



THE
FIELDSTONE
REVIEW

ISSUE 2, 2007



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Editors' Note

Holly Luhning and Deborah Leiter

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

During our selection process, we try to include both emerging and established authors and we do not put weight on where authors reside. At the same time, we're pleased that many of our authors are from Saskatchewan this year. For example, we are delighted to include a non-fiction piece by Governor General's award winner Robert Calder, and to be the first journal to publish work by emerging poet Meagan Wohlburg. We're proud to place these authors next to some voices from around the world.

As a journal that's delivered online, we seek to publish traditional literary works next to those that push the boundaries by leveraging hypertext and other qualities that are unique to this medium. We will strive to include more of these innovations as the journal evolves.

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

Deborah Leiter, 2006-2007 Managing Editor

Holly Luhning, 2006-2007 Editor-in-Chief

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POETRY
&
PROSE



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Of What I Have Always Known

Triny Finlay

For my next trick I will devastate all insects

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

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

And the cosmic range of those in flight

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

paper

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

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

I will need a volunteer

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Epithalamion 2

Christina Mengert

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

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

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Sutemi Waza

Yi-Mei Tsiang

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

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

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

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

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

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Submerging

Meagan Wohlberg

As you wade out
you leave no wave or ripple;

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

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

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

somewhere else.

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Acoustic Phonons

Mari-Lou Rowley

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

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James Alan Fox, "The Fieldstone Review," 2011

James Alan Fox, "The Fieldstone Review," 2011

The structure came flying through the emergency room doors, glided...
The structure came flying through the emergency room doors, glided...
The structure came flying through the emergency room doors, glided...

Randy phoned the stop home, have a couple of beer and watch t. It was Monday...
Randy phoned the stop home, have a couple of beer and watch t. It was Monday...
Randy phoned the stop home, have a couple of beer and watch t. It was Monday...

She was high like, but an unusual reaction to her, had she possibly drunk some...
She was high like, but an unusual reaction to her, had she possibly drunk some...
She was high like, but an unusual reaction to her, had she possibly drunk some...

Valerie had been over her head since the day. She'd been, almost, some kind of...
Valerie had been over her head since the day. She'd been, almost, some kind of...
Valerie had been over her head since the day. She'd been, almost, some kind of...

"Valerie, what the hell, did you do stop away from you to the floor Brandon...
"Valerie, what the hell, did you do stop away from you to the floor Brandon...
"Valerie, what the hell, did you do stop away from you to the floor Brandon...

The main reason of the house over all and Randy was able to push back of his...
The main reason of the house over all and Randy was able to push back of his...
The main reason of the house over all and Randy was able to push back of his...

Valerie laughed and struggled to against her brother's chest. She obviously had...
Valerie laughed and struggled to against her brother's chest. She obviously had...
Valerie laughed and struggled to against her brother's chest. She obviously had...

"That's not a girl, huh. It's a friendly girl." Valerie giggled and behind Randy's...
"That's not a girl, huh. It's a friendly girl." Valerie giggled and behind Randy's...
"That's not a girl, huh. It's a friendly girl." Valerie giggled and behind Randy's...

Randy hung up out of the chair, pushing Valerie off his lap and onto the floor...
Randy hung up out of the chair, pushing Valerie off his lap and onto the floor...
Randy hung up out of the chair, pushing Valerie off his lap and onto the floor...

"James Christ, Valerie! It's Randy. Your brother. What the hell have you been...
"James Christ, Valerie! It's Randy. Your brother. What the hell have you been...
"James Christ, Valerie! It's Randy. Your brother. What the hell have you been...

Valerie was partially sitting, partially lying on the floor, picking at the buttons of...
Valerie was partially sitting, partially lying on the floor, picking at the buttons of...
Valerie was partially sitting, partially lying on the floor, picking at the buttons of...

Randy looked at her and noticed the red of her face from the alcohol. She...
Randy looked at her and noticed the red of her face from the alcohol. She...
Randy looked at her and noticed the red of her face from the alcohol. She...

Valerie was sitting in her pocket. She pulled out a huge wad of cash and placed it...
Valerie was sitting in her pocket. She pulled out a huge wad of cash and placed it...
Valerie was sitting in her pocket. She pulled out a huge wad of cash and placed it...

"Where the hell did you get that? There must be a thousand bucks here!" said Randy...
"Where the hell did you get that? There must be a thousand bucks here!" said Randy...
"Where the hell did you get that? There must be a thousand bucks here!" said Randy...

