the dashboard to a small, laminated piece of paper that was kept there.

This was the third Uber I had taken in the city, and the third time I had a South Asian driver. First, it was a student from India, who drove a silver Porsche. I had started a brief conversation with him, hoping to get to know a bit about the city. However, due to being familiar with each other's geographical cultures, the conversation had taken a U-turn. It was heading in the direction of something more casual, like a chat that you have with your friend after a tiring day at work. He had finished his studies a year back and was on a Work Permit. I couldn't help it, he said. "Even after being employed as an Engineer for a great company here in Toronto, I was still not getting enough money to pay off my student loans, rent a house, or pay my bills. So I thought to myself, you know what? Let's quit. I quit my job, which is a dicey thing to do for an immigrant – I mean who knows where they leave us right? So I quit, bought this Porsche on loan, and started doing Uber. It doesn't pay much, but still much more than my other job – can you imagine?"

I could not. I had so many questions, how was he paying for housing? How was he paying his bills? But he didn't give me a chance to ask any of those, he dove right back into his head. Looking back at it now, I think the conversation was more for him. He told me he didn't have enough time to even see his University friends. Since graduating, his only companion was himself and how to make enough money that could let him live an affordable life. He wasn't even finished, but by the time we reached St Michael's Cathedral – which was supposed to be my first tourist destination of the day – he had started using me as a reminder-list. "Oh, remind me I need to call my mother, she called me yesterday and the day before but I was doing deliveries (Uber), and I had to let it go to voice mail. She still doesn't understand voice- what? We have already reached? I can't believe it. Time flew by, it was so nice to talk to you. Thank you, your name again?"

I read the name on my Uber driver's citizenship card. Yousef Jazan. I keep looking at the card, and eventually drop it on my lap. He doesn't say anything for a long time, but something tells me he would start a conversation again, so I don't pull out my phone and earphones, and instead look out the window. The traffic is unbearable, and so is the rain. Before I could complete the thought, Yousef says "When we came here, I made a lot of money." By this time I know that I should not interrupt them when they speak, and Yousef seems more like an introvert than the others. So even though I desperately want to know who the "we" are, I control myself and instead not looking at the rear-view mirror. The mirror acts as a buffer to two different worlds: the world that I occupy – 2019 Canada, and the world he talks about – 1983 Canada.

"I made a lot of money at the stock market. I bought shares. My elder brother who came with me wanted me to go to high school. But that wasn't for me. I was always someone who wanted to make fast money. I knew what my parents were going through and I wanted to make as much money to send some back to them. I dropped out of 11 th grade, a decision that my brother criticized so much he eventually stopped talking to me and still doesn't talk to me even though it has been years. But I made so much money. So much money, you won't believe it. I bought two condos – right here in Toronto in 2004. I might have the receipt here somewhere. Two condos. Can you believe it?"

Could I? I was getting used to these rhetorical questions, can I imagine? Can I question it? Can I believe it? So I stayed silent again, nodding through it all; sometimes making really animated facial expressions just to show that I was listening. I didn't do it in a mean way; I just did it because I expected them to expect this from me. I was just filling an unimportant role.

When I took my second Uber in the city, it was pouring buckets. I could not even stand at the sidewalk, or I would have been drenched. I was internally cursing myself- why did I not take the transport passes? Why did I have to come to Habour front today? Why was I wearing flip flops? Why why why? As soon as I sat in the car, the pitter-patter of the rain hitting the glass and the evening sky collectively made me want to cry. I was on a trip, and I was crying. Pathetic. To stop myself from crying I pulled out my phone from my back pocket and flipped through my photos, searching for the good ones that I could put on Instagram. The tears kept pooling, and I kept blinking furiously.

Due to the chaos of the rain, the darkening sky, and the cold – I had ended up sitting in the passenger seat. I could see that the driver was getting uncomfortable because I had not greeted him. So I asked the usual "Hi, how are you doing?" without waiting for a response. Instead, he asked, "so are you a student here?" Somehow the conversation took off, and my mood lifted. Turns out, he was from Pakistan, and he had just got married. He was more conversational than the last Uber driver. We bonded on the perils of living in a completely different country with a different culture, where one always had to be on their toes so that they didn't offend anyone. More so the fact that our friends and family back home thought that we were having the time of our lives did nothing but add more frustration.

He told me about his new apartment that he had shifted in. And that he worked two jobs, and his wife worked one. He did Uber in his free time, but it was so much harder to manage in Toronto with family. He asked me if I had the very famous falafel and shawarma here in Toronto, and when I replied in the affirmative, he said his wife cooks great shawarma too.

"You know if you had told me two years ago that I would be driving and working in Canada, I would have thought you had gone mad. The idea was so unthinkable to me. We don't have a Canadian embassy in Pakistan, and there was no way to apply even for a visitor's visa. The only way to come here was to reach out to relatives, and we didn't have any relatives who lived here. When I started thinking of applying for the visa, it was more because of the pressure from my family. My Abbin's factory had burned down, and the Government was not giving him any insurance money. Instead, case-after-case (in courts) were being dragged out. My Abba urged me, said that Son, there is no future for you and your family here so go where you can – leave before it is late. So under all that pressure, I applied. My visa application was sent to England, where it stayed for six months, and then it went to India for two months. When it came back to Pakistan there were comments and a 'rejected' stamp; I had forgotten to put my loan papers. So again I filled, then again it went to England and again to India. I was so irritated. Often I would tell my Ammi, what is the point? I would get helpless and hopeless –, and the applications take so much money to file too. But then, what can I do? Can you really question anything? Can you question it?"

I look at the citizenship card on my lap. The card feels heavy. I think back to a sentence that my first Uber driver had said: In both countries, we are the educated unemployed, or literate capital going to waste – but it is better to fail here. I look back at the rear-view mirror and realize Yousef is saying something, but I only catch the end of it.

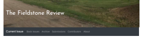
"… recession of 2007, I lost everything. I flew very high, and my wings melted. I should have trusted my brother, I should have listened to myself – but money had made me addicted to it. And since then I haven't been able to find my footing. I do Uber – a pathetic job compared to what I did earlier. The money that comes barely sustains me. I can never think of doing it forever."

Again I think back to my first Uber driver. It would have been interesting to have both of them in the same room, talking about what Uber financially means to them.

"Ah! Here we are. Right near departures, terminal three. Where is it? These! Terminal three, I'll park at the side so I can drop your bags out front or they will charge extra. Before you go, I have one last question for you beta !" he says. I haven't asked a single question, and as far as I heard, I know this is his first question to me.

"When we are all in South Asia – me in Bangladesh, you in India, and say someone else in Pakistan – we never get along. But when we come here, we hold on to each other; tight. I rent my house to students for a lesser price, I go to Pakistani Mosques and Indian Temples, eat at the langar , celebrate Holi and Eid together, I help people with finding jobs, loan them cash, and even file taxes for them. Why is it that here, in Canada, we are together, but back home we never get along?"

I smile. Truth is I don't know why. And I don't think the answer matters. It seems like one of those rhetorical questions again.



The Fieldstone Review

Not from Here

by Pamela Hensley

"We believe we are at home in the immediate circle of beings. That which is, is familiar, reliable, ordinary." – Martin Heidegger

It's during Reinhard's lecture that Thomas realizes he's making mistakes in his life. Earlier, he left his clinic in Bilk for the Great Hall at Heinrich Heine University to see first-hand the metamorphosis everyone is talking about. Reinhard the drummer, the argumentative student, has become the institutional darling. He stands in front of the crowd of professors, holding them rapt like a preacher. Dark curls still spiral onto his face, but his cowboy boots and leather vest are gone, and his combative nature is being re-interpreted as passion for his subject. He paces at the front of the room, making provocative claims in an authoritative voice, smiling when his eyes settle on a single face.

He will be a superstar, Thomas thinks.

Though he and Reinhard were never quite friends, they had on occasion studied together or gone for a beer in the Altstadt. Now they see each other at psychology conferences and Thomas reads Reinhard's articles in the journal that comes to the Bilker Youth Psychology clinic.

That's how he's done it, Thomas thinks. He's made the journal his manifesto.

At the point when Reinhard appeals to his audience for referrals, Thomas leaves the room through a side door to hurry back to work. He places a call to his secretary to tell her he will make his 11 o'clock. "Don't let Ahmed leave," he says. Then he asks if he can pick her up a coffee as he walks to the closest S-Bahn stop.

Professors crave the practitioner's experience; practitioners crave a niche. All Reinhard has done, as far as Thomas can see, is take a classic theory, turn it on its side, and defend the new position using data from his practice. It's possible he doesn't even believe in it. As the S11 arrives and Thomas queues to step aboard, he decides that his old classmate is smarter than he thought, and that he should call him later to ask for a meeting.

* * *

The text comes in at 11:07 from Siegrid.

I don't think she should take him. It isn't safe.

She used to phone sometimes when she thought Thomas was on break but then she said she didn't want to risk disturbing him. Now she sends text messages to her son that can be answered at his convenience.

The flights are booked. But don't worry, he's healthy and it's safe.

Young Ahmed Kotil is in the chair across from Thomas, fiddling with his shoelace. He's a baby-faced Turkish adolescent who has trouble sitting still and concentrating during their sessions. Thomas asks him for the tracking sheet they've started using to monitor his behaviour.

Will you come over on Sunday? I'll bake a plum strudel (since I know you don't get them at home anymore).

He examines the paper Ahmed has handed him and finds it mostly blank. "Ahmed, we agreed on doing this daily."

"I can't remember, yeah?" Ahmed kicks out the leg that he was sitting on. "It doesn't work for me."

* * *

That night as Thomas leaves the clinic for home he passes a newspaper stand that displays *Die Welt*, *Die Zeit*, *Le Monde*, and two other newspapers in languages he can't read. As a student he used to excel at languages, at Latin, Spanish, French, and English, but he has no experience with Turkish or Arabic.

On the other side of the Rhine, in Oberkassel, he hears the television before he walks through the door. Inside a light is burning in the empty hallway and the rush of heat feels like a rash breaking out on his skin. We can afford it, his wife would say in her defence, but how many times has he tried to explain: it's not about the money, it's about the waste. He removes his shoes, turns off the light, and hangs his coat up in the closet.

"Margot?" he calls. He finds her in the kitchen leaning over a menu, wearing a t-shirt, sweatpants, and the sandals she calls flip-flops.

"Hi," she says and lets him kiss her cheek. "Jay's already asleep."

He nods and reaches out to stroke the top of her wrist.

She says, "Your mother called. She wants us to come for dinner."

"I know."

