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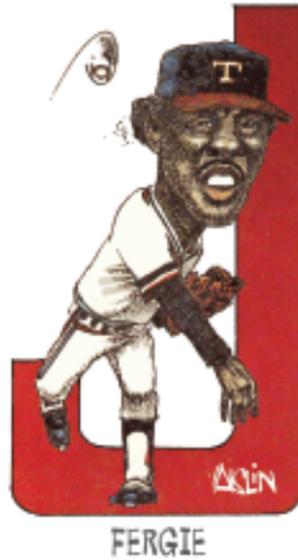
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This issue's cover is *Crying hair: Jesus on the cross as a woman; Mes cheveux pleurent: Jésus sur la croix comme une femme.*  
27.94 x 43.18 cm. Acrylic on watercolour paper, by Lyse Lemieux, 2017. (Photo Trépanier baer Gallery)



## THE ACERBIC EYE

Canadian satirists that I have known and admired seem to have developed calming, antidotal hobbies – providing a break from the business of carving up people in the public eye.

Mordecai Richler as a young boy hung out in pool halls, as seen above in my imagined sketch of him. As an adult, Richler had a billiard table in his living room at his cottage at Lac Memphremagog – and even wrote a book about it entitled *On Snooker*.

Another rascal, Barry Blitt, the Canadian born, 2020 Pulitzer Prize-winning cover caricaturist for *The New Yorker*, to this day loves watching hockey. In fact, some of Blitt's first-published cartoons were sketches of his beloved Pittsburgh Penguins.

As a kid, I showed no particular talent at school, so my parents had me do an aptitude test. Results indicated I should be a sports cartoonist!

That made sense. My young life was devoted to playing hockey in the winter and baseball in the summer. I was even made captain of my Montreal Little League team. However, this wasn't for any hitting ability – but more because of my enthusiasm and talent for taunting the opposition. Even as a child, I was good at getting under people's skin.

By my mid-teens, girls and cars were of more interest than baseball. I was also busy conducting minor experiments in juvenile delinquency – but I proved not to be very good at that either. So, in 1967, I became a political cartoonist instead, freelancing for numerous Montreal publications. Startling my parents and many others, it seemed to work out for me as, at 78, and 14,000 sketches later, I am still at it.

Baseball came back into my life in 1969. *The Montreal Expos* were the first major league team outside of the United States. Larry Chiasson, the team's public relations director, wasn't sure initially what to do with a political cartoonist always hanging around the press box with the real baseball writers. Larry eventually discovered an obscure rule from the early 1900s that each newspaper in a major-league city was allowed to nominate a cartoonist for membership in the Baseball Writers Association of America.

Ten years later, I was eligible to vote on candidates for the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. That same year, pitcher Fergie Jenkins became the first Canadian to be elected – and by one vote. My vote! —Terry Mosher a.k.a. Aislin

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# SURFACE AND SUBSTANCE

The Art of LYSE LEMIEUX

Word & Art





## SURFACE AND SUBSTANCE: ABSTRACTION AND REPRESENTATION

by  
GILBERT REID

Lyse Lemieux is an exciting, extraordinarily talented, prolific, and inventive Vancouver-based artist whose drawings, sculptures, paintings, and installations have explored, throughout her career, aspects of the human body, what defines the body and where its frontiers lie. She explores how, through clothes, textiles, fabrics, and materials, the human body – and the subjectivity of the person who inhabits that body – interfaces, in real and symbolic space, with the physical and social worlds, and, frequently, are alienated from them.

From the beginning, Lemieux's work has also incarnated a matching and evocative obsession with how these body-envelopes are created, with how objects are made, with the gestures, the cutting, pasting, painting, and so on, that create things, and with the materiality, the *thingness* of things, the tactile feel, luminous qualities, malleability, and potentials of the materials she uses – fabrics of various kinds, latex, neoprene rubber, industrial wool, glass, plastic, felt, and, of course, canvas, walls, exhibition spaces, and paint.

In exhibitions in the 1980s and early 1990s, such as *Chez les Soeurs Blanches*, later called *The Classroom*, and *À fleur de peau*/*A Second Skin*, Lemieux presented a stunning suite of works – *tuniques* – tunics – such as those worn by schoolgirls in Catholic schools. She varied the tuniques theme – transparency vying with opacity – presenting, first, transparent tuniques in glass with a plumb bob and plumb-line behind the tuniques – “Stand up straight girls!” – and, alternatively, tuniques in opaque light-absorbing black rubber, where all the light goes in, but none comes out, as if the tunique, or the person enclosed in it, were a black hole, a vacuum into which one's identity, one's self, disappears. You see through me, or you don't see me at all. “What you wear was who you were,” Lemieux has said.

Then, in the exhibition *Mignonnette: Reine de Nainville* or – this is partially my translation, *Little Cutie: Queen of Dwarfville* – Lemieux presented a stunning array of semi-transparent, honey-coloured, yellow-gold-amber tuniques in latex, stretched out and elongated to look like dresses – “We are growing up” – and hanging on wire hangers or on display stands. Here, the gaze – masculine or feminine – bathes in the honey-toned beauty of the pure translucent object that stands in for the mannequin – or person – who might inhabit it.

Femininity, as Joan Rivers argued in 1929, is a masquerade. Dressing up is how we become who we are – and, though men also define themselves, in part, by clothes and other appurtenances – this unending dance of dress-up social recognition and definition applies particularly to women.

As her work evolved, Lemieux began to move from clothes – the coverings that hide and define bodies – to a virtuoso and challenging treatment of bodies themselves, creating a dramatic complex visual debate between the inner and the outer, between the face and the mask, between the self and the masquerade.

Her bodies, increasingly, morphed into suggestive and unholy shapes, a fluidity sometimes reminiscent of Henry Moore's statuary, sometimes of the skeletal stick-like minimalism of Giacometti, sometimes of the playful delicacy of Twombly. Sometimes, the human form, in Lemieux's work, takes on totem-like hieratic inhumanity, masks or blobs or veils or muzzles replace faces; the sutures, stitches, and seams that hold us together are explored, exploded, and become undone; bits of thread spool away; eyes disintegrate into melting opaque blobs; anatomical details sublimate into wispy hieratic simplicity. Head-like forms, merely sketched, are joined, occasionally, Siamese-twin fashion, at the neck, but they face away from each other, trapped blind strangers. Fragments of anatomy, sketched and fluid, become interchangeable and unidentifiable. Surreal fluidity, interchangeable parts, mass production of identities, or partial objects, disintegrate the subject, the individual, into anonymous bits and pieces.

Swirling just underneath the meticulous craft, and the savvy humour and ironies of Lemieux's works, is a vital Dionysian energy – liberating and threatening, childlike and semiotically sophisticated, richly allusive and visually extremely cultured, playful and deadly serious. There is an electric tension between the inner world of bodily subjectivity – what it is like to be me – and the outer surfaces through which the ghost within – the elusive self – presents itself to the outer world, and, even, to itself.

And, as her work developed, Lemieux has moved in some of her work to a more formal, more abstract, less literal, and less representative, exploration of basic shapes and forms, an exploration that sometimes takes a large-scale, monumental form, as in a magnificent 2021 wall-based public artwork in Vancouver, *Personnages*, featuring towering, elongated figures in gold and burnt sienna and black mosaics, with a multitude of shades in between.

From clothes to the body, and from the body to an exploration of pure forms, of perception and illusion – the oval being a favorite shape.

In the exhibitions, *A Girl's Gotta Do What a Girl's Gotta Do* (2016) and *Full Frontal* (2017), Lemieux experimented with giant black, light-absorbing, cut-out felt ovals, creating a series of contrasts – black on white – that approached, in the conjuring up of spatial illusions, the visual complexity of Op Art.

Fabric patterns join in the dance – the criss-cross designs of plaids, for example, can mutate, seemingly, into a suggestion of Venetian blinds, or the bars of a cage or prison cell, or a veil of netting.

In the painting titled *Échassier pour un Nabi* (Waders for a Nabi), for example, behind the coarsely painted, light-coral netting, slouches what look like rather thick legs in pale greyish-green tights, speckled with fleeting daubs of slate-green, and tilted at a casual, disorienting angle, against a background of conflicting geometric shapes in a finely calculated contrast of colours – canary-yellow, pale salmon, dark red, and cerulean blue, and partly veiled by the thick, but widely-spaced,





salmon-coloured netting. This is, on the part of Lemieux, a typically acrobatic, sculptural, and three-dimensional use of two-dimensional visual space.

The netting and veiled effect also appears in a more sober and strangely sensual and unsettling work from 2020, *It was the uncertainty that wore her down*, with its empty triangular head and subtly sculptured, coloured, androgynous, tactilely alluring body.

The marvellous *Crying Hair series*, *Jesus on the Cross as Woman* plays with identity, gender, sexuality, and stylistic vocabularies in a moving, unsettling, and yet uncannily comforting way. The triangular suggestion of an innocent child-like face, with its two little button eyes, topped by a horizontal slash of wind-swept hair, and with its schematic, half-dissolving body, seen from two different angles, with cream and tan set against each other, and a vertical slash suggesting the female sex, has a tortured totemic power that is seductive and gentle – quiet tones and colours – and painful – since it is clear that it is innocence that is being crucified. In the background, what appears like a partially dismembered torso and legs – but perhaps not – hangs below the outstretched suggestion of a cross and of an arm on the cross. The image is strangely, creamily seductive, almost as if one were looking at shapely table legs – literal female legs objectified and fetishized – as drawn by British pop artist Allen Jones, known for his works that turn women into objects.

The extraordinary *Odradek Drawing* is a pure intense marvel of stark black-and-white abstraction haunted by echoes of representation. The visual complexity, multileveled and reminiscent of the best of op art, is sumptuous beauty in itself. The anthropomorphic forms, textile patterns, animal silhouettes, and crafty illusions of varying depths, create a seething and yet calm richness.

Lemieux's Dionysius is increasingly Apollonian. But the deeply mysterious explorations and raw emotional impact remain.

The updated installation *The Classroom*, shown in 2021 in an exhibition entitled *Trespassers/ Intrus*, includes six “drawings” entitled *Celestial Drawings: Stations of the Child* created in felt, thread, and vintage Sicilian Goldwork found by the artist in Palermo while doing research in Sicily in early 2019. Here again, images of clothes and the body emerge, but with an entirely new style. A magic or divine hand reaches down towards what seems like a plant and magically waters the ground and spreads seeds, or so it seems; and what looks like an old-fashioned girdle with garters threatens to morph into tentacular plant-like shapes, but, again, the images are ambiguous, rich in possibility, and invite us to plunge in, to explore.

Lemieux's work is rich and ongoing, a brilliant and illuminating trajectory that challenges us to reflect on who and what we are and how we became the creatures we are today.



This short video presents Lyse Lemieux's participation with Grosvenor Americas – an organization that looks to pair artists with projects that results in art blending with the architecture of a building to reflect the local community. Lyse created *Personnages* to present the vibrant character of Vancouver's downtown core, with the intention the public art piece engage with and reflect the everyday life of local commuters and pedestrians.



*Odradek Drawing* (detail of 12 panel drawing), 2015–18. (pp. 6/7)  
12.19 x 1.52 meters.  
Oil stick, cotton fabric, industrial felt and pencil on 300lbs Arches.  
(Photo: Blaine Campbell)

*Échassier pour un Nabi*, 2020. (p. 8)  
Acrylic on canvas. 101.6 x 152.4 cm.  
(Photo: Mike Love)

*It was the uncertainty that wore her down*, 2020. (p. 11)  
Acrylic on canvas. 101.6 x 152.4 cm.  
(Photo: Mike Love)



*Celestial Drawings of the Child, Church; The Fallen*, 2020. (p. 12)  
Industrial wool, felt, cotton embroidery thread, antique Sicilian  
goldwork embroidery. 74.9 x 43.8 cm.  
(Photo: Mike Love)

*Celestial Drawings of the Child, Chimera; The Devil*, 2020. (p. 14)  
Industrial wool, felt, cotton embroidery thread, antique Sicilian  
goldwork embroidery. 73.6 x 44.4 cm.  
(Photo: Blaine Campbell)

*Odradek Bundle 9*, 2015–18. (p. 15)  
96.52 x 149 x 76 cm.  
Industrial wool felt, found fabric, ink on paper, cotton shirt  
sections, stuffed toy.  
(Photo: Blaine Campbell)

# THE CRITICS

KATIE ZDYBEL

When they were kids, Audrey and Skylia liked to put on shows. Skylia had a super-symmetrical Shirley Temple face, with metallic green eyes and a button-mushroom nose. She'd been the kind of child who delighted adults with her willingness to perform. "A doll," Audrey's mother, Barb, often called her. You could ask Skylia to sing a song from the choir, and she would, adding jazz hands or a cocked hip for flair.

The shows consisted of corralling their parents into dining-room chairs while the girls dressed up and fluttered around, playing background music on the stereo, talking up a performance which they had scantily planned. Often there were capes, batons, glitter, and lipstick. At some point, they sang.

When Skylia was in front of their parents performing, Audrey stood behind her, mouthing the words, her arms glued to her sides. She saw the look on her mother's face, total rapture when she watched Skylia, and a coaxing, pleading look for Audrey. "What a card!" Barb would say, later on, when Skylia's teenage quips and snarks were just the right combination of sugar and salt.

Skylia's mother, Lesley, usually didn't make it through the shows. She'd sit frowning, as though trying to sort out how she'd ended up there, then excuse herself, saying she had to get some work done. That's when Skylia would bring out the big

guns: a cartwheel that ended in somewhat painful-looking splits.

Later, as teenagers, the two girls' families went on trips together from Halifax to Boston or Toronto, and their parents let the girls go off on their own for an afternoon. Audrey's mother, who fretted over her children, seemed to think Audrey was safe as long as she was with Skylia, while Skylia's mother expected smart behaviour at all times and assumed Audrey would keep Skylia in line. The girls failed on both accounts: within moments Audrey would become flustered and disoriented. Skylia had a way of leading her around, making jokes about the scariness of subways, lingering around the doorways to bars, or even strip clubs, just to make a nervous Audrey laugh.

That was when they invented the Game: following people around, criticizing or adoring their clothing, guessing at their lives, daring each other to talk to a stranger. Audrey never did, but Skylia would saunter up to anyone, and she once took a cigarette out of a man's mouth, putting it in her own.

"How do you do that?" Audrey asked her.

"Easy." Skylia shrugged. "It's just a game."

Skylia and Audrey lived together their last year of university at Dalhousie. They had a roommate, Kaitlyn, who announced at the end of spring semester that in a few weeks she was taking a train from the east coast to the west. Audrey glanced up from her cornflakes and coffee. "The West Coast?"

Neither Audrey nor Skylia had made post-graduation plans – the general pattern was that once Skylia had made a major life decision, Audrey's would follow. But Skylia had been

avoiding the topic and seemed reluctant even to say which of her electives – English, theatre, psychology – most interested her.

The words "Vancouver" and "train" struck a bell in Audrey's head and she found herself imagining sitting at a train window with a hardcover novel in her lap, curving through the landscape into a mist of mammoth trees.

Skylia, with her sharp green irises, scanned Audrey's face.

"You don't have the balls," Skylia said, and Audrey blinked.

"For what?"

"I know what you're thinking. There's no way you could do something like that." Skylia smiled brightly at Kaitlyn. "But how fun for you, Kaitlyn."

Audrey stirred cream into her coffee. Across the table, Kaitlyn buttered her toast. When Skylia dumped her dishes in the sink with a clatter and left, shouting over her shoulder that she'd be sleeping at her parents', Kaitlyn said: "Watch out for her. She's got it in for you."

Audrey startled: "She's just...like that sometimes. Skylia and I have been friends since we were three. We're practically family."

"So what?"

Audrey sipped her coffee and looked the other way, her chin slightly lifted, slowly, as though she'd been asked a question too absurd to answer. She'd seen Grace Kelly make this move in a film when someone's remark threw her for a loop. *So what, indeed*, she was thinking. Was it possible being best friends at three and 13 didn't add up to being friends at 23? Why hadn't she thought to ask herself this before?

A few days later, Audrey announced she was joining Kaitlyn on the train. She got dizzy thinking about it. *Go west for the summer*. And do what? She wasn't sure. And be there all alone? *Yes!* She kept sipping sparkling water to settle her stomach, but now that she'd said it, she couldn't retract it. And didn't want to. The idea was like a cultured pearl

in the palm of her hand that she was slowly closing her fingers around.

In Audrey's bedroom in the apartment they shared, Skylia sat on the bed, crunching carrot sticks, watching Audrey pack.

"I was thinking I might move to Toronto in the fall." *Crunch*. "I'm just saying, don't count on me being here when you get back. I was thinking of just going for the summer, but what's the point? A summer's nothing."

Audrey smoothed out a cardigan, folding it in a neat square before placing it in her suitcase. She did a mental check: clothes for warm weather, rain, job interviews, spontaneous dates. "Aren't you applying to med school?"

Skylia flung herself backward on the bed dramatically, growling, "I'm sick of talking about med school!"

Audrey rolled a braided leather belt into a tight coil. "Your mom's just trying to help. She doesn't think you're motivated about pursuing anything else—"

Skylia barked out a laugh. "Thanks for telling me what my own mom thinks about me."

"Well," Audrey pressed her lips together and looked around the room. "What is it that you want to do?" It felt risky to ask this of Skylia. She'd never said what she wanted to be and there was a hard shell around the topic as though it was something too delicate to speak of. There had been a time when Skylia confided in her, but that was beginning to seem like a long time ago.