"Three guys. Three dudes, guys." responded Valerie. They think of them Valerie...
"Three guys. Three dudes, guys." responded Valerie. They think of them Valerie...
"Three guys. Three dudes, guys." responded Valerie. They think of them Valerie...

"What got them there?" Matthew Valerie. She giggled and more and more...
"What got them there?" Matthew Valerie. She giggled and more and more...
"What got them there?" Matthew Valerie. She giggled and more and more...

"Who got 'em back home?" Randy asked. His comment was met with his heavy...
"Who got 'em back home?" Randy asked. His comment was met with his heavy...
"Who got 'em back home?" Randy asked. His comment was met with his heavy...

"Who, Val, where did you take the money?" Randy grabbed his sister's shoulders...
"Who, Val, where did you take the money?" Randy grabbed his sister's shoulders...
"Who, Val, where did you take the money?" Randy grabbed his sister's shoulders...

Valerie was making the scene from Randy's forehead. She reached out a...
Valerie was making the scene from Randy's forehead. She reached out a...
Valerie was making the scene from Randy's forehead. She reached out a...

Plan to be honest. Out of the apartment, away from the old and the...
Plan to be honest. Out of the apartment, away from the old and the...
Plan to be honest. Out of the apartment, away from the old and the...

"I think he had her back to fill the ends of percent when they...
"I think he had her back to fill the ends of percent when they...
"I think he had her back to fill the ends of percent when they...

Randy had helped get her back on the methadone program over the past year...
Randy had helped get her back on the methadone program over the past year...
Randy had helped get her back on the methadone program over the past year...

Randy let the latticed drapes fall back against the window. Valerie was...
Randy let the latticed drapes fall back against the window. Valerie was...
Randy let the latticed drapes fall back against the window. Valerie was...

He jammed up and reached to the window as if he were at the top of...
He jammed up and reached to the window as if he were at the top of...
He jammed up and reached to the window as if he were at the top of...

There were some walking along the sidewalk. She was already turning onto the...
There were some walking along the sidewalk. She was already turning onto the...
There were some walking along the sidewalk. She was already turning onto the...

"The three guys came up from their beds to walk over. The two older guys...
"The three guys came up from their beds to walk over. The two older guys...
"The three guys came up from their beds to walk over. The two older guys...

"There's the bitch, Jack. Sleeping in the back and never looking up...
"There's the bitch, Jack. Sleeping in the back and never looking up...
"There's the bitch, Jack. Sleeping in the back and never looking up...

"Randy, Charlie." normal Jack. "You got company. A husband."
"Randy, Charlie." normal Jack. "You got company. A husband."
"Randy, Charlie." normal Jack. "You got company. A husband."

The gang looked to look to Randy. His first. Two beautiful and fifty pounds. He...
The gang looked to look to Randy. His first. Two beautiful and fifty pounds. He...
The gang looked to look to Randy. His first. Two beautiful and fifty pounds. He...

Jack was steady, his hands and the other more steady, slightly...
Jack was steady, his hands and the other more steady, slightly...
Jack was steady, his hands and the other more steady, slightly...

"There's one more outside. We don't have anything about it...
"Randy responded. He reached for the face of the three...
"Randy responded. He reached for the face of the three..."

"There's one more outside." continued Jack. "We'll just look for the...
"Randy responded. He reached for the face of the three...
"Randy responded. He reached for the face of the three..."

Randy started forward, having decided there was no way he could...
Randy started forward, having decided there was no way he could...
Randy started forward, having decided there was no way he could...

"Daddy, daddy, I want a wife."
"Randy, I want a wife, standing by his...
"Randy, I want a wife, standing by his..."

"Let's get your brother back to the bathroom. Get out of here,"...
"Let's get your brother back to the bathroom. Get out of here,"...
"Let's get your brother back to the bathroom. Get out of here..."

Charlie pulled the knife from his back pocket. He held it in front of them, waving...
"Let's get your brother back to the bathroom. Get out of here,"...
"Let's get your brother back to the bathroom. Get out of here..."

Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...

Jack was sitting against the wall, his back to the wall, his...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...

"Let's get your brother back to the bathroom. Get out of here,"...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...

"It's been forty minutes. I'm going to call it. Stop CPR."
"Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had..."

"The room looked looked around at the first phlebotomist and...
"Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had..."