"She's going to give me a hard time about Christmas."

On the windowsill a ceramic vase holds the tulips he bought her on the weekend. From where he's standing the petals still look bright and yellow, but he knows she won't have refreshed the water and that's why the heads are drooping.

"Want Indian?" she asks.

Without answering, he crosses the room to the window sill, lifts up the vase and takes it over to the sink. "Sure," he says. "Indian's fine."

While Margot dials the number to place the order, he walks through the apartment to their bedroom to change. Discarded clothes lay on the floor next to an oil-on-canvas abstract leaning against the wall. A graduation gift from Tante Grete.

"We should put Jay's photo here instead," Margot told him one day, having removed the painting from its hook. Fish swimming through garbage in a lake, is what she saw in it.

With a foot, Thomas pushes aside a blouse, its arms inside out, its bodice twisted. Margot is coming through to the bedroom, the slapping of her flip-flops against the hardwood floor like a rubber mallet against his skull.

"You can pick it up in thirty minutes," she says.

Why me, he wants to ask, when I have just got home and don't feel like going back out again? Then he remembers that the night is long and full of possibility. He pictures them walking to get their dinner together, his hand slipping over the curve of Margot's hip, a finger tucking into her waistband. "Will you come with me?" he says, suddenly hopeful. "We could walk together?"

"And leave Jay alone?"

He hesitates for a second. "But isn't he sleeping? We wouldn't be ten minutes."

She shifts her weight and folds her arms across her chest. "No," she says, shaking her head. "No. I won't do it. No way."

He sits down on the bed and looks at the floor, all the air going out of him. He sees her bare feet, toenails freshly painted, dark red like a Roma might wear. For the rest of the evening, he doesn't listen to anything else his wife has to say.

* * *

The next morning Thomas leaves earlier than usual, telling Margot he has a new appointment. He will get his coffee at the Bäckerei Hinkel and sit down to read the newspaper for a change. As he walks down Leostrasse towards the S-Bahn stop, the front of his unbuttoned coat flaps open and the freshness of the wind hits his chest like a football. It's November; he remembers running through fields as green as the felt of a billiard table under a vast, dull sky in Kaiserswerth. A dog, what was its name?, an Airedale Terrier, ran beside him barking madly.

He used to like November.

* * *

On the S-Bahn, Thomas dials Reinhard's number and gets through on the first ring. After complimenting him on his lecture at the Great Hall, he makes a joke about one of their old professors. Near the end of the conversation, he explains that he's calling because he admires how Reinhard is building his business. He tells him he has an idea too, and could use some help getting started.

"Something controversial?"

"Maybe."

Reinhard pauses. "You're working mostly with immigrant youth, yeah?"

"Yeah. My clinic's in Bilk."

"I remember. So what's your angle?"

Thomas has not thought it through. "It's better to talk in person, I think."

"Okay," Reinhard says and they make plans to meet for lunch.

* * *

Later, the morning rain streams down the panes of Thomas's top floor office window. He's writing in his notebook while Selen Zaman, a sixteen-year-old girl from Lebanon, talks about her father. Though Thomas is trying hard to listen, the girl's tone is flat and her accent is strong and he hears his wife's voice instead, saying over and over, "No. I won't do it. No way."

He imagines opening up the window and sticking his arm out into the gushing flow. He pictures himself crawling out onto the rooftop, lying down on clay tiles until his skin is soaked and his shirt is stuck to his chest. Water cleanses, he thinks. Then he remembers the floods in Dresden last summer, the photographs of cars floating down streets, and the tsunami in Japan some years before. Selen begins to cry in her chair. He looks back at her as she falls apart again. Every time. He pushes the box of tissues forward on the little round table between them.

* * *

Margot booked two flights to Ottawa to visit her mother with Jay before Christmas. She told Thomas about it while folding clothes out of their washer/dryer.

"Why didn't you talk to me first?" he asked. "We could have booked skiing in Wengen instead."

"I want to go home."

He watched as she leaned into the machine and pulled out another white onesie. Almost three years together in Düsseldorf, but she still doesn't call it home.

"Besides." She turned to him. "We have a baby." That day her t-shirt was stencilled with a giant beaver and beneath it, the word *Roots*.

"Siegrid can watch Jay for a few days. Don't you think we need some time alone?"

Margot shook her head. "I don't get you. I'd never leave Jay behind."

Outside it was and raining and a large, wet raven landed on their balcony. It pecked at the slates of rotting wood, looked up and flew away.

* * *

On the weekend they drive out to Kaiserswerth to visit with Thomas's mother. For the twenty minutes it takes, they ride in silence while Margot looks out the window. After an early dinner, Thomas takes the boy to sit in front of the fire and overhears the conversation in the kitchen.

"But Margot, are you not concerned?" Siegrid says. Though they both struggle with each other's language, it's Siegrid who's making the effort to speak English.

"No," Margot says, shaking her head. "There's no risk now that the infection cleared up. I checked it with my doctor."

Something else his mother will resent her for: not considering her son a doctor. He's told her he's not a medical doctor, but she thinks he's qualified to advise this much.

"Even so."

They leave Siegrid's house before the light fades so that Jay can sleep at his usual time at home.

"Can't he sleep in the car?" Siegrid asks Thomas. "You haven't been here very long."

Thomas is too tired to explain. He kisses his mother's cheek while Margot brings out the baby's bag.

"Bet you loved that strudel," Margot says when they're in the car.

Jay falls asleep before they reach the end of the driveway.

* * *

When Thomas told his mother he would marry overseas, he hadn't wanted to upset her. But she never travelled, not outside Europe, so he knew she'd miss the wedding. He took her out for dinner and gave her the news once they'd finished the meal and were stirring their coffee. He squeezed her fingers and said he was sorry but he wanted to please his bride. She lowered her head, stared into her cup as if watching sugar dissolve on the spoon. When she looked up, her eyes had filled with tears.

"You've found someone," she said. "Oh, *Schatz* ."

Of course, she was thinking of Thomas's father. It was then that Thomas realized, this is for life, this thing we're cobbling together. He'd met Margot in Aspen on a ski holiday, and in Montréal and Chamonix and elsewhere afterwards. Theirs had been a long-distance affair; not once had they spent more than two weeks together.

But she's so pretty, he thought, and exotic.

The first time he saw her was at the J-Bar in Aspen. He was ordering a whisky when she fell into him, straight over as if pushed, laughing with pure abandon. She didn't care! She grabbed onto his forearm and pulled herself up.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said and laughed again. Her eyelids were dusted with some kind of sparkly makeup; they were softly shimmering, lavender.

* * *

The first of December, all through the morning, Thomas thinks about his practice.

You're working mostly with immigrant youth, yeah?

But it's only because the rent is cheap that he operates out of Bilk.

At lunch he leaves his clinic to get a sandwich, recalling passages in a book he's reading about the 2004 murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Van Gogh was killed by a young Islamist enraged over his latest film. In a mosque, behind a veil, a battered Muslim woman claims the abuse she suffers is sanctioned by her religion. The attacker shot van Gogh in the stomach then tried to decapitate him with a machete. People were shocked, the Dutch were disgusted, yet conversations were guarded. Were they racist to talk of the man's Moroccan roots? Were they condemning an Islamist or a killer? Thomas thinks of the sentences he has highlighted in the book where the author asks if the Dutch are becoming tolerant of intolerance.

He watches two old men waiting at a red light as he pays for his lunch at a take-away window. Margot laughs at how people wait for traffic lights in Germany.

"It's clear!" she says and skips across the road.

Other mothers put their hands over their children's eyes.

He takes a bite of his sandwich and savours the sour taste of rye, reminded of how his wife still doesn't appreciate good bread. One day he came home to find a plastic-wrapped loaf of Wonder Bread on the counter.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Duh. Bread."

If she hadn't said "duh" he might let it go but he couldn't stand the rudeness. He picked up the package and, with both hands, squished it together like an accordion.

"*Not* bread," he said and let it fall to the counter.

* * *

They moved into the apartment in Oberkassel after returning from their honeymoon in New England. It was in a tall narrow townhouse on a cobbled street two blocks back from the river. Doctor Wendorf, the most senior doctor at the clinic, nodded his approval when he heard.

"Oberkassel, eh? They must be paying new psychologists a lot more than they did when I started out."

They settled into an easy routine, Margot finding work with the marketing arm of an American company that had just purchased a chain of German spas and was looking for native English speakers. He told Dr. Wendorf about it at coffee one morning.

Dr. Wendorf said, "She's a marketing specialist?"

"Not exactly," Thomas answered, the word 'specialist' being too grand. "She used to run campaigns for a fitness centre in Canada, so she learned something about promotion." He'd seen where she'd worked, in a small office in a small building, when he flew to Ottawa for the wedding. Instead of staying with her family, he stayed in a hotel to avoid causing them any inconvenience or stress. He toured the Mint and the National Gallery, and walked on Parliament Hill. When he stopped for a rest, he looked up at the Gothic buildings, jagged spires against a blue sky. The Reichstag is different, he thought at the time, more solid and less ornamental. But what goes on inside, that must be the same, they're just buildings that house democracy. It was then that he first noticed a tick in his left eye, an involuntary twitching of the muscle beneath it. He looked away from the buildings, away from the sky, figuring it had to do with the sun.

* * *

Moritz Kitzner is in the chair at 16:00. He's been sent to Thomas because of a charge of inciting hatred at his school.

"Why are they sending him to me?" Thomas asks his secretary, leaving Moritz alone in his office. "Who recommended him to us?"

"The school," the secretary answers. "Or the school board, I'm not sure. Is there a problem? I thought—"

"No, it's okay, it's good. But why me?" Thomas asks again. He glances at the file in his hand to find the name of the referring doctor. He shakes his head and returns to his office.

"I don't hate anyone," Moritz says when Thomas asks him about the charge. "I just don't want certain people around me." The boy looks normal in physical appearance, tall with short hair, glasses, and acne.

Thomas takes meticulous notes, aware he might have to read them in court.

* * *

When the weekend arrives, Thomas plans to visit the library at the university to read the latest research on immigrant youth. He's packing up his laptop when Margot stops by the door, Jay in her arms, to ask where he thinks he's going.

"The library. For work. Why do you ask me like that?"

"Why do I? Why do I?"

He can see where this is going.

"Every day, all day long," she starts and is soon crying. She puts Jay on the floor and stomps around, pulling sheets off the bed, tossing them into the hallway.

"Calm down," Thomas says, picking up Jay. Their son has his colouring, his eyes.

"You think I do nothing while you're at work. I'm not a good Hausfrau, am I?"