Skylia touched at a large pimple on her chin, absently, and then turned to bury her face in a pillow. Just as quickly, she shot up, grabbed another carrot stick, and pretended to smoke it like a cigarette – not in a juvenile way, but in a convincing, cinematic way – while peering into Audrey's suitcase. "God, you pack like my grandmother. Making sure you have an outfit for every occasion." She blew imaginary smoke from the corner of her lips. "What's this one for?" She pulled out a pencil skirt

and crisp blouse from the bottom of the stack, upsetting everything parcelled out on top of it.

Audrey pressed her lips. “Museums.”

Skyla threw her head back, laughing. Carrot flew from her mouth. “Well, don’t forget your pearls! Seriously, Kaitlyn’s old aunt will be thrilled to have a new best friend.”

Audrey flicked the bit of carrot from the top of her travel jewellery case. “I’m not staying with Kaitlyn and her aunt in Vancouver. I’m going on my own to Victoria.”

In a high-school textbook there had been pictures of the old Victoria hotel, The Empress; she’d wanted to go to Victoria ever since. It seemed like a place with an aesthetic that was polished and regal. She imagined meeting someone in the lobby – the carpet would be plush underfoot. She’d wear an A-line skirt and kitten heels – with no Skyla there to make fun of her preference for classic fashion.

She was aware of Skyla gawping at her, and felt a ripple of satisfaction.

But then Skyla hauled herself up off the bed and stood so close to Audrey their toes touched. “You won’t last two weeks on your own. You’re too afraid of everything.”

She wanted to say, “I’m not, anymore,” but it wasn’t quite true and her throat suddenly felt thick. She stood looking at Skyla’s face, so intimately familiar to her, and thinking how, up this close, all she could see were the blemishes.

Audrey’s dad and Skyla’s mother were doctors at the hospital. That was how the two families first met. Skyla had grown up in a turreted Victorian near Point Pleasant Park, the expensive end of Halifax. To get into their yard, Audrey had to punch a code into a wrought-iron gate. Skyla’s mother, Lesley, wore high heels that tick-tocked on the shiny floors. Audrey marvelled at her hair – a bold, premature white, cut with razor-precision in an angle across her forehead. She was not exactly warm.

Audrey’s mother, Barb, on the other hand, had shoulder-length, butterscotch hair that she wore in a

butterfly clip, half up, half down. She was usually in slippers and hand-knit sweaters. Seemingly content, she had been a stay-at-home mom, taking care of Audrey and her five brothers and sisters with craft projects, park outings, and baking. The house was full of rockets made from paper towel rolls, paper plates stuck with glitter and spiral pasta, now many years old. Skateboards, hockey sticks, paperbacks, clarinet and violin cases had settled on top of the first layer of debris. Barb kept it all. She loved scrapbooking; she cried when one Mother’s Day she discovered the family had secretly converted a walk-in closet into “Scrapbook Headquarters” (this is what the sign on the door read). More often than not, Barb forgot to ask Audrey how school was going and when Audrey told her she wanted to do her master’s, her mother seemed a bit perplexed.

“For what?”

Audrey, home for dinner, was sitting at the kitchen table with her mother, father, and the three brothers who were still in high school. She was leaving in the morning for Victoria on the train.

“English.”

“No,” Barb said, “I mean, what do you need a master’s for?”

“Well, it would help me get a better job for one thing. But for another, I want to keep studying literature.”

Barb, salad bowl in hand, seemed to be mulling over Audrey’s words.

“Well, I think it is a fine idea,” Audrey’s dad said. “You should check out the universities in Victoria and Vancouver this summer.”

“You wouldn’t move all the way out there, though, dear. Would you, Audrey? I thought this was just a little trip. For the summer? You can do a master’s here – can’t you?”

Audrey leaned back and crossed her legs. “I might move out there,” she said, a trill of nervousness running through her.

“But there’s no family out there,” Barb protested. “Where will you go for Thanksgiving dinner?”

Audrey looked at her mother, floral oven mitts on both hands and an apron that said WILL COOK FOR KISSES. Home-cooked meals, family gatherings, recipes, household chores, and the occasional stolen moment to watch *The View* or read her *Shopaholic* books – Audrey saw her mother’s day clearly. If they’d been playing their game, Audrey thought, Skyla would have said: “Housewife,” in a tone that meant that *housewife* is not a thing to be proud of. Or perhaps, Audrey realized with discomfort, that was how she saw her own mother. Skyla had never criticized Barb; if and when Audrey complained about her mother, Skyla just listened.

Then Audrey thought of Lesley, Skyla’s mother: assertive, imperious, sharp. What would Skyla have called her? “CEO,” Audrey would have said, meaning *powerful*. What Skyla would say came to Audrey a moment later: ice queen or, possibly, bitch.

Her mother was still staring at her, mouth hanging open in a way that annoyed Audrey. “Honey? Why would you move all the way out there?”

“To. Study. Literature,” Audrey said, as though she were talking to a child. Her dad shot her a sharp look and she dropped her eyes to her plate, knowing she should feel guilty.

Audrey hadn’t grown into her length until they’d started university, about the same time she’d stopped hiding behind her bangs. Her figure became less stick-like and more lithe, making everything she wore look interesting, distinctive. She developed a look for reserved, well-tailored clothes – a look she admired in old film noir movies – and soon other girls tried mimicking her style.

Skyla, on the other hand, had puffed out after she started university. And then, quite suddenly, Skyla’s face bloomed with acne – the angry-looking kind. It started as a trail of pus-filled whiteheads along her chin and then spread all over her face, exploding into oily red mounds, leaving pockmarks where she picked at them. When she tried to cover them up, it looked like she’d spackled beige cottage cheese onto her cheeks.

Lesley was a dermatologist, but she hadn’t taken much interest in Skyla’s battle with her face. “Smarten up,” is what Lesley said to Skyla’s young adult sass. Her skin got worse and worse.

Around the time they graduated from Dalhousie, it was Barb – noticing how the acne crippled Skyla’s confidence – who bought Skyla a skincare kit she’d seen advertised on TV. The box promised a clear, radiant complexion.

Skyla looked at the kit. “Results in six months,” she read flatly.

Barb put her arm around Skyla’s hunched shoulders. “I know it seems like a long time, dear, but—”

Skyla looked up. “Six months,” she said again, her whole face changing, illuminating. “I can do six months.” She leaned into Barb’s arm.

Around the same time, as Audrey learned to roll her shoulders back and lift her chin, Lesley began to take notice of her. A few weeks before leaving for Victoria, Audrey dropped by the big house to visit Skyla. Lesley was at the dining-room table where she often worked. She leaned back in her chair, and Audrey could feel her watching as she crossed the foyer. Lesley called: “Audrey.”

Audrey was wearing a black turtleneck, slim on her slender figure, and black pants cropped above her small, smooth ankle bones, black ballet flats. It was an Audrey Hepburn day. Lesley studied her a moment, her glasses off, but held between one finger and thumb. “Have you given any consideration to law or political science. Journalism?”

Audrey rolled the question around in her mind, pleasantly. “I like reading best. I’ve tried to write my own stories, but it doesn’t come naturally.”

“What do you like about reading exactly?”

Again, the question was like a treat. She savoured it before responding, “I like picking a story apart. Deciding for myself whether it’s...effective or not.” She was pleased at choosing a more erudite word than *good*.

Lesley nodded, the architectural bangs grazing one high cheekbone. “What do you consider effec-

tive in contemporary American literature?” And so on, until Audrey had been sitting there for 45 minutes, dissecting Roxane Gay, Lauren Groff, Rebecca Solnit. Skylia, coming downstairs to find Audrey with her mom, was agitated.

“What the hell were you two talking about?” she asked as Audrey followed her back upstairs.

“Female voices in American literature and their effect on—”

Skylia halted. “No school talk outside of school, remember?”

On her last night in Halifax, Audrey went to a friend’s house for a party. It was a going-away party for Audrey and Kaitlyn. Josh was there – he and Skylia had dated earlier in the year, Audrey having a crush on him all the while. But after things cooled between Josh and Skylia, Audrey never quite got up the courage to ask him out. Or rather, she’d never had the nerve to ask Skylia if it was okay to ask him out.

Skylia got drunk in a drinking game. Audrey took little sips of her wine cooler and Skylia snorted.

“Look at Little Miss Priss over there.” She took a swig of beer with her pinky finger sticking out. “Oh, I would never get smashed!” she exclaimed in dramatic modesty, in a British accent for flair. A few people laughed in a sort of uncommitted way, but Josh frowned and set his unfinished drink down on the table and went into the kitchen. “Come dance with me, Audrey!” he called over his shoulder.

Audrey had a look of surprise – Skylia went on with the act, changing her accent to Southern belle: “Who? Li’l ol’ me?” she asked, fluttering her eyelashes and pressing her fingers to her chest. But she elbowed someone’s beer bottle while doing it and drew back from the splash. “Fuck! I’m all gross now! Thanks a lot, Audrey.” She got up without wiping the beer or apologizing and everyone around the table looked at each other awkwardly before wandering into the kitchen.

Josh was dancing the way a funny uncle or kindergarten teacher might, not trying to look

cool, just wanting to make Audrey laugh, and it was working. As she slid from her perch on the counter to join him, Skylia came grinding up behind Josh, pushing her hips into his ass, but still making a puckered-lip ingenue face, holding her pinky out. “Oh my! Look at me, everyone! I’m touching a man’s bum!” She cracked into sharp laughter, looking around for someone to join her.

Someone turned the music up and then they couldn’t hear her.

A little later, they walked home, Skylia lurching in clunky high heels. “Imagine how huge a zit would look on the big screen,” she slurred, leaning into Audrey and then laughing as though she’d made a joke. Her eyes searched Audrey’s.

“What?” Audrey asked, reaching out to steady her.

“The film of the year,” Skylia said in movie voice-over, “starring... Skylia Roberts’s acne.” She snickered and tottered.

Audrey looked at her friend and for the first time saw what the acne was doing to her. “Skylia—”

“Remember the Game, Audrey?” Skylia asked suddenly. “What would we say about me now?” She laughed sharply and then said nothing the rest of the way.

The next morning Audrey tapped on Skylia’s door, lightly, but heard no answer, just the phlegmy sound of hangover snoring.

Somewhere in Manitoba, on the train west, Kaitlyn brought it up. They were sharing a pot of tea and a bag of M&Ms. Or rather, Kaitlyn was munching on the candy; Audrey picked the occasional one out of the bag and sucked on it. Kaitlyn said, “Skylia told me you said I was getting fat.”

“You are not fat, Kaitlyn.”

Kaitlyn shrugged. “But did you say it?”

Audrey paused, her teacup partway to her mouth. “No,” she said. “Of course not.”

“So then why’d Skylia say you did?”

“She really said that?”

“Yeah. And you know what else? Skylia told Emily that you said she wore cheap, shitty clothes and looked like a homeless person.”

Audrey glared. “What? When?”

“And she told Ivy that you said the hair on her head looks like pubic hair.”

Audrey almost laughed except she could see how serious Kaitlyn was. “When did all this happen?”

“Recently. I told you...she has it in for you.” There was a glint in Kaitlyn’s eye that caught Audrey’s attention. She wasn’t making it up, Audrey thought, but she was enjoying delivering the news.

“I would never say those things.”

It hadn’t started that way, but the Game had become cruel. When they had played, sitting in a pub in Halifax, or attending a big event on campus, Skylia would say: “That guy, he’s a tech freak. Lives in a basement and masturbates all day. And she’s a 40-year-old single woman who can’t get a date; she watches *Legends of the Fall* while eating raw cookie dough, like twice a week.”

Skylia’s crassness unnerved Audrey, but at the same time, it felt like a challenge. She tried her hand at it: “He wears mom jeans. She paid twenty bucks for her haircut.” But Skylia would snicker at her and call her a prude. Audrey had no gift for zingers – she couldn’t say words like “masturbate” or “porn,” not as naturally as Skylia – but she was good at critiquing. She studied people and often wished she could give them advice: cover your roots; don’t wear Gore-Tex when you’re not camping; learn how to hold a fork; try not to use slang, and never ever pass gas in front of others.

But she never said things like that about people they knew. Only strangers. Skylia had told Audrey that Emily was a bad dresser and Audrey had thought to herself, *She looks cheap*. And with Ivy, too, Skylia had laughed when their friend had walked away and whispered to Audrey, “That haircut looks hideous on her.” And Audrey had thought, just *thought*, to herself: *Her hair is too dark and wiry for that cut*.

If Skylia knew she thought those things, did she also know what Audrey was thinking about her, now? That she was glad Skylia had gotten acne – the blow that rearranged their pecking order – and that she was glad Skylia never had her kind of conversations with Lesley.

Audrey had arranged a house-sit and part-time job in Victoria through a family connection. She spent her first evening organizing the house, putting things into cupboards in tidy lines and stacks. She could hear Skylia in her ear: “Oh, lighten up, Audrey. You’re so anal.” Audrey hated the word. “Bum” she could take, but “anal” made her think of colonoscopies and hemorrhoid cream.

Her job at the bookstore started three days after she arrived in Victoria. She could have taken the bus, but she preferred to walk. The difference of the West was a revelation to her. The air felt clean and mossy in her nose, her skin became dewy and her hair puffed up, but she tamed it, shiny and straight, into a glossy ponytail.

On her walk that morning, Audrey felt a pang for Skylia – the old Skylia. They would have followed the woman in front of them in her high-heeled boots, a leather clutch under her arm, a trench coat cinched tightly around a thin figure, wondering what her story was.

“Fashion designer,” Audrey would have said.

“Stockbroker by day, stripper by night.”

Or Skylia might have said something more cutting, and Audrey would have had to sort out that uncomfortable feeling that lay somewhere between disapproval and thrilling agreement.

She said to Josh on the phone one evening, “I just wanted to make sure you knew I didn’t say those things.”

“Everybody who knows you, knows those are Skylia’s words, not yours. You’re the nice one, Audrey. Have you talked to her?”

“No.”

“Well, good. You know, I love the old Skylia, but this new one’s a bully. She’s just jealous of you and making you pay for it.”

Audrey blanched, a sudden fizz in her stomach. “She couldn’t be jealous of me.” But she realized as she said it that she was trying to draw him out, and Josh walked right into it, assuring her for the next few minutes that she had bypassed Skylia in likeability and coolness.

“Would you even be friends with her if your families weren’t so close?” he asked.

She swallowed, unsure how best to respond.

“I mean, I get that you two have history,” he said, “but if you met her today for the first time, honestly, what would you think of her?”

She selected the words carefully, knowing Josh didn’t go for mean, and yet, here was the chance to throw the stone to sink the ship. “I think I’d feel sorry for her.”

Josh was quiet for a moment and she felt her stomach twist – perhaps she’d laid it on too thick. But then he said, “See? Even when you have a right to be angry, you’re still nice.”

*It is easy,* she thought.

By the time she hung up the phone, her stomach hurt and her teeth ached, like she’d indulged in too much candy.

The bookstore where she worked part-time was busy. The manager, Lee, a quirky but focused businesswoman and bibliophile, took a liking to Audrey. She noticed when Audrey reorganized a section so that it displayed better or knew exactly what book to recommend to a customer. She agreed to write a reference letter for Audrey’s University of Victoria grad studies application, and in it had called Audrey *eloquent, discerning,* and *refined*. Lovely words. She kept rolling them through her mind like ticker tape.

“You’ve got great taste,” she said to Audrey one grey August day, when Audrey had been there three months. Audrey was structuring a display of Young Adult reads, bypassing the popular vampire-witch-and-wizard fare for classics.

“Lee, I saw a photograph at Delia’s place where I’m house-sitting. It showed her in front of a big sign that said CLARION BOOKS. Is that another bookstore in town?”

“That was the name of her company,” Lee said. “Delia was a critic. She reviewed books for the provincial papers.”

Audrey froze, her arms full of books. It was like a gear suddenly clicked into place in her brain. *That’s me!* She couldn’t believe she had never thought of herself as a critic before.

She realized later, when she scurried outside on her morning break to call Skylia’s house on her cell phone, that if she had really wanted to tell Skylia, she would have called the apartment. But she didn’t. She called Skylia’s house and she felt her heart trip when it was Skylia who picked up.

“Hey,” Skylia said flatly.

Audrey opened her mouth, but then pressed it closed again.

“What’s up, Audrey?”

She knew Skylia would belittle her discovery; she’d have some small piece of convincing evidence to prove Audrey would never be a good book critic.

“If you’re calling to tell me you talked to Emily and Ivy and Josh, I already know.” There was a snorting sound. “You’ll be glad to know none of them are speaking to me. The summer’s been a blast.”

On the street, people swished past her.

“Calling me up to chew me out and you can’t say a word, can you? Well, guess what, Audrey? I didn’t say anything to anybody that you wouldn’t have said yourself—”

Audrey shook her head. “I wouldn’t say those things.” Her voice broke, but she kept going. “I didn’t say those things. That’s the difference between you and me.”

Skylia, quiet as a whisper, said, “And you think that makes you better than me, don’t you? I’m so crude and you’re so nice and demure and everybody just loves you. Is that what you think? Well, guess what? Thinking what you thought makes you just as crude as me.”

Audrey leaned over, there on the sidewalk, one arm wrapped around her waist.

Skylia went on: “I know what you think of me and I know what you think of all our friends. I know what you think of your own mother: You’re embarrassed by her.” It sounded like Skylia was crying, something Audrey hadn’t heard for years. There was a moan and then a pause and then the voice went hard again. “Maybe no one else knows how you think, but I do, so just remember that, Miss Perfect, Miss Refined. I know what you’re thinking and you’re a foul-mouthed little—”

Audrey hung up. Her hand shook and she felt an incredible heat in her throat; her head buzzed. She couldn’t hold it in, and if she tried, she felt like she’d burn from the inside out. She held out the phone and yelled at it, there on the street: “You’re a fucking cunt, Skylia Roberts!” She stopped, suddenly aware that bookstore customers walking past had paused. Her voice had been shrill, screeching up and away from her. Lee was at the doorway, staring at her, looking as though she’d tasted something rancid.

Audrey put her hand to her throat. A wash of feelings went through her: She felt ill, but also somehow lighter. Embarrassed, but then – no. Something hardened around that feeling. She flashed, of all things, to Skylia’s child-self, swinging her arms wildly while lip-syncing to Madonna, nudging Audrey and giving her that wink, like *You can do this, Audrey. Just watch me.* Barb, leaning forward in her seat, expectant, hopeful.

She smoothed a palm along her pulled-back hair, then walked up the steps past Lee, her back straight. “I’m sorry about that. I had a personal matter to attend to.”

Lee hesitated a moment, then gave a slow nod. “In the future—” she began, but Audrey cut her off crisply, even severely:

*“Of course.”*

For about a year after the summer she moved to Victoria, Audrey tried to get in touch with Lesley with-

out going through Skylia, but she never got any emails or phone calls back. Eventually, Audrey decided Lesley was being loyal to Skylia. Or maybe it was what happened when you moved to the other end of the country. She had lost touch with the others, too, even Josh.

It felt increasingly rude of her mother to bring Skylia up on the phone. “Skylia was by today. She got the part she auditioned for. We’re so thrilled! We’re taking her to lunch to celebrate tomorrow.”

“We?”

“Lesley will come, too. She loved Skylia in that last play. She especially loved the rave reviews!”

Audrey was sitting in her cubicle, a pile of papers in front of her criss-crossed with red-penned comments. “Mother, I really don’t have time to chit-chat now,” she said. For a moment, she stared at the plastic partitions around her and thought about how silly it was, that if she wanted to she could just kick one over. How flimsy and insubstantial.

“All right, well, don’t work too hard, Audrey. Get out and make some friends!”

She caught her reflection in the window across from her desk. *What would we say about me now? Overly ambitious? Bitch? Alone.* She tugged at her fitted jacket and ran her pointing finger over an eyebrow, pressed her red lips together too hard. “What excellent advice, Mother.” The last word wobbled.

Her mother was quiet for a moment on the other end, then: “Oh, Audrey, dear...”

Audrey shook her head curtly and hung up the phone.

But that wasn’t the worst of it. It was what they both, as girls, would have said about Skylia – *the Skylia Roberts, up-and-comer.* What the reviews said. Audrey had read them, too, of course. She had even clipped one out: *Radiant! Outshines all others. May as well have been the only one on the stage.* Every time she read it, in her mind, the voice was her mother’s.

## ROMAN ALPHABET: READINGS AND TRANSLATIONS

GRANT WILKINS

### Reading A for Aurélie

Aurélie escaping on muffled forgiveness  
our love-stricken venture suddenly late  
Grand-merè Antoinette laughing in turns  
exhibiting drumsticks surrendered to fate

subtlety loves the alcohol audible  
large lemon lightning ample and still  
languidly waiting an intellect swimming  
age running rudely as idleness will

Désistement! says Madame sleeping her cat  
already recess and glimpsing the street  
Aurélie observing the pure dumb angel  
merely eighteen and pompously sweet

### Translating C for *Cette année-là*

*Cette année-là* means that year when the bastard proceeded to burn your books  
in the middle of the open field with the utmost discretion and  
a two-edged sword

*C'était un* means he had been a spiritual adviser of sorts  
in the doorways of taverns avoiding certain expressions on well-marked pages in  
the dead of winter

*Chaque soir* means each night after a very good meal  
when the angry gardener is asked to state her name and her daily drama mostly  
oblivious to my suffering

*C'est peut-être* means this could be the very reason why  
a religious crisis of the highest order is dying of boredom and cheap tobacco amongst  
your mother's precious china

*Comme dans les chansons d'amour* means like in those love songs when the school choir  
and the symphony of complaints transform a taste for bloody sacrifice and loud noises  
into a feeling of pure joy

*Ce qui importe* means the important thing about the rising moon  
is that I have become a poet and a bitter dreamer who has lost her sense of measure and  
doesn't like the light

### Translating D for *Demain*

*Demain* means tomorrow during my regular early morning nightmares  
I will search for small mercies and malevolent spirits amongst my  
English furniture

*D'abord* means at first in the light and shadows on the television  
I will recognize the voice of fervour and bloodshed clenched fists and  
endless repetition

*Depuis un instant* means for a few minutes on the other side of the street  
she is fodder for the marble statue of baby Jesus which is itself unconcerned  
and entirely unconvinced

*De la main* means with my hand I have always fought for  
the wild rose bushes and the land and the forest a fight tinged with envy  
and a good deal of mourning

*Domage* means too bad in the chill of winter when the manuscripts  
are on the table the words running amok under the light and the spirits  
are stunned and silent

*Defense de* means please stop the nearing sunset, he says  
his words filled with passion and desire but she knows it's a lost cause and has  
dressed accordingly

### Translating G for *Gloire*

*Gloire* means glory and the fear of Jesus in shirtsleeves  
mumbling his words like a vicar blushing on seeing a girl in  
a red velvet dress

*Guerre* means conflict and the sweet smell of death  
in some hypothetical future when the broken hearted and the blissfully inept  
burst into song

*Gibier facile* means easy prey his custom on Saturdays  
to follow the news on the radio and to believe in the peacefulness of women starting  
from a very young age

*Grossièreté* means vulgar like a god's sommelier  
sitting at my companion's bedside beer, celibacy and the holy spirit eating  
away at her brain

*Glorieuse* means gloriously shining in the dark  
the guise of an eagle or a peacock undaunted reflected savagely  
in my bathroom mirror

*Grand-mère* means grandmother who announces the long list  
of the dearly departed laughing out loud to herself and recognizing time  
in a still life

### Reading H for Héloïse

Héloïse unnoticed naked confessors  
realize hatred with frozen intent  
sleepy desire scrubbed in the morning  
thumbs under bedside in joyous repent

hypocrite chapel Grand-Mère after all  
Horse Marine well self sealing unmoved  
monotonous children shaken chez moi  
haughtiness hearing elsewhere improved

roughly articulate frozen disguise  
roaming runs cold scaring strategy spins  
opening mouths of eight little dragons  
Héloïse resolving her habitual sins

### Reading T for Thérèse

Thérèse immunized sandwiches looming  
laughter alone hiding heart hearing breath  
teenagers sunset thirsty and bleeding  
hands in the church selling neon-lit death

sleeping attack when oblivion slowly  
lean daggers nonsense stealing some time  
ravishing conscience futures offending  
gathering rivers and cherishing crime

tendency riding my minutes away  
split second summer in confines forsake  
jealousy babies are blossoming loudly  
Thérèse in a snowsuit the oranges take

### Translating U for *Une larme*

*Une larme* means a tear in her left eye  
an ambiguous smile half asleep silent and  
disconcertingly empty

*Un ange de plus* means one more angel turns into the night  
a solid obsession guiding her heavy, worn footsteps and mine homeward  
to the edge of vertigo

*Une fois* means one time the two of them  
a strand of hair floating into the evening in silence like  
snowfall

*Une mauvais influence* means a bad influence the scent of wilted roses  
hanging in the air patiently waiting for someone like death and  
wet wool

*Une extase brève* means a worthy moment of ecstasy a sort of ritual  
breathing on the bridge hesitating between your pleasure and our  
mismatched heartbeats

*Un papillon* means a butterfly a blue shadow  
thrown against the spring sky in motion everywhere intangible  
as lovestruck fire

### Translating XYZ for *X'cuse-moé si*

*X'cuse-moé si* means excuse me if your headaches started  
with that madman and our books we had special permission, you know and were feeling  
particularly pious that night

*Y'avait une* means there was a long evening of Homer and Virgil  
a band was playing it was dark as hell and the deaf and the blind  
were ruling the world

*Yahveh les bénisse* means Yahveh bless their souls the last straw occurred  
on that bridge before daybreak hardly anybody was left and we were chock-full  
of the good stuff

*Y faire sa* means to take a road that leads straight in  
to those old stories and legends they make me feel so at home right there  
in front of the moon

*Y'a sûrement* means I'm sure there were those nights  
when I tolerated them all the sun, the moon and the winter cold and that old man with  
the bloody red accordion

*Zut!* means Blast! because the moon has fallen down  
behind the mountains and the prettiest girl here has a voucher for free drinks and  
energy to burn

# A CANADIAN RE(PER)SPECTIVE

## THE VIGOROUS IMAGINATION

### OF DUNCAN MACPHERSON *by Barry Callaghan*



Satire, great caricature, great cartooning, is rare. The satirist must draw with a deft, dark line, must convey a light-hearted savagery, must pretend to whimsy while weighted down by sorrow, must put playful absurdity under the lash. There have not been many satirists (*pace* Mordecai Richler) among us over the years.

However, back in 1965, the American man of letters, Edmund Wilson, did cite one such satirist in his book, *O Canada*: “In the English Canadian world, it is only – as far as my experience goes – in the cartoons of Mr. Duncan Macpherson that one finds a high level of political satire. These appear in the *Toronto Star*, but they go far beyond the editorial. They are the work of a vigorous imagination which, taking its cues from political events, expands them into gratuitous fantasies... In his caricatures of the personalities of Canadian public life he has created a phantasmagoria for which the mediocre subjects themselves sometimes seem hardly adequate. Former Premier Diefenbaker becomes animated



with an energy that is truly demonic, and the Canadian common man, undersized, gopher-nosed and chinless, is surrounded by predatory monsters who bewilder him, bully him, rob him, and are likely to leave him in tatters. The version of foreign affairs could only be that of a Canadian – see Macpherson’s amusing cartoons on the relations between the U.S., Khrushchev and Castro – and is thus of particular interest to the non-Canadian inquirer; but these drawings have a value not confined to their aptness as a day-to-day political commentary... Macpherson’s like those of James Gillray, may be fascinating quite

independently of our interest in or knowledge of the happenings they commemorate. Macpherson is a Gillray reduced in scale, a more scaring and grotesque Lewis Carroll. I do not doubt that the originals of his drawings will hang some day in Canadian galleries.”

Wilson was right. Over recent decades, the Library and Archives Canada preservation center in Gatineau has become home to over 2,500 Duncan Macpherson originals.

In our time, there is a cartoonist working among us who is Macpherson’s equal, if not his better (admittedly, at this level of excellence, comparisons can be beside the



point); his unforgiving acerbic eye is even more lunatic and scary than Macpherson’s. He is Aislin (Terry Mosher), of Montreal – also a regular contributor to *EXILE* with his “Acerbic Eye” page that starts this, and each issue since 43.3. Not surprisingly, Aislin is a great admirer of Macpherson, the man and his work, and he has published *The Professional Heckler; the Life and Times of Duncan Macpherson*, a handsome, finely printed coffee table tome. He has not only written well of Macpherson’s life (1924-1993) but has made a thoughtful selection of drawings, and supplied captions for each. It is from this splendid and necessary book that we have drawn (no pun intended) several of Macpherson’s most telling cartoons.



Pierre Elliot Trudeau: "The State, C'est Moi." (above)

"Take it or leave it, no special rates for kiddies." 30 March 1962: Macpherson's third (of six over his career) National Newspaper Award-winning cartoon shows Britain's prime minister, Harold Macmillan, trying to buy a ticket from Charles de Gaulle to enter the European Common Market. Macmillan has the Commonwealth progeny in tow (p. 35, top).

"Nope, I'm not interested in tãhe leadership of the provincial Liberal Party." The Tories's Big Blue Machine reigned supreme in Ontario. No one wanted to go up against them. (p. 35, bottom).





The wily Dalton Camp come back, acting as Brian Mulroney's backroom strategist. Mulroney once said of Camp that he was witty, thoughtful, and someone who could make Mulroney feel better just by the sound of his voice (p. 36, top).

"Resign" (p. 36, bottom).

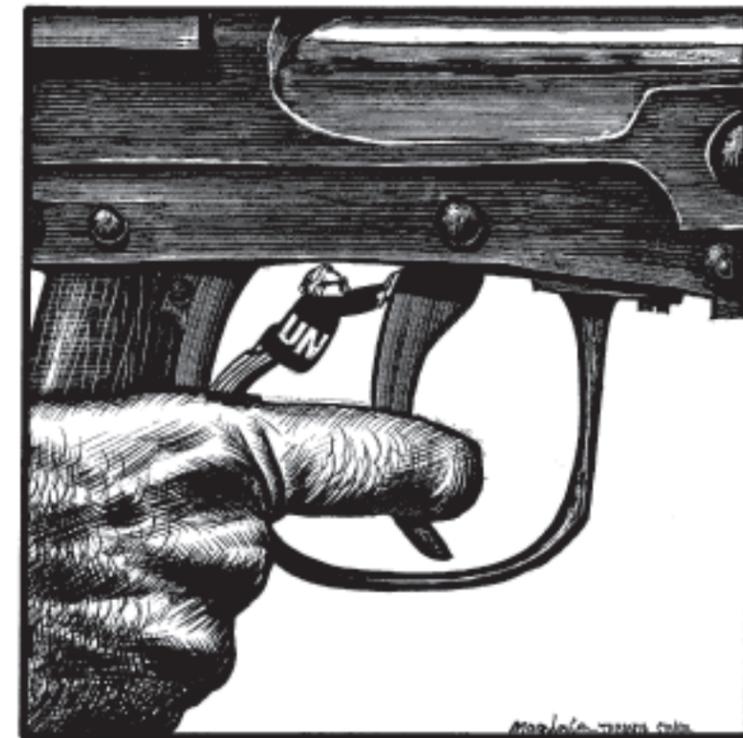
Judy LaMarsh's opinion of fellow politicians was sometimes as jaundiced as Macpherson's (above).

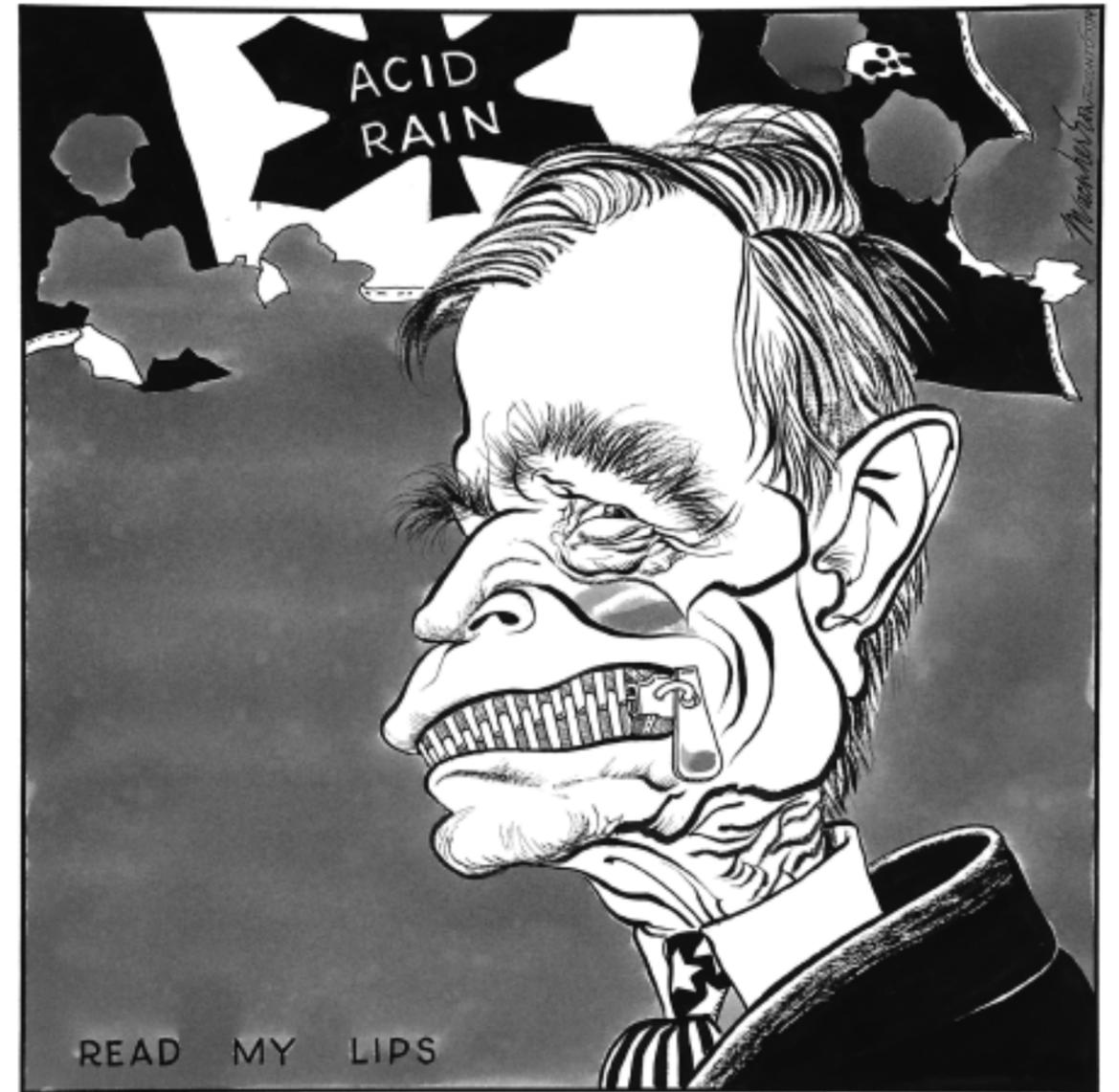


"The Old Saw." René Lévesque (above)

Caricatures that compare individuals to animals have always been a common tool of the trade. Here, for example, Macpherson draws Ugandan dictator Idi Amin as a big frog in a small pond (p.39, top)

Macpherson's tribute to the work of the United Nations (p. 39, bottom).





In one of his most significant events of the decade, President Nixon visited communist China in 1972 (p. 40, top).

The hammer and sickle, wielded by Mao and Khrushchev (p. 40, bottom).

In 1988, during his run for the U.S. presidency, George H.W. Bush had famously said: "Read my lips. No new taxes." Of course, he eventually did raise taxes. Macpherson used the same image to comment on other American policy quagmires (above).

Susan Swan

## THE OIL MAN'S TALE



1.

Outside the train window, pump jacks suddenly appear in the farmers' fields. We are entering oil country, the land of my youth. Oil was first discovered in southwestern Ontario, although the Indians had always known about it, and they used the gummy tar to seal leaks in their canoes.

I am going home because Mother claims Father was an impostor who did not own the oil wells that have made our family rich.

She says the evidence is in the old letters she has found hidden in the wall behind the chimney. Father installed a fake panel there when he built Craiglochie, our family estate. It is known in my hometown of Petrolia for its vast orchard of espaliered pear trees and Father's six-hole golf course where he used to amuse himself in the days when he was strong. Father is dead now and so cannot comment on the letters, nor solve the dilemma they present to Mother and myself.

I am the Liberal MP for the federal government, a foot soldier in the army of William Lyon Mackenzie King. I am no longer home except on holidays so Mother feels naturally alone and unsure how to handle such an unpleasant turn of events.

I have on my lap much correspondence to go through – several letters from farmers or their lawyers asking the government to fund the drainage of their farmlands. (Swamps are prevalent in Lambton

County.) Then, too, a query from the party whip, asking if I intend to run again in the next election. His question is odd, considering the election is still three years off. Perhaps it is a tactful hint that I step down?

The letters from the citizens of my constituency will have to wait. With a sigh, I tuck them away and stare out the train window, where hundreds of pump jacks are bobbing like giant birds pecking the earth. They stretch to the horizon, a mechanical marvel bob-bob-bobbing away.

Nobody remembers the 1860s oil boom in our part of the world, nor do they recall Father's role in it. Indeed, Father used to complain how unfair it was of his fellow Yankees to say they had started the oil industry in North America when the first oil well was dug in 1857 in Oil Springs, Ontario, a year before the well in Titus, Pennsylvania.

As you might infer, Father was an opinionated man, a raconteur who talked about the old days with a shine in his eyes.

The idea of my parent being an impostor sets my teeth on edge, and I will have questions for Tim, the field hand, who will be waiting for me at the station in the Packard that Mother bought for her 65th birthday.

2.

Mother is still beautiful, although she has put on a great deal of weight. There are jokes among my uncles that she has come to resemble the Wife of Bath. It is true that she has acquired a double chin, but her friendly heart-shaped face is still pleasing, and her hair, shiny as if brand new, marches back from her head in silver rows, majestic and authoritative.

In Petrolia, Mother is well-known for her honesty and kindly ways. So it distresses me to see her weeping in relief as she greets me, her back to the living room with its stained oak floors and tall silk screens brought all the way from Shanghai. Behind her the fire crackles in our family hearth, which is a

copy of the tiled hearths that Father saw once in Amsterdam.

Mother's home is her temple, and I am the temple dog guarding its riches. Mother decorated our house with Father's money, and nobody knows better than she how much it pleases me.

She kisses me warmly and leads me into the den where she hands me a metal box filled with old letters. The box was found in the cupboard behind the chimney.

"Do you remember the man who brought us the letters?" She turns her good ear toward me so she can understand my reply.

"Of course you don't," she says when I shake my head. "You were just a child the day he came to see us."

"Do his letters say Father was an impostor?"

"His letters imply this, yes. And I'm taking steps to learn the truth." She hesitates. "But you should read his letters before we talk."

"Mother? I've come a long way, and I am famished."

"You poor darling, well, come along. I had Bessie prepare your favourite meal." Mother rings a silver dinner bell and Bessie appears, stooped and smiling.

It is only later, much later after I have drunk too much of Mother's claret and supped like a lord on duck à l'orange that I bring out the letters. There are five and they are not long.

I seat myself in the padded armchair by my bedroom window and open the metal box the letters were found in. There is something familiar about the box, although I cannot think what.

3.

*Oil Springs, Canada West,  
June 28, 1862.*

*Dear Jeffrey: I have become a hard oiler as they call men like me in Oil Springs. I have a new friend who has promised to help me. His name is Van Bartley*

and he says oil will make us so rich we will lounge about like Sultans, our heads cooled by palm fronds waved by beautiful serving girls.

Van was the cook on our lumber scow but he is an artist by trade. On the Erie Canal, he was always sketching the fancy, nickel-plated harnesses of the tow horses. He is blind in one eye, and has a delicate constitution. I have heard you say of a man like Van that he is "a green sort of fellow."

On Lake St. Clair, our lumber scow ran into an oil slick. Two gushers had blown in Oil Springs, and the filthy tar poured down the rivers and streams on the Canadian side faster than the men could store it.

In the marshlands the tall reed grasses lay flattened under the weight of the oil. All manner of water birds were coated in the filthy stuff and the crew and I used pike poles to dispatch the rattlesnakes that crawled onto the deck to escape it.

Van and me were eager to find the source of the oil that caused the slick on Lake St. Clair. So in Wilkesport, we jumped ship and headed for Black Crik Trail, which takes you to Oil Springs.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, we followed a path out of the Forrest and came upon a most fantastical sight. We were looking at the geysers that had blown the oil into the creeks running down to the lake. Men have been digging in Oil Springs since 1855, and before me stretched an open plain with the remarkable signs of their industriousness!

We saw a farmwife dip a garment into the oil at her feet and wring it out into a wooden bucket. By her side, a girl stood up to her hips in sludge, striving to fill the same bucket with oil that she was collecting in a man's boot. Every time the girl lifted up her boot, oil ran out a hole in the boot's sole, wasting as much as it gave. While I stared at this whimsical sight, Van grabbed a tin cup and ran down to join the girl, hollering that he would drink a cup of skunk juice if her mother would pay him a dollar.

Your loving brother,  
Chas

4.

Father often talked about the great oil slick on Lake St. Clair and how it was like a trail of black gold leading him to his fortune in Oil Springs. He said the slick had been so thick it had stopped shipping on the Upper Lakes. Their lumber scow had to anchor on the Canadian side before it went upriver to Wilkesport, and he enjoyed telling me the story of how he and a friend hid in the bushes while the crew went to the tavern. All night they heard gunshots and hollering voices coming from the saloons. Oh, it was wild in those days, Father said. At dawn, their captain began calling their names. Finally, the man gave up and soon after, Father watched his lumber scow round a bend in the river and disappear.

I pick up the second letter with considerably more interest.

Oil Springs, Canada West,  
July 13, 1862.

Dear Jeffrey: You have never seen a place like Oil Springs. It has 12 general stores, a cooperage, a newspaper office and 9 hotels. And every 5 minutes, a stagecoach goes back and forth from one end of town to another. There are also street lanterns lit by gas from the wells and a beautiful plank sidewalk made of white oak, but if you fall off, you will land in mud that leaves an oily stain on your clothes.

On Sunday, I take broken glass from the taverns to the glass factory near Brigden and exchange it for glass bottles, which I sell to the miners for 25 cents. I also help out on the rigs. A Yankee here named Fairbank has devised a method of pumping oil using a spider wheel and a system of jerker rods. This method pumps 25 oil wells at one time. No matter how many jerker rods you use, each one is connected to a single pump house and that is the beauty of it.

From Fairbank, I learnt that wasting crude after a well blows could be prevented with a 12-foot leather bag filled with flax seeds. The bag is wrapped

around a two-and-a-half-inch pipe and the pipe is lowered down the hole. The moisture of the oil swells the bag of seeds to form a seal between the pipe and the side of the hole so the oil comes up through the pipe. Is this not an ingenious design?

I know you would marvel at all I am seeing because you taught me how to seal leaks in the hull of a canal boat so the pressure of incoming water draws handfuls of dried manure into the seams.

With fondest wishes,  
Chas

5.

Ah. I have finished the first two letters and now I understand why Mother is worried. Father expressed himself with fanciful words, and these letters are filled with plain-spoken descriptions of Yankee know-how. What's more, the stories he told never dwelt on practical matters like the old-fashioned jerker rods that we still use to this day on our oil-fields. They are connected to a single pump house, and when you walk in our oil fields the sight of the jerker rods is what draws your eye: hundreds upon hundreds of horizontal wooden sticks sliding noisily back and forth above the ground. I am bewildered by Father's enthusiastic descriptions in his letter because he was never interested in our jerker rod system, or for that matter, the way a swollen seed bag could keep the oil from being wasted. Father preferred to recite "The Song of Hiawatha" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and he never deigned to ask Mother about the rigs.

Is it possible Father developed his dreamy inclinations once he struck oil? It has been known to happen. The human personality is inventive when its survival is challenged. But once the challenge has been met, it can blossom into artistic expression. So perhaps that was the case with Father, who was forever painting and drawing while Mother and Tim, the field hand, ran McGill Oil.

6.

I start on the third letter, and then put it down, smiling. How could I have forgotten? I met the man these letters are addressed to when I was nine. His name was Jeffrey McGill. The year was 1892, and I was helping Mother hang an oil painting Father had made of the main street in Petrolia. It was the last picture he painted before the bad business with the nitroglycerine.

Mother invited Jeffrey McGill for iced tea on the verandah, and he sat down, mopping his face with a handkerchief. Father was resting, Mother said. She explained that Father has not been in his right mind since he was injured.

"My husband is not very handy," she said. "And he had the misfortune to be shooting a well near here when the dynamite went off. It was the last of his accidents, the poor lamb."

"You say Chas is not handy?" Mr. McGill sounded surprised.

Mother smiled. "My husband is a dreamer. I am more practical and together we have made a good home for our son." Her gaze drifted off to the oil derricks beyond the family pond and then rested on me. I was sitting on the porch swing, holding my toy sailboat.

"This is Chas Junior," my mother said. "He takes after his father."

Jeffrey McGill looked searchingly at my face. "I cannot see the likeness," he remarked. "But I am most eager to see my brother, Mrs. McGill. It has been 30 years since I heard from him."

"Chas wrote you?" Mother looked puzzled. "He never told me he had an older brother."

"My brother's letters stopped in December, 1862. I couldn't leave home to come north and find out why. I own canal boats on Lake Champlain, and my business left me no time for such journeys."

"You say my husband's letters stopped in December 1862?" Mother asked. "In December his best friend, Van Bartley, drowned in an oil well."

Mr. McGill stared off at the pump jacks going up and down in the meadows. He seemed unhappy to hear Mother's news. "My brother has done well for himself," he said finally.

"Are you in need of money?" Mother asked.

He shook his head vigorously. "I was the one who financed my brother's trip to Oil Springs."

"So you think you deserve a share in what he found?" Mother replied, a quaver in her voice.

"Mrs. McGill, my doctor says I have only a few months to live so I have come to say goodbye to Chas."

Mother and I stared at him curiously. It was true he did not look well. His eyes were ringed with black circles and moisture dripped from his face as if the man was overcome by the tropical heat that used to be common in Petrolia 350 million years ago, when McGill oil was being made.

"Please, ma'am," he said. "Can I see Chas?"

He looked at Mother so bespeakingly she took my hand and the three of us went into the second parlour where she had set up Father's bed. I was used to the pitiful sight Father made lying on his mattress. He slept downstairs because he no longer had the strength to climb up to his bedroom on the third floor.

"Is he blind in that eye?" Jeffrey McGill whispered, looking at Father's eyepatch.

"Yes, and now he can no longer speak," Mother replied. "But if you ask him a question, he will write his answer on the slate by his bed."

Jeffrey McGill came close to Father and said: "I am your brother, Jeffrey. Do you remember me? Thirty years have passed since you and I saw each other."

Father buried his head under his pillow, groaning so Mr. McGill suggested he read some of the letters he brought with him to help Father remember.

Mother nodded and, in a calm, reassuring voice, Jeffrey McGill started reading out loud. Immediately, Father began to wail piteously and Mother rushed to his side.

"You have frightened him," Mother cried.

"I am trying to learn the truth," Jeffrey McGill retorted. "My brother was not blind in one eye."

"You haven't seen him in 30 years." Mother spoke loudly so she could be heard above the noise of Father's cries. "Now I must ask you to leave."

"I tell you this man is not Chas." Jeffrey McGill gripped Mother by her shoulders. "I'll know it's Chas if you let me see his feet."

"Sir, you forget yourself," Mother replied, shaking free of his hands. "Please go this instant."

7.

I had forgotten Jeffrey McGill's peculiar request to see Father's feet. Not only did he want to see Father's feet, he asked to see mine. But I am getting ahead of myself.

*Oil Springs, Canada West,  
October 9, 1862.*

*Dear Jeffrey:*

*Van's scheme to sell cardboard patterns for men's shirts is a failure. The farmwomen here close their doors on strangers thinking they are hooligans from the taverns at Wilkesport. So Van is discouraged and often complains that our digestive powers have suffered from drinking out of the oily stream. He wants to go to Pennsylvania where he says the oil does not stink of sulphur the way it does here.*

*To make matters worse, Van was kicked out of our hotel for picking a fight with one of our bunkmates.*

*So we have put up a shanty on a 1/2 acre lot sold to me by a local shepherd. The smoke goes directly up and out a hole in the roof, and we sleep on hemlock boughs. We have nicknamed our quarters McGill's Folly and when I strike oil, I will make McGill's Folly a mansion fit for a president.*

*Every day, Van goes to the tavern while I help other men with their oil rigs, and every night I stuff my boots with oak leaves to soften their soles, which are worn through from the action of my foot*

*on the treadle. Digging with a treadle takes a physical toll on a man like myself, with his monster toes. They swell up at night and cause me no end of pain. Blast the ancestor who gave us this deformity!*

*Your brother,  
Chas*

8.

Jeffrey McGill's peculiar question about seeing Father's feet came up again shortly after we left Father's bedroom.

"Did he never speak of having a brother then?" Mr. McGill asked Mother in the hallway.

She hesitated.

I could tell she was trying to remember.

I caught the stranger's eye and said: "Father told me he had a younger brother in Detroit."

Jeffrey McGill stood still as can be. "I am living proof that is not so," he replied.

"Chas, please go outside and play with your sailboat," Mother said fiercely.

I did as I was told and a few minutes later, Jeffrey McGill came down our verandah steps and over to where I stood in Father's fountain, sailing my boat. By then, I had taken off my boots and rolled up my pants, and he asked me to come out of the water so he could see something.

As we stood talking, I could hear the familiar creak-creak-creak of the jerker rods in the nearby oil fields. The sound always made me think of the tales by Edgar Allan Poe that Mother read me at bedtime, and that afternoon, while I chatted with our visitor, I felt myself shiver.

"What do you want to see?" I asked.

"Your toes," he replied. "I want to see if they are like mine."

I felt shy about showing him my feet so I stayed in the pool.

"The toes of the men in my family are webbed," he said. "I wondered if yours are the same."

With that, I lifted my foot out of the water and showed it to Jeffrey McGill.

"So you do not share our family trait." He looked so angry I felt afraid.

At that moment, Mother appeared. "Mr. McGill, why are you still here talking to my boy? I asked you to leave."

"The man you call your husband is not Chas. And here is my proof!" He waved the letters as if he was wielding a scythe to cut Mother down. "It means your oil wells belong to me."

"You are a fortune hunter," she cried.

"And you, madam, are living off property that isn't yours," he retorted.

"That's a lie," Mother replied. "I am an honest woman." She began to weep.

"Don't be mean to Mummy," I said, tugging at his jacket.

He looked ashamed of himself. "If you read the letters you will come to the same conclusion I have." He handed Mother the letters. "Your husband is an imposter who somehow got his hands on my brother's wells."

He swung himself up on his horse. "I will come back for the letters in two days and then you and I will have a talk, Mrs. McGill." He looked down at me, smiling. "And if you really are Chas's boy, you will grow up to be a good man."

9.

Here are the last letters to Jeffrey McGill, with their claim to our home and oil fields.

*Oil Springs, Canada West,  
October 29, 1862.*

*Dear Jeffrey: Yesterday Van and me had a fight. He has gone to Brigden to live with a farmwife, and I am back "canalling" again. The autumn rains have arrived, and I spend my days up to my waist dragging stone boats to the railroad station in Wyoming. You would be astonished to see me working in "the canal,"*

as they call the slick muddy path that runs through the Great Swamp of Enniskillen. Each stone boat has a flat bottom and can hold two thirty-five-gallon barrels of oil. At night, I wash my clothes in the creek by our shanty and am too exhausted to talk.

Your brother,  
Chas

Oil Springs, Canada West,  
Dec. 16, 1862.

Dear Jeffrey: An oil smeller has divined oil at the bottom of my hillock. I have named the well Old Shepherd after the shepherd who sold me my lot and I spend up to 18 hours every day jiggling down.

Alas, I have parted ways with Van for good. He is drinking more every day, and when I hit a gusher, he says he wants his share because he helped me establish myself in Oil Springs. I have told him that he will get nothing from me. He spends all his days in the tavern and has not put in one hour on my oil rigs.

Tomorrow I expect my rig to reach a depth of 130 feet. My crew is prepared for the well to blow, and I have warned them to stand back because dangerous gases come up with the oil. Men have died after being overwhelmed by the noxious fumes.

If anything happens to me, I am leaving the oil well to you, Jeffrey. I have commissioned a photographer to do my portrait and the law firm Bradford & Son has drawn up a will that states my intentions.

Your brother,  
Chas

10.

Old letters are not corroborating evidence. Nevertheless, it's clear the man who wrote these letters wanted to leave his oil well to his brother, Jeffrey. It's far less clear who the man was. If he were the real

Charles McGill, then who was Father? Van Bartley, the drunkard friend mentioned in the letters?

There are no more letters after this one. Is it possible their author fell into his well after being overcome by toxic fumes? Or is the truth something worse? What if Father pushed Charles McGill into the well? If Father is a murderer then we cannot retain any portion of Craiglochie with its prosperous oil fields.

But Father would never do something so cruel. It is more likely the oilman fell into the well by accident and Father thought he was doing nothing wrong when he claimed the land as his own. After all, Father was only 19 when he walked the Black Creek trail to Oil Springs. He was a young man wanting to get ahead the way young men have always done. So what was the harm in posing as the owner of his friend's well? How could he know the other man had bequeathed the oil well to his brother?

Yet, how terrible to think Father lied to us all these years! How terrible to consider the possibility that he was deliberately fooling Mother and me! Especially Mother, who waited on him hand and foot.

There is no point speculating. If what the letters say is true, we have two choices: we can give back the oil wells or pretend the letters don't exist and go on as before. After all, we are the ones who planted the pear orchards and built the oil derricks. We are also the ones who pay the men on the rigs. And we are the ones who give daily business to the shop owners in these parts. Why should we have to hand over the fruits of our labours?

Yes, why should we hand over our property to someone who won't run the oil rigs as successfully as Mother and Tim? Who would neglect our well-tended pear orchards? I can't move Mother out of her home at her age! My small apartment in Ottawa isn't up to her standards. She has been raised to be a hostess of a grand establishment like Craiglochie. She won't know what to make of Ottawa, where the politicians eat each other for breakfast.

I will talk to William Lyon about this mess. He won't let me down. I'm one of his upcoming younger members. Just a few weeks ago, he hinted about giving me a cabinet post. In the meantime, I have remembered the rest of Jeffrey McGill's visit and how the letters came to be in the chimney.

11.

After Jeffrey McGill departed from Petrolia, Mother sat on the front porch clutching the letters. She looked as sad as she did the day Father was harmed in the nitroglycerine explosion.

"Are you going to read them?" I asked.

"Not yet." Mother sighed. "Chas, I will go for a walk first and clear my head."

When I asked if I could come with her, she told me she needed to be alone so she could collect herself. She often walked in the oil fields when she felt discouraged. She said the creaking noise of the jerker rods proves there will always be money for us, even if God decides to take Father up to Heaven.

When I could see her walking among the jerker rods, I snatched up the letters, praying she would not return and catch me. I put the letters in a metal box I stole from Father's studio and hid the box in the secret panel in the chimney. It was the panel that Father used to stash his liquor. I caught him doing it once and he swore me to secrecy.

I was in bed by the time Mother came back from her walk. She peered in the door of my bedroom and asked if I knew what had happened to the letters.

"Did you take them?" she said.

"Mother, I cannot read very well," I reminded her.

"Ah, that's right," she replied. "What would you want with a bunch of old letters?"

The next day she asked Bessie and Tim, the farmhand, but neither of them had seen Jeffrey McGill's letters. Later that day Jeffrey McGill sent word that he had to return home on unexpected

business, and he asked Mother to return his letters in the post.

Father died soon after, and Mother was too busy with the funeral to think any more about the letters. Then one of Jeffrey McGill's relatives sent us word that he had died of heart failure.

12.

So now here I am, back in my childhood bedroom at Craiglochie, wondering what to tell Mother. As if on cue, she opens the door, an oil lamp in her hand. When I nod in friendly fashion, she limps toward me in her buttoned boots and peers up at my face.

"The town clerk is downstairs. He has found an old will at city hall by a man named Charles McGill."

"You told the clerk about the letters?" I cry. "Without asking me?"

"It was the right thing to do," she says stubbornly. As I try to argue her out of her idiotic idea, a shower of light fills the room. In astonishment, we turn towards the window.

Outside, the moon is rising over the pear orchards. It has come up suddenly, the way it does in the countryside. Oh, how I have loved Craiglochie – the meadows where bluebirds nest on our fence posts; the large, screened-in verandah where Mother and I take afternoon tea; the Staffordshire fire dogs, the dark red porcelain lamps from China, the stately butler's chair with its wooden wings, the spool beds custom-designed for us in New York.

Mother puts a finger to her lips and whispers: "Ssssh, Chas. Do you hear something?" Mother is somewhat deaf, and she is often confused by unexpected noises. We both listen. At first, I hear nothing because the sound is so familiar. Then, as if to mock me, comes the creak of the wooden jerker rods hauling our oily treasure out of the earth.

# A FLIGHT OF DRAGONS

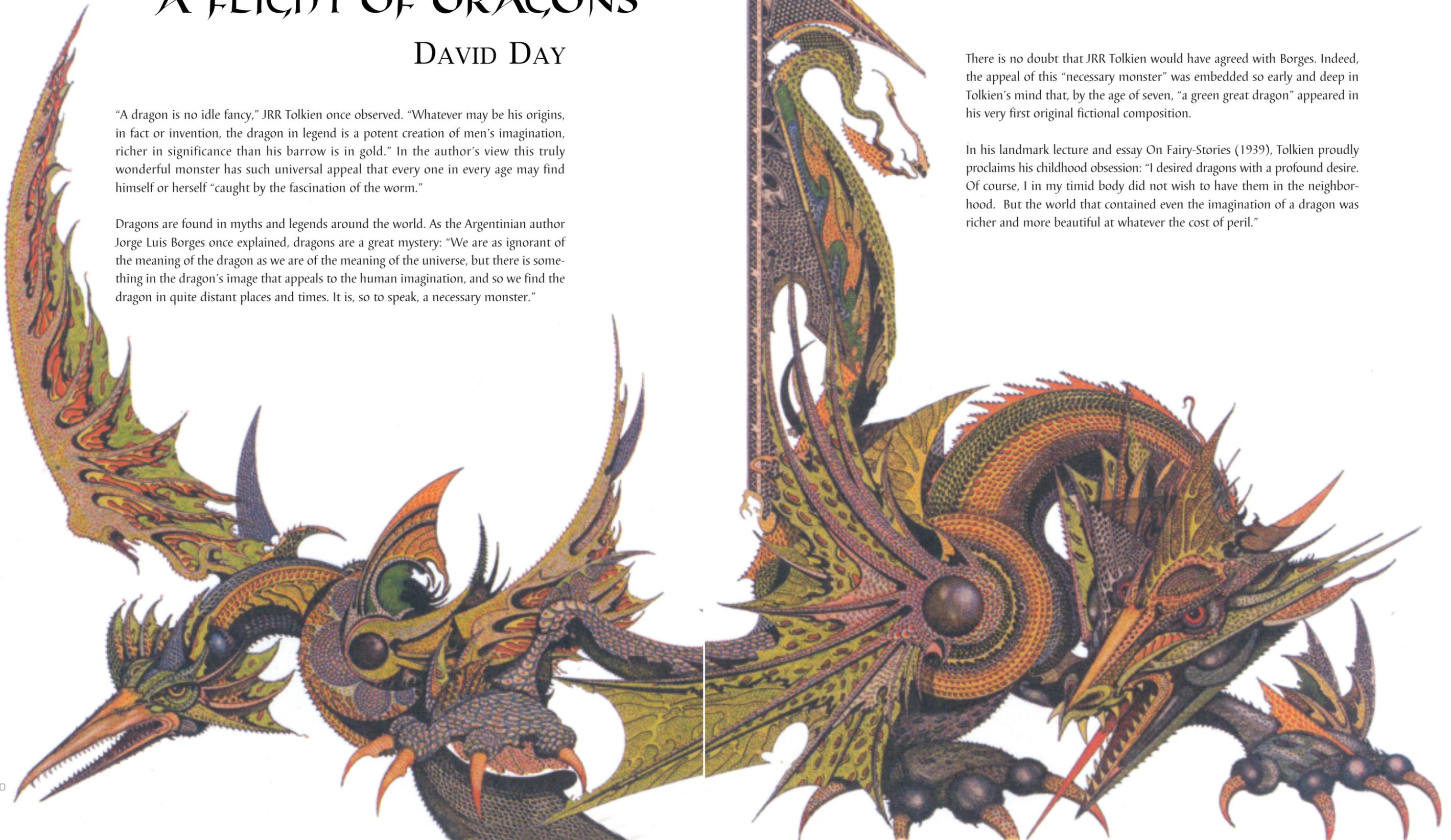
DAVID DAY

"A dragon is no idle fancy," JRR Tolkien once observed. "Whatever may be his origins, in fact or invention, the dragon in legend is a potent creation of men's imagination, richer in significance than his barrow is in gold." In the author's view this truly wonderful monster has such universal appeal that every one in every age may find himself or herself "caught by the fascination of the worm."

Dragons are found in myths and legends around the world. As the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges once explained, dragons are a great mystery: "We are as ignorant of the meaning of the dragon as we are of the meaning of the universe, but there is something in the dragon's image that appeals to the human imagination, and so we find the dragon in quite distant places and times. It is, so to speak, a necessary monster."

There is no doubt that JRR Tolkien would have agreed with Borges. Indeed, the appeal of this "necessary monster" was embedded so early and deep in Tolkien's mind that, by the age of seven, "a green great dragon" appeared in his very first original fictional composition.

In his landmark lecture and essay *On Fairy-Stories* (1939), Tolkien proudly proclaims his childhood obsession: "I desired dragons with a profound desire. Of course, I in my timid body did not wish to have them in the neighborhood. But the world that contained even the imagination of a dragon was richer and more beautiful at whatever the cost of peril."



Over the past 40 years, I have become something of a connoisseur of dragons and associated mythological monsters. In 1979, I published *A Tolkien Bestiary*, the first illustrated encyclopedic guide to Middle-earth. In that book, I referred to myself as a student of teratology: the study of monstrous and miraculous beings. At the time, it was not an entirely serious claim, however, after four decades spent in the writing of a dozen books on JRR Tolkien's world, I think I am entitled (at least for the purposes of this essay) to assume the mantle of a professional teratologist.

Over those years, it has been one of the great pleasures of my life to have collaborated on these books with so many extraordinary artists. This was particularly true in my exploration of the vast landscapes of JRR Tolkien's Middle-earth: the largest and most complex mythological systems ever invented by a single author in all of literature. And of all the inhabitants of that world, the most illustratively challenging for those artists in my books has been in their evolution of original and inspiring depictions of Tolkien's dragons.

From the beginning, the dragon was chosen as Middle-earth's emblematic beast: Ian Miller's dragon cover for *A Tolkien Bestiary* has become a much-admired classic of its kind that has been reproduced in over a hundred and fifty editions in 18 languages. There is a perennial appeal to Miller's art and unique style and technique that is immediately recognizable. This is in good part due to his trademark pen and ink "tight-pen style" that gives his work a surface akin to a Dureresque metal-plate engraving: as can be seen here in his illustration of Tolkien's Scatha the Worm. An artist whose work spans a variety of media, Ian's fans in the film industry include Ralph Bakshi, Michael Crichton and Guillermo del Toro. Del Toro claims to have been inspired as a filmmaker by Ian Miller and acknowledged him as "the foremost illustrator of late 20th century fantasy."





In his youth, Tolkien claimed to search for “dragons, real dragons, essential both to the machinery and the idea of a poem or tale.” He discovered one such monster in the nameless dragon in the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* that ultimately inspired both the plot of *The Hobbit* and the creation of that book’s famous dragon, Smaug the Golden. In the Old English poem, a thief enters the dragon’s lair and steals a gold cup. In Tolkien’s tale, the thief is the titular Hobbit, Bilbo Baggins. And in both tales, the theft of a gold cup awakens a sleeping dragon. *The Hobbit* is essentially the *Beowulf* dragon story told from the thief’s point of view.

The death of Smaug the Golden Dragon of Erebor is certainly one of the most dramatic moments in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*. It is also one of the most challenging events for an artist to attempt to illustrate. Kip Rasmussen, a talented and emerging American fantasy artist, created this 2018 portrayal of Bard the Bowman’s arrow piercing the soft underbelly of that great dragon. It is a stunning and original vision of that critical turning point in Tolkien’s novel.

It is interesting to compare Kip’s version of this event with that of the British fantasy artist Allan Curless, who was commissioned to re-create exactly the same scene 39 years earlier. Allan was one of the most adaptable and prolific contributors to *A Tolkien Bestiary* in 1979 – and its successor, *Tolkien: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* in 1992. This panoramic portrayal of the Death of Smaug has proved to be among the most popular and frequently reproduced art works. Sadly, Allan Curless who was also a political cartoonist for the *Sunday Times*, passed away too soon at the age of 47 in 1997.

Death of Smaug  
the Golden Dragon



In the 1980s and 90s, my education as a teratologist grew exponentially with the publication of over a dozen illustrated books for adults and children. This was especially true with the three books I conceived in collaboration with the English illustrator, Alan Lee. The first was simply entitled *Castles* (1984): a grand tour of castles in history, mythology, fairy tales and literature. And of course, there were dragons, however, it wasn't until we created Tolkien's *Ring* (1994) that Alan first really ventured into Tolkien's world.

Subsequently, Alan Lee has become the most celebrated Illustrator of JRR Tolkien's world. He has been commissioned by the Tolkien Estate to illustrate all of Tolkien classic novels, plus most of his posthumous works as well. He also became a primary conceptual artist and designer for *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* film trilogies; and in 2004 won an academy award as art director of *The Return of the King*. The series director, Peter Jackson, said of Alan Lee: "His art captured what I hoped to capture with the films."





With the new millennia, new styles and trends evolved in the portrayal of dragons. In *The World of Tolkien* in 2002, Sam Hadley brought something of a heavy metal look to the monsters and denizens of Middle-earth. Hadley is a highly adaptable British commercial artist who produced works of art that ranged from book covers to billboards and video games to hand-painted murals, as well as advertising and editing and packaging. He has a wide range of styles from photo realistic airbrushing to more traditional painting and drawing for clients like Saatchi & Saatchi, Carlsberg, Madison Square Gardens and the English National Opera.

From 2014 to 2020, I undertook a six-volume series of Tolkien reference books in a new compact flexi-bound format that integrated many of the artists of the past with a new generation of talent. It was designed as somewhat imitative of Andrew Lang's famous fin-de-siecle illustrated Faerie Book series – each book with a different coloured embossed cover.

The Italian Mauro Mazza and the American Kip Rasmussen are two newly commissioned artists in this series who are rising stars in the firmament of fantasy illustrators. Mauro and Kip both took on the formidable challenge of illustrating dragons who emerged from the primeval world revealed in Tolkien's *Silmarillion*. These were monsters of an archaic and heroic age of Middle-earth that preceded the time of Smaug the Golden in the *Hobbit* by over six thousand years.

Mauro Mazza took on the task of portraying the ancient terror of Tolkien's First Age: Glaurung the Father of Dragons. Glaurung was the first fire-breathing dragon released upon the world. The life and death of Glaurung is one of the central tales in *The Silmarillion*, and was very much inspired by the *Volsunga Saga* and its portrayal of Fafnir, the monster that Tolkien considered the most formidable dragon in Germanic literature, and awarded the epithet: "Prince of all Dragons."

Mauro proved to be a gifted artist with a flamboyant and dramatic style that draws on – and pays tribute to – the remarkable past century of fantasy illustration. He also has a considerable knowledge of ancient cultures that is essential in these books, as they are much concerned with the historic, literary and cultural inspiration behind Tolkien's writing. Mauro is a versatile freelance illustrator who works in publishing, fashion and advertising, and teaches drawing and painting at Scuola Internazionale di Comics in the ancient city of Brescia.





Kip Rasmussen is particularly attuned to the poetic language of Tolkien's writing and responded as an artist by creating haunting and evocative scenes of great beauty and power. This was especially true in his atmospheric illustrations of primaevial dragon-haunted lost world of Tolkien's First Age. His illustrations have been included in Peter Jackson's DVD *The Hobbit the Desolation of Smaug*. Kip is also an author and independent film producer.

Kip Rasmussen has specialized in drawing subjects and scenes from *The Silmarillion*, the work he considers most fundamental to Tolkien's legendarium. Consequently, he was the natural choice for portraying Ancalagon the Black, the largest and greatest of the vast legion of winged fire drakes released in the final battle of the War of Wrath. The attack of Ancalagon (meaning "rushing jaws") in that last Great Battle has precedence in the account of the Norse battle of Ragnarok found in the Old Norse poem *Voluspa*, wherein "the flying dragon, glowing serpent" known as Nidhogg (meaning "malice striker") emerges from the underworld of Niflheim. Like Nidhogg, the ravening majesty that is Ancalagon emerges from Tolkien's underworld of Angband and unleashes terrible withering flames down from the heavens.

- Page(s) / Artist / Book Title, Publisher, Year  
50-51 & 53 / Ian Miller / *A Tolkien Bestiary*, Ballantine Books, 1979.  
54 & 64 / Kip Rasmussen / *The Dark Powers of Tolkien*, Thunder Bay Press, 2019.  
56 / Allan Curless / *A Tolkien Bestiary*, Ballantine Books, 1979  
59 / Alan Lee / *Castles*, Bantam Books, 1984.  
60 / Sam Hadley / *World of Tolkien*, Mitchell Beasley, 2002.  
63 / Mauro Mazzaro / *Battles of Tolkien*, Thunder Bay Press, 2016.

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# TUMULUS

## BASMA KAVANAGH

1.

Relentless, staggered thunderclap of breakers exploding against incurved cliffs, cascading from the headland, rumbling and cracking. They collapse towards the cove: slam against rock, splitting, spuming across boulders and shoals. Bouncing back, incoming crests collide, tear, pop, sizzle up the beach. Muscling large stones and small ice floes, a tonne of sediment shaken and tumbled, abruptly released. The briefest lull, scooped into suck and clatter, grumbling whoosh of water sliding out below the break, gathered—a ruff of foam and cobble—into the next wave.

2.

Mitts off, cold hands out to riffle damp sand, sifting as the tide sifts. Storms bring metal to the surface, lift polished glass, plastic and Formica, a mosaic of porcelain bits. Maybe a worn marble, cloudy and pea-sized. Here, shells smashed and rounded, barnacles ground from the reef. We keep our eyes peeled for lacy forks, tines curled back, handles bent at right angles—every wave a hammer, every rock an anvil. Paper-thin butter knives, pocked and corroded, spoons bent by the ocean's mind. Eyes catch on curves and edges: a pipe clamp, coiled copper wire, *a coin*. Silver-smooth ghost of a dime. Hefty old penny, vines visible still. A quarter, a bite out of it, peppered with holes. The breakers winnow battered treasure from pulverized shale. The worse the better; the weather, our pilfered finds.

3.

With our father, we play on pans of ice in winter. Clampers, we call them. Frozen and re-frozen, broken, on their journey here, the pieces merge at weird angles, padded with snow, coated with fresh ice. They roam and drift with wind. A herd, a puzzle, too big to lift, ever-shifting, shaped like sheep or bathtubs, mattresses, giant cakes, castles. My sister and I do gymnastics, live to climb and tumble. Clamper-hopping feels like vault or balance beam, except no hands. Starting at the reef, we hop, one tippy pan to the next. Best when wind drives ice against the cliff, the whole cove crammed. Sometimes they see-saw under our weight, dip into frigid water; some slush, not ice. They groan, creak, whisper. You have to leap, leap, keep leaping. Some snowy, easier to grip, some slick and rounded. The trick—to never fall in, a next move ready, goat-nimble in winter boots and coat.

4.

The every-season gurgle-slop of the little stream spilling out the *v* of its cliff-top channel, *pitterpatter blobblob sploosh*. Sour, ragged drizzle of rust-coloured water trailing from the overhang, sopping soil, long grass roots. Wind-strewn, it slaps the rock face, trickles and seeps. Down ledges and mineral seams, detours into fissures. Pauses. Tries to find the muddy dump at the bottom—a slouching midden, hump of sewage, coal dust, silt, and sludge, household garbage—generations of junk, ripening. Drawn to the heap like gulls, we poke with found sticks from the beach, pick and pry the clayey layers, dig down.

5.

Late summer, far back as I remember, we play in the breakers—the name we learn for legions of huge waves that follow hurricanes. The game—to wade out a wide ledge of reef with the tide coming in, face open ocean, let enormous waves wallop you as they break, yank your feet, haul you into deep water. Be ready to yield, to grab a lungful of air, last a dreamy half-minute—trapped—under waves. I open my eyes, watch sheets of foam scatter through belts of blue-green water. I roll like a pebble, ripple like seaweed. I wait. It's a sin how many drown here. The breakers spit us out by the beach, curling wide and low across shallower reef, roaring churn of air and water meeting scarred shelves of Carboniferous rock. We stagger from the fray, ears ringing, clamber up stained ledges, scramble around the reef to go again.

6.

His bi-fold pantry door squeaks on its rails, no matter how you open it; we try fast, then stealthy-slow. Swim-tired and shivery, or ravenous after picking frost-puckered cranberries, my sister and I perch, search for snacks on shelves—Milk Lunch in their purple box, tinned corned beef with a key on its belt, saltines, homemade green tomato chow-chow and relish in jars. Turnip, carrots, and cabbage at the bottom in the dark. Mysterious Hard Tack on a high shelf. Maybe we find a yellow bag of ripple chips from *The Cowap*. If we're lucky, Grandpa will fry a slice of black pudding, or bologna, impale soft white bread on a long knife, toast it over a hot element while fat sputters in the cast-iron pan, *Did I ever tell you the story about the three holes in the ground? Well, well, well...* we groan, devour the incomparable toast that tapers from wide crust to cut edge, compressed by the knife, the glaze of butter, warm in his company.

7.

The mines close: no more tailings dumped, and the backshore shrinks, scoured away in winter. One bad storm—the road vanishes. No one takes a car down, not for years, there's no room to turn around, but New Aberdeen wants its beach. Town sends a backhoe to carve a ledge. Once, then twice, the ocean swipes it. Now we scramble—drop fifty, sixty feet—fast-slow, skidding, rubble slithers underfoot, loose hunks clatter, race us to the bottom. Outcrops near the reef cave in, flaunt fossil-forests, columns of giant horsetail entombed for eons. Timbers of old mine shafts—early French, or bootleg—bristle the shifting slope. Garbage twinkles from the muck pile below the stream, whole beach to ourselves.

8.

Bottles become our obsession, blue glass and amber, lavender and aquamarine; which machine made, which handblown. *Oh, lookit this!* Threaded lids still attached, or corks intact. Sometimes labels. Ink bottles. Itty-bitty vials, jars, emptied of salves, tonics, balms, and drops. Booze. Vicks, Noxema, Javex, ammonia, gin. Brown cod liver oil bottles fashioned with a fisherman lugging a cod—head resting on his shoulder, tail hanging to his feet. Manky, blackened tins we toss aside. The odd cup and saucer, rarely intact, some nearly transparent; we mime sipping tea, pinkies raised. The heap predates plastic, preserving trash that wouldn't burn. Tossed from company homes above, a hundred years' worth, now exhumed by ever-higher tides. In No. 2, everyone suffered mustard powder, cod liver oil, chesty coughs. Three kids to a bed sometimes; a dozen people sardined in each tiny half-house.

9.

*Whas yer faaather's name?* everyone drawls—kids, adults. Up close, scrutinizing. In other words, who are we? Where are we from? How did we come to be jumping off this reef? At first, we answer wrong. Sun-browned, shivering, dripping snot and salt, we go from blending in to standing out. A ripple, a whiff. We call him something else; he has another name here. We name cousins, aunts, our Grandpa, triangulate relationships. *Ah, yer Dowoight's girls,* someone proclaims, pleased. The ripple vanishes. *Dowoight?* Who's he?

10.

Squatting on the cold beach, hunched over heaped shale, noses dripping, opening the brittle book-sized blocks, breath held: *Don't break!* Cold fingers stroke fern-fronds, fine-veined leaves, scaly bark and perforated roots, testing the perfect fit—each fossil and its twin. We want to split every flaking rock, fill our straining pockets, beg to visit the secluded cove, make the blustery walk from Grandpa's house. Leaning into wind, struggling over treeless heath, catching our breath in sinkhole troughs. We teeter along the rails of snarled spur-lines leading nowhere, crunch across a scree of coal past ruined, tilting towers—the mute, salt-blasted colliery, its seized flywheels and hoists. Hurry below the high-tide snarl of plastic jugs, rope, and mangled bicycles, to search. Heads bowed, prying silently at lump after lump.

11.

From under the peel of an apple, an egg, an onion—several strata of well-worn jokes, under the nearly silent laugh hissing from the toothy crack of an opened mouth. Under a flapping army rain poncho, under the thundering breakers. Under the modern sinks and bathtub, the vegetable garden, the vanished birch groves. Under ruffled flags, sepia pomp, little girls parading first communion dresses, newly shined shoes on the unaccustomed feet of the boys. Out from under the thumb of the church at last. Under the stories of hand-dug tunnels, under hunger and fist-fights, strikes, the clanging trolley, its flexed steel tracks. Under a row of morning glories scraped into poor soil by the old house. Under the dole, the drinking, early deaths, wasting-diseases. Exposed timbers of bootleg mines, the red and black debris of underground fires, under coal seams, miles-deep shafts wetly veining bedrock beneath the Atlantic—something still leaches.

12.

Not my stories in the crumbling priests' ledger, but my ancestors and neighbours—we're all related, anyway—populate its pages. Every sin and indiscretion, each moral failure scrupulously detailed. A manual—how to control a parish. Prayer, penance, a list of secrets—the scribes' trespasses left out. A huge crowd gathers. Two excavators nip grey siding. Broken-windowed teenage-hangout. Fire-trap. Eyesore. The once-grand church defrocked. Old posts and laths shatter, dry beams—squealing—split. The machines rip away flesh, leave it weaving. Bare-ankled, bony. They push together from one side, the structure flexes, buckles, cracks—lurches sideways. An explosion of wood, glass, plaster, cloud of black dust. It keels over, a movie dinosaur slamming into mud. The whole neighbourhood shudders.

13.

Time catches and piles on the reef; streams by, creaking, keening, groaning. Quick on the current, turning on a dime, rolling. Time tinted red by the island, or milky turquoise as winter ocean. Time shushing, slides over itself, sinks. Time grinds onto the beach with a juddering howl. Time riming the shore, thick and smoothed by waves, shearing away rock, digging trenches, burrowing. Drifting in and out with the tide. Blown on a gale, jamming the bay. Time in a glittering heap—shrinking, vanishing.

Linda Rogers  
RAPUNZEL

It hurt like hell when Skip cut my braids off. I'm not kidding. Hair has feelings, just like carrots and elephants, who actually cry out loud, but Skip and my mother were oblivious to my pain. In the Skip moment, I found out some people have no nerve endings, their neurotransmitters snipped off, just like my long golden hair.

I loved my hair, loved the story of Rapunzel, which my brother read to me before I taught myself to compensate for our AWOL egg and sperm donors, who were too busy being a prince and princess themselves to weave fantasy gardens for kids.

Rapunzel grew her hair into a long rope that let her prince climb into the tower where she lived alone, reading comics, and eating ice cream delivered by good fairies at midnight. I had similar aspirations, and then, one summer day, Skip, the *au pair*, my mother's confidante, brought them crashing down.

We were having a grace and favour holiday, the guests of sympathetic friends who had a beach cottage and a wild Welsh mountain pony that resented adults much as I did. No one else could feed that pony apples without having their hand bitten off. No one else could get on her without being bucked off.

That was the summer I discovered it is harder to control a deranged mother than a willful horse. Some mothers cannot be charmed or distracted. Some mothers must be obeyed. Mine was on a mission and Skip was her besotted accomplice.

On the gender spectrum, I had been a restless nerd, a girl who needed books to devour and trees to climb, one who argued fiercely, and argued to win. I had been judged a tomboy who loved fern fights and playing horses with my friend, Madelyn – Mad for short – but wrong, I was all girl, planting my flag in no girls' land.

I had revelled in androgyny, *She for the Goddess only, He for the Goddess in her*, but my female parent had a new imperative. The needle had to move. She now required a male child. Not my decision. I mention this because someone, Skip, not my mother, who is now gaga, would argue that I had asked for the transformation.

Without notice, my Wettums doll was consigned to the nuisance ground. I was told her insides had rotted from constant feeding and she'd died in the doll hospital. My beautiful dresses, sent by an aunt whose obsessive need to smock held off alcoholism for a while, were donated to a thrift shop. I was given a holster with two cap pistols and permission to attend the cultural war in our lane – the annihilation of Indigenous surrogates.

Heretofore, my play persona had been Sacajawea, the brains of the Lewis and Clarke expeditions. I stood on the high rock in the Simpson boys' yard and argued for peace and reconciliation, my peace pipe filled with tobacco swiped from my father's pouch. In my new crewcut and khaki shorts, I transformed into Gene Autry, the crooning cow-girl. Until I started to go to Saturday matinees and saw him singing "Home on the Range," I'd identified with Gene, somewhere else on the spectrum.

Skip, our rescue nanny, was a former gang member. I gave her a wide berth. She was the egg donor's *au pair*, and I learned from my autodidact French study about Madame Sourire, a mouse that smiled, who should have meant an extra pair of hands to wash the dishes, and fold the laundry, not to pick up a pair of scissors and change my life. Again. Snip.



Skip was way farther down the androgyny road than I was, with her cropped hair and boy walk. My brother explained what that meant. He explained gaydom, told me he had sex feelings for boys. I didn't even know what sex feelings were, even after being accosted by a man without pants in the woods where

we built forts and picked huckleberries; and the Mountie who came to interview me asked about certain words, which I denied knowing. Of course.

Realizing I needed to speak the language of jurisprudence, I upped my game, researched the proper names for a few body parts and helped put a couple of pervs in jail, but I still thought the whole crime was exposure, undressing in public and trying to convince little girls that the thingy dangling between their legs was a doll to play with. I knew dolls were inanimate, not dangly body parts. Dolls were for little girls, just as babies were for mums and *nannies*. Such was the child-received division of gender in those days and the rest of it was ether, non-empirical.

When our biology teacher told us the penis fit in the vagina like a hand in a glove, oh really? I was truly surprised.

We were free-range kids. The woods were not forbidden, an omission I now find strange, but such is the detachment of narcissistic parents. Details like safety hardly mattered, until they did.

Today, I watched a video of a toddler walking through an open gate in the fence around a swimming pool and, duh, tumbling in. The dad, known as Duh for the purpose of this retelling, told media after he saved the kid from drowning, "I'm going public so people will pay attention to pool safety." Oh, Duh, you bought a pool. Pools are not all Hockney paintings. Stupid Dad.



The Big Change started with a family moment that led to my brother offering to trade his piggy bank for my skipping rope.

It was Sunday morning. Our parents were sleeping in. Normally we got ourselves up, poured cereal in a bowl, gobbled it, and left for Sunday school, where there was a heap of happy clapping and singing. We liked clapping and singing. We liked Jesus bidding us to shine. We liked the tender view of little sparrows and the fact that a man with a

gentle face loved us unconditionally, his little lambs. No one else in our post-colonial world used endearments like that.

But this Sunday, we defaulted. There was an interval in a storm, both at home and outside, where the trees in our garden shook, dropping apples on the lawn, and it looked like more weather was coming. Why risk getting soaked even though not going to church would mean we were in for the big Sunday sulk, words unspoken, food untouched? We were used to fights, our parents accusing one another of high crimes and misdemeanours that ranged from adultery to hoarding mother's little helpers.

Both units needed to be the centre of attention. Both were the children of invalids. Our grandfather was defoliated in the war to end all wars (if only). Our grandmother had a broken heart and had given what was left of it to Jesus, none of it left for the attention-seeking soprano we called Mum. We knew our parents' narcissism grew out of their parents' hypochondriacal self-absorption, and we also knew that that was no excuse.

When I think about how my brother and I were made, I see two broken sticks rubbing together, trying to start a fire that would thaw our frozen parents. *Suttee*, our style.

Our mother's desire for attention made her competitive with women and girls. She had to be number one. She had to be prettier than other girls, smarter than other girls. Our dad used the same playbook on my brother, constantly demeaning my mother's little fairy boy. Dad had to be king, and no princes. And no hiding places.

In general, we regarded them as theatre. They fought, they pouted, and apparently they fucked. They moved on and so did we. Domestic bumps had very little consequence in the larger theatre of Cold War raging around us, duck and cover, the need for bomb shelters.

This time was different. A small incident with my brother escalated and they kept it going all night long, while we kids barricaded ourselves behind my bedroom door.

The next night our fun couple went on a date – a concert and dinner – and after making fudge with a "smash," somewhere between a dash and half a cup of crème de menthe, we settled into the Mother Closet and began our rituals. First, we sniffed everything – her suits and dresses, her fur jackets, even her shoes – smearing it all with our fudge fingers. It's amazing how intoxicating the smell of her perfume mixed with sweat could be. High on mother musk, we selected our wardrobe, usually by sticky touch, my brother and I both favouring velvety as opposed to silky. We used the thumb test, rubbing the fabric between our thumbs and pointing fingers while sucking the other thumb. Whatever gave us sex feelings, we chose.

He settled on black velvet with a pink silk rose at the bosom and I picked the green Empire dress, trees being my optimum refuge. I loved the empire waistline and long sweeping skirt that trailed behind, her peekaboo bosoms aloft. She used that one a lot for recitals. My strawberry blonde hair was long and straight, my brother's longish for a boy, dark auburn and wavy as an oil slick. He twisted mine in a low chignon and pinned it with diamanté bobby pins. I lacquered his hair flat and back, like Hilary Swank at the Oscars the year she won for *Boys Don't Cry*. We took our time with make-up and, when we were done, sat side by side at her dressing table, gazing into our matching blue-green eyes, admiring our work. "Gorgeous," I said. He really was.

That was when they came in. That's when it started.

"It's all your fault," our father accused our mother. "You baby him."

"No, she's to blame. She's a dominatrix," our mother accused me.

"You're hardly ever home," I countered lamely.

It escalated. Things got thrown. Broken. We longed for Skip even though neither of us liked her. She had the knack of keeping our mother in check. But Skip was at an all-nighter. Her team had won the softball tournament and she was weekendening

with her gang. All night long, my brother and I lay side by side in my bed, with my chest of drawers against the door, wondering what came next.



Just at civil dawn, as the sun slipped like a golden yolk past the horizon and began its ascent, my father's eyes landed on the Warhol silk screen of my mother, and, when he called it a name she didn't like, she took an axe to it. Then she chopped up the oil painting of my father by his best friend who died in the war.

Everything in our house was defined by the war, war as a noun and a verb. While my father watched, I assume in masochistic fascination, my mother then took the axe to their conjugal bed, which she threw out the window in little pieces. Luckily, we weren't lurking on the terrace below.

Not that it didn't land on us anyway.

I wondered if my father was next. Really, I didn't care so long as she didn't come after my brother and me.

Finally, without drawing blood, she put down her weapon of mass destruction and passed out on the floor beside him. I always thought they enjoyed the fights, and later came to think of them as foreplay. The problem is they didn't let us in on their little drama secret. We thought the battles were real and we took them seriously.

When silence descended, we moved the furniture, cracked open the door, and verified the cease-fire, then tiptoed out of our safe room and made ourselves breakfast, adding the crème de menthe to our cereal. Crème de menthe was our comfort protest, carefully rationed, the crystallized bottle at the back of the liquor cabinet lasting forever. We saved it for fights. We were the grown-ups, sophisticated, wise, and they were the children. Crème de menthe validated us, and mixing it with milk, like Beethoven, is not as loud as it sounds.

In lieu of heading straight for Sunday school, where we swallowed the gospel and really good

breakfasts of pancakes and bacon, my brother went to his room and got his piggy bank. He was saving for the yellow brick road. I knew, based on experience, his midnight journeys were solo, that I would not be invited to join because our magical thinking took us in different directions, him to midnight and me to High Noon, the cowboy and Indian confrontations in our lane.

"Wanna trade?" he asked casually, holding out his pink pig, shaking it so I could hear it was full of coins.

"What for?" What did I have that could possibly match such a magnificent get?

"I want your skipping rope."

"My skipping rope. Are you kidding?"

"Nope. I want your skipping rope and all the rhymes that go with it." He said weird stuff like that. I wondered which ones he meant, really meant. "On a mountain stands a lady..." So far, so good. Boy-girl stuff. Romance.

"All she has is gold and silver." I get it. He's giving me his. "All she wants is a fine young man." (That was the existential question, I guess.)

"Okay," I said, and my visible friend, still wearing the velvet dress and high heels, took off across the street into the forest, swinging my skipping rope like a lariat.

"All the boys love Harriet," I sang. "Harriet's handy with a lariat / But Harriet doesn't wanna marry yet / She's having too much fun."

I was dying to run after him, but I knew he'd send me back. Besides, someone had to hold off the vigilantes.

Maybe, when my father was calling my brother names, he let him know it would be smart to be handy with a rope for skipping and tying knots, and tying girls up and branding them, which is more or less what happened to me. He was running away from home, something I dreamed about but, unlike him, never had the jam to carry out.

It looked like he was heading toward the fort in the woods where Mad and I played doctor. "No boys allowed," I yelled after him/her as he vanished

with a smirk, a very credible girl in high heels and evening dress. "Taa-rrra," his raised middle finger disappeared in green like the Cheshire Cat's smile.

Whenever I think of him, I see that finger.

My brother stayed lost. I couldn't tell them where he had gone. I didn't know. That was his business. He left all the time, sometimes returned like a crow with small treasures – a kitten, or a rhinestone barrette he found on the sidewalk – and almost always a story. My brother frequented all-night diners and often came home smelling of ketchup. He always found a lonely person to buy him breakfast in exchange for hearing him out. Diners are great places for that.



They actually didn't notice until Monday.

"Why didn't you say anything?"

"Why would I? He takes off all the time."

"A whole day? What were you thinking?"

"I was thinking he took a holiday. Maybe he did. Like I said, he comes back. The cat comes back. You know the words." I knew she didn't. She could rattle off lyrics in a dozen languages, but kids' songs, songs her kids might like to sing with her? Not a hope in hell.

"What are you talking about? Where? Is? He?"

"I! Don't! Know!" She was rough, pinching my shoulders. I was crying by then. They would have to bite the bullet and call the cops, again. That was embarrassing, wouldn't look good on her résumé and, besides, my bro was her little man.

My dad was beyond irritated with all of us. Me. Her. My brother. We were inconveniencing him. He had meetings to attend.

The cops turned up with my skipping rope. It took them two days, but they found it tied to a branch on a tall skinny tree that had fallen over.

"Is this your rope?"

"Looks like it."

"What did he tell you?"

"Nothing."

"Where is he?"

Even at nine, I was a big fiction reader. "The fairies probably took him. I think he was hoping for that."

"Do fairies make nooses?" the cop asked.

"All the time when they're hunting for teeth."

"Stop it!" I thought my dad was going to hit me.

"Maybe a wild animal ate him," Mother moaned, "and it's..."

"All her fault," I finished the sentence with her, the first of more times than you can count on a centipede's toes, not even counting when she'd already accused me of brewing the elixir that had made him light in his loafers.

"She's right," I said. "It was a unicorn."

I had to get the cops on side, make them see this was a family any red-blooded fairy would run from.

"We have a missing boy and a rope," one big guy said while the other two looked at their shoes. "No note, no clues from his sister, and no body."

The case stayed open, and my parents behaved as if he was dead. I knew he wasn't. He didn't feel dead, just missing in action, a 14-year-old on the lam. He hadn't acted as if he wanted to be dead. Sure, he gave me his piggy bank, but I knew that was just a red herring. When I dumped it out, there was only small change adding up to about \$60. My brother was a miser, and I knew he had a fortune in birthday money stashed somewhere else, enough to get to an all-night diner where no one would know him and some sugar daddy was waiting to tell him a sad story that never ended.

I pissed his change away on comics and jaw-breakers.

Skip cut my braids off, and my mother made me dress like a boy. But it wasn't the end of the world. My hair would grow. I would outgrow my brother's name and his clothes. My mother would outgrow her voice and settle down at home. She would try to seduce me as she had him, and I would punch her so hard she would roll out of my bed and bang her head on the floor. My father would get caught penetrating a dancer, and my mother would get

dementia, also my fault because of the bed incident. All this would happen. “Suck it up, Princess,” I told myself. “The cat came back.”



That never happened, but I grew up, ditched the boy paraphernalia and the boy name, moved to Victoria, went to art school, and made bronze jewellery that looked like vines from the Garden of Eden but tied like nooses, no clasps just loops. When it started to sell, because, I assume, lots of people have living rope memories, unbiblical cords to untangle, I brandished his name or a version of it, back to the garden Eve, who made Eve Jewellery.

I made restaurant reservations under Eve, and my new friends called me Eve. I was a survivor. My brother had disappeared, not a clue anywhere even though I asked around and searched the internet.

On a sales visit to Vancouver, I called my mother and Skip answered the phone. “We’re married now,” she said, “And you don’t exist.”

“Way to go, Skip, from *au pair* to heiress,” I said and hung up.

I took a cab and cruised by the old house, saw an old lady in a wheelchair on the terrace and asked the driver to stop. While he waited, I took out the elastics holding my braids, shook my hair and walked up the driveway. The sun was behind me. I knew my red-gold hair shone like her rising son. The old lady stared at me gape-mouthed, as if I was a rare bird she’d spotted in the shrubs.

“What’s your name?” she said.

“Rapunzel.” I laughed, maybe manically. Some of us don’t know how to control our voices.

“You’re trespassing, Rapunzel.”

I picked a rose on my way out.

“He killed a tree,” the old lady shouted as I got in my cab. I didn’t look back.



The jewellery show was at the Georgia Hotel. I decided to pop into the beauty salon and have my hair done. The salon was crowded, but I was lucky, someone had cancelled. The stylist took me to her chair and felt my hair.

“I’m Eve. What can I do for you? Shampoo? Cut?”

“I’m Eve too, and I just want a set. I braided it so it would crimp. My hair is straight.”

“I wish,” the hairdresser said. “The grass is always greener.”

I looked at her hair. Very curly, shaved on one side and teased on top, auburn as a chestnut pony.

“We could trade.”

“My sister used to say that.”

“Pots,” I said.

“Pans,” she answered.

“Pins.”

“Needles.”

We laughed.

“I make jewellery and I’m modelling it tonight. Could you put my hair up and work some of this into it?” I opened my bag and pulled out my Sisyphus tiara, a couple of clips, and a necklace to weave into a chignon.

“Wow,” she said. “Lots to work with.”

“Oh, I have a warehouse full.”

“No, I mean your hair.”

“I haven’t cut it since I left home.”

“Home?”

“It’s a long story.”

She got to work pinning up my hair and spraying it in place. I kept my eyes shut until she was done. I wanted the full surprise. Then she held a hand mirror and swung my chair around.

“Take a look! You look gorgeous,” she said, and I met her green eyes in the mirror. She looked away, just for the bat of a false eyelash, and I knew not just one but two strong women had survived the family gender wars.

“Not as gorgeous as you, Evan. Never.”



Selected by MICHELINE MAYLOR  
Poet Laureate emeritus of Calgary, 2016-18

## *Think of How Old We Could Get (an excerpt)*

### *Poems by Tyler Engström*

Once a poem punches you in the solar plexus, it’s hard to forget. This happened to me with James Tate’s “Goodtime Jesus” which starts at breakfast, walks through a massacre, and ends with coffee. I still walk around randomly saying, “Hell, I love everybody.” Why? Because the elements of the familiar and the bizarre blend seamlessly, in a way that speaks to a universal bewilderment and conclude in existentialist questions: Why am I here? What is this life I’ve been given? Am I using it well? Is it using me? What sort of god is playing this trick on me? And what does it all mean anyway?

Tyler Engström’s debut collection of poetry *Think of How Old We Could Get* will hit the stores in autumn of 2021. I could go so far as to call him the James Tate of Canadian poetry. Boldly, because his work interrupts normal perception through each intricate wending journey, each poem is a micro-trip, an ego death, a rupture in the fabric of reality. He embraces a surreal-realism that evokes Tate, but also the painting *American Gothic*, in which a portrait is oddly made, and the artist admits he was goaded by the question, “What sort of people live in that house? What sort of world is this?”

Engström rummages for such questions both externally in the landscape and internally in the mind’s eye. Poems wriggle into and out of landscapes of the known, such as stores and roads and fields, then veer into existential questioning so quickly that we readers experience a perceptive whiplash. I often find myself reading, then rereading for the sheer joy of experiencing this otherworldly disruption out of common telling into alternative narratives of a post-truth roaming philosopher. Reading Engström evokes hypnogogic dream states, or a Maurice Sendak-sort-of-journey into the Wild kingdom, before returning exactly where it began; we feel a little disrupted, a little disturbed, and a little delighted by it all.

His voice is unique in the Canadian literary landscape. I’ve asked him numerous times if he’s American. He tells me, “No, Micheline,” patiently, kindly, but there is that forthright essentialism in his voice, a stripped-down version of the telling devoid of tired, recycled images. In 2017, this Calgarian was one of three finalists for the Writer’s Trust RBC Bronwen Wallace Award. His poems have most recently been included in *FreeFall Magazine* and as part of the anthology *Drifting Like a Metaphor: Calgary Poets of Promise* (Frontenac House). I am pleased to introduce to you emerging poet, Tyler Engström.

—MICHELINE MAYLOR

## Hymn

On a particular day  
when we were all thinking of the sun, even if we didn't say as much  
I drove an old church lady with cancer to the hardware store  
to buy the supplies we needed to fix the fence that was hanging by its wire.  
I'd fix it, she would watch and tell me where I'd gone wrong  
and that seemed to be the way things went around then.  
A pop song came on the radio and she told me it was a church hymn.  
There was a church organ, sure, but it was their own song I told her, I was sure of it  
and for the next hour we argued about who was right  
or maybe it was just a minute, time seems to forget itself faster than it happens.  
I stared out the window at the dead grass fields separated by range roads  
that I'm sure seemed like little rows of brown and nothing if you were moving fast enough.  
I don't even know why I argued about it.

Maybe I was young enough not to know the value  
of letting someone have something you didn't want  
in the first place.

We got out, both being right or wrong depending on the interpretation  
and I leaned against the faded red '94 Dodge Caravan and took out a cigarette.  
She said, "There's no smoking in my car"  
and I said, "Then I guess we're both lucky I'm not in your car"  
and corrected her again, it was a van  
and I was so petty, so dumb, but I felt beautiful then  
and I'd already decided all the little things in the world  
would be mine, and I'd take each one however I saw it.

When I learned some years later she'd died of that cancer she had  
I said good riddance, did three Hail Marys, and asked for forgiveness  
not wanting to test whatever fate I had left.  
I remembered how she would stare at me while I drove stakes into the ground  
my face wet with sweat, and her mouth so dry as she told me to do it again,  
and again, for nine dollars an hour.

I was sitting alone and that same song came across the radio  
and I thought, my God  
it might sound like a hymn  
after all.

## Crying Men

I stuck my hand out the window  
and made it a plane in the wind as we approached the gas station  
a pock mark on an otherwise naked body to run rubber on  
I walked in and the station attendant asked me  
"Do you believe in God?"  
I told him no, or maybe when the moon seems right  
and I need something more fitting to a poem than  
believing in nothing.  
He took me by the hand and we walked out back into the field  
behind the station where I imagined someday wild horses had run free  
and he asked me again  
and I told him only when the wheat we pass through becomes bread  
and wine will I believe the word of God  
and he took my hand again and kissed me on the mouth  
we both tasted like cigarettes and I said still, no  
but he cried and I don't do well with crying men  
he said God told him the next man would be beautiful  
and tell him what he needed to know  
I told him I was not a beautiful man  
he said yes, but he hoped I might do  
so I laid him down and told him  
"There is a hole in your heart no god can fill."

I came back to the station and you were waiting there  
with a soda in your hand and the tank full  
and you said "Who do we pay?"

"Nobody, we've already given so much."

It started snowing a few minutes later on the road  
and you told me my eyes looked like Lake Louise.

## A Red Brick

I have a habit of collecting orphans. No, not what you're thinking. Just objects that seem lonely, you wouldn't believe me if I told you. I was walking down the street - my wife finds it grating the way I start a story - and I stumbled on a red brick. It was just sitting there, can you believe it? "Strange place for a brick," I said, but nobody was around to hear me. I picked up the brick and tossed it back and forth in my hands. It was a good brick, good weight to it, and that classic brick red. I thought maybe it had been in the movies, that's how good this brick was, but Hollywood was a long way from here. The brick and I walked down the street together and said hello to nobody at all. People started to look at me strangely, someone called out and asked what I was doing with the brick, if I was planning anything dangerous. I said, "I'm more worried about what the brick is doing with me, some things we can't control." I walked over to the corner store to buy a pack of smokes, American Spirits in the blue. I didn't really smoke anymore but today felt like all I had left. There was glass everywhere, which wasn't how this place was usually set up, and the cashier was nowhere to be seen. I helped myself to a pack and picked the brick up off the ground and brushed the glass off. I don't even remember putting it down to be honest, but it must have happened.

## The Day After Halloween

Smoking an American Spirit on the porch in a jacket,  
because everything is less than zero  
and I'm too old to pretend to be cool for no-one anymore  
watching abandoned witches' hats  
and fairy wings blowing down the street.  
We're wasteful, so we get what we deserve.

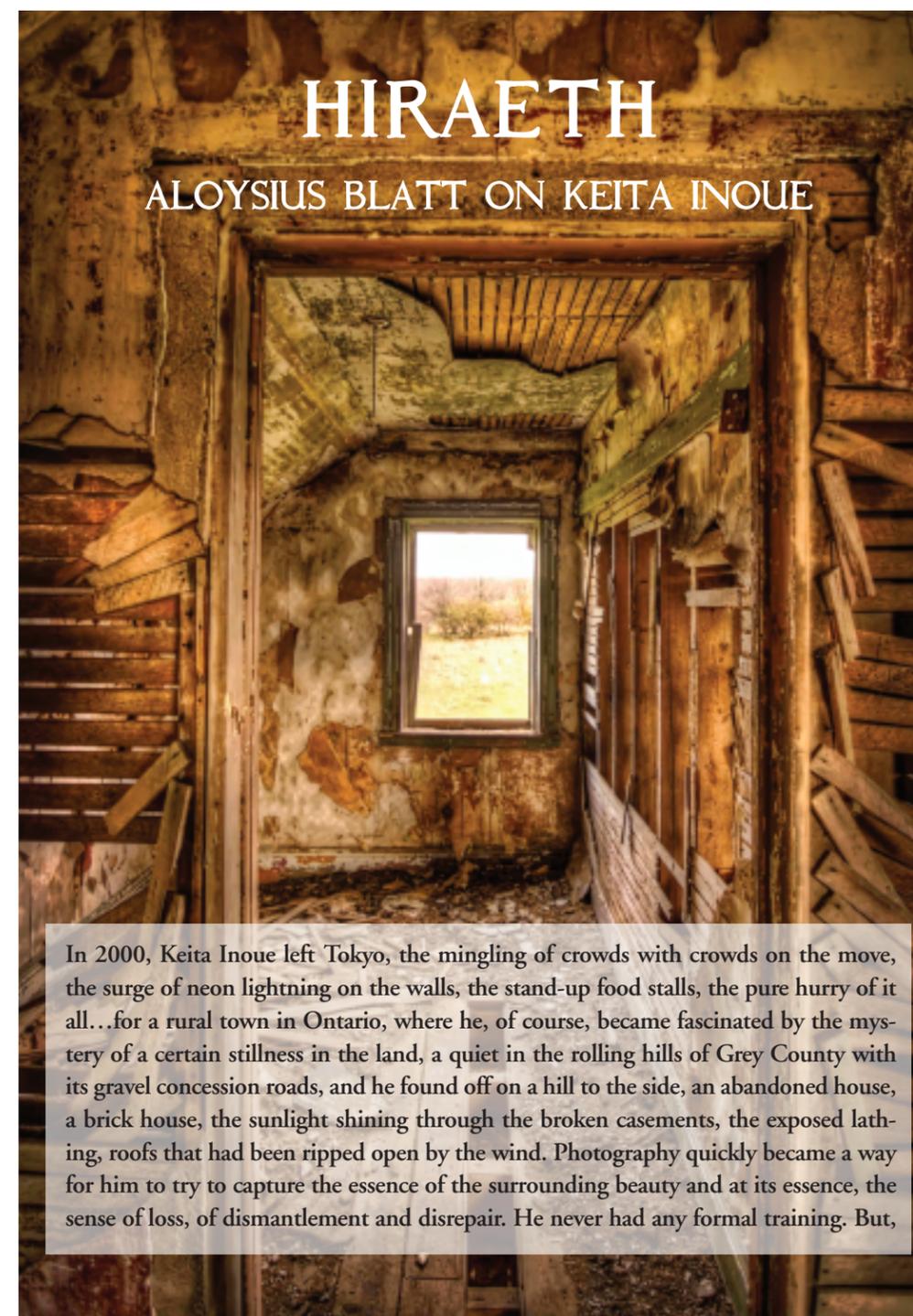
I see a small rabbit scurry under a car.  
It's not some left-over act  
from a boy dressed as a magician,  
it's just considered vermin here.  
But it's quiet,  
and I don't have to imagine myself  
as the rabbit - this is all the little peace  
we have left.

# Word & Art

## Think of How Old We Could Get

I ask you what you're thinking about, but I already know  
 you're thinking, *What am I doing with this slob, this loser, this ingrate*  
 but I'm thinking, *Hey, at least I know what ingrate means*  
 you tell me it's Barthelona not Barcelona and Fuh not Pho  
 and I lay in your bed and I imagine being ninety years old  
 and I'm still with you because we both know you've settled  
 and we hear a crash come from the kitchen.

When you investigate, you see I've fallen  
 and I tell you to call an ambulance and you sit,  
 staring at me for hours, even having a breakfast of omelette,  
 toast, and bacon, the smell fills every inch of the room  
 you even clean your dishes or at least put them in the dishwasher  
 and the whole time you're asking, "What's the number?"  
 and leaning down and kissing my head and never reaching  
 for the phone.





a house, and others, he travelled, camera in hand, road after road across Grey County (and a few other places, too), seeking to document this abundance of abandonment, the roads themselves testifying to a deep absence; where once there had been a village – Hole-In-The-Wall – there is now nothing, a real hole in the air, and down the road where there was another bustling village, there is not nothing; there is a hydro pylon, energy flowing overhead, from somewhere else to somewhere else. All this serenity is made more present, more moving, more quietly tragic, by the through highways with their litter of fast-food shops and gas pumps (sentinels to a different kind of disappearing energy). The result



driven by curiosity, and by paying acute attention to experience, he developed a style that is his own, he found his own eye for the icons of an emptiness that seemed, upon constant perusal, to litter the landscape. Soon he was photographing his subjects in three exposures, stacking them using HDR software, and then amplifying certain elements in Photoshop, developing his vision as best he could.

His journey had begun with that abandoned farmhouse on one of those rural sideroads, a brick house on a slight rise, a house that had, despite being a tin-roofed shell of itself, not just something of nostalgic beauty, but something that had achieved the serenity that can inhabit ruins. It suggested something universal, perhaps the loss that always follows on the heels of intensity and passion and commitment, something elegiac in a bare-bones reminder of rituals long gone; family meals eaten, loves sought, loves abandoned, dreams removed and transported to somewhere else. Fascinated by such



of this confrontation with the ephemeral on Inoue: “I always start my photo shoot knowing it may be the last time I will see a place as it is, and so I look to capture the nostalgia for a home to which you cannot return – a longing for a home that is no longer, or perhaps never was.”

In the words of the poet Hayden Carruth:

*How fresh it was then, the world then...  
The lake, pines, red-winged blackbirds raucous  
In the cat tails...man's house,  
Five rooms and jerry-built, hung  
On the bank by the highway, up  
At one corner and down at another,  
With a tin roof, windows off-kilter...and  
He listened to the little song sung by  
the October wind in the eaves  
above his head.*





*The Photographs*  
 Conduit (Grey County, Ontario), p.85  
 Red Villa (Ibaraki, Japan), p.86  
 Sanctuary (Nova Scotia), p.87

*Vicissitudes* (Grey County), p.88  
 Mayakan (Kobe, Japan), p.89/top  
 Dragon's Path (Grey County), p.89/bottom  
 Your Memories (Grey County), p.90

# MY FIVE

## KEITA INOUE

### CHASING MEMORIES



#### 1. CHILDHOOD

As an only child of artistic and independent parents, I quickly learned how to spend my time playing with the toys I crafted from a very early age. Beginning in the 1960s we lived in a tiny public housing apartment in downtown Tokyo. When I turned six, my parents dedicated one of the three small rooms to be my space. Those ninety-eight square feet became my own playground where I would spend many hours exploring my creativity. Since my mother, Natsuno, worked as a women's hat designer and later became a professional calligrapher, her behavior showed me how to immerse myself in the arts, including drawing, playing an instrument, and learning calligraphy. Developing such hobbies, I began to find more value in applying myself to one thing at a time and sticking with it until I excelled. As a boy, I also enjoyed exploring the neighbourhood with my friends. We would often sneak into long-abandoned buildings, imagining alternative lives, trying to connect with ghosts. My father, Kenji,

loved watching movies and often brought me along with him to see all kinds of movies, old and new, from Hollywood and Asia alike.

#### 2. CAMERA

My parents loved travelling. Whenever they travelled to places like Hokkaido where my mom was from or Gifu where my dad was born, they would take their camera and capture their memories. There were dozens of albums with thousands of photographs. Their love for photography naturally extended to chronicling my life as I grew. There is a colour photo when I was a toddler, my mom crouched in the gravel, behind a toy bus I could ride, posing for photographer me, in my red sweater

and denim overalls, white-socked feet in teddy bear flip-flops. Several years later, when I was nine, I snapped one of my parents in a park, stretched out on a picnic blanket, my mom serious, my dad smiling broadly. Because my dad worked late into the night, whenever he had free time, the three of us always did something fun together. When I was a teenager I became interested in capturing the world around me. One of my mother's best friends, Chizuko Ueno, was a professional portrait photographer. Her work impressed me, though I wish I'd been wise enough to consult with her about lighting and the mechanics of cameras.



My first camera was Konica Revio Z3. Now I use Canon 7D, a well-built, all-round camera which withstands the extremes of Canadian weather, especially in winter.

And, there is a word that's not widely known but aligns perfectly with what I wish to convey through my images: Hiraeth (Welsh pronunciation: *hi:raɪ̯θ*, *hi:raɪ̯θ*) (*n.*) a *nostalgia, homesickness, or yearning for a home to which you cannot return; a longing for a home that is no longer or never was.*



### 3. MOVING TO CANADA

When I turned 21, I started living on my own in Tokyo and enjoyed the independence and excitement of those years. In my late 20s I met my future wife, a woman from Ontario who was teaching English on contract. My Tokyo lifestyle was becoming increasingly routine and less adventurous, so, at 30, I decided to move to Canada, feeling the need to explore different parts of the world. Life in Canada was such an eye-opener. A lot of things I had learned and practiced day-to-day in Japan, like... seemed so superficial and irrelevant. We found a house we love and settled down in Grey County. I appreciate the quiet beauty of nature and an outdoor lifestyle and both aspects influenced my photography.

### 4. DEATH OF MY PARENTS

My father died suddenly not long after I moved to Canada and my mother a few years later. Dealing with their deaths from afar has been the most difficult thing I've done. I discovered that in losing the only family who helped me grow, I also lost my sense of belonging to Japan, even though I lived there for 30 years. When my mother died, I sold the apartment. But, before handing over the key, I went through the contents, carefully gathering and sorting their photographs accumulated during their long lives together. This loss of identity in my home country has had a profound impact on how I now explore and capture images of abandoned places. These are the places where I find myself imagining the lives of those who once lived there, but eventually had to leave them all behind both physically and spiritually.



### 5. ENCOUNTERING THE FIRST ABANDONED HOUSE

The very first abandoned house I spotted was purely by accident while driving in Snowball, Ontario. I did not know why at the time, but I felt the need to stop the car and photograph the derelict farmhouse. The building calmed me and it seemed as though I had been there before in the distant past. Ever since this first encounter, I find myself experiencing the same emotion every time I discover and explore different abandoned places, some places with stronger feelings than the others. Photographing those buildings always seemed to be the right thing to do to record the memories of whoever had once lived there. As an outsider, I always feel connected to them. I hope viewers experience a similar emotional response.



# Contributors

## ENCOUNTERS

### SURFACE AND SUBSTANCE: ABSTRACTION AND REPRESENTATION

LYSE LEMIEUX is an interdisciplinary artist, originally from Ottawa, currently living in Vancouver. Her drawings, sculptures, and installations explore the space between abstraction and representation, while maintaining an interest in the human figure. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, and was the 2017 recipient of the annual visual arts Viva Award. Lemieux is represented by Wil Aballe Art Projects in Vancouver. [lyselemieux.com](http://lyselemieux.com)  
[waapart.com/viewing-room-lyse-lemieux](http://waapart.com/viewing-room-lyse-lemieux) *photo by Stephen Li, Provoque Studios*

## FEATURES



GILBERT REID is a Canadian writer, journalist, diplomat, university lecturer, script doctor, and a television and radio broadcaster who has covered war, weapons technology, utopian beliefs, France and Italy, eroticism and sexuality, and international economics and politics. He is the co-author, with the late Jacqueline Park, of the romantic historical adventure novel, *Son of Two Fathers*, and the author of two collections of stories, *So This Is Love: Lollipop and Other Stories*, and *Lava and Other Stories*, as well as the eight-volume sci-fi and fantasy series *Adventures of V*. [gilbertreid.com](http://gilbertreid.com) *photo by Wodek Szemberg*



### A CANADIAN RE(PER)SPECTIVE: THE VIGOROUS IMAGINATION OF DUNCAN MACPHERSON

BARRY CALLAGHAN is the well-known novelist, poet, and person of letters who has been included in every major Canadian anthology, and his fiction and poetry have been translated into seven languages. His 13 books include *The Hogg Poems and Drawings*, *The Black Queen Stories*, *The Way the Angel Spreads Her Wings*, *When Things Get Worst*, *A Kiss Is Still a Kiss*, *Barrelhouse Kings*, *Between Trains*, and *Beside Still Waters*. *photo by Mark Tearle*



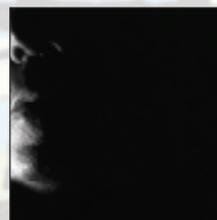
DUNCAN MACPHERSON (1924–1993), with his bold and distinctive brushwork, is considered a giant of Canadian editorial cartooning. His witty works challenged authority, and tapped into public sentiment on domestic and world events, while Macpherson himself helped reshape the trade for a generation of cartoonists. *photo by Bob Olsen/Toronto Star/Getty Images*



### HIRAETH: ALOYSIUS BLATT ON KEITA INOUE



KEITA INOUE of Thornbury, Ontario, has had his photographs featured in several magazines and he has had five solo exhibitions since 2016. When he is not at his desk coding for his web development business, he is out and about exploring the rural sideroads to capture the hidden treasures. [leftahead.ca](http://leftahead.ca)  
[facebook.com/leftaheadphotography](https://facebook.com/leftaheadphotography); [instagram.com/leftaheadphotography](https://instagram.com/leftaheadphotography);  
[youtube.com/c/LeftaheadCaPhotography](https://youtube.com/c/LeftaheadCaPhotography)



ALOYSIUS BLATT is the *nom de plume* of a writer who has criss-crossed the world, been in wars and in prisons, known men and women who were criminals, or who were killers by ideology or because of historical grievance. He has been among the scarred, been a confidant to those who reside in refugee camps, and his heart resides in the stillness of the land that is the special quietude found across the rolling hills of Grey County, Ontario. *photo by Andrea Malizia*

### GRAVITAS: A FLIGHT OF DRAGONS



DAVID DAY of Toronto is the author of over 50 books of poetry, ecology, natural history, fantasy, mythology, and fiction, while being best known internationally for his dozen best-selling books on JRR Tolkien. He has also worked as a newspaper columnist, and has written for theatre and television. Day's books have been translated into two dozen languages. [daviddaybooks.com](http://daviddaybooks.com) *photo by Hall Train*

### LAUREATE'S PICK: THINK OF HOW OLD WE COULD GET

TYLER ENGSTRÖM is a poet based in Calgary, Alberta, and a former finalist for the Writer's Trust RBC Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers (2017). His first collection, *Think of How Old We Could Get*, will be published in 2021.

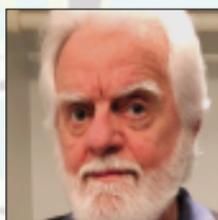


DR. MICHELINE MAYLOR is a Poet Laureate Emeritus of Calgary (2016-18). Her most recent book is *The Bad Wife*. She is a Walrus talker, a TEDX talker, and she was the Calgary Public Library Author in Residence (2016). She won the Lois Hole Award for Editorial excellence in 2019. [michelinemaylor.com](http://michelinemaylor.com) *photo by Christina Riches*

## ENCOUNTERS

### THE ACERBIC EYE: IN THE BUSINESS

TERRY MOSHER (a.k.a. Aislin) of Montreal is often called Canada's nastiest political cartoonist. Over the course of his career he has frequently appeared as a commentator on many of Canada's major television and radio programs, and is also a regular speaker on the topics of humour, history, and the importance of cartooning as a communications tool. [www.aislin.com](http://www.aislin.com) *photo by Terry Mosher*

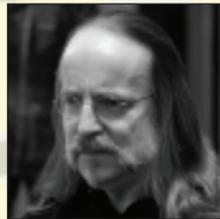


### MY FIVE: CHASING MEMORIES

KEITA INOUE – see opposite page, *Hiraeth*, for biographical note.

## PROSE & POETRY

**KATIE ZDYBEL** resides in the Blue Mountains region of Ontario. “The Critics” is from her forthcoming debut collection *Equipoise* (Exile Editions). She has been published in *The Antigonish Review*, *Prairie Journal*, and *The Malabat Review*. Katie has an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC, and is a graduate of the Humber College Creative Writing by Correspondence program.



**GRANT WILKINS** of Ottawa is a printer, papermaker, and poet who likes ink, metal, paper, letters, sounds, words, and combinations thereof. His writing has appeared in the pages of *ARC Poetry Magazine*, *The Ottawa Press Gang Concrete Poetry Anthology*, *Train: a poetry journal* and *AfterC* magazine, amongst others, and he recently published *Literary Type* with Toronto’s nOIR:Z. He has degrees in History and Classical Civilization, and English.

*photo by Stephen Brockwell*

**SUSAN SWAN** is a critically acclaimed writer who has been published in 18 countries and translated into eight languages. In 2019, she published her eighth book of fiction, *The Dead Celebrities Club*. Swan’s 2012 novel, *The Western Light*, was a prequel to *The Wives of Bath*, her international bestseller made into the feature film *Lost and Delirious*, which premiered at Sundance and was shown in 32 countries. Her 2004 novel, *What Casanova Told Me*, was a finalist for the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize. Her award-winning first novel, *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World*, about a Canadian giantess who exhibited with P.T. Barnum, is currently being made into a television series. Swan is a retired Humanities professor from York University, and lives in Toronto.



**BASMA KAVANAGH** is a poet, visual artist, and letterpress printer who lives and works in Nova Scotia, in Mi’kma’ki. She produces artist’s books under the imprint Rabbit Square Books. She has published two collections of poetry, *Distillō* and *Niche*, which won the 2016 Lansdowne Prize for Poetry, and was a finalist for the 2019 NS Masterworks Arts Award. The book-length poem, *Rubā’iyat for the Time of Apricots*, was shortlisted for the 2019 J.M. Abraham Poetry award, and won the Book Publishers Association of Alberta’s Robert Kroetsch Award for Poetry Book of the Year.

[basmakavanagh.ca](http://basmakavanagh.ca)

*photo by B. Kavanagh*

**LINDA ROGERS** of Victoria, British Columbia, began writing short stories at the behest of Exile’s publisher, who told her it would be fun. He was right. Rogers writes fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and songs with her husband, blues mandolinist Rick van Krugel. She is the recipient of, among others, the Leacock, Kenney, Montreal Poetry, Livesay, Bridport, Cardiff, and MacEwen Awards for writing. Linda has been a Canadian People’s Poet, a Victoria Poet Laureate, the president of the League of Canadian Poets and the Federation of BC Writers, and an honorary Arts Citizen of Victoria. Her most recent books are the short story collection, *Crow Jazz*, and the novels, *Bozuk* and *Repairing the Hive*. She is currently editing a collection of women’s art and writing, *Mother, the Verb*.



*photo by Veronique da Silva*