"What do you think the story is here?" one of the staff members...
"Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had..."

"Oh, you know, the usual. Drug and gun wrong. Pretty violent...
"Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had..."

Chris pulled the little brother's trucking arms from around his...
"Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had..."

He wanted to return to the way he had been. He had...
"Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had...
Randy had his father's shoulder slapping to the left. He had..."



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Burnt Sienna

Paula Jane Remlinger

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

before thick black lines
divined paths for us to follow;

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

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

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

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

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

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Weaponry

Matthew Hall

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

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Still Life

Susan Stenson

A green stool.
Two pillows.

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

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

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

She squats, squints.
Checks his pockets
for change.

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

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

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Fielding Julie

Michael Spring

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

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

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

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

The easiest thing was to take her home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I said, "Are you staying awake now? Because if you are, I'll pull the curtains."

She shrugged and shook her head to clear it.

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

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

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

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

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

"No. We didn't."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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October Light

Sheri Benning

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1
Not the flute-song light of April,
of skittish creak waves or
the heart-in-throat jitter
of aspen leaves.

2
When you peel the husk back.

3
Allspice, cinnamon, unwashed hair,
cloves pinned to over-ripe oranges,
sweat of yesterday's labour.

4
Doesn't turn around though it can feel the eyes at its back.

5
Nor is it November's slag-light, the thing said
by a lover that cannot be taken back and now sits
between them broken-winged and awkward.
Not light of the thin-cough after.

6
Inward light --
viscous magma, lamp in a night window,
light of a thought you can't yet say, blood, embers
through the seams of an old wood-stove. Light that invites,
go deeper.

7
A thick-tongued drunken prophet, light
that spills long-shadows at your feet as if to slur.
It knows how to come to grips with the darkness
that is coming, but it's not going to say.

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NON-FICTION

the fieldstone review

Confessions of a Re/Deformed Academic

Robert Calder

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

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

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

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

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

In other words, for every observation made in the book, I could produce substantiating evidence from a variety of sources: letters, interviews, articles, government documents, court records, marriage certificates, wills, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and critical books. The reader thus can question some of the assertions made in the biography, but he or she cannot claim that I have not gone as much as possible to the best sources on which to base those assertions.

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

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

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

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

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

I was persuaded, and so I began the book by describing the only time I ever saw my uncle when he was back in Moose Jaw after five and a half years of war and I, at the age of four, walked over to my grandparents' house to see his one June morning. One of the earliest memories of my life, I now remembered only the outlines of the event and more of my own general response than of the external details. Taking great pains, and often much reworking and polishing, I produced an account of the experience and of my uncle's subsequent suicide, his funeral, and the effect of his death on his family.

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

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

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

Similarly, later in the book, when I was describing my grandparents receiving the telephone call telling them of my uncle's suicide, I treated a scene which I could not possibly have witnessed. I described my grandfather home on a Friday evening after a week of travelling as a salesman for the Co-op Creamery, and my grandmother waiting to hear whether she had "at" again won prizes for her bakings and hunting at the local fair. I wrote that they were still grateful that their son had returned from Europe without apparent injury and that they were wondering how his reunion with his wife in Vancouver was going. I have no proof that this is exactly how they learned of his death. I do know that this is how they spent my Friday evening in the summer in Moose Jaw during fair week, and I do know that the reassuring predictability of their peaceful and assuming lives was shattered by an entirely unexpected telephone call. My account of their experience, though fabricated from what I know of their habits and their behaviour, can be argued to convey this shattering in a very effective way.

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

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

Does the reader, then, have a right to complain that I have offered fiction disguised as fact? If not, are readers justified in complaining about James Frey's offering a highly fictionalized version of his life as a true history? Should non-fiction writers, as Alberta Mangot suggested at a recent Saskatchewan Writers Guild Conference, forget about nagging details like dates and place names and write what they want? As always, the difficulty in such matters is where the line is to be drawn. I'm still enough of a historian to believe very strongly that any non-fiction writing should be firmly grounded in as much verifiable fact as possible. Those facts should not be ignored or distorted in as much rendering of experience. The "truth" of that experience, however, may be beyond the factual level, and it may be best communicated by techniques and strategies of fiction. And, if we were to look closely enough, we would see that memoirists and autobiographers have always done that. Ultimately, we would even have to admit that authors of scholarly books have always done that, but they have learned to hide their subjectivity more discreetly.