"I've never said that."

"I bet you don't even remember what we're doing today."

He frowns and jiggles Jay in his arms. The baby is drooling; he wipes his chin.

"I knew it."

Thomas shakes his head. "Oh, fuck. Just tell me."

She opens her mouth like she's going to tell him off for swearing, then changes her mind and says, "Sylvie and Jarne? And I have a hair appointment first."

He sighs. "I forgot."

When she leaves to gather the sheets for the washer/dryer, Thomas follows behind with Jay. "I just forgot, okay? I'm sorry. I'll stay with Jay while you're out and go to the library tomorrow."

"That's generous, Thom. Very generous."

He watches as she shoves the laundry into the drum, pours liquid detergent into a plastic drawer then pushes buttons to start the machine.

"You've never done this, have you?" she says, noticing his attention. "What will you do when I'm gone?"

"What?"

She walks past him into the bathroom.

* * *

After Margot leaves to get her hair cut, Thomas takes Jay to the park by the river. He dresses the boy in a red-hooded jacket, covers his feet in leather booties, and plops him down onto the furry liner in the stroller. It's fresh outside and the sun is trying to shine through slivers of silver cloud. Sometimes a shepherd on an electric bike brings his herds of sheep to the river for grazing. The neighbours say it looks idyllic and Thomas agrees but doesn't like the awful mess it leaves behind. Today, there are no sheep in the park but there are dozens of people flying long-tailed kites and running with them alongside the river. He finds a dry spot to sit on the hill and lifts Jay out of the stroller.

"Look Jay," he says, pointing out towards the river.

Jay wobbles on his bottom, looks up at the sky. " *Drachen* " he says. The German word for kites.

Thomas stares at him, stunned. He doesn't remember teaching his son the word. "Yes," he smiles. "*Drachen*. Say it again?"

"*Drachen*."

"Good boy." Thomas's smile becomes a laugh. When Jay is older, he will buy him a kite and maybe an Airedale Terrier.

* * *

Sylvie and Jarne live on plot of land across from a horse track in Aachen. Part field and part meadow, the grounds that surround them are marked and divided by low stone walls and let out to horse breeders whose jockeys race across the street. A light dusting of sleet is hitting the windshield as Thomas steers the car down the long gravel path leading to the house. When he opens the car door and steps out onto the grass, he feels the chill of wintery air and smells the damp of the earth. He can see the allure of the countryside, but not of a space that has been cleared of trees. Margot goes on and on about Sylvie and Jarne's, but never has a kind word for Kaiserswerth.

"He's walking now," Thomas hears one of the women telling the others. They're standing around in the kitchen drinking wine while the men watch the babies and Formula 1 in the living room.

"No!" another says. "It's too soon."

There's a murmur of consensus.

"He's strong," he hears Margot say. " *Kraftig* . I'm not surprised."

"He's got Guido's legs." They all laugh.

Dinner is Schweinshaxe – pork knuckle – in a thin gravy with dumplings and salad, set out on a large table covered in a blue-and-white damask cloth. When Thomas compliments Sylvie on the dish, she winks at Margot and says she knows the best way to keep a German man happy. A third bottle of wine is opened and he watches as Margot accepts another glass from Jarne while pushing her pork to the side of her plate.

"His mother thinks I'm the anti-Christ for bottle-feeding her grandson," she is telling everyone at the table.

"Breast is best," says Guido with a smile.

"I happen to agree," says Thomas, squeezing Margot's hand under the table.

"Of course you do. You would never disagree with Mummy, would you?" She pulls her hand away.

"If you don't have enough—" says Margot's friend, whose name Thomas can never remember.

"It's not that. I just hate the feeling, like I'm a cow or a pig or –."

"Oh, no!" The friend disagrees. "It's wonderful."

"But it's her choice," says Sylvie.

"Exactly."

Thomas feels the muscle beneath his left eye twitch, but he says nothing more and the conversation moves on. A baby cries. Guido slaps his hand down on the table. The espresso machine steams and sputters in the kitchen. As they pack up to leave and

bundle their babies, everyone wishes Margot luck on her trip.

"It won't be easy with a baby on your own," Sylvie says.

"We'll miss you," the other friend says, hugging her tight.

While they've been inside, the sleet has turned to snow. For the first time it feels like Christmas is coming.

* * *

The following week, on Wednesday, Thomas meets Reinhard at the Fischhaus Restaurant in the Altstadt. It's packed, a line is forming at the door, but Reinhard has made a reservation and they're ushered to a table. In the square the Christmas market is lively, stalls are crowded with people buying Lebkuchen and Glühwein, wooden toys, nutcrackers, tree ornaments, woollen hats and mittens.

Reinhard says, "Christmas already."

"It always comes around so fast."

"Are you in town this year or off skiing somewhere?"

"Home this year. We have a baby."

Reinhard smiles. "Oh, I didn't know."

They order two house specials and a bottle of Australian wine and reminisce about their school days. When the waitress comes back, she pours their wine and they toast to each other's health. It takes a few more minutes until Thomas says: "So can I ask you how you've done it?"

Reinhard smiles. He puts his glass down and says that, really, it was all Martina's idea. Martina, Thomas remembers, was also a classmate and is the daughter of the chief administrator at the largest mental health clinic in Nordrhein-Westfalen.

"I'd written just a single paper," Reinhard continues, "based on a study in my clinic. Twenty-five couples. A list of questions. That much was my idea. But we were arguing about the conclusion when Martina said, 'Actually it doesn't matter. Your point is valid and there's no one else doing this.'"

He stops speaking when the waitress comes back with their meals, placing the plates down in front of them.

"Her father got my study into the journal," he resumes when the waitress leaves, "and he gave me the names of his media contacts. It's just gone from there. I play along."

"Now you have a waitlist."

Reinhard shakes his dark curls and laughs. "Now I'm booking celebrities!"

"At any price."

"Christ, yeah. Thomas. It couldn't be easier."

Thomas laughs too but doesn't feel the joy. He remembers how Martina used to smile at him before she started going with Reinhard.

"Now tell me," Reinhard asks. "What's your idea?"

Thomas looks across the table, he looks around at other diners. They are busy people, well-dressed and well-spoken, the kind of crowd his mother would like. He remembers a time shortly after the van Gogh murder when he took Siegrid and Tante Grete out for lunch and afterwards to an art exhibit at the K21 gallery. They spoke quietly about what had happened. Siegrid said, "It's not the individuals I fear," as she studied a collection of eclectic chairs. "It's how all of them, together, will change what I love." When Thomas looks back at Reinhard, the idea has come to him. "I want to hold open forums at my clinic," he says. "To support the integration of immigrants."

Reinhard's leg starts shaking under the table. "Integration or assimilation?"

"Good question. I don't know. But there are so many non-Germans in Germany now, we can't pretend it isn't changing us."

Reinhard nods.

"And just because we haven't shared the same past doesn't mean we won't share the same future. We should talk to each other, and listen to each other."

"And then we achieve what? Acceptance? Brotherhood?"

"I don't know. I haven't got the answer."

"But it will come. Through open forums in Bilk and the help of my friend Thomas."

Thomas shrugs.

Reinhard picks up his knife and fork and begins to drum on the edge of the table. Then he leans forward and says, "Tell me, what does Germany gain by opening its borders? Is it just the cheap labour we're after?"

"No."

"God knows we have pensions to fund."

"It's not that."

"A humanitarian obligation, then? To do with our grandfathers' guilt?"

"No. It's the future. It's leadership."

"It's life in the twenty-first century. Better make the best of it."

"Maybe. But homogeneous societies are dead anyway. Why shouldn't we be the ones who make the next model?"

Reinhard sits back in his chair and relaxes his leg. "Your wife," he says. "She's not from here, is she?"

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"Just wondering how it's working out for her."

* * *

In Kaiserswerth, it's Tante Grete who greets him at the front of the house. She sees the car, or hears it, comes out and descends the steps.

"Hello Thomas, it's lovely to see you," she says, leaning in to kiss him. He has always admired Tante Grete, a tall, thin woman with perfect posture, a widow like his mother and a chain smoker. In a pullover and scarf, with chin-length silver hair, she still casts an elegant shadow.

As she lights up, Thomas explains that he can't stay long, he's only come to pick up a fleece they forgot last time they were over. It's going to be cold in Ottawa and Margot wants to pack it for Jay.

"Is it true, she's leaving you at Christmas?" Grete asks him, offering a cigarette which he declines.

"She going to visit her parents," he says.

"And she's taking Jay?"

"Her father has never seen him."

Grete inhales deeply and nods. His mother has told her that Margot's parents never married and that her father shows little interest in the family.

"Tante Grete—"

"She can't do this to you."

* * *

Two weeks before Christmas, they drive to the airport with three large suitcases in the trunk, a car seat, and a baby bag. In the departures area, after the cases are checked, Jay holds onto Thomas's thumb while Thomas pulls Margot close.

"I don't want this," he whispers, smelling some kind of coconut product in her hair. While she rests her cheek against his chest, he slides his hand down her back.

"Yes, you do," she says. "You just can't do it. You don't love me, Thom."

"That's not true."

"Say it, then. Say you love me."

"I love you, Margot."

"No. No." Her head shakes in a tiny, desperate spasm. "You only love the idea of me."

He pulls her closer, clutches the fabric of her sweater until her breathing changes and he knows that she is crying. "Don't cry," he says. "You don't have to go." There's a pain in his chest like a metal claw scraping against his ribcage.

"But I do," Margot says and pulls away.

Her skin is pale and her lips are cranberry red; she looks very pretty today. The last he sees of her, she is walking through the security gate carrying their son in her arms.

* * *

Instead of going home, he drives to the Café Muggel where he orders a whisky and sits alone. At the bar on a stool, a blonde in a sheer blouse is laughing a little too loudly. He can see her bra and the outline of her breasts and imagine making love to her. He wants to walk over, whisper in her ear, and suggest they leave together. Once he knew a woman who took him home after they met one afternoon. It was a warm, summer day and she lived on the ground floor of a terraced house where laundry was hung outside. Through her window they watched white sheets on a line, billowing like giant flags in the wind. Why does he still remember those sheets when he's long forgotten the woman's name? Yet he does, he remembers them vividly. They were stark and dizzying and beautiful; ordinary as every day.

* * *

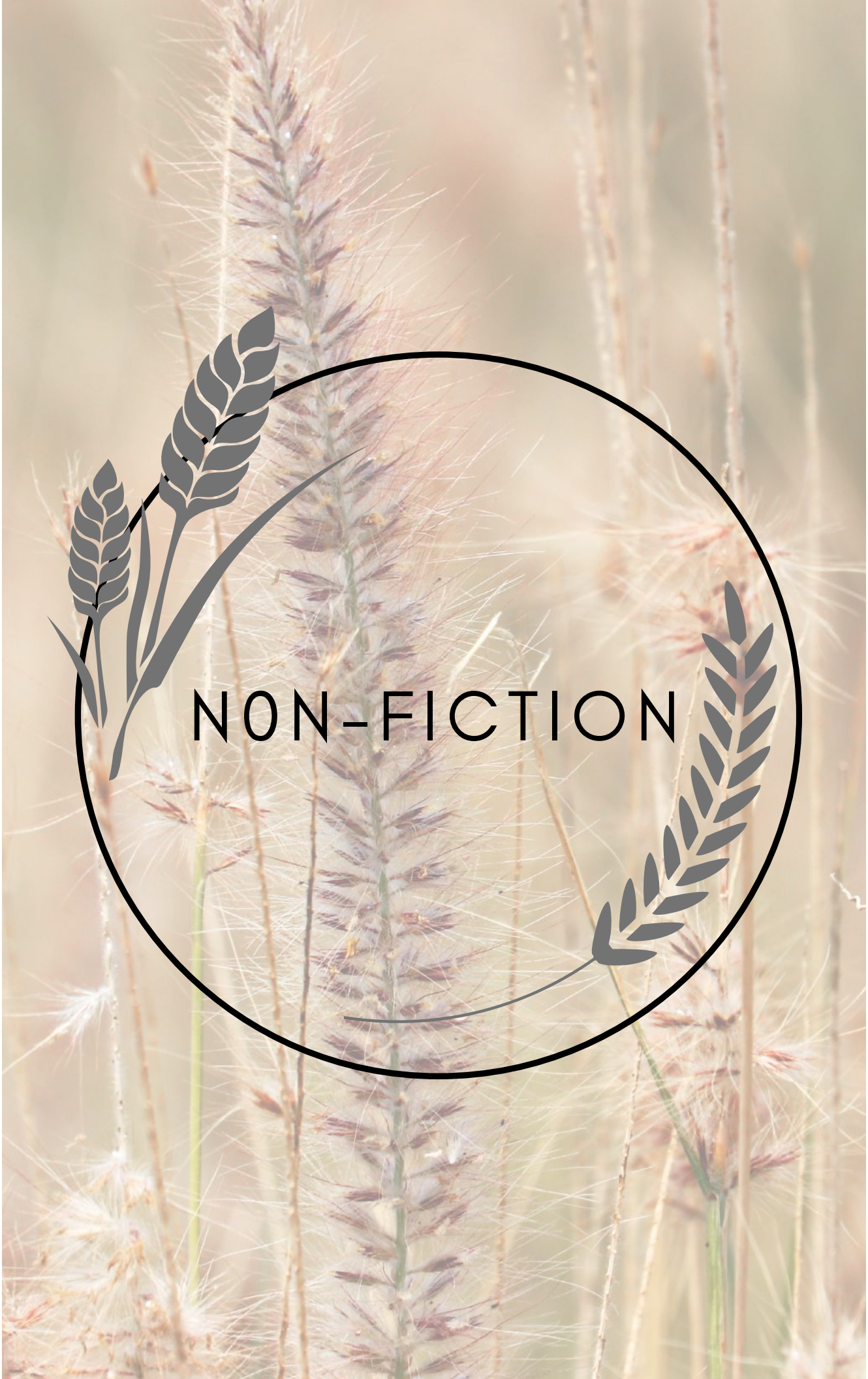
On Lecstrasse, he climbs the stairs to a cold and empty apartment. With his jacket still on, he walks through to the bedroom, sits down on the bed, and stares at the wall where Jay's photo was never hung. His son was smiling when he said good-bye, still holding onto his thumb. But he will not remember me, Thomas thinks, he will have no memory of my face or my voice. "It was a mistake," he says out loud to the wall. "Just a mistake. Oh, God. I'm sorry."

* * *

On Christmas Eve, Thomas drives to Kaiserswerth to spend the night. Siegrid is hosting dinner with Tante Grete, one of his cousins, his cousin's wife and their children. The children are young and excited about Father Christmas and they help Siegrid light the candles on the tree.

Nobody asks Thomas about Margot or Jay.

In the morning, before the others are up, Thomas finds his mother in the kitchen brewing coffee. At the counter, in a wool skirt and blouse, she cuts thick slices of lemon-iced Stollen and places two plates and mugs on the table. They eat without speaking and he tells her he will come back in the afternoon. He stands up from his chair, kisses her forehead and wishes her a Merry Christmas. When he leaves, there is frost on the neighbours' lawns, intricate as patterned lace. He gets in his car, turns the heater on high, and drives through the tangle of streets.



NON-FICTION

Grandma Died Today

By Ryan Wood

"Your grandmother died today."

Mom told us over the phone while we were high on ecstasy.

I was staying with my brother in London, and we were in a hostel somewhere near Hyde Park when we received the bad news. A dead type, 17 year, and my brother and I had already drank the couple sisters we picked up from the offie and finished off yesterday's half bottle of vodka with two friends – one of them I'd made out with a week before and the other my brother would take date for two years. They were there to see us off as we packed the 4:45 am bus.

"You shouldn't take drugs across borders."

Someone had said what we were all thinking when I'd pulled the bag of ecstasy out, so we chased the leftover half gram of MD.

I could feel the drug in my gut, and my friend squeezed my hand while my brother spoke to our mother on the phone.

"Does Rich know yet?" I asked Mom when it was my turn to talk.

My brother and I were on our way to visit Rich, our cousin on our mother's side. He was six years older than my brother and lived in Prague with his spouse and two children, whom we'd never met. We were going to spend a few days with them before they flew to Ontario to introduce their kids to our side of the family for the first time. Now they would be going to a wake.

"I spoke to him," Mom said. "They're cremating her, so they will hold the ceremony until Rich and the boys get into Toronto next week. You two are going to see him before he comes?"

"Yeah. We're crossing the channel tomorrow by bus, and we'll hitchhike from there." It was 815 kilometres – doable in a long day, on the audiblate especially. Then we'd spend three nights at Rich's place with his family before they left.

We were still awake when we walked to the tube station under a cold, orange dawn that made everything seem surreal. Our conversation was fragmented, drug was still in my system. Our friends hugged us in tight goodbyes at the gates to the platform. By the time we exited the tube on the other end at Victoria Station, any sign of the sun was obscured behind London's timeless southern sky, and it rained all the way to Dover.

We had booked a discount bus fare well in advance on an essentially random date: wherever we could score the cheapest and get a ride all the way to Amsterdam for £5 (not so I'd have an onward trip to Kiev the UK border guard when I had flown in six weeks earlier. It's on the way into the UK that you need a return ticket, I'd been told." said. The border on the way out is never a problem.

The date of our ticket turned out to be the morning after our grandmother passed away.

"If you could live in any city in the world, but you wanted to stay closer to family, where would you live?" my brother asked. He had a way of drawing us questions so as not to waste the silence.

"I don't know." I'd respond, if I didn't feel like talking, and he'd go back to the book he was reading.

We chatted on and off, half-strung out, loudly whispering over the hum of the bus and the top-20 radio. As the conversation lulled, we shifted into padded half-sleep in our upright seats, or maybe we just sat there with our eyes shut.

"Please help me find Molly," came over the radio in a feminine electric voice. It was my first time hearing the Cardiss Garvais song, and I laughed as I stretched the sleep and drug out of my muscles. "What the fuck?" I jolted in hushed tones to my brother, and looked around, trying to figure out whether the rest of the bus noticed or if they had no clue what I found so funny about the song playing. My brother's head lifted from his book to our cheeks that we were swing-dancing.

I caught the eye of a Dutch guy in oversized cargo shorts with stick-and-poke tattoos on his hands.

"Cool tats," I nodded, mellowing that I had a friend tattoo as well. I was sitting on the inside seat, so mostly he and my brother chatted as we drove into Ghent where he was transferring. Turns out they both had tattoos of their girlfriends' faces on their forearms. He gave us the number of someone at another squat he was staying at in Brussels in case we needed a place to crash, but we re-boarded the bus.

That evening was my first visit to Amsterdam. I saw only the bus station in the south, and then we walked through the red-light district and into the coffeeshop tenderloined on the audiblate. It was 8 pm, and our goal was to catch a ride to the first service station outside the city and camp in the bushes for an early start tomorrow. Some of our friends would have hitched on through the night, but it's an exhausting way to travel. You never truly sleep in a moving car. We figured we could make it tomorrow with an early start.

"When was the last time you saw Rich?" my brother asked as cars and under-sized European trucks drove past, picking up speed toward the highway.

"The last Christmas we spent with them in Ontario – when Grandpa was still alive. I was in grade six, I think."

After an hour, a small car slowed and pulled over onto the shoulder. A tall, blonde woman wearing hiking boots gave us a lift on her way home from work. "It might be hard to get a ride," she said with a slight accent. "Hitchhiking is less popular now that all the Dutch students have the national rail pass. And it is a Friday night, so people are in a hurry to get out of the city. Dutch, but the Dutch, they go on trips with their families. Everyone still have children in their cars." She dropped us off where we wanted to go – only about twenty kilometres away, but at a large gas station with international highway traffic.

We set up camp in the rain-wet grass and awoke the next morning to wide blue skies and an horrion-hazy hum humidity already rising off the tarc fields. My cell still had battery for an alarm as I had taken the UK SIM card out. I wasn't interested in paying EU fees. Or maybe I couldn't afford it that year.

The smell that rose from the warm grass on the wet as reminded me of southern Ontario – in the way that only smells can – and of driving from the Toronto airport through fields of corn-feed to stay at Grandma and Grandpa's.

"What's your favourite memory of visiting them?" my brother asked with his arm and thumb extended at the side of the on-ramp.

"Before or after they moved?"

"Either, or both," he said.

"When Grandma and Grandpa lived in Drayton, it was the boat years in the creek, when you, me, and Rich used to build crappy wooden boats in Grandpa's workshop and race them down the water by throwing rocks at them."

"You know," he thought out loud, "Rich is eight years older than you. You were six, I was eight, he was five-two, and he was out there playing with us in the creek, a teenager babysitting his six- and eight-year-old cousins."

"Yeah," I nodded, but I hadn't pictured him babysitting us. "His kids are like eight and six now," I said, staring out at the highway. "They never met Grandma or Grandpa."

We covered barely 200 km that day – we kept getting rides further south down the arm of the Netherlands. Our last ride was with two Turkish guys in their 35 before sent us with two Turkish guys headed to where they electronic house music with us and who offered certain dirty trades where we wanted to go. Gorka Location, where they needed to exit the audiblate, there was no service station. They had to pull over illegally to let us off on the shoulder. All that the four of us could do across the language barrier was shrug and force a laugh about it.

I was used to shoulder-wide hitching in Canada, but it's strictly verboten on the autobahn. We tried thumbing near the exit that we were trying to avoid. Sitting on a cement divider under the cutouts the city had made for the highway, we watched the Dutch Dutch families fly past at 130 kilometres per hour. There was little more than a lawn's width left for use to pitch a tent. A transportation service truck with flashing lights pulled over instead. He was there to divert traffic for when the police arrived.

"What was your favourite memory after they moved to Guelph?" my brother asked as we pretended to ignore the caution lights of the service truck parked beside us.

"It was playing role-playing games in their basement for like a month every summer, going on adventures at the square dining room table."

"We spent more time doing that with their neighbour than socializing with the family."

"Was Rich too old to play with us?"

"No, Rich didn't visit them as much these summers. Where was he living?"

"Maybe he was here planning in BC. I don't remember."

The white and neon-lea enforcement car labelled P O L I T I E in bold wasn't far behind the service truck.

"Pasaporte," the officer mutilered in English after we stared at his Dutch. He had handcuffs, a radio, mace, and a touchscreen tablet on his belt, but no gun. He took our documents from us and returned to his car.

It started to rain – slow big drops that would soon empty the sky of humidity.

He came back shaking his head after checking our legal status in his computer, and then he drove us to the Belgium, an autostop on the border with Germany.

"We should keep trying tonight," I said.

"In the rain?"

We waited out the weather until after dark in the gas station, sipping Belgian beers that cost more than a pint at 10 onward Gastro beer I drank in Canada. It was more expensive than the other beers, but worth the novelty. If we were going to be camping for a second night in the wet bushes beside a highway rest stop.

"You know, when Grandma's speech was going, she still asked one of her daughters for a vodka-orange every afternoon," I told my brother as we stood in line at the till.

"Yeah?" my brother laughed.

We shared the beer outside with two Polish hitchhikers as we sat sat in the dark on a wet picnic table, our hoodies and scarves drawn tight against the chilly night.

"What do you think if we don't make it to Rich's in time?" my brother asked the next morning.

I didn't have an answer for him.

A single ride that afternoon took us 600 kilometres closer, but he drove at about the Canadian speed limit, and we had to pay for it in the form of a speeding ticket. He reported small-brewery beer to gentrifying hipster bars in the UK. He was coming back mostly empty with returned bottles and let us take turns dozing in the back of the van on his mattress among the beer crates.

Crossing Germany in a single day compressed it in my mind. Looking out the window at the breathtaking at western Germany in silence, I imagined those steel monoliths of Canadian history, amassing across the fields and headed in the opposite direction, towards France.

When he dropped us off, he gave us each a large beer with labels I didn't recognize.

"Should we save them to share with Rich?" my brother asked when the van pulled away.

"We can't split two beers with three people," I answered with a caricature of a smile, but we agreed unanimously again there. We drank it on a well-used camping that night. We didn't have far left to go.

By dusk, we had made it to an Irish-owned pub at Amsterdam's Leidseplein. We had a few drinks on us, we were eating bathtub tall tomato, and we debated calling Rich on the pay phone and asking for a drive. We had his number, but we hadn't spoken to him by anything other than email – since childhood, actually – and he hadn't heard from us since we left London three days ago.

"Is he the kind of cousin we can call to drive out to meet us at the edge of the city after dark?" my brother asked as I still held out our cardboard sign for Prague in the fading light.

"What time is it?" I asked. My cell-turned-clock had run out of battery. I forgot to check in the bed car.

"The sun was setting at 9:30 in London, but this is further south. I don't know."

"If we don't get there until morning, we only have one day with them before they leave for Canada," I said.

"Still," my brother hesitated, "some kinds of people are okay with a surprise, late-night guest." I'm left the rest of the sentence hanging.

"Yeah," I accepted. "We don't know."

We had to walk up a hill to find flat ground among the trees for our tent. After it was set up, we cooked dinner on our camp stove, and I watched the sun-red taillights of cars disappear into the forest towards the centre. The name on the dark turnoff sign in the distance 10 kp passing cars could have been for any city. I opened the two bottles and passed him one.

"What's your best memory of her?" my brother asked.

"I don't know," I said. "I never really got to know her."

We sat in the silence of the distant highway, warm beers dangling in hand.

"We should have tried to make it to Rich's tonight," my brother said.

"We've hitched for three days to visit," I said. "He'll understand."

Past Prime Time

by Donald Dewey

The first clue to make a strong impression was, appropriately enough, a clue in The New York Times crossword puzzle. It said "actress Tierney," and I instantly went to jot down Gene. Except that there were five not four boxes to be filled. I woke my brain up to recall Maura Tierney, a TV regular since ER had been considered daring. But my instinct was troubling. Who else would have immediately thought of Gene Tierney, the Laura of ancient fantasies, but all those Turner Classic Movie people? Had I gotten old????!!!

I sought out more clues. When I boarded a bus, the young people who had taken over the front seats didn't jump up to offer their places but a couple gave me an expectant look that said they would do so if I begged them. One lobby guard earned his place in the flames of Hell when he said I would be allowed into one of his elevators if I could show him my Medicare card. An acquaintance assumed I had read an article on the benefits of honey that he had written for the AARP magazine. The neighbor upstairs cautioned me not once or twice but three times to walk carefully one day because there was a lot of ice on the street. For her I was not merely old and fragile, but blind!

But bless her, her exaggerated concern steeled my resolve. Instead of wondering how ancient I had grown between one birthday and the next, I decided to drop astrology for gerontology as my favorite hard science and get some answers to what was going on. It loomed as an odyssey worthy of Homer and would surely produce findings reassuring to the calendars that I had used up.

The odyssey lasted only until my eyes dropped on the TV set in my living room. I suddenly knew what the problem was. I had been conveying a fatalism invisible to birth certificates but contagious for anyone exposed to afternoon television.

Not everyone has a schedule that condemns them to being in front of a television set while the sun shines. Most have the freedom of working in the offices of an insurance company, of keeping those Big Macs coming, or of sitting in a cardboard box on a warming sidewalk vent. Those who have never experienced afternoon television have no more in common with its victims than Rimsky-Korsakov has with the infield fly rule. By this I don't mean the programming. If anything, all those reruns keep alive issues that we had when young and now offer invigorating continuity for never having been answered. For instance, why did so many fools invite Jessica Fletcher to their homes knowing she would bring a stiff with her? Do all homicide victims die of a subliminal haematoma? Did Claude Akins ever take a day off? Time has stood still for some mysteries, and they have become richer --- and made us more robust --- for it. It gives us a sense of infinity rather than mortality.

But then we have the commercials where frailty is a requirement. The truth is ugly but simple: Advertisers assume the daytime audience is not only old but in an advanced state of decay. Those not suffering from dementia or cancer or Parkinson's have bleeding gums or leaking bladders. The fortunate ones are those who only have difficulty climbing staircases, climbing into a bathtub, or not hearing what the clown sitting alongside is shouting into their deaf ears Eighty-five-year-olds have been warned: They are going to suffer socially unless they get dental implants and canes that can do their walking for them. Hospices don't have as much built-in gloom and certainly not as much profit potential.

Every day brings commercials for Brilinta, Symbicott, Chantix, Epcluse, Cosentix, Dupixent, Eliquis, Embrel, Humira, Mayvret, Ozemprice, Olissa, Otezia, Reticare, Systane, Theraworx, Taitz, Xelianz, Xyza, and Xarleto. Don't ask what specific ailments they allegedly cure. Don't even bother about the ten additional ailments they will induce (not so allegedly, to judge by a quavering-voiced warning) if taken. The important thing is that after swallowing them, gray-haired people in dockers and canvas shoes couldn't be happier chopping up celery in their kitchen. And they are the survivors, those still spry enough to hang on to a glass of water to wash down their pills, capsules, and caplets. And why not smile and look wise? Their only remaining responsibility before leaving the planet is to pay for their cemetery plot so their 50-year-old children will be able to buy more iPhones.

Granted the logic of the advertisers is flawless. If Saturday morning on cartoon shows is the ideal time for pitching fatally sugared cereals and sodas to children, weekday afternoons were invented so that the retired, the homebound, and the temporarily bed-ridden could be exposed to the wonders of any product with an x or z in it that could --- but not always --- cause uncontrolled vertigo, diarrhea, or giggling so better check with a doctor before turning uncontrolled dead.

All that is the explicit part of the message. But stuffed into it are extras like the cotton wads in a pill bottle. For one thing, the happy addicts are shown almost always in a home setting --- the kind of home that has a TV set offering all-day access to medicine commercials before, during, and after hacking up the celery in the kitchen. If they are ever shown outdoors, it is as they fast-walk on some private property that may be because they are exercising to stay healthy or because they are trespassing on private property. But the much more penetrating message is its seriality: It will be shown afternoon after afternoon at the identical time until the viewer has indeed crossed Jordan to no longer be all that distant from Quincy. Nobody said Reality TV couldn't also be Interactive TV.

Just a coincidence that I haven't sensed those crepuscular shadows of age since I stopped watching afternoon television?

Editor's Desk: Borders Edition

by Kyle Dase

This year marks the careful editing and curation of a dozen issues by the Fieldstone Review and we have brought together a special collection that I hope readers will find both timely and entertaining. There are so many people without whom this journal would not be possible: as always, this issue benefits greatly from the meticulous gaze of Jillian Baker as our copy editor. Our web editors, Tristan Taylor and Adam Vazquez, have brought their special charm to the (digital) pages of this edition and it shows. To Ian Moy, Shane Farris, and Sarah Dorward, our Creative Nonfiction, Fiction, and Poetry editors respectively, I can only say thank you, thank you, thank you for carrying out what can so often be the difficult and (now only almost) thankless work of mediating between contributors and review readers to separate the wheat from the chaff and bring home an abundance of writing to the project.

And, of course, a very special thanks to all of our readers in every category for your hard work in evaluating the many submissions we received this year. Your rigour and dedication provide our editors with valuable insight as they make difficult decisions.

Borders is this issue's theme and our writers chose to interpret the word in different ways. From "Hidden Messages," which confronts us with the humanity of refugees while bringing a certain warmth into the issue, to "Grandma Died Today," the tale of two brothers transitioning their way across borders literally and metaphorically, the theme has brought us an intriguing mix of perspectives.

This issue we have been graced with the creative nonfiction of Benn Ward and Donald Dewey; the fiction of Peter Freeman, Samidha Kalia, and Pamela Hensley; and the poetry of Miles Knecht, DJ Tyrer, Nancy Cook, gillian harding-russell, Nigel Ford, and Atar Hadari. I would like to thank each of these contributors for sharing their work with us and allowing the FSR team to curate its representation to the wider public. It takes a tremendous amount of courage to share one's creative work and we appreciate you placing your trust in us!

Finally, I am happy to announce our first ever Fieldstone Review Literary Prize of $100 goes to Peter Freeman for his short story, "Hidden Message"! Good writing deserves recognition and I hope the tradition of rewarding talented authors will grow and continue within this review.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work on this journal with so many wonderfully hard-working and talented people as its EIC. I know that I leave it in the best of hands with its incoming team, and cannot wait to see the work that FSR will continue to put out.

CONTRIBUTORS

Our Contributors

all a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

a

Genevieve Allaire is a scientist in southern New Mexico, where she resides in the company of the desert plants she loves the most. She holds a B.S. in Plant Science from the University of Delaware and a M.Sc. in Plant & Environmental Science from New Mexico State University. Originally from the northeastern United States, she has worked as a botanist in the private, public, and federal sectors throughout her native country.

Synesthete: Reality as a Scientific Quandary

Alfredo Salvatore Arcilesi born in Toronto, Canada, spent a decade penning an eclectic bibliography of award-winning short and feature-length screenplays, before transitioning into the world of prose. His work oftentimes explores the lives of everyday people who find themselves trapped in the complex labyrinth of physical, mental, and emotional illness and isolation, self-doubt and self-reflection, and must find a way—*if any*—to confront themselves and the world around them, in real and surreal settings. Currently, several of his short fiction pieces are enjoying stays in multiple publications.

Plastic Breath

b

Elizabeth Anne Barbaza-Cousineau–I'm an award winning multi-media artist (BFA, AOCA, and Post Grad AOCA), poet, fiction and non-fiction multi-genre writer. I have been writing poetry, short stories and articles for different Canadian publications over the years, am the main writer for the Simcoe County Steampunk Society Annual Zine *What in the World is Steampunk*, and have recently expanded into the international market with my first submission to be published by*Fox Hollow*.

Reliance on Reliable Plastics

Bertrand Bickersteth writes and researches on Alberta's black history. His poetry has appeared in Kola, Freefall, and the anthology, *The Great Black North: Contemporary African Canadian Poetry*. He was born in Sierra Leone, educated in the UK, resident in the US, but raised all over Alberta. He currently teaches Communications at Olds College and is editing an anthology of black literature from Alberta.

Accidental Agriculture

Bethany F. Brengan is a freelance writer and editor who splits her time between the US Olympic Peninsula and the internet. Her poetry has appeared in *After Happy Hour Review*, *Channel*, *The Gordon Square Review*, *The 2015 Poet's Market*, and *CV2: The Canadian Journal of Poetry and Critical Writing*. She can be found at Essays No One Asked For.

Afterword Doppelgänger

Jessie Brown is the author of two short collections, *What We Don't Know We Know* (Finishing Line Press) and *Lucky* (Anabiosis Press). Her poems and translations have appeared in numerous local and national journals, including venues like *The Comstock Review*, *New Madrid*, *Minerva Rising*, *Full Bleed*, and the *American Poetry Review*. She lives in Massachusetts, where she leads poetry workshops both independently and in schools and communities throughout the Boston area (www.JessieBrown.net).

Sit Back, Relax

Michelle Brown is again writing poetry, essays, and creative nonfiction after a detour into law and treaty negotiations. Her work has been heard on CBC Radio1 and she has performed at The Flame in both Vancouver and Victoria. She was long listed for the 2015 *PRISM International* creative nonfiction competition and received an Honourable Mention in the Canadian Authors Association Victoria 2016 Flash Fiction contest. Her website www.skyblanket.ca features photo essays written while she was in South America and Turkey. She is working on a memoir, *Coming Out Sane*, about living with PTSD. She is Cree from the Métis Nation.

The House on Strathnaver Avenue

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Diane Callahan strives to capture her sliver of the universe through writing fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. As a developmental editor and ghostplotter, she spends her days shaping stories. Her YouTube channel, Quotidian Writer, provides practical tips for aspiring authors. You can read her work in *Translunar Travelers Lounge*, *Short Édition*, *Riddled with Arrows*, *Rust+Moth*, and *The Sunlight Press*, among others.

Prelude and Fugue

Yuan Changming published monographs on translation before leaving his native country. With a PhD in English from the University of Saskatchewan, Yuan currently edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver. Credits include ten Pushcart nominations & publications in *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry* (2008-17) &BestNewPoemsOnline, among nearly 1,600 others across 43 countries.

Pondering over Plasticity

Rafael Chidiac is an American Lebanese who lives in Luxembourg. He enjoys poetry over all other forms of expression and has recently gained the courage to start sending poems to an audience beyond himself. He likes to write about big emotions and small things.

Lonely Journey

Hejsa Christensen completed her MFA in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia (2016) and was awarded the *2014 Random House/Hazlitt Award in Creative Writing*. She has written features for *Canoe and Kayak* and *Outpost* magazines.

On Family

Nancy Cook is a U.S. writer and lives 475 kilometers from the Canadian border. She runs the "Witness Project," a series of community writing workshops designed to enable creative work by underrepresented voices. Nancy has just returned from Northern Ireland where she offered arts programs for people affected by the sectarian conflict known as "The Troubles." Her newest work can be found in *Existere*, *The Tangerine*, and *Litbreak*.

Myself and her Majesty's Government

Kym Cunningham received her MFA from San Jose State University with emphases in creative nonfiction and poetry. She acted as the lead Nonfiction Editor of *Reed Magazine*, the oldest literary magazine West of the Mississippi. She received the Ida Fay Sachs Ludwig Memorial Scholarship, the Academy of American Poets Prize, MARY's Editor's Prize, and two Pushcart Prize nominations for outstanding achievement in her writing. Her writing has been published in more than a dozen literary journals and two anthologies. Her first poetry chapbook was published in February of 2018.

In Sheep's Clothing

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Holly Day has taught writing classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minnesota since 2000. Her published books include *Music Theory for Dummies*, *Music Composition for Dummies*, *Guitar All-in-One for Dummies*, *Piano All-in-One for Dummies*, *Walking Twin Cities*, *Insider's Guide to the Twin Cities*, *Nordeast Minneapolis: A History*, and *The Book Of*, while her poetry has recently appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *SLAB*, and *Gargoyle*. Her newest poetry book, *Ugly Girl*, just came out from Shoe Music Press.

The Bird

Katherine DeCoste is a queer white settler currently pursuing their MA in English on the stolen territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən, Esquimalt, Songhees, and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. Their work has appeared in *Plenitude Magazine*, *Grain Magazine*, *The Antigonish Review*, and elsewhere.

Benediction
Cyclone, almost
after Fiona Apple

Donald Dewey

Past Prime Time

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, NH. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry, published in 2021, is *Mist in Their Eyes*. He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

Living in a Bubble

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Catherine Edmunds is a writer, artist, and fiddle player with an award-nominated Irish folk/rock band. Her published works include two poetry collections, five novels, and a Holocaust memoir, as well as numerous short stories and poems in journals such as *Aesthetica*, *Crannóg*, and *Ambit*. She has been nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize, shortlisted in the Bridport Prize four times, and was the 2020 winner of the Robert Graves Poetry Prize. Catherine is married and lives in historic Bishop Auckland, in the foothills of the Pennines in the north of England.

Roofer

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Donna Faulker (née Miller) drinks tea without sugar, mochas with marshmallows, and vodka and orange juice in a tall glass with no ice. Donna has two dogs, a one-eyed cat, and three teenagers. She lives in New Zealand with her husband, Victor. Donna has had poetry published in *fws: Journal of Literature & Art*, *Havik: The Las Positas College Journal of Arts and Literature*, *Tarot Poetry Journal New Zealand*, *Songs of Eretz Poetry Review* and forthcoming in *Lemon Spouting Journal of Visual Art and Literature*.

Riding the Wild Nor'wester

Jenny Flores is a writer from Mississippi. She is currently working towards her MFA in Creative Writing. Her writing has appeared in multiple blogs and magazines, including *GEEZ*, *Writer's Market*, and *Down in the Dirt*.

I Saw Your Mother Running Naked Through Mayfield Park

Nigel Ford is English, lives in Sweden and works as a writer, dramatist, visual artist, journalist, curator and translator. Recent publications include a short story in *The Fortnightly Magazine* (UK) and poems in *Orbis* (UK).

It's a Life Like Any Other
Down Mines of Dreams
A Waste of Beauty Chimed

Carol J Forrester published her debut poetry collection, *It's All in the Blood*, in 2019. Her work focuses on the Shropshire countryside where she grew up, mythology, feminism, and history. She's been featured on *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Ink Pantry*, and *Eyes & Words*, though her parents would say her greatest literary achievement was being shortlisted in a poetry competition by The Farmer's Weekly. She now lives in Crewe with her husband, and their pond of koi.

Credit Card Gal

Peter Freeman lives on Salt Spring Island on the west coast of Canada. He writes nonfiction and fictional novels, screen and stage plays, short stories, magazine articles, children stories, and poetry. Peter has been shortlisted for the short story, "In the Waiting Room", and a finalist for a poem, both of which were published in the Best of 2018 Adelaide Literary Award Anthology. Peter's nonfiction book, *Cape Horn Birthday: Record-Breaking Solo Non-Stop Circumnavigation*, is published by Seaworthy Publications Inc. of Florida, and his book of fifty poems, *Growth*, is published by Adelaide Books, New York.

Hidden Message

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M. Brett Gaffney holds an MFA in Poetry from Southern Illinois University. Her chapbook *Feeding the Dead* (Porkbelly Press) was nominated for a 2019 Elgin Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association. She works as co-editor of *Gingerbread House Literary Magazine* and writes about scary stuff on her blog at No Outlet Horror Reviews.

Bitten

Megan Gannett is a queer settler writer from Edmonton. Her work has appeared in *The Antigonish Review*, *CV2*, *The Goose*, and elsewhere. She has an MA from the University of Alberta.

How Our Calls Cross the Ocean

Myrna Garanis is an Edmonton poet/essayist. Her essay "All Tied Up" was recently shortlisted for the Edna Staebler personal essay contest and is published in *The New Quarterly*, Spring 2017.

Hemingway's Beard

Elder Gideon holds an MFA in poetry, keeps a decades-long iconography practice, teaches high school English to underrepresented students, and learns as a disciple of a Gnostic master Tau Malachi, with whom he co-authored *Gnosis of Guadalupe* (EPS Press, 2017). His creative concerns orbit divinity in materiality. This selection (in addition to twelve already published) come from his first manuscript *Aegis of Waves*, for which he's seeking a publisher.

Digital Narcosis

Laura Glaves (RN, BSN, BFA) is an award-winning artist and emerging poet. Her poetry has been published in *Open Door Poetry Magazine* and has been accepted for publication in *Pure Slush Books Lifespan Anthology*. Her nursing career spanned thirty years and eight specialties. Her publications include "Supporting Emotional Regulation and Emotional Availability through Home Visitation" in *Zero to Three* and "Managing Asthma" in *AAACN Viewpoint*. She enjoys writing poetry about the human experience.

Sitting in the Fog

Trudy Grienauer is a writer and translator based in Edmonton, Alberta. Recently, she had a poem published on Edmonton transit buses and another performed by a local choir. She is a regular contributor to readings and anthologies of the Edmonton Stroll of Poets and is currently working on a longer manuscript about the history of her Austrian grandparents.

The Lab Coat

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Atar Hadari's *Songs from Bialik: Selected Poems of H. N. Bialik* (Syracuse University Press) was a finalist for the American Literary Translators' Association Award, and his debut collection, *Rembrandt's Bible*, was published by Indigo Dreams in 2013. His Pen Translates award winning *Lives of the Dead: Collected Poems of Hanoch Levin* is out from Arc Publications. He translates a verse bible column for *MOSAIC* magazine.

Winnie

gillian harding-russell is a poet, freelance writer, reviewer and editor and has been a mentor and juror. She received an MA in English Literature from McGill and a Ph.D. from the University of Saskatchewan. She has four poetry collections, most recently *IN ANOTHER AIR* (Radiant Press, 2018) which was shortlisted for a Saskatchewan Book Award. In 2015, "PROUD MEN DO NOT LISTEN" was shortlisted for *Exile*'s Gwendolyn MacEwen chapbook award, and in 2016, "MAKING SENSE" was chosen as best suite in the same competition. Poems have recently appeared in *Heartwood* edited by Lesley Strutt (LCP publication, 2018) and will soon appear in *Resistance: an anthology of sexual abuse*, edited by Sue Goyette (Coteau). Poems have recently come out in *The Nashwaak Review*, *The Society*, and *Exile* vol. 42, issue 1, and a couple will appear in *Transition* magazine soon.

Two Skeletons in a Cave in France

Shauna Eveleigh Harris is an emerging writer from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. She graduated from the University of Regina in 2007 and has been working as a trauma therapist in northern Indigenous communities. Her poems have appeared in *Vintage Gypsy* magazine and *The Society*.

Milk Soup

Randel McCraw Helms was, until his retirement, professor of English at Arizona State University. Making poems is his vocation. His work has recently appeared in such venues as *Coe Review*, *Avis*, *Sicklit*, *Pilgrim*, and *TXTOBJX*.

Potion Against Heart-Ache

Pamela Hensley is a Montreal-based writer whose fiction has appeared online and in journals including *The Dalhousie Review*, *EVENT Magazine*, *Litro*, *Montreal Writes* and the *Bristol Short Story Prize Anthology (vol. 11)*. She is currently at work on a novel inspired by the life of photographer Fred Herzog.

Not from Here

Debbie Okun Hill was born/raised on the prairies but now gardens words full-time in rural southwestern Ontario. She is a member of the League of Canadian Poets with over 380 of her poems published in over 135 publications/e-zines including *Descant*, *Existere*, *The Windsor Review*, *Vallum*, and *Other Voices*. *Tarnished Trophies* (Black Moss Press, 2014) is her first trade publication. Follow her blog: *Kites Without Strings*.

Her Resistance
Hidden Series of Lies

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Jeffrey Ihlenfeldt lives, writes, and teaches in Lancaster, PA. His fiction and creative nonfiction have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Ascent*, *Story Quarterly*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Solstice Literary Magazine*, *Cumberland River Review*, *Adirondack Review*, and *Quiddity*. Jeffrey is a two-time finalist for the Fulton Prize in Short Fiction and has been nominated for Best of the Net. A featured writer at the Lancaster Book Festival and the Greater Reading Literary Festival, he has been a writer-in-residence at Ledig House International Writer's Colony and The Artists' Enclave at I-Park, among others. He holds an MFA from Goddard College.

Uncle Jack and Sunfall Sam

I.B. (Bunny) Iskov is the Founder of The Ontario Poetry Society, www.theontariopoetrysociety.ca. In 2009, Bunny was the recipient of the *R.A.V.E. Award* (Recognizing Arts Vaughan Excellence) in recognition of outstanding contribution to the cultural landscape of the City of Vaughan as Art Educator / Mentor in the Literary Arts discipline. In 2017, Bunny received the Absolutely Fabulous Woman Award for women over 40, for her contribution to the literary arts in the Golden Horseshoe. Her poetry has been published in several literary journals and anthologies and she has won a few poetry contest prizes. Most recently, Bunny had one of her poems published in TAMARACKS, Canadian Poetry For The 21st Century, Lummox Press, James Deahl Editor.

Plastic Passions

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Nolan Janssens was born in Santiago, Chile; took his first steps in Antwerp, Belgium, and grew up in British Columbia, Canada. He was born without borders; thinking outside the box is part of his make-up.

Painting on Waves

Sarah Jensen is a writer and PhD candidate living in Toronto. She also teaches a creative writing class at York University, where she and approximately 3000 other union members were on strike. As an exercise she hopes to share with her students when the strike ends, she has been making strike-related art every day of the labour disruption. This is the university's second strike in three years.

a strike, a show of hands

Denver Jermyn lives and writes in Toronto, ON. His poetry has previously appeared in *Vallum*, *ity'Words*, *parenthetical*, *The Cadaverine*, and others. He was shortlisted for the 2017 Eden Mills Writers' Festival Literary Contest and received first honourable mention in the 2012 Vallum Award for Poetry.

Faintly Falling

Zak Jones is an American expatriate poet living and writing in Canada. His poems have appeared in *Hart House Review*, *Half a Grapefruit Magazine*, *Milkweed Zine*, and *Palimpsest: Yale's Graduate and Literary Arts Magazine*, among others. Zak is a graduate student at the University of Toronto where his creative work intertwines with his research to explore the particular traumas abound within the Southern United States.

Kiremit Caddesi, Balat, Istanbul: June 2015

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Samidha Kalia is a literature student. Most of her stories deal with time and memory. Her interests lie in analyzing Neil Gaiman's work, writing reviews for publishing houses, re-writing the myth of women in folklore and fairy tales, along with eating good food and being a chai addict.

Conversations in Rhetoric

Saskia Layden Kaya is from New York and after trying Brazil, Madrid, Italy, Amsterdam, and Denmark, she now lives in Fethiye, Turkey. She is currently compiling poems and essays written over the span of 20 years for a full-length memoir. Her published work can be found in *Visible Magazine*, *Berlin Art Parasites*, and The Rising Phoenix Review.

Atlantic Oceans of Food and Flesh

Zach Klebaner is a filmmaker, poet, and comedian who holds a B.A. in Film from Hofstra University. While he was a student, he co-founded the theater troupe Ambiguity, hosted an open mic frequented by various artists, and wrote for the student-run comedy program *Thursday Nite Live*. His poetry has appeared in *Crossways Literary Magazine*, *Wax Poetry and Art*, and *Verse-Virtual*, and he was the third-prize recipient of the 2019 *Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest*.

American Ways

Miles Knecht was born and raised in New York City. He is a recent graduate of Haverford College, where he studied English literature with a focus on contemporary fantasy. As a life-long lover of the mysterious and unexplained, flowers, and overthinking things, he writes plenty of poetry about all three.

The Devil's Rope

Samir Knego is a writer and poet with work in *Living Artists Magazine*, *To Be Young (And Disabled)*, *Claw & Blossom*, and elsewhere. He's on the editorial team at *Decolonial Passage* and lives in North Carolina with a bright green wheelchair and a little black dog. Find him on Twitter and Instagram @SamirKnego or at A Very Decaf Person.

Exit
or dancing, for what it's worth
and it's not about not being disabled

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Naomi Lakritz lives in Calgary and is a former columnist and editorial writer at the *Calgary Herald*. Her work has also been published in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, and other Canadian papers.

Mildred Mendelson

Wendy Lane lives in Minnesota with her spouse Judith and their Scotty dog Gus. She is retired from a successful career as a visual artist, and human resources professional in arts and academia. Wendy is writing her memoir as a collection of creative nonfiction essays, but is as yet unpublished. In addition to writing, Wendy enjoys reading, plein-air landscape painting, and traveling.

Wendy received her BA degree in arts administration, an MFA in painting, and is a certified life coach. She takes writing courses through The Loft Literary Center in Minnesota, and meets every other week with her writing group.

Clearwater Lodge on the Gunflint Trail, a Trip Journal

Rachel Laverdiere writes and teaches in Saskatoon. She has worked as a language teacher in South Korea, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. Read Rachel's short fiction and creative nonfiction in the most recent issues of *Filling Station*, *FreeFall*, *Dime Show Review*, and *Soliloquies Anthology*. You can follow her on Twitter @r_laverdiere or learn more about her at www.rachellaverdiere.com.

Orange Soda Paradise

Kurt Luchs (kurtluchs.com) has poems published or forthcoming in *Plume Poetry Journal*, *The Bitter Oleander*, and *London Grip*. He won the 2019 *Atlanta Review* International Poetry Contest and has written humor for *The New Yorker*, *The Onion*, and *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*. His books include a humor collection, *It's Funny Until Someone Loses an Eye (Then It's Really Funny)*, and a poetry chapbook, *One of These Things Is Not Like the Other*. His first full-length poetry collection, *Falling in the Direction of Up*, is forthcoming from Sagging Meniscus Press.

Do You Know These 10 Common Warning Signs of Depression

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Kyra MacFarlane is a young poet and fiction writer originally from Spiritwood, Saskatchewan. Two of her poems are to be published in Saskatoon publications - *isms* zine, and the *Tonight It's Poetry* anthology,*Poetry All Over the Floor, vol. 1*. She is currently pursuing an English degree at the University of Saskatchewan. Her interests include music (both playing and listening to it), reading, writing, and cuddling with her dogs. MacFarlane is a feminist, volunteering at the University of Saskatchewan's *USSU* Women's Centre. You can find her at music venues, feminist rallies, and the library. MacFarlane also operates "Timely Tinnitus," a blog where she posts music reviews.

Anxious Moon

Lesley Machon is a junior high language arts teacher. She devotes herself the lifelong task of question-asking, querying assumptions, and empowering young minds to engage courageously with curiosity. A lover of colourful skies, fusion food, and contradictory adverb/adjective arrangements like "comically serious," and "audaciously afraid," she is known to many as an avid learner and teacher alike.

A Eulogy to Honour the Death of Original Thinking, Laid to Rest by the Educational System

Tanasha Martin was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Published works include *The Pine Hills Review's: Unicorns Special* ("Hope for Flint"), The Writing Journey's, *Reasons for Hope* ("Peer", "Digital Footprint", and "Once More, With Feeling"), *Human: An Exploration of What it Means* (online: "Touched", "Personal Bubble", and "All Smiles"), and *Near Myths* ("A Tale with No Fairies", "The Scant Structure Slayers", and "Everglow"). Additional works can be found at tanashamartinwrites.wordpress.com

Paper or Plastic

Allison McFarland writes novel(la)s. She pursues an MFA in Writing at the University of Saskatchewan. Her work has appeared in *filling station Magazine*, *Boston Accent Lit*, *Hooligan Magazine*, *Wild Magazine*, *In Medias Res*, and *FOUND*, the second chapbook by Malform Press. Loft on 8th published her chapbook, *Marianne's Daughters*, in March 2018. She holds a BA (hons) in Law and Society and a BA (hons) in English with a concentration in Creative Writing, both from the University of Calgary. She is the co-founder and co-editor of the magazine antilang.

Aesthetician

Douglas W. Milliken is the author of the novel *To Sleep as Animals* and several chapbooks, most recently the collection *Cream River* and the forthcoming pocket-sized edition *One Thousand Owls Behind Your Chest*. His stories have been honored by the Maine Literary Awards, the Pushcart Prize, and *Glimmer Train*, and have been published in *Slice*, *The Collagist*, and *The Believer*, among others. His website is www.douglaswmilliken.com.

Lonesome Jubilee

Valerie Mills-Milde lives, works and writes in London, Ontario. She is the author of the novel *After Drowning*, (Inanna Publications and Education) which won the 2017 Silver Ippy (Independent Publisher Books Award) for Contemporary Fiction. Her short fiction has appeared in numerous literary journals across the country. A collection of these pieces was short-listed for the Black Lawrence Book Award. *The Land's Long Reach* (Inanna Publications, 2018), is her second novel.

Triptych of Crayon Man on Tight Rope

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Dorothy Neagle is a Kentuckian who lives and writes in New York. She has studied writing most recently at the Unterberg Poetry Center, and her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Dialogist*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Glass Mountain*, and more. Her nonfiction has appeared in *Memoirist*, *The Nastona*, and *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*. You can find her on instagram @aentlencesaremyface.

Girl Call

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Mikkilynn Olmsted writes nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. Her writing explores women and their complex relationships with self, family, and women. When not writing, she snow sports. Mikkilynn teaches writing and folklore at Metropolitan State University of Denver in Colorado, USA. Her writing has appeared in *not enough night*, *High Grade*, *Jephyrus*, *Hautlief Review*, and other journals.

Skiing in Jeans

Nicholas Olson is the author of *The Adirondack Haystack Still Floats*, a collection of short stories studying the North American working-class, released in 2014. Olson curates his own series of essays at www.balloofrice.com. He lives in Regina, Saskatchewan on Treaty 4 Land.

Happy 40th Jen

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Timothy Parrish is a Pushcart Prize-nominated writer and critic living somewhere in California and teaching most usually at UC Davis. Parrish's recent short fiction has appeared in *Rattler*, *Ploughshares*, *Equinox*, *Vestal Review*, *Sonic Boom*, and *Blood and Bourbon*.

Three Women, Three Women Blues

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Meryl Reinhart lives in South Orange County, CA. She graduated from California State University, Fullerton with two BAs in Liberal Studies and American Studies, with a minor in Elementary Education. She works as an after-school teacher with second graders, but is pursuing a career in writing. On the surface, her biography looks spick and span but underneath are signs of struggle. Writing is her outlet, so she has decided to take a dark turn in the mental well-being category.

Match Box

Melanie Reitzel is a retired RN lactation specialist who reminded her patients how to be mammals. She received her MFA from San Francisco State University. Her poetry, creative non-fiction and fiction have been published in various anthologies and in journals including *Poet Lore*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Tulane Review*, *Popshot Magazine* and *North American Poetry Review* (which nominated one of her prose poems for a Pushcart Prize).

SURVIVAL MANUAL FOR A MEMBER OF THE ECCLESIA: BILLINGS, MONTANA, 1969–71

Kate Rogers was shortlisted for the *2017 Montreal International Poetry Prize*. She has work forthcoming in *Catfeminea, the Great (Coliichan)*. Her poems have appeared in *Twin Cities Cinema (Hong Kong–Singapore)*; *Juniper*; *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*; *The Guardian*; *Asia Literary Review*, *The Goose: a Journal of Arts, Environment and Culture* and other publications. *Out of Place*, Kate's latest poetry collection, is reviewed here.

That Cunning Woman, Cutty Sark

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Gianna Sannipoli's poetry has been published in *The Cardiff Review*, *London Grip*, *The Seattle Star*, *Mason Street*, *The Wild Word*, *Panoply*, *One Sentence Poems*, *Dodging the Rain*, *Red Coyote*, *Otis Nebula*, and Gnashing Teeth Publishing's anthology, *Love Notes You'll Never Read*. She is the Poetry Editor for *San Antonio Review*.

Mysostis in February

John Whitney Steele is a psychologist, yoga teacher, assistant editor of *Think: A Journal of Poetry, Fiction and Essays*, and graduate of the MFA Poetry Program at Western Colorado University. His chapbook, *The Stones Keep Watch*, is to be launched by Kelsay Books in the fall of 2021. A Pushcart Prize nominee, his poetry has recently appeared in *The Lyric*, *The Orchards*, and *Road Not Taken*. Born in Toronto, ON, and raised among the pines and silver birches of Foot's Bay, ON, John lives in Boulder, CO where he often encounters his muse while hiking in the mountains. Website: John Whitney Steele.

Lord of Dance

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Nathan TeBokkel is a PhD student at the University of British Columbia, where he studies poet-farmers and the intersections of agriculture and aesthetics, drawing on his background in genetics, melon farming, and food safety audits. He has published articles in *Word Hoard*, *PostScriptum*, and *The Apollonian*, has a book chapter and a review in press, and has disseminated poems in *Propaganda* and a chapbook held together by dental floss.

Ray's Rocket

D.J. Tyner is the person behind Atlantean Publishing, was placed second in the 2015 Data Dump Award for Genre Poetry, and has been published in issues of *Amulet*, *California Quarterly*, *Cerillon*, *The Dawnthreader*, *Haiku Journal*, *The Pen*, and *Tigerlark*, and online at *Atlas Poetica*, *Bindweed*, *Poetry Pacific*, and *Scarlet Leaf Review*, as well as releasing several chapbooks, including the critically acclaimed *Our Story*. D.J. Tyner's website is at https://djtyner.blogspot.co.uk/. The Atlantean Publishing website is at https://atlanteanpublishing.wordpress.com/.

New Nomads

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Carter Vance Carter Vance is a writer and poet originally from Cobourg, Ontario, Canada, currently residing in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. His work has appeared in such publications as *The Smart Set*, *Contemporary Verse 2 and A Midwestern Review*, amongst others. He was previously a Harrison Middleton University Ideas Fellow. His latest collection of poems, *Places to Be*, is currently available from Moonstone Arts Press.

Blood Loss

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Benn Ward is a journalist, a writer, and an Associate Editor of the *London Reader*. He curated the issues "Words from Within" on mental health stories and "Wish You Were Here" on travel writing. Among other publications, his writing has appeared in *Southwinds*, the *Global Intelligence*, and occasionally the *London Reader*. He is working on his second degree in creative writing at the University of New Brunswick and lives part-time between Fredericton, NB and London, England. You can find him on twitter @BennWardWrites.

New Nomads

Henry Matthew Ward (Matt) is a Tennessee native with a BS degree from Middle Tennessee State University and an MA from Ohio State University. He retired from teaching and real estate development in 2005, leaving time for his hobbies of classical music and writing. He and his wife live in Murfreesboro, TN.

There is a Place

Lorraine Whelan is a Canadian writer and visual artist based in Ireland. Her prose, poetry, and art criticism have appeared in Ireland, Canada, USA, Luxembourg, and online. Her artwork is included in public, private, and corporate collections in Ireland, USA, Canada, UK, Belgium, and Australia.

If I Were a Tree

Louise Willford lives in Yorkshire, UK. Her poetry and short stories have been widely published, most recently in *Bandit*, *Pushing Out the Boat*, *Makarelle*, and *English Review*. In 2020, she won First Prize in the *Arts Quarterly Short Story Competition* and the Merefest Poetry Competition and was awarded a MA in Creative Writing (Distinction). She is working on a fantasy novel.

Clover

James W. Wood's recent work has appeared in *Vellum*, *PRISM International*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *Stand (USA)*, *The North (UK)* and *The Interpreter's House (USA)*. He is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *The Emigrant's Farewell* (The High Window Press, Leeds, UK, 2016) and grew up in Canada, becoming a citizen in 1981. He now lives in the Gulf Islands off the coast of British Columbia with his wife, son and dog.

Apotropaic

Amos Jasper Wright IV is native to the dirt of Birmingham, Alabama, but has called Alabama, Massachusetts and Louisiana home. He holds a master's degree in English and creative writing from the University of Alabama, Birmingham, and a master's degree in urban planning from Tufts University. He lives and works in New Orleans. His fiction and poems have appeared in *Arcadia*, *Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Clarion*, *Folio*, *Grain Magazine*, *Gravel*, *The Hollins Critic*, *Interim*, *New Ohio Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Off the Coast*, *Pale Horse Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Salamander*, *Tecenda Literary Magazine*, *Union Station Magazine*, *Yes*, *Poetry*, and *Zouch*. His debut short story collection, *Nobody Knows How It Got This Good*, was the recipient of the Tartt First Fiction Award from Livingston Press. His author website is available at www.amosjasperwright.com.

The Lens Grinder

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