

SOLILOQUIES ANTHOLOGY



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We would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehà:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather.

Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other people. We respect the continued connections with the past, present, and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other people within the Montréal community.

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FOREWORD

Putting together and releasing edition 28.1 of *Soliloquies Anthology* has been a labour of love. Calling on Canadian writers, with a particular emphasis on highlighting writers from Concordia University, we meticulously went through each submission and spent long, hard hours deciding which pieces, we felt, had a place in this edition.

We would like to congratulate all of those whose work has been published in this edition, and encourage those whose isn't to continue to submit their writing again and again. There were so many incredible pieces submitted, and it is imperative that we show all of the writers our deepest gratitude for allowing us the privilege of experiencing their work. It is because of them and their willingness to share their art with the world that we are able to continue to put out this anthology.

Of course, *Soliloquies* wouldn't be possible without our team. Our deepest thanks to our hardworking editors who read through each piece with a fine-tooth comb, and work with the authors to bring each piece you see here to its final form. We'd also like to highlight the work of our web content creators, putting their hearts and souls into their weekly articles on the *Soliloquies Anthology* website. In this anthology, you will find a sample of the incredible work they consistently put out. Finally, we'd like to thank our administrative team – our managing editor, our social media manager, and our graphic designer – who have kept *Soliloquies* both running and looking its best.

Lastly, thank *you*, dear reader, for picking up this anthology. Whether it occupies a spot on your bookshelf or is thrown at the bottom of your bag, we are grateful to be a part of your world. In this issue, the poetry is as poignant as it is absurd, from squirrels, to the circus, to your father's teeth. The prose will illuminate the world as it is and as it could be, taking you from the back of a spin class, to a Walmart, to a father-son ski trip. We are so proud of what we have created, and we hope that you connect with this edition and its tales of love and loss, hope and

disappointment, the eccentric and the strange. May you close this journal having experienced something beautiful.

Morgan Gordon and Isabelle de León
Co-Editors-In-Chief



RATS EAT FLOWERS FOR DESSERT

Teomi Avila Baker

On an icicle night telephone wires shiver,
Sparks fatal enough to keep me warm,
Frost licks my petals and freezes them in,
Alone above with in-held breath

Stuck by chance and blind by choice
To critters who tug at my cemented stem,
Forcing sweet paws down my throat,
While bumblebees tease pollen away

For shame a blossom partial to cold,
Would be tempted to devote a frivolous life
To honey crumbs and bubblegum
Below stale streets, salty and bleak

Fiends strangle me weak,
Down a molasses underground and
Coat my thorns, corrupted
And frosted I succumb

Pebbles mix into my buffet
Weighing me into the candied earth
I sink and sink with only
One petal still free in the wind

Shaking off that upright chill, I'm left limp,
A flower addicted to getting picked.

At last my share of nectar gets got,
My stem shrivels beige and all at once
I'm nothing but a ravenous rat
Greedy enough to eat the whole kingdom.

on wednesday evening i was thinking about marrying
you

Noah Sparrow

at every table i'll save you a seat.
my gums are coat hangers for you
to use. i let you braid rice through
my teeth. i let you on my lips.
you like to throw my head in the air
and call it thinking. i call you
a lot of stuff back and everything is fine.



PLAYING WITH CARDS

Sabrina Papandrea

When I ache for your face, I ask my mother to take me out for coffee. She reminds me that I am aging. She pays in coins — the counterfeit kind. Says I should be better at going outside. She says I will find a man who is nothing like you. I am small in her mind. Slow. I am unsuccessful at letting you go. She says this is because I do not eat enough. On my walk home, I stop strangers in the street. I ask them to lie down with me. Lie on top of me. Use their weight and push the grief out of me.

I took home church bells on a Monday afternoon. I never believed in God but liked what you liked to do; thought back to the day I cried in the pew. Now, there's a bald man whistling a tune I don't know. I contemplate sin, the delicious kind, and remember how you thought you were evil. I said 'you are good' and believe it still now. You are good. You were made of good bones, good teeth, and a healthy heartbeat. You considered yourself unlucky to be loved by me.

It felt like grace, like salt on your wrists, like harboring aliens in a basement. The way it feels to dedicate your life to something that's mostly water. You promised not to act out then wrote down all my vices on lined paper. Kept them on your refrigerator. And it's okay — it's all okay. Because I understand the intricacies of mime work too, of nihilism, of lying to cartoon characters from your spot in front of the TV. It's for the sake of the thing. Where everything devours everything and thensome.

We were playing with cards. Decks of 52. Dealt from the dealer's shoe. It was non committal, a low wager — I didn't know that till now. I put up guilt, holy water, the consequences of my own actions. Settled for loose change and stale cigarettes. You lost your patience, seemed irritated, and got tired of placing bets. What's the fun when you're always up one? Now that you're unscathed, go back to that bar. Look for me. Look at me. Look at the cake I made for you. Spit in my face if you're going to walk away. Take that small girl on a date; hold her face and touch her leg. Tell her how I begged.

AN ANGEL BUYS A TOASTER FROM WALMART

Dimana Radoeva

Somewhere, an angel is trying to purchase a toaster from Walmart.

It always rains when it happens, though it seems like the purchase occurs only once a year—twice at most. The exquisite moderation in toaster purchases made by angels has been noted throughout the centuries. Usually, They enter the hallowed halls of your local Walmart, doors creakily opening and closing by themselves, at a sensible time—around eight or nine p.m.—perhaps after a late dinner.

Tonight, They had sugary pasta. Melting through Their fingers, handfuls of bow-shaped dough were gently scooped onto Their plate. Doubtful that an angel can finish the entire meal, hungry as They might be, the plate will join the rest of the week's meals in the fridge: clementines dipped in honey and eggshells, sliced pears and dental floss, a single proud piece of bread soaked in apricot jam.

After sprinkling a perfectly normal amount of sugar on each spoonful, They contemplated the idea of Their kitchen countertop adorned with more than just the stacked tower of cheese graters grazing the cabinets, scratching pristine white paint on rotting wood. And, so, tonight, They will buy a toaster.

The fluorescent lighting lining the ceiling, humming steadily, will emanate a strange, familiar warmth, making the entire experience of going to a Walmart for everyone else at least ten times more unsettling. But it is late evening, the store is humming in tandem with a strange new rhythm and a radiant glow has washed over the cold, gray concrete floor. Footsteps irregularly pitter patter in the kitchen supplies aisle—an angel is buying a toaster tonight.

They'll flag down some poor soul ambling around in a blue vest, nametag slightly askew from the ten crates of tangerines he had to unpack, eyes sunken from the conversation about which kind of peanut butter is the best with the weird lady who keeps coming around to chat every Friday, hands shaky and hair fried.

And They'll listen to the worker drone on about how, really, the cheapest one will do you well, and They will feel the bone-deep

exhaustion seeping from his lanyard cheerily screaming in a Comic Sans font: “How can I help YOU?” with the Walmart logo cynically staring back at Them. They’ll wait for the conversation to end. Patiently. A virtuous exercise in customer service.

An angel will smile peacefully at the depressing line-up of dust-covered, unplugged models, each claiming they’ve invented a new kind of toasting technique. The bland metal coloring of the boxes shines a little brighter tonight, though, and They will peer at their reflection on the side of one of the machines, sighing softly, remembering Home. In Their distorted reflection on badly polished metal, They see Themselves in His image again, for just a moment—an inexplicable heartbeat stutters deep within Them. Flesh stretching out like silk fabric, for kilometers into the distance. A quiet and soft expansion blanketing an edgeless red sky. A hundred thousand eyes staring back at Them, lovingly blinking like clock chimes in the middle of the night.

When the Walmart employee comes by, looking incredibly put-upon by having to help Them pick a toaster, They will waste no time asking: *Which one makes the bread the toastiest? Do any of them make that satisfying ding! sound once the bread pops out? Will one particular model help remove the sickening taste of honey and vodka in my mouth? Is there a toaster that helps with homesickness? Will this one make a toasted slice that will finally make my teeth feel sharp enough? Is there an option to make only burned slices? Until ash itself seeps out of every pore of this device’s circuitry?*

He’ll have checked out of this line of questioning by the third sentence. He tells Them to get the one on sale. It works quite well for the price, and it won’t be on sale tomorrow, so They should buy it now. They’ll smile and nod, eyes trained up to the ceiling. The lights are flickering, as if signaling Them to leave.

It will take a while to checkout; the line-up is long, and people are angry. Angry that they’re here, but also angry because there isn’t much to be happy about at nine p.m. on a Friday night these days. But an angel is purchasing a toaster tonight. They go to pay and it takes a bit before They pull out a wallet. The ache is back, right in between Their shoulder blades. It feels like an annoying itch, but it burns like someone put a hot iron to Their back.

Someone did, eons ago. And in the wreckage of Their fall, when They felt the blinding pain of materialization, of the creation of this unwanted body, They wept. They thought, and thought, forming images through fleshy circuits limited by linearity: *What are these smells? How can these fingers feel wet earth? Can these eyes capture the enormity of My sinful desire? They pulled me apart, admonishing Me for the want I sheltered within Me like a radioactive core. What is the shape of this punishment? What is the shape of this Problem?*

They will murmur an apology and pay for Their toaster with a credit card with no name on it. The cashier quickly informs Them of the return policy and pushes the toaster to the side, calling for the next person.

(Angels commit credit card fraud often, but it does not count.)

They will walk out into the rain again. The doors will open and close with a stutter, as if the mechanics of it all became confused at what just walked through. It's pouring by the end of an angel's purchase of a toaster. The rain comes down like furious tears, sliding down the sides of buildings and trees and the little concrete bumps on the parking lot.

They take a deep breath and hold on to the burning feeling.

They disappear down the street.



BREATHLESS AND BURNED

Teomi Avila Baker

So if squirrels can fuck on someone's front steps in the middle of the
day and humour
pedestrians with bush tails and snouts amused in woodland love then
why can't I

Rip away pants in a thunderstorm and flash bloomers I made of old
curtains and fishing wire
to cyclists moist and aerodynamic down a slope please

Take off my wig in a home depot and nail my scalp the way you nailed
your headboard to the
wall and painted over handprints like disappearing

Bubbles caught in mid air and unloving me they won't even pop for me
what useless filthy chip off a scrub screaming
garbage! garbage! garbage!

Oh how it reeks of athletes foot and marmite and darts on a hangover
if I could stuff my pants full of it to unpollute I would

Crash in a fire on a beach and not make it to the ocean

PAST THE EXPIRATION DATE

Auri Masterson

I taste decaying toothpaste on my teeth
when I swipe over them with my tongue

It's funny,
how anything can taste stale

Over-oxygenated birthday cake;
crunch of crisp icing
and cold crumbs

A laugh lasts a few beats
after the joke sinks in,
but the room has gone quiet

And,
'I love you too'

MY DAD, THE JUGGLER

Jade Palmer

My dad juggles so good.
Balls, pins, flaming torches,
bean bags, knives, chainsaws,
my dad could slice right through your dad
and everyone would clap.
My dad only ever drops the things he juggles
on purpose for a good laugh,
like a clown kicking his hat
down the sidewalk.
Oh!
my dad can juggle hats, too,
flinging them up by the brims
and then, surprise!
he throws a hat!
it lands right on your head!
talk about performance!
talk about caring from afar!
He has helped me juggle three balls,
and you gotta throw and catch the balls eight times
to call it real juggling but I don't know
if I can call it real juggling yet
cause he's never stuck around long enough to count.

When I'm throwing and catching,
I'm too busy to count,
so when I'm practicing alone and the ball goes thud
on mom's hardwood floor,
I don't know if I'm like dad yet,
but mom stops washing the dishes for a second,
just a second, every time the ball hits the ground.
Maybe she's counting but I've never asked.
Dad tells me to stand facing the wall
and get real close to it when I juggle so the balls can't fall forward,
can't get away on me, can't find the front door
and walk through it,
now get real close to the wall too, dad.

Standing that close to the wall
reminds me of time outs,
and I've only ever gotten time outs
when I got too excited to do something.
Has he ever given another kid a time out?

Because they must get so excited to see him juggling.
Oranges, scarves, human hearts, it's crazy
how long the things he juggles are in the air,
how fast they leave his hands
how they always fall back anyways.

But I don't blame them,
you know.
It's spectacular to be in the palm of his hand.



THE WAY WE GO

Quinn B. Collins

The pine grove rose to a needle point along the middle of the slope, splitting it apart like a headland in a river. In the snow the trees and the space between them seemed impossibly dark. Tom's father swung up along the shoulder of the slope and planted on the hardpacked rise, and Tom, trailing close behind, cut a hard stop in the snow beside him and leaned forwards on his ski-poles, justifying the rest to himself by studying the treeline and the runs below. The mountain side was burnished over with a hardened sheet-ice crust that glinted in the cool light. There had been no fresh snow in three days.

Tom's father lowered his fleece mask and rubbed the ice crystals from his beard with a gloved hand. He was sweating. He held four fingers to the sun and lowered them and checked again. He pulled his mask over his nose and looked back at his son.

"Alright then," he said.

He pushed off and dropped swooping down the slope with his poles tucked beneath his arms, leaning low over his skis and carving wide across the snow.

Tom loved to watch his father ski. He skied beautifully and as if it was the easiest thing in the world to do. Even now that he was older and heavier he still skied better than anyone else. Skiing was the one thing they always had together.

Tom watched his father grow small on the hill, dropping towards the trees. Then he crouched forward and slipped down after him. He shot rubber-legged over the mounding snow, feeling nothing at all except the empty rushing feeling in his stomach. Then he was in the trees, not looking but smelling them and the trunks flying past like in a car because he was not looking, then rushing and trying to stay forwards, not thinking, feeling the roots beneath his skis, no room to slow and going too fast and skis chattering on the bad crusty snow, thinking maybe he could stick it, shooting, rushing, flying, almost clearing the

trees out onto the white run, then dropping, thinking nothing, crashing over and over and legs twisting, feeling the snow on his face, bad crusty snow, not moving at all now; the milkglass sun breaking in between the branches overhead.

Tom rolled and sat up. His ankle felt funny. It did not quite hurt. Then it hurt quite a lot. One of his skis had come off and lay in a drift between the pines. He brushed the snow from the toe catch of his boot and clipped the ski back on. His father was waiting below. Tom skied down to meet him.

“You alright?” His father’s voice sounded fuzzy through his mask. “That was a pretty good spill you took in there.”

“I’m fine,” Tom said. “I just landed a bit funny on my leg.”

“Does it hurt?”

“No, not really. I’m fine.”

“It was a good one, alright. What happened?”

“I don’t know.”

“It’s the ice. It’s no good between the trees when it’s like this.”

“It’s all ice.”

“*Now* it is.”

They skied down to the flat beneath the hill, past the lodge and the line of people queuing at the gondola station. Coming into the town it was already beginning to darken. In the day it had rained and you could see the gravel street beneath the patched dirty snow. Every year now the good snow season was shorter than the last and every year the happy whitetops ended higher and higher upon the mountains. In his short life Tom had seen it happen.

They poled past the ski-shops and pubs along the main street of town. The windows of the pubs were fogged over from the heat of the bodies crowding inside. Tom thought longingly of the warm leather booths, the darkly veneered tables. The wet evening air bit at his bones. It was always worse in the cold when the air was wet. They tapped the snow from their skis out front of the hotel and walked, clomp-footed and swaggering in their heavy boots, into the lobby.

The Australian sitting at the reception desk looked up from his phone as they came in. Tom had been skiing with him the night before.

“How is it up there?” The Australian asked.

“The same,” Tom told him.

The Australian shook his head. “Coming out for the night ski?”

“I’ll have to see,” Tom said. He was trying hard not to show about his leg.

“I guess they’ll all go somewhere else pretty soon,” he said, following his father down the hall.

“There’s still a few good years left here,” his father said.

They took the elevator up to the room and hung their heavy coats and snowpants over the heater to dry. It was awkward to be sitting around like that in only their thermals. Tom’s father wiped down his skis and stood them together with his poles in the corner of the room.

“Let’s see that leg of yours,” he said.

Tom showed him. The ankle was badly swelled, and his fingers left round white marks where he prodded at it. His father rolled the joint gently around and let it rest again on the bed.

“I’m sorry for ruining the trip,” Tom said.

“You haven't ruined anything.”

“Yeah I have, a bit.”

Tom's father dug a flask from his suitcase at the foot of the bed. He crossed the room to the console and poured out two glasses of the deeply coloured whiskey.

“This'll fix you up good,” he said.

“Mum's gonna have your head if she hears,” said Tom. He had never drank with his father before.

“She won't hear about it from me,” his father said, handing his son the glass.

Tom drank, holding the whiskey beneath his tongue until it numbed his mouth. He let it run down his throat, feeling the burning warmth butterfly out through his chest. His father watched him.

“I guess you've done that before.” he said.

“Never,” Tom said. He grinned. He really loved his father then. He loved to ski with him. Every year they had their skiing. It was the one thing they always had together.

“Did you have fun today, Tommy? We had some pretty good runs out there, at first.”

“Sure. I always like going up to the ridge first thing in the morning like that, when it's empty and there's fog over everything.”

“So do I,” his father said. “It's a different thing being so high up.”

He stood with his back to the room looking out at the street below. It was all the way dark now and the ice-crusted snowbanks along the sidewalk glinted in the electric streetlamp glare. Above the town the skihills were flat and mounding against the grayblue sky.

“I guess you fly out pretty soon,” his father said.

“I’m trying not to think about it,” said Tom. “Does it look like it’s gonna snow?”

“Hard to say. If we’re lucky, I guess.”

Tom saw in the blackglass window the reflection of his fathers eyes moving over his face.

“What about whats-her-name? You two gonna keep seeing each other?”

“I don’t know,” Tom said. “We haven’t really talked about it.”

“You could have her come out to see you sometimes.”

“It wouldn’t be the same. The distance would kill it.”

“Have you told your mother?”

“She won’t like it.”

“No, she’s pretty fond of that girl.”

“I know it.”

“I’m sorry for bringing it up, Tommy.”

“It doesn’t matter.” Tom sat down on the bed. His father finished his drink and placed it on the console. The air in the room was very tight.

“Why don’t I go down and see about getting us something to eat?”

“Alright,” Tom said, not really hearing.

His father went out the room. It was very quiet. Tom lay on the bed staring up at the ceiling, and when his father came back with the pizza box he was laying that way still.

“What’s the matter, Tommy?”

“Nothing,” Tom said. He felt all hell inside himself. The talking before had reminded him that he was leaving. All during the day he had been trying not to think about it.

“Why don’t you sit up and eat?” his father said.

“I’m not hungry.”

“Still.”

Tom sat up. The warm pizza smell was everywhere in the room. He ate quietly and with his face down. He was near to crying and did not want his father to see.

“I’m sorry for bringing all that up earlier, Thomas.”

“It’s not that, really,” Tom said.

“What, then?”

“I don’t know.”

“If you’re gonna just lay there making yourself miserable you may as well say it.”

“What if we never go skiing again?” Tom asked.

“They have skiing out east too, you know.”

“It won’t be the same.”

“You wouldn’t really want it to be.”

“I wish I wasn’t leaving,” Tom said.

“Don’t you want to go to school anymore?”

“I don’t know. I thought I did. I do and I don’t, I guess.”

“Everyone feels like that, before.”

The pizza box was empty. Tom’s father folded it crossways to make it fit into the little waste bin. At the console he poured himself another drink and pulled the curtains halfway shut over the window, leaving only a thin stream of gray moonlight spreading out along the middle of the room.

“Why don’t you get some sleep, Tommy? I’ll clean up in here.”

“Alright,” Tom said.

He was suddenly very tired. Everything was drained out of him now, leaving only the empty, finished feeling of coming out at the bottom of a long run. He undressed and climbed under the covers. His father moved quietly around the carpeted room. Eventually he switched off the light and got in the bed beside him. He slept, and in the night when he woke it was cold, and the wind blew hard and whistling down from the mountain and along the empty street. Tom could hear his father’s breath rising easily beside him as he slept. His leg was very stiff and hurting and lying there he thought how he would not be able to ski in the morning. But then it did not really matter—the skiing had always just been the excuse. For a long time he lay awake hearing the wind and his fathers breathing and he lay there in the dark in the cold hearing and not thinking at all. And outside it began to snow.



I, THE COMMERCIALIZED:

A POEM SPONSORED BY ATLANTIC VENEERS COOPERATION

Inuya Schultz

By the time we are born
our Father's hamartia is already
a stubborn stain,
like oily proof of candle wax
on an antique dining table
& our mother has already wept
because "How careless can you be
to drip all over *this*!?"
This being the table,
the table being our history.

Father likes to play videotapes
late at night
on the fat back TV.
He sits in the shadows, feet at the screen's shore
and massages oils into his scalp.
The videotapes are from a time
before the paparazzi
rewrote his name in a grease ink,
a time when fame only meant that
he was gilded and beloved.

This videotape was a parting gift
from Hollywood; a glittery place
that hates to see its stars fall
so much so that it often
mixes cornstarch into the troposphere
so that if a star must fall,
at least it won't fall so hard, so fast,
and at least it will survive into a life
of late-night, nostalgic repentance
and petty royalty cheques.

This videotape that Father likes to watch most
is a commercial,

guerrilla-style and grainy.

In it, Father plays an Icarus falling
steadfast as a plunging gannet.

Wings, like broken fingers crossed
like a promise to betray behind his back.

And we never see Father
as this watered-down myth
land.

He falls in a sky with no cornstarch;
falls and falls faster than the
teardrops of wax that seem to rise,
as he falls and falls and falls.

Before the videotape ends
and before Father replays it until dawn
massaging his scalp until it blisters
the Icarus turns his glamorous face
and reveals a lustrous grin.

The frame freezes on a lens flair
cast by his Veneers and
Father Icarus winks at us.

Then, a voice-over,
maybe his own father
declaring knowingly that
Falling's not so bad
when you look this good.



THE VIEW

Laurie Koensgen

Sparrow scat, flash-
frozen by wind,
clips the windowpane
beneath the feeder

and leaves three streaks:
correction fluid
spread by a careless hand.

What more can be redacted from me
this skint winter
of the year that has whited-out
 my savings
 graces
 hair?

I'll reframe this smear
as a triptych gift.

Titanium white on a palette
knife: three wisps
of long, wan cirrus.

COLONOSCOPY

Maude Guillemin

Trigger Warnings

blood, violence, defacement of dead bodies, mentions of Quentin Tarantino

Everything is a stream of consciousness; everything flows in a stream. One is not expected to ever bathe in the same river twice. like the living bodies of the authors, J.R. and M.G., playing God, using the form of public figures like Barbie dolls for their games, their silly stories, circling again and again and again in a circular outdoors swimming pool in suburban Ontario. Like the words of the authors, spoken under the moonlight following in a trail of current created by their bodies, perpetual motion.

To Jehna Rushton, who came up with half of this stuff. This piece wouldn't have been possible without our star Steve Buscemi and the involuntary participation of Quentin Tarantino. For legal reasons, everything depicted below is fictional and is in no way affiliated to any of the people mentioned.

OPENING SHOT (THIS IS A WRITTEN STORY) - INT. DAY - A BATHROOM

Steve Buscemi, hovering over his bathroom sink, staring at himself in the mirror. The camera zooms in on his face thrice, abrupt and mechanical.

It centers on Steve Buscemi, who shall be referred only and fully as Steve Buscemi. Steve Buscemi is investigating the death of infamous movie director, known foot fetishist (*My Best Friend's Birthday* [00:33:01-00:33:04]), and haunting presence, Quentin Tarantino. Along his

investigation, he shall meet various suspects, find various clues, as it is customary. They are all red herrings as none of them are connected to the murder in any capacity. Nothing matters.

INT. CAR

A recreation of Pulp Fiction scene of Samuel L. Jackson and John Travolta discussing European McDonald's hamburgers.

JOHN TRAVOLTA

But you know what the funniest thing about Europe is? It's the little differences.

Instead, it is Steve Buscemi and the mother of his many nephiis (nephiis. *noun.* plural of nephew). The mother of the many nephiis is pushing on the accelerating pedal with her bare right foot.

MOTHER OF THE MANY NEPHIIS

But you know what the funniest thing about Canada is? It's the little differences. For example, in Ontario, the birds simply do not shit. The Ontario government removed all of their cloacas.

This piece of information is the only one in this written story that is not a red herring.

The name Jesús Malpracticce keeps popping up during the investigation. Steve Buscemi believes this individual is one of his many nephiis. He, however, solves the identity of this suspect by looking at the Steve Buscemi within. The letters of his full and only name, Steve Buscemi, appear out of thin air (this is a written story), rearranging themselves to form the words "JESÚS MALPRACTICCE". The letters don't match up at all, so the operation takes a while. He discovers that the real Jesús Malpracticce was himself all along.

INT. ROOM - DARKLY LIT

Steve Buscemi, facing the cathodic screen of an old computer. The only source of light is the screen. He has found video evidence of the murder of Quentin Tarantino on an archival tape recording of Jeopardy.

CUT TO

EXT. NIGHT - A SUBURBAN ONTARIAN HOME

A pool, in which two individuals, J. R. and M. G. are brutal pipe murdering Quentin Tarantino in a nondescript cackle of cruelty. They get the dead body out of the pool and into the suburban home to which the pool is attached. The Body Doth Not Bleed. J. R. and M. G. get back in the pool, swimming in circles, the blood washing off their bodies, following them in a red trail, erasing the remains of their inhuman act. Once they are clean, they get out of the pool satisfied with their work, stripping out of their swimsuits while listing words that remind them of the word “colon”. Colonoscopy. Colonization. Colander. Cologne (cologne. *noun*. /kə'loʊnjə/).

CUT TO

INT. NIGHT (THIS IS A WRITTEN STORY) - LIVING ROOM

Quentin Tarantino's corpse sits in an armchair with sunglasses on to disguise his lack of liveliness, Weekend at Bernie's style. The body has been taxidermized, music coming out of its mouth, as if turned into a karaoke machine. J. R. and M. G. are using it to sing karaoke naked in the living room. The music, however, has no lyrics. They are simply singing the guitar chords.

CUT TO

EXT. DAY - MORNING - OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

J. R. and M. G. carrying the body of Quentin Tarantino out of the house, giggling like school children. They proceed to lay it down and cover it in bird seeds so that the evidence of their crime can be eaten by the birds. A myriad of birds flies to it, house wrens (*Troglodytes Aedon*), Eurasian

starlings (*Sturnus Vulgaris*), red-eyed vireos (*Vireo Olivaceus*) and Eastern whip-poor-wills (*Antrostomus Vociferus*), their tiny feet covering the body, gripping it, ripping it, and devouring it through the strength of their tiny beaks. It is a well-known fact that Ontarian birds cannot shit since the government mandated the removal of their cloacae. Therefore, the birds can't shit out the evidence.

CUT TO

INT. TV SET - JEOPARDY BUT THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS

Deafening is the absence of usual host of the show, Ontarian Sudbury-born icon, Alex Trebeck. The three contestants either stare in emptiness or directly at the camera (this is a written story) in complete silence without ever moving. The host has been substituted by the tyrannical J. R. and M. G., alternating between each at every shot. It's J. R. then M. G. And J. R. And M. G. And J. R. and M. G. The centered contestant is replaced every time he is within the camera's line of sight by someone who looks more and more like Steve Buscemi until he is replaced by the actual Steve Buscemi, the man himself. The scene ends as all the contestants pronounce simultaneously, in a perfectly synchronized manner, with Quentin Tarantino's voice, the word "Jeopardy". This sequence lasts forty minutes.

FINAL SHOT- INT. COMPUTER ROOM

Steve Buscemi's face illuminated by the computer screen. His feet are gripping the concrete floor by the toes. Over his horrified expression, the credits roll (this is a written story). It features the name of every single person alive who did not work on the project.

PETER PEOPLE

Sabrina Papandrea

There are people in town and the people there
are named Peter. Motorcycle Peters,
sweet tea Peters, kissing each other softly Peters.
Arms wrapped around bruised and battered necks
gold rings attached to Phillip Morris cigarettes.
You've heard the Peter people
age well; that they're not vindictive,
angry, cruel. The Peter people
boil rice and repent their sins
pray to God so they can sleep in.
The Peters hear the wind because they believe
it speaks to them. Holding each other tightly Peters,
red sweater Peters, watch-you-on-street-corner Peters.
Reflections, ghosts, pasta on the stove
Peter holds the wooden spoon
and begs you for forgiveness.
Don't leave us all alone.
Now you join in on Sunday roast; go ahead and touch
their nose. It is not yours but *please*
still take it. The Peters speak of evil but know their limits.
They break down the collateral into minutes;
it is easy to hate but what will that do
for your soul? Open up and listen to
Peter, he says *waiting for the weekend*
won't make it come any quicker.
Look behind, it is only Peter sitting in your window.
Walk down the stairs, Peter speaks there
and asks if you'll listen:
gibberish, limericks, sheet music that's
none of your business.
It is their town, you're only a guest
with vintage slacks and a
hefty checkbook.
Peter won't preach but the time has come
to enlighten his disciples. Engines turned off,
the clocks have stopped, and inside the square

he calls them to order. Quietly, he says:
*It is nice, isn't it? To mow our lawns,
drive our cars, eat with our hands,
and not think of it.*



VERDUN, '23.

Vincent Grenier

The city's full of smoke and indecision;
fires that burned out generations ago, now breathe
toxins into the veins of transitory networks.

Business yawns, collects yesterday's ash and unfurls
countless mechanical ghosts upon the world
is an infinite grave; we each must find our plot

for our mortal spirit is too sacred to survive
and it's our poisoned blood that sings the stars to
sleep.

Our city of cemeteries, built for life,
houses a silence conversations used to fill.

We are inconsequentially made one; we move in
lockstep, a war drum apart. Though our hearts yearn, hold
open doors, recite prayer, forge formless remorse

there's no voice to fill this hollow shell. Evening snow
sheets barren streets in a divine radiance; but how
are we meant to walk, while our lovers meant to rot?

Their city with strong walls is destined to fall;
to reconstruct, but no one can ever rebuild

the conversation people have in the dark, its tone
corrodes. We have poured our concrete, condolences,
condemnations, into a black hole. When they,

those regal statesmen, gathered in expensive chairs,
smoking cigars, whether conquest or pestilence, say,
'we will bleed them white' — remember, it's us who bleed.

BIRDS OF PREY

Thomas Latendresse

Something small cuts across my eye and skitters into
the bathroom.

Did I think silence was peace?

Experience tells: orifices are soft points of entry,
a heel-crushed mouse explodes from the eyes – tiny holes bursting white.
It is amazing to think life was in there somewhere.

And surely somewhere in flashes of light and rain,
terror is death emasculated. Here a home
rests on stains of raccoons and drainflies.

I am Death's scythe.

Curved movements whooping and war-coughing towards their center.
Beginning to rattle and dance. Wind shears sprung from
nowhere and a breath pulsing excitement.

Realm of wilderness, I am risen.

The skitter stops with my approach.
Each step sees obliterated depths of silence
crash into my home. My steps barely fill the space between us.

Terror as death unfinished

I cannot make it to the bathroom
Crystallized tendons immobilized in the ink that absorbs me

And from my alabaster bathtub a man rises like a mother from labour.
He wears upon him an infinite depth.
My eyes fixed on him, I am seized like rigor mortis.

There is no great death, only self-abasement

WHAT WASHES AWAY

Tina Wayland

Julija beat at the woven rug with the broom, the dust burning her eyes and filling her lungs, deepening the cough she could never seem to get rid of. She spat on the ground and crossed herself. *Jėzus. Protect me from this dust. Protect me from this cold, from this awful place.*

In the house behind her, Julija's father was still asleep on the ledge above the open hearth. It was the middle of winter, ice thick at the edges of the Neris, and the heat from the fire could not reach the dirt-floor room where he normally slept. Instead, he crawled with arthritic hands up to the ledge, warming his half-broken body against the chimney stones. One year the cold had descended with such force that she had placed her babies there, too, tucked into the withered hollow of their grandfather, too startled from cold to even cry.

Although her father had outlived both his wives—one in his youth, the other in old age—it was Julija who was tasked with keeping alive his body that, for all appearances, had long been dead. It was Julija who inherited everyone's chores and mistakes and grief.

The men were away in the forest, chopping the trees that kept the family warm and earned them barely enough money to eat and now and then buy something extra. They stayed away longer and longer these days, ever since her sister Philomena had left behind another mouth to feed—had handed Julija her daughter and boarded the ship that carried her across an ocean she'd never seen, to a place with a name her mouth could not pronounce. *Kanada*. Julija spit on the ground again.

I'll send for Tekla as soon as I can, she'd told Julija, showing her the litai she'd earned in secret, kept in a tin hidden beneath the floor. *But I have to go now—the ship sails in three days. Sesuoi, please, it won't be long.*

But it had been almost four years, and she had yet to send money to bring her daughter home. Tekla, with her long, black locks and her cheekbones unlike anyone else in the family. Tekla with her endless questions and curiosity, who stopped to peek in shop windows and

marvel at the dresses they could never own, making them late, wasting their time, holding Julija back.

She felt herself sinking under the weight of this child, who was nothing like her own children. Tied to her like a ship anchor she couldn't dive down and pull away. What she wouldn't give to sink her burdens to the bottom of the ocean.

She could hear the women now, by the water, their voices carrying the words and melody back to her on the wind. A song about the sea and the sky and drying linen on treetops. Laundering day. Julija gave the rug a final thump, wrapping her hands firmly around the broom handle until her knuckles grew white and her wrists shook with the effort. Then she picked the basket of soiled clothes off the ground and began to walk towards the sea.

Julija could barely remember when her own mother had been alive, something far back in her mind—the feel of her apron against Julija's skin, the faint smell of garlic that was always on her fingers. *Motina. Mother.* A name more practical than heartfelt. All she can remember clearly is being the one who took care of them all.

Before her father's body had turned into a husk, hands withered to dry sticks, he had left every morning with the axe thrown over his shoulder, his enormous hands making light work of the oak trees at the back of their lot. He would pat her head on his way out, fingers spread out across her hair until they hung down in front of her eyes, her cheeks, smelling of the linseed oil he rubbed every night into the axe handle.

Būk geras, šaunuolė. Be good. I will be back when the sun dips down.

She spent her earliest years running among the skirts of the women in the village, learning their ways, mimicking their songs. She'd place her hands on top of theirs as they taught Julija to scrub her father's work clothes up against the rocks, twisting each piece until the last of the salt water poured out and hanging them to dry on branches in the sun.

By the time her father married a second time, Julija had learned to take care of the house, so that when the next babies came along—Antanas, then Philomena—she was no longer thought a child but extra help. Even after marrying Petras and having her own children—even after her siblings had grown and their own mother had died—it was her father's house that would become her home. It was easier, she reasoned, to take care of one family than two.

They all lived under the same roof, breathed the same soot-filled air, dipped their spoons into the same soup pot she placed every evening on the table. They sat around the same hearth her mother and stepmother had cooked over, ate from the same bowls that sat on the same shelves in the same kitchen her father had built almost 50 years before.

Julija cleaning, cooking, sweeping. Keeping each of them alive.

So when Philomena came to her and announced she was with child—stood before her unmarried, unwilling to spill his name as he'd so easily spilled his seed—Julija knew she would never unbind from her fate. That her hands would forever be full, and the basket of laundry she dragged each day to submerge into the sea would never be empty.

The envelope was tucked up against her breast, under the thin Sunday blouse she darned and tended so carefully. Two hundred litai, exchanged at the bank in Kaunas for bills that were hidden in the gift box of trinkets and soaps from Canada.

For Tekla. The note had been pinned to the doll in the hand-sewn dress at the bottom of the box. Julija felt her heart lift and break. One less mouth to feed. Yet one more piece of her sister taken away. The small stack of bills Philomena had sent, in a language Julija could not read, was more than any amount she'd ever held in her hand.

When Julija returned from Kaunas, Tekla was scrubbing turnips too big for her hands in a bowl of cold water, slicing them carefully—away from her, like her aunt had taught her how to do—before throwing them into the cooking pot. The child would never say if she was tired of washing turnips or shucking peas, sweeping the floor until the dirt

gathered in clouds around them before settling again, if she no longer wanted to hold up her grandfather's chin to feed him, prying open his mouth so she could fit the spoon in. Her head may have been filled with an endless river of ideas, but she did what she was told.

Julija turned her back to the room and bent to hide the envelope, damp with sweat, in the same spot under the floor where her sister had once kept her own litai. The room felt smaller now, the hard dirt of the floor rough against her knees, her fingers cramping around the corner of the shelf she needed to pull from the wall. The gap in the earth was more of a hollow, room enough only for a tin, and Julija folded the envelope in half and placed it in the earth.

This is the space, she thought, our family uses to escape. This is the hole they crawl through and never come back.

She changed back into her work clothes, tying her apron strings once, twice around her waist before pulling them tight. Then she stood with her hands on her hips, unmoving, here but also somewhere else, somewhere far away, before running her palms roughly down the front of her skirt, as if to wipe away her thoughts.

It hadn't taken long for the village to notice Philomena's growing belly, her chest swaying with extra weight, forcing her to do her chores sitting down, bent awkwardly around the wash basin. The pregnancy itself wasn't cause for scandal. This was an ancient corner of an ancient country, where babies continued to come whether they were wanted or not, and where chores still had to be done.

No, what caused tongues to loosen in mouths that ate the same meals the same way for as long as anyone could remember was the father. Or lack of one. Philomena was not being courted. She was not seen with anyone in the fields or the village. And although her beauty was unusual and striking—Tekla would later inherit the same chin, the same gaze—Philomena had no interest in anyone who'd come to their door.

If Julija had her suspicions, she kept them to herself.

It was sometime in the spring, when the days grew longer and Julija had moved to her father's house after his second wife's passing, that Antanas announced he was ready to go.

Go where? The roads were flooded with spring runoff and the village would be almost inaccessible for weeks. Julija shook her head. *Brolis, brother, what must I teach you now?*

But Antanas had ambitions that would take him further than the village. Would take him to a place he'd heard about when the men from the docks would hitch rides on the farmers' carts as they returned from the market. Across the sea. Away from their old land and into fields that were being planted with something new. *Saskatchewan*. Each syllable rustling like wheat stalks in the wind.

You will do no such thing. Your mother would not have wanted it. I will not allow it. Julija's eyes pierced through the gloom of dusk settling in through the windows, trying to change his mind with a look, a fury. There was much work to do, and with Juozapota still fresh in her grave. But his eyes held hers and she finally turned away.

Philomena had stopped rubbing her belly and was staring at Antanas, too. How could she sit there and watch him so silently? Julija imagined there was anger in the space where words would not come. That her sister was waiting for this pain to pass, for the rage in her stomach to settle before telling Antanas that he must stay. That it was madness to leave them.

How wrong she turned out to be.

They spent the morning purchasing items to fill the bag for Tekla's trip: a change of clothes, a washcloth, her papers, candy to calm her stomach, a hairbrush bought with the few cents the child was allowed to spend herself.

The train to the coast left tomorrow. Then it was a short sail across a channel and a long voyage over the sea. They'd found a businessman in

the next village who was heading that way and, for a small fee, would take Tekla under his wing. One less thing for Julija to worry about.

Tekla could hardly sit still, could barely keep her tongue from trickling her news. Ever since Tekla learned her mother had sent for her, at last, after years of waiting and waiting, she told anyone who would listen that she was leaving.

Aš einu namo! Tekla said to the women who came to sit around the table with their knitting and sewing. *I'm going home!*

Tylos. Julija pinched Tekla's thigh under her chair. These people had never seen more than a few crumpled litai at a time. *Hush, child.*

But Tekla was returning to her mother, the beautiful woman in the photograph she kept under her pillow, whose voice she claimed to remember when the women were in the fields, picking carrots and pulling at beets and singing the same songs her mother once did when rocking her to sleep.

All Tekla knew was that her mother had sent for her, and she was going home.

Julija kept the last of the money on her now, afraid someone would come for a visit in the hopes of finding where it was hidden.

Throughout the day she would run her thumb along the edge of the bills, feel how worn and smooth they had become. Wonder how much meat they could buy, how many reams of good cloth and thick yarn, if it could ever make up for all the work and all the days and years she stayed here, taking care of them, feeding them, nursing them, until they decided they were done and left her here alone.

Their last stop of the day was the public baths at the thermal springs, normally not a trip they'd take during the week. But Tekla was going to board a ship with people in their best dresses and suits, smelling like perfumes and rich soap and hand lotions that came in glass bottles, and Julija was determined to get her as clean as possible. Besides, she wanted Philomena to remember that even if they did not live in the city like she did—even if her old village was nothing more than drafty

houses with crooked floors and leaky sinks—they knew how to look their very best.

The public baths were almost empty. The men were long gone to work and the women were home with their children and their chores. Julija led the child to one of the baths near the edge of the woods and helped unlace her cotton blouse and remove her skirts. She would tear these into rags once Tekla was gone, no longer needing to mend and lengthen and scrub them clean. Then Julija held her hand out so this child—this child who was given an opportunity that Julija would never know—could step into the water and wash the village away.

Teta, please hand me the new soap from Canada. Tekla's arm reached up over the side of the tub, her fingers now pink, steam rising from her arm into the still-cold spring air. How had she fed and clothed and tended to this, someone else's child, for so many seasons, only to be left with nothing? How had she split the food for her children into one more portion, made the bathwater stretch one more turn, found one more place above the mantle next to her father on the coldest winter nights to keep them all from freezing to death? Six years in their family, four of them under her care, and now it would be as if she'd never done anything at all.

She hadn't meant to keep her arm outstretched for as long as she did. She hadn't thought to do more than hand Tekla the soap she'd unwrapped from a piece of old cotton—a rag that she could now throw into the fire, replaced with a piece of Tekla's worn clothes.

But when her hand touched Tekla's she felt the burning of the litai rolled up under her blouse, the weight of the years and the work, the unfairness, the thanklessness, the rage of it all. And before she could fully understand what her mind wanted her body to do, she put her palm on the top of Tekla's head—hair wet and soft, now, warm from the heat of the thermal spring—and pushed her under.

It was surprisingly easy. She felt Tekla's hands come up and grab hers, the soft palms, hands that would not know the hard work of living in a village. That would stay delicate and clean in a city across the sea, where people walked in expensive shoes on paved streets and ate their meat

with a knife and fork and had water that fell from a pipe into a shiny white sink that never needed to be scrubbed and clothes that never had holes and men that didn't disappear all day into the woods and leave her to take care of everything, to take care of everyone, and give her nothing...

She could feel the water begin to settle, Tekla no longer digging into the skin of her wrists. The bubbles had stopped breaking the surface. Julija wondered if this was all it took to exchange one life for another.

Kq tu darai? The voice behind her startled Julija and she pulled her hand away. *What are you doing?* For a moment she had no answer. What was she doing? She turned to the bath to see Tekla's face emerge from the water, no longer serene but confused, gasping for breath. Too scared to speak, too young to know she should be angry. Then Julija turned to the woman who'd spoken.

Labas, Rūta! Hello! Julija tried to keep her voice from shaking. She wasn't sure what had happened.

She was no longer sure of anything at all.



THE BODY RECALLS

Laurie Koensgen

Cherries, drenched
in a descent of cool rain
then kilned by a hot white sun
split—
their crimson skins thrust open
along ripe selvages
like lips
on the cusp of utterance.
This memory
haunts my tongue.

Rain, a susurrus—
the sibilance of fingers
stroking marble beads,
smooth now as the cloak
of glycerin
the moon throws on the lake,
silken as slippery elm
over a wound.
This memory silvers
on my skin.

Sun, a catharsis—
lifts
each private darkness,
leaves its violet likeness
behind closed eyes;
it looms, illumined,
insinuates
itself into my sinews.
This memory warms me,
warns me.

IN HEAT

Ennie Gloom

The cat so shameless
In her absolute desire
That mew groan from her most bottomless belly
Coil around ankle, that python,
Slinky is her back
Vibrating with excited rhythm
Nearly screaming now *love me*
Love me love me

I am apparently only
But a lamb consumed
By bleat
Ready for the harvest
My silence cult-classic
An open mouth
Only means one thing
If it is not speaking



belly junk

Grace Stamler

i find shiny objects to fixate on,
i hold them in my mouth
and bite hard enough to collect another chip
that makes my dentist point and laugh

the things gloss enough to make me a magpie,
a collector of your garbage.
he threatens dentures
yet my stomach is never full enough

there is no remedy to the pitted abdomen of a weak woman
protruding belly full of trash;
things that shimmered twenty-five years ago,
worn down metal scraps that are
almost-identifiable

Woman-Almost-Identifiable,
i see the shape of a mother reflected by my bloated belly but
cannot make out a feature, not quite more
than the disfigurement of beach junk

microplastics and macroplastics and blue plastic straws
accidentally swallowed at night
they don't ever taste like you;
copper,
before meeting the sun

i found you a few shores ago

i trap you in
a rusted wedding ring
and from a faltering hand
i lose you

SOUL SEARCHER

Haley Schokking

“Hey, babes! Are you here for the one-thirty?” asked the peppy receptionist behind the front desk. Her Crest commercial smile glowed eerily under the LED sign that read “SOUL CYCLE.”

“Yes. I think the website said I’m bike fifty-eight?” Lauren said, toying with her long brown ponytail.

“Amazing! You’re with Bradley! My name is Jessica! I see it’s your first time!” The way Jessica said “amazing” made Lauren feel like she had already completed a cross-country marathon just by showing up. She flipped the sign-in iPad around.

“Thanks,” Lauren said.

She joined the group of people hovering around “Studio One.” A pretty blonde girl wore a microfiber headband, eighties-workout-video style. Lauren was appreciating how the girl’s clavicles jutted out against her sports bra when the door to the studio opened. A Tarzan-like man emerged and smiled at the waiting people with over-excited-talk-show-host energy: Bradley. Lauren noticed the blonde girl give Bradley a little wave, and he winked back at her.

“Hello, hello, HELLO. Beautiful people, WHAT DOES IMPOSSIBLE SPELL?” Bradley cheered.

“I’M POSSIBLE!” the group hurrahed.

He opened the door, and Lauren walked into a room filled with legions of neon yellow spin bikes stationed in fifteen intimidating rows. She found her bike in the very back and took a seat.

As the class began, the cyclists naturally divided themselves. The front rows were made up mostly of women in their twenties to forties who sported colorful spandex sets. Lauren noticed that the pretty blonde girl was sitting directly in the centre of the first row. In the middle, there

were men and women of all ages; they wore far less revealing athletic wear compared to the front. Finally, in the back, alongside Lauren, there was an elderly lady, a pair of giggling twelve-year-old girls, a pregnant woman, and a large middle-aged man. She tried to distract herself from the embarrassment by reading the black, bolded word art that covered the studio walls. Words like “INSPIRED” and “OBSESSED” were displayed in larger fonts than the rest. There were also phrases strewn in here and there like,

“Ready to raise the roof and cardio-party?”

“ReSOULutions are made here.”

“Turn your aggression into expression!”

Behind Bradley’s podium at the front of the room, the wall read “EVERY BIKE FILLED IS A SOUL FULFILLED.”

The lights began to strobe, ebbing between shades of a neon rainbow. The yellow bikes glowed in the dark. Jessica walked around the perimeter of Bradley’s podium lighting candles; despite the hot pink tracksuit, she reminded Lauren of a nun preparing an altar. Bradley’s voice suddenly boomed through the stereo system,

“WHO’S. READY. TO. SWEAT. THEIR. FUCKING. SOUL. OUT?”

The sound of people cheering was drowned out by the blast of rap music and Bradley’s yells as he gave intricate choreographic instructions.

“Right, left, double-right, up-down. I WANT TO SEE THOSE PONYTAILS SWING LADIES. Notch your intensity up two points. One for your mom and one for the boyfriend you don’t have yet. Arms up! Okay now, six, seven, SQUEEZE. YOUR. FUCKING. ABS.”

Bradley hopped off his bike and walked up to a woman in the front row.

“FOUR! YOU’RE OFFBEAT. SWITCH WITH FOURTEEN.”

Four didn’t have time to respond before Fourteen leapt off her bike, sprinted to the front row, and pounced onto the new bike like a wild animal. The former Four scampered away sorely into the abyss of glowing yellow bikes. Meanwhile, Bradley laced his hands behind his back and inspected people up and down the aisles as if he were a scientist and they were his experiment.

“I DON’T CARE IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU’RE ‘DYING,’” Bradley preached, putting bunny quotes around “dying,” and Lauren was certain he had magical, Soul Cycle mind-reading skills because she had literally just been thinking she might die.

“THIS BURN IS THE MOST ALIVE YOUR SOUL HAS EVER FUCKING BEEN. NOW TURN. YOUR. INTENSITY UP!”

If Lauren’s legs “burned” anymore, she would go up in smoke. Between the strobing neon lights, Bradley’s screams, and the sea of toned, bouncing asses in front of her, she felt like she was in Kendall Jenner’s version of hell. When Lauren looked at her watch to find that there were still fifty-five minutes left of class, a single tear literally rolled down her cheek. She wondered, Am I about to die locked onto a stationary bicycle?

A woman in the eleventh row threw up all over her bike. She stopped cycling and

BOOM!

Thunder rang through Lauren’s ears. Between the little specks of light blinding her, Lauren watched Bradley direct the woman to get off her bike. He led her stumbling body to the lobby and quickly returned.

“Show’s over, people, and I don’t want to see an encore. CRYING IS YOUR EYES SWEATING. NO. EXCUSES,” he bellowed at row three, “You keep pedaling just like you keep living. Ain’t that right, Cheryl!”

The beautiful blonde girl whooped. Bradley hadn't addressed any of the other students by name. As Lauren contemplated Cheryl, intrigued, Bradley approached the fifteenth row like a tsunami ready to rain down on Lauren's poor form. On his way down the aisle, he slapped one woman's behind and screamed,

"HEY! DO YOU WANT THE PEOPLE BEHIND YOU TALKING ABOUT YOUR LIFE OR YOUR ASS?"

"MY ASS!" the woman hollered back.

Lauren had turned from human to Jell-O in only forty-five minutes. She was halfway to the door when, on the brink of collapse, she heard a dreaded noise:

"Hey, babes! How was your first sesh?" Jessica said.

Lauren turned around slowly and tried to smile without grimacing as much as she could,

"It was great!" she lied, shuffling up to the desk.

A photo of the Victoria's Secret angels in the Soul studio was framed on Jessica's desk. Lauren straightened up.

"Oh good," Jessica said and then lowered her voice. "So it wasn't you who set the cannon off? I was in the bathroom when it happened, so I didn't see anything."

"No, but what is that thing?" Lauren asked.

"The cannon is coded into the bikes to go off when someone stops cycling. It helps keep people motivated," Jessica announced, like Soul Cycle's very own Barbie-fied Siri. Lauren raised her eyebrows and nodded as if this were a completely ethical way to keep people exercising.

“I gotta head out, but thanks so much.”

“See you soon, babes!” Jessica said, giving Lauren a wink.

For some ungodly reason, Lauren actually did keep going to SoulCycle about twice a week. Maybe it was the stylish aesthetic, or maybe she really was getting in touch with her soul, but more likely it was because Lauren wanted desperately to tell people,

“Oh, SoulCycle? I go, like, *all the time.*”

Lauren had progressed from the back to the middle rows, an accomplishment akin to lifting oneself out of poverty. During today’s class, her bike was stationed behind two girls who were usually in the front row but had not managed to nab their usual bikes. Lauren couldn’t help but eavesdrop on their conversation, desperately hoping to hear some tidbit of advice on how they were able to consistently book front row bikes; whenever Lauren tried to sign up those spots were always sold out. Would she have to make pilgrimage to the first Soul studio? Get anointed with Bradley’s sweat? Sell her soul? She listened closely.

“Cheryl said she wants CocoBeet. Are you gonna go?”

“Maybe later, but I’m gonna shower here first. Same with Stacey”

Lauren lingered behind Cheryl in the line, noting her micro perfections like her lack of hip dips. Lauren had never heard of hip dips before Soul. Workers piled oranges and whole heads of kale into a clear, spinning juice press. When she reached the counter, Lauren copied Cheryl’s order.

“I have a Green Angel here!” the barista called, sliding a juice across the counter.

Lauren and Cheryl went to reach for it at the same time; Lauren pulled back her hand.

“Did you order a Green Angel too?” Lauren asked.

“Oh my god, I did! It's my favourite. But you take it. I just realized this isn't a small.”

Cheryl passed her the juice; something in her demeanor changed, like she had just recognized Lauren as a member of her own species.

“I'm Cheryl. Wanna grab a seat with me?”

Cheryl and Lauren sat down at a pair of wooden stools in front of a window that overlooked the street. The Green Angel that the girls were drinking was essentially seven-dollar kale sludge. Lauren had to actively hold back a gag every time she sipped it. The girls sat quietly. Lauren was wondering what Cheryl thought of her when a girl with cheeks that ballooned unnaturally out of her face sat on the bench in front of CocoBeet.

“Oh my god,” Cheryl said, grabbing Lauren's arm. “That's Sarah Myers—we went to high school together. And she's bo-otched!”

Cheryl suddenly whipped her phone out of her purse and pulled up Sarah Myers's profile, scrolling back to five years ago. Lauren leaned in to inspect the evidence.

“Looks like she's gotten her lips done since I saw her last,” Cheryl said, smirking.

At first glance, Lauren thought Sarah was just another pretty girl. Someone Lauren would even envy. Now, it was like Cheryl had handed her a microscope, and Lauren saw the clownish plumpness of the girl's cheekbones and lips. She glanced between the real Sarah and the Sarah in the picture, shocked by her brand new mouth. Lauren ran a finger over her thin lips, half motivated to buy three units of Juvaderm and half grateful that, at the very least, she was anything but “botched.”

As she stared at Sarah's mouth, Lauren noticed Sarah had comically white teeth, which prompted Lauren to say,

"She kind of looks like Jessica."

Cheryl giggled, and Lauren slurped her sludge triumphantly.

"So, how long have you been going to Soul Cycle?" Lauren asked,

"About two years. I go almost every day."

"Everyday!"

No wonder Cheryl was thinner than a popsicle stick. The girl was a goddamn superhero.

"Yeah, I'm a Rooster during the weekdays, but I ride in the afternoon on weekends," Cheryl said, sipping her juice.

"A rooster?"

"It's a rider that goes to the studio before five am."

Lauren did not wake up before eleven thirty on a good day.

"Makes sense how you're always front and centre then. How do you get that bike anyway?"

Cheryl straightened up, and a sly smile hinted at the corners of her mouth.

"It's called Noon-on-Monday. It's really only The Pack who knows about it because they don't want newbies coming and accidentally fucking up the order. Basically, sign-up opens at exactly twelve on Mondays. It's kind of like trying to get a Justin Bieber concert ticket in 2013—super competitive and cutthroat."

"What's The Pack?"

“Soul Cycle regulars who always sit front row.”

It seemed like there was a whole Soul vocabulary Lauren was unaware of. She almost asked Cheryl if there was a secret dictionary or bible somewhere but held herself back.

“And here I was thinking I was getting good at this stuff!” Lauren laughed.

“Don’t worry, babes.” She said “babes” just like Jessica. “You’ll get the hang of it. Just don’t go front row until you’re ready. It’s better to spend your whole life in the back than to ever push yourself too hard and end up setting that cannon off. You know about the cannon, right?”

“Of course,” Lauren said.

Lauren passed time in class by counting each of Cheryl’s protruding spinal bones and imagining a bunch of surgeons ripping her apart, shocked to find that the only thing filling Cheryl’s arteries was raspberry smoothie juice.

I should drink more smoothies, Lauren thought.

Hanging out with Cheryl gave Lauren a fascination with things like nutrition, health, and “wellness.” Cheryl taught her to count her calories and drink her food, and Lauren had actually lost a few pounds just by being friends with Cheryl. Best of all, she had reached “regular” status among the Soul Cycle staff since upping her weekly class intake to four times a week (as per Cheryl’s advice).

Bradley began to come up to her while she cycled and say things like,

“DO YOU KNOW WHY I WANT TO SEE YOU DRIPPING, LAUREN?”

To which Lauren would reply,

“BECAUSE MY SOUL LIVES IN MY SWEAT!”

For weeks, fear of the cannon kept Lauren away from the front row. That changed the day the group of tittering girls by Jessica’s desk turned around in almost perfect synchronicity (they tended to move that way), and each held up a white T-Shirt that said “FRONT ROW” across the chest. Lauren realized that everyone in line was a member of The Pack.

“New merch!” squealed one girl.

Lauren was pretty sure her name was either Amber or Ashley. It was pretty easy to get Pack members mixed up because they all had names of teen movie characters.

“Let’s put them on so we can match in class,” said Stacey to Courtney.

“Do you think I should buy two so I don’t have to wash it every day?” cried Becky.

Lauren was freakin’ furious throughout her whole Soul sesh. It was already hard enough to walk by Cheryl and the whole Pack whenever Lauren went to the middle row; now she had to look at their white shirts glowing obnoxiously in the dark for the whole hour.

Lauren’s mouse hovered over the “sign-up” button, and her finger ready to click it as soon as those four sweet digits popped up. Eleven fifty-eight. Lauren started breathing heavily out of her mouth. Eleven fifty-nine. Her clicking-finger twitched. Twelve. Every part of Lauren’s body froze, save for her finger, which clicked on the sign-up button at light speed. She beamed; it was happening! But then,

Full.

The next week, Lauren was ready again. This time, at eleven fifty five. She clicked and clicked and clicked and,

Full.

Another week gone. Eleven fifty four.

Full.

Finally, in the fourth week, a beautiful sight lay in front of her. Every bike was open (except Cheryl's; what a Soul angel). It was like getting accepted into every Ivy League university in the country. She clicked on bike two. It neighbored Cheryl's to the right. *Confirm.* Adrenaline rushed down her spine. She was going to be *front row* and centre, looking and feeling as soulful as Mother fucking Theresa.

Lauren strode up to the front desk with the laissez-faire confidence of a CEO entering their own office. Cheryl and Jessica were already there.

"Hey Laur! I saw you booked bike two today!" Jessica said.

"You're gonna keep up, right?" Cheryl chirped.

"Of course," Lauren said.

Cheryl hooked her arm in Lauren's, and the pair strode into Studio One. Most of The Pack had already taken their seats, and they all gave Lauren smiles and nudges as she took her bike. Just then, Bradley came in and suddenly stopped mid-step.

"Look at you!" he said, beaming at Lauren. He then clicked his fingers together and shot little guns at her. "You're gonna rock it, Laur."

She grinned. Bradley had never called her “Laur” before. She felt powerful, *sacred*, bathed in the light of Bradley’s candles. The room darkened, and Lauren relished in the colourful chaos of lights. Up close, Bradley’s once-sinister voice now took on the divinity of a preacher.

“EVERYBODY! YOUR SOUL IS HIDDEN IN THE BODY YOU DON’T HAVE YET. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THAT?”

“TAKE YOUR JOURNEY. CHANGE YOUR BODY. FIND YOUR SOUL,” the class chanted.

Lauren fist-bumped the air mid-chant. She had never been so in time with the music; she swayed side to side with the ease of a flower in the wind. Her movements were so perfectly in sync with Bradley and the front row that it seemed they had all merged into one body. One soul. Was this what having a divine experience was like? When Lauren imagined Cheryl up here, she imagined her cycling with the ease of a teenage girl biking around her neighborhood on a summer’s day. But when Lauren turned to smile at Cheryl, she saw Cheryl’s head hung down in the centre of the chest. Lauren was both relieved and amused to see Cheryl struggle. What did she care? She was soaring, flying, leaping, and—

The cannon went off.

It all happened so quickly, but Lauren saw it in slow motion. Cheryl’s slim figure glided through the air, her arms flailing like a butterfly smacked mid-flight, a monarch assassinated on the throne. Lauren searched Cheryl’s expression for signs of embarrassment in the moments before she hit the floor, but Cheryl’s face was gray and nauseated. The cannon thundered as she tumbled off the bike and fell with a *thud*. Lauren looked to the centre podium, where Bradley reached out one hand and yelled,

“CHEEERRRRRR!”

Lauren and Bradley worked together to lift Cheryl's body out of the room. She was almost completely unconscious.

"Put her up here, Lauren. Jessica, get rid of the iPad," Bradley said, motioning to Jessica's counter.

They laid Cheryl's limp body atop the white slab.

"Oh god, not Cher!" Jessica cried.

"I'm going to call an ambulance. Stay with her." Bradley implored.

He ran away to the phone in the back room. Lauren stared at Cheryl's knee and shoulder bones, poking out against her pale skin. Cheryl's limbs, once elegant and slim, now appeared gaunt and harsh. Between the sickly blackness of her eyes and the way she had been laid on the counter, Cheryl called the image of Jesus to Lauren's mind.

Oh my god. She died for her Soul, Lauren thought.

Cheryl's eyes fluttered open.

"Cheryl?" Lauren asked.

She groaned and Lauren was relieved she wasn't dead. Jessica leaned close to Cheryl's ear.

"Cheryl, honey, are you still on your juice cleanse?"

Cheryl nodded.

"Maybe we should get her some bread or something" Lauren suggested.

"Please, no bread," she whimpered, barely able to choke out the words. "Just get me home."

GETTING FREAKY UNDER THE BIG TOP

Katie Cossette

On my tongue lives a tiny circus,
whose dancing lights can be seen
through the fragile skin of my cheeks.

After a long night's rest,
drool stained cotton-candy pink,
my pillow is littered with stamps

Advertising bearded ladies,
sword swallows, even lizard men
and conjoined twins.

I wonder if they crawled in
through my ears or up my nostrils;
I am a heavy sleeper.

Late at night after the spotlights are turned off
and the lions have been corralled,
their drunken parties echo through my body.

The contortionist grabs whoever
can be spared and turns herself
into a clown car near the uvula.

Thimbles of bottom-shelf vodka
burn my throat as they stumble on papillae.

One of the bears practices a new routine,
but I guess he hasn't gotten used to
the feel of rolling rubber under his paws just yet.

I barely hear his roar of surprise
as I choke on the flailing hairball.
The fur upsets my stomach.
The circus packs up shop after that,
too sad or too scared to stay.

I'm kinda happy they decided to move on,

Twisted up balloons were getting
lodged between my teeth
and I'm allergic to dogs.



RECENT DIAGNOSIS

Ennie Gloom

Please,
in my next life,
let me be your dog.
Here, there is no shame in begging. Then,
you will love me for my longing.

When my body is buried
I'll be sure that there is no coffin—
just a shallow grave, please,
near the communal bike path.
Sprinkle a few
forget-me-not seeds.

This way,
I'll be bones someday
and my ribs will prod through
the earth after heavy rain.
Your dog will know where to find me—
something about the familiar smell
and the sincerity of salivating chops.

Realistically, I'll be an excited mutt
let off the leash only
when I'm on my best behaviour.
My face will be an innocent one,
all black-eyed and ashen,
you'll think as I look up at you,
a rare thought
because I am a loud annoyance,
chasing rabbits in my sleep,
untrimmed nails scratching at the hardwood.

“Go ahead,” you'll say to my curious gaze.
Here, I can dart off,
gallop through this park,
pumping my legs so furiously

as if I'm a miraculous greyhound.
The sky becomes
only something vast as
I race the sparrows.

When I come to a mound,
I'll know to dig.
I'll find a way to make you understand
that this naughtiness is my nature,
but for now,
my mind is only forget-me-not.

When you'll click your tongue,
I'll know to run
back to you with trained immediacy.
If you give a dog an egg
they know to carry it carefully,
to not sink their teeth into the fragile shell.
I'll treat the heart the same way
when I drop it at your feet.

You will not be surprised at my imploring;
this world is round, it is
only natural for everything to circle back.
My whistled whine will mark your decision:
I am begging you to love it
or launch it through the autumn sky.

THE GUTTERS

jc

Hurts,
being stood up
at the bowling alley
men's night no less—
not that we
in the infancy of our plans
were ever aware of such a fact.

I waited there—
like a jerk
in the eyes of the old bowling attendant
who asks me, “are you here by yourself?”

in my innocence, I reply:

“No.”

“Yes—

but I'm waiting for someone.”

I stand there
like a pin
while she tells me,
“the lanes are full
except for the 5-pin lanes.”
The 5-pin lanes
were half as full
and half as interesting.
They were happily occupied
by children
and their parents, who watched
that ball
as it is

hurled
down the waxy lanes
onto the street.

So I walk out:
through rain
that soaked my sneakers.
I am fueled
by the fiery death
of several cigarettes
like a spark plug for my lungs
they drive me down
Princess Street
to my Toucan
my pub
that awaits me

At the bar,
I spend my time,
thinking
drinking.
An old woman a few seats down
starts talking to me in an Irish accent:
she tells me stories
of her youth
of her family
of her uncle, who floated over from Ireland
to Newfoundland
on a chunk of ice.

I nod
I drink

and give my best impression of a good listener.
She asks me questions
that I don't know the answers to—
but with enough alcohol
could invent—
She asks me:
“Is your father fully Irish?”
“Yes,” I guess,
She talks of:
“The War”
which War,
I'm not sure,

some time from before
myself,
I don't say much:
What could I say?
in my 20 years
quartered
courted
by her existence.

She catches the last bus,
tells me, before she leaves
“I always take the 9:30 bus home
after drinking. Because if I miss it
from drinking too long,
or too much:
I'll have to walk home instead
and reflect.”

Tonight however
she's taking the bus—
and the only reflections she'll get
are from the dirty, etched windows
and the little
lingering drops
of moonlight.



VOYAGER 2

Ace Côté

Here's how it happens:

They come to earth. Their ships hang in the atmosphere, glittering light like bits of fractal glass while chaos thrives below them. First panic, sharp like revolutionary bombs and police fire on protestors and the words *martial law* winding across the unfurled ribbon of news screens. Then the slow ebb of one day, another, another, until muscles stretch blue-bruise sore and the sky settles through one catastrophic sunrise to the next. The scientists and philosophers are dragged from their wretched institutions to sit beneath glaring lights, asked to formulate responses to the one question everyone wants to know the answer to and which they are no more qualified than the next man over to unearth. The world shakes. The world imagines what it would be like to be unraveled. Meanwhile in Wyoming on the roof of a garage, Evelyn watches through a telescope and takes notes.

It's all about connection.

This is what she tells herself, looking through the telescope as beside her, Max crochets. He is creating something from something else—a sweater from yarn, from wool, from the sheared offerings of sheep on the mountain near where they grew up—and she is delving elbows-deep into the universe searching for things already there. Things that have been forgotten, like the ends he forgot to weave into the socks he made her, which she still wears but which fall apart a little more each time she does. Maybe it was easier for Galileo, she thinks. When the sky was still uncharted territory and all it needed was a new set of lenses. Now she charts the movement of satellites, of shuttles, of vessels known or unknown, writes down the movements in her field journal like it's a language she's not yet fluent in. *Nothing ever gets past you*, he likes to say, but it all does—it all moves past her, so quickly she can barely catch a glimpse before it's gone.

What do you think they want here? He asks over microwaved noodles one night, later than they should be eating because neither of them can

keep track of the time. She doesn't feel the need to clarify the they as she still sees the static dots against the backs of her eyelids every night, and knows the same way she knows everything about him that he closes his eyes and does the same.

Maybe they want what we want, she says, the hopeful interpretation, *maybe they just want to get to know us*. It's not the one she believes in, but it's the one she places out into the universe just in case it's listening. He gets up to start the record player and the sound comes gently and then all at once, needle skipping across vinyl like the stones she used to toss across lake water in a time farther past. She held her breath to see how far the worn-smooth stones would make it: one, two. One, two. And the first strums of *Johnny B. Goode* filter through.

This is for them, right? He asks with a hand outstretched and she abandons the bowl of half-eaten noodles to take it, pull him closer, sway their now-connected bodies to the melody already sent out into space. If she holds her breath, she can hear his heartbeat. If she listens closer than that, the air passing through vocal canals before he hums, the precursor to music, the body's own rhythms.

This is for us, she corrects him in the warm light, still moving.

Max was almost named Leo, like the constellation, and she thinks some days that maybe his parents realized it would be too heavy-handed; that there was already so much inside him that adding another piece of the universe would be enough to make him burst. There is a notebook he carries with him that she pretends not to read, flipping through the pages of half-thoughts and poetry when he's betrayed her into sleep on the old leather couch while watching a film about space. *They should have sent a poet*, Jodie Foster says from the tv screen when confronted with the expanse of the galaxy, and Evelyn looks at the curve of Max's spine, the way it sits exactly where it meant to, and thinks *what is this if not poetry, anyways*.

Here's how it happens:

It doesn't. There are new lights in the sky, that's all. The chaos settles like the passing of a sandstorm. In the backdrop of the extra

constellations, newscasters report that *scientists continue studies*, all the same reflective tones and polished cadences. But the real answer is that there's nothing more to do, nothing except wait until they change their minds and send a message, or they leave.

It drives her fucking *crazy*.

They're right there, she tells him again and again. They're redoing arguments like this is pre-written dialogue, *The Life and Times of Evelyn and Max* and they're on the seventh matinee. *They're right there and we can see them but we can't do jack shit about it!*

Maybe it's like you said, he replies, ever gentle but still tired, loose ends still fraying where he hasn't tucked them in. *Maybe they've decided just to watch and learn and study, and they'll reach out when they're ready.*

Everyone's giving up, she says, and this is the fear: that life will go on. That all this catastrophic possibility will be for nothing. She's spent what might be lifetimes studying the facets of the universe, and thinks: if not for this all-surpassing moment, then what?

They'd first met as doe-eyed undergrads, where he'd been a back-of-the-class participant and she'd been front-row, notes at the ready, muscles always sore from the weight of too many textbooks for her arms to support. This was the way forward, she determined: no detours, no pit stops, extra canisters of gas tied up in the back. Any day not in a lab, a day wasted. *Come outside*, he'd tell her, even when she made fun of him, *look at all the things you're studying*, and she'd count the stars from a field instead of through layers of warped glass, soft blades tickling at the undersides of bare arms, and remember through her whole body how it felt to be alive.

Back then, he had described her as 'relentless'. *That's just a nice way of saying 'bitch'*, she tells him now, but knows it wasn't; looks back and watches as he makes the choice to fall into her orbit. He's so soft, this man beside her. Every day she peels him back and finds new things creating.

She thinks some nights she should tell him that she loves him. She thinks, maybe, he already knows.

Here's how it happens:

It doesn't. And then it does.

She watches as the night burns, houses in the distance turned to beacons, everything ablaze except what isn't. Mountains dark against lit horizons. *The second coming*, Max says beside her, ironic because he does not believe in god, just in repentance, and the air is summer campfire in the woods when she was thirteen. The stars are still visible, somehow, stellar constants drawn between strands of smoke. In the firelight Max's hair is feathered, sticking up at the back, and the backs of his hands are rough beneath her fingers as she takes them. He is with her as the world ends.

He is with her after, too.

As the sky grows brighter, she charts it pinpoint by pinpoint. Until they all blend together in a haze of light and he tells her *Evelyn, we have to leave*, worrying fingertips pressed against the crook of elbow as he guides her away. They leave the house behind, the garage, the telescope. They bring their journals with them.

There are hollow bones that once were buildings wherever they go. The stars, when they look up, are foreign constellations in the once-known sky. They wander on bloody, blistered feet from abandoned motel to abandoned motel, sleeping on scorched floors like listless children up sick and hazy. One night, so late the sky is already growing brighter, they find shelter in what once must have been a church. *If I believed in god I would have to think they killed him*, Evelyn says in her pre-sleep delirium, and Max kisses the top of her head, says *I know, I know*. They fall asleep in open pews, row after row extending, the altar ahead in ruins.

When she wakes, there is ash in her hair, on her clothes, a thin dusting across her forehead and cheeks and eyelashes, the backs of her wrists. *Max*, she calls him, always the first place she turns to look. He is awake

already, head tilted up to where, through the barren ceiling, the sky is weeping soot.

Look what they've done, he tells her, the line of his shoulders a mark of stolid desolation, and this time it is Evelyn's job to reach out her hands and pull him closer, to take the fragile carcass of a soul and stitch him back together.

She knows something she isn't telling him. Something to do with old access codes and blueprints and big red buttons from her previous life, or the one before that. He knows this the same way she knows that he's stopped writing despite how he still acts as if he might, holds a pencil close like he's just getting ready to pick up where he left. They don't speak of it until they do.

Could you really do it? he asks her when she's confessed, when she has told him in simple, scientific terms about this last violent act left inside her.

If it could stop them, she tells him, breath still and calm within her, *I could do just about anything*.

He is so soft. All he has ever wanted is creation. When he nods she knows it as a sign: benediction, absolution. She takes his cheeks in her hands, lets hot tears run over cracked knuckles. Presses chapped lips to ashy forehead like a blessing and tells him *good*.

Here's how it happens:

Like communion. She takes the whole world within herself and swallows.

It happens the way it happens and in another time, she would repent. She would grieve if there was anything still to lose. Instead they take the earth within their bruise-broken hands, shape it back into how it was meant to be, and when it ends she tells him *I love you* and he says *I know, I know*.

RAIL-TOWN CHILD-SONG

Joel Robert Ferguson

The world was someplace else. Honestly
if the tracks were forced

to have a wrong side, this was it
though grudgingly. A none-horse town

to its bones, this old rail junction,
hills barely high enough to be seen through

what I now know is called "atmospheric extinction."
This lack of blue haze draped on distance

didn't feel like a short-changing— colors
popped, childhood's waiting game

never felt like a game or waiting. *Neither
in nor of the world.* In winter the cold blaze

taught conditional blindings, how mounds of snow
were made to cast long shadows so early.

Summer: pagan green cathedrals. All the while
the rail line behind the neighbours' garden would bear

tanks and field guns painted sand-yellow across the river
to port, to waiting petrostates and bush wars.

NIGHT PALACE

Vincent Grenier

The wine-dark sky, the wind trembles, the winding streets
in all directions. Each a labyrinthine hall, each
an escape to marble ballrooms, reach into central summer
pull solstice free from the subway station, illuminate
the breach, those lower pits. We're standing on the balcony
my back to the balustrade, holding sunset in a crystal glass
or some cheap alcoholic punch. Our ghosts grow overfed
on stories of grazed skin, hometown scents, lilacs and horizons
then ignited. Now a smouldering shadow. Smoke
pours into the outline of precious pink clouds. We're drinking
again. Stuck in between dances as ethereal music advances
from the lush belly of the palace. The night in a fraction
a fragment of the infinite where your hair outlines the stars
and the frills of your dress linger while you become
such slumbering perfection, and reflect everything
under the moon. Those walks by the lagoon
when life was cold and you were painting in the studio
and I was comfortably removed. Loving you isn't cool.
You kiss me, and so collapses the world, but my world
deserves more than collapse. Although the now is mine
the fragile drifting of your golden hair against the wine-dark sky

is mine.

You aren't mine. By morning we'll choose our winding escapes
and wander back to our lives. You'll remain the engineer
on a freezing ship, and I'll play the captain of a modest craft
and I'll remember how you used to laugh, and my dreams will fill
with the thought of you, and the feelings too, and they'll feel like tombs
until we reunite. On the balcony, when it's dark outside, and I've gone
for a smoke. So I can sit and watch with my back to the wind
as you dance in the light with the person you love.

roundabout ahead

Olivia Hornacek

sometimes nostalgia is a kind of relief
and grief is not loss
but finding something right where you left it
the hook in a fishes mouth
farm raised or freshly caught

don't just touch your lips to the bottle
roll the glass over your teeth till it fogs
let the wax burn
and take the batteries out of your smoke alarm
just listen to the pop of the wick

drink the canned peach juice
your lip will heal from the raw edge of metal
and you will scar
but isn't it so sweet? you will want another sip
always take another sip

laugh at the same joke you used to
be funny even alone in a subway car
stew isn't meant to bubble
it's meant to nourish
Gluttons don't need leftovers
sometimes hope is a kind of forgetting
Hermits only needs to see three steps ahead



WEB CONTENT ARTICLES

Lost in Translation

Santiago Eastman Herrera

“Borges affirmed, in earnest, that an original can be unfaithful to a translation... [He] would often protest, with various degrees of irony, against the assumption—ingrained in the Italian adage *traduttore traditore*—that a translator is a traitor to an original” (Borges on Translation). While reading *Poems of the Night*, a posthumous collection of poetry by Jorge Luis Borges, I couldn’t help but think about what it meant to translate something into a different language for the first time. If Borges, one of the most important literary figures in the entire Spanish-speaking world, claimed that a translation can differ from the original, then what is the difference between a translator and an author?

Many theories claim it’s impossible to create a complete, one-to-one translation of a text as there will always be something that’s lost from the origin culture to the target culture. Many theorists like Hans Vermeer and his Skopos theory or Anthony Pym’s notions of equivalences deal with this missing piece, either focusing on the “purpose” of that translation, the target audience’s culture, or (especially in contemporary times) simply by saying that the reader should put in some of the work in understanding the text.

In America in particular, because of a trend in nationalism and inwards-focused literary movements, translators in the 20th century focused a lot on “domesticating” literature. Most of the work they did with texts changed things so that the target audience wouldn’t know the piece was foreign. The reader’s comfort was paramount for these translators. Anything unknown to the culture would either be removed or replaced with something the reader could be trusted to be familiar with.

In theory, this can seem perfectly innocent. At least for me, it can be frustrating to read a text and not understand important ideas or information relevant to the scene because of a language barrier. But theorists like Lawrence Venuti argue that this domestication process is inherently political behavior. In his book, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Venuti argues that these modifications to the original text are largely political. What does it mean if a book that’s deeply

rooted in a specific culture gets altered or has certain elements changed for the sake of an unknown reader? How can anyone learn about other cultures if they're only ever exposed to their own?

They can't. All this does is breed ignorance. Not to mention, this silent elimination occurring between the lines could (and often does) lead to racist sentiments. If a book talks about the struggles of an immigrant in America and the sole thing that brings them comfort is Colombian empanadas, but the translator changes the protagonist's traditional food for burgers, then that has fundamentally transformed the meaning beyond the author's experiences. This is an extreme example of course, but a significant one nonetheless.

The celebrated Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges translated a lot of works as well, including some by Oscar Wilde, Virginia Wolfe, and Rudyard Kipling. In the introduction to *Poems of the Night*, editor Efraín Kristal writes that the poet would forever edit his original work while continuing through the publication and translation process. *Poems of the Night* explores many works by Borges throughout his life, both before and after a degenerative disease permanently blinded the author. The collection takes many of his themes of darkness and light and juxtaposes his colorful youth with his much more somber adulthood. This poetry collection is unique in that it holds his original poems in Spanish on the left, then the English translation (by one of six translators) on the right, many poems appearing in English for the first time.

Each translator goes about the work differently, but while I was reading, it was fascinating to see how different the original and translated versions were. Some differences were purely utilitarian: English as a language is more difficult to rhyme in than Spanish, as Spanish offers many more words that end in similar vowels or suffixes that can be played with than English. (Not to mention, poetry that rhymes isn't very "in" right now in English—it sounds too much like a nursery rhyme. I blame the Modernists.) Other differences include longer verses (what can be said in five words might need 10 in English) or even adding information to provide more context.

A great example is "Limits," translated in this collection by Alastair Reid:

<p>De estas calles que ahondan el poniente, Una habrá (no sé cuál) que he recorrido Ya por última vez, indiferente Y sin adivinarlo, sometido</p> <p>A Quién prefija omnipotentes normas Y una secreta y rígida medida A las sombras, los sueños y las formas Que destejen y tejen esta vida.</p> <p>Si para todo hay término y hay tasa Y última vez y nunca más y olvido ¿Quién nos dirá de quién, en esta casa, Sin saberlo, nos hemos despedido?</p>	<p>Of all the streets that blur into the sunset, there must be one (which, I am not sure) that I by now have walked for the last time without guessing it, the pawn of that Someone</p> <p>who fixes in advance omnipotent laws, sets up a secret and unwavering scale for all the shadows, dreams, and forms woven into the texture of this life.</p> <p>If there is a limit to all things and a measure and a last time and nothing more and forgetfulness, who will tell us to whom in this house we without knowing it have said farewell?</p>
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In the original, Borges uses an ABAB CDCD rhyme scheme, with iambs throughout even if the meter stretches from 11-13 syllables. Alastair in his translation chose neither to rhyme nor to stick to a consistent meter. The poem is too long to fit into a closed form, so Alastair takes advantage of the free verse nature and plays with the translation. In line 4, Alastair adds “the pawn of that Someone” (referring to a supernatural being looking from above) that isn’t specifically present in the original. Borges implies it between lines 4 and 5, but Alastair draws it out for his anglophone audience.

Borges’s views on translation often skewed toward the transformative, meaning he took creative approaches to the original work in order to play on it. But how different does the work have to be before

it becomes something new, something unique? How much agency do translators have and how responsible are they when it comes time to credit sources? What would have happened if I came to the collection not understanding Spanish and only had Alastair's translations to get me through the poem?

There's no easy answer. Venuti argues against domestication. Borges argues for transformation. And here I sit, stuck in the middle. I enjoyed the Spanish and English versions, but for different reasons. As I went through the collection, I realized that both can be valid. There wasn't something "lost" when I switched to English—it was a different experience altogether. If anything, it made me appreciate being able to read both versions as I could sit there and look at the choices made for each. I've developed a new appreciation for translations—who knows, maybe in the future, I'll learn more languages and get to experience several new cultures.

Remember Us

Jayde Lazier

For all the soldiers who have fallen, for all the soldiers who are still here to tell the story, for all the families that endured the pain of losing their loved ones