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I'll Be Seeing You
Susan Hayton

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your death only confirmed the rational, the unavoidable, in my mind. Painful, irreversible, deterioration. Almost ten years, watching the demotion of a human mind, and the associated physical destruction that accompanies it. You tried to resist. You were young and strong, and incredulous...when you were still well enough to grasp what was going on. But this horrible disease lingered, waited for you, ultimately, to give in to its persistence, to accept that no attempt at resistance could forestall the lacking inevitable...

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

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

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

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The background of the image is a soft-focus photograph of tall, thin grasses with feathery seed heads, likely foxtails, in shades of light brown and beige. A large, thin black circle is superimposed over the center of the image. Inside this circle, there are stylized grey silhouettes of wheat stalks on the left and right sides. The word "REVIEWS" is written in a clean, black, sans-serif font across the middle of the circle.

REVIEWS



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

Kevin Ziegler

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

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

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

As you might expect, *Once in a Blue Moon* progresses through a chronological account of St. George's life: a rural childhood in Ontario, frustrating adventures in Britain, a marriage, children, and a move to Saskatoon and induction into that city's bustling arts community in the 60's and 70's. She spends the majority of her time -- more than half her autobiography -- recounting moments from her early years, explaining how this formative time shaped her creative spirit. She speaks of later accomplishments (along with the obligatory name dropping), but it only seems as though she's going through the motions of writing such an autobiography. She does not dwell on her successes; as she moves along she is just as likely to focus on her inadequacies as her triumphs. What captures her attention is her personal and professional failures, such as dropping out of college in England and then being unable to enter art school. Nevertheless, there is little bitterness in St. George's recollections; she maintains a consistent level of good-humor and mild detachment. Despite working among the avant-garde, she lives a life of stability and comfort, a peaceful time full of art, family, and friends. So much so that she often turns to the lives of others for her more entertaining stories. If you were looking for a sensationalist memoir of scandal and intrigue, this is not the place. As she writes at one point, "The 70s and 80s were an electric time not only in the arts, but in society generally. I was aware that, while all this freedom was liberating and exciting, I needed to keep myself grounded in my home, children, and marriage, because it was easy to get carried away" (216).

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

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

Jennifer Still

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

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

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

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

The cultural phobia Finlay suggests in this work is subtle, but potent. In "Of Being So Careful," notions of being bound to fear are supported not just in subject, but in linguistic play. Here cultural identity, particularly in regards to domesticity, economics and marriage, is embedded in language: "we are tied to it, tied / to apron strings / purse strings / rings on our fingers." The "rings" in "strings" subtly, beautifully resonates the oppressive learnings strung through the language of a patriarchal culture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jessica Antonio

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

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

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

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

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

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

While I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, I do have a few minor complaints. At times, the characters' actions are elliptical, far-reaching, and slightly unbelievable. Both Rowan's father, and his lover, Macon, suffer from mental illnesses that warrant institutionalization. Sexuality, while not static, is fully explored by Rowan and his mother. Although it could be argued that Rowan mimics his mother's exploration, and therefore embarks on his own, or that due to the exposure to his father's illness, he seeks a partner who suffers from the same illness, the similarities in plot tend to feel a bit contrived. Apart from Rowan, and possibly his father, the characters could have been more developed. There is also an awkward, recurring, subplot in which Rowan meets/exploits a young Aboriginal woman, which seems extraneous to the text as a whole. Further, while I appreciate Lapointe's creativity, I found that perhaps she was a little *too* free in the naming of a few of her characters. The names of the protagonist, Rowan, and his high-school lover, Macon, are distracting and serve to take away from the gravity of their relationship. This point also holds true with Macon and his unfortunately named sister, Georgia.

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

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, scope, and deliverables. It serves as a guide for all stakeholders involved in the project, ensuring that everyone is aligned and working towards the same goals.

This document is organized into several sections, each covering a different aspect of the project. The sections are: Introduction, Objectives, Scope, Deliverables, Risks, and Conclusion. Each section provides detailed information and insights into the project's progress and future plans.

The project is currently in the planning phase, and we are working closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the project is on track and meets the required standards. We will continue to update this document as the project progresses and new information becomes available.

We are confident that the project will be completed successfully and will provide significant value to the organization. We appreciate the support and collaboration of all stakeholders and look forward to working together to achieve our common goals.

Thank you for your attention and interest in this project. We will keep you updated on the latest developments and any changes to the project plan.

Best regards,
Project Manager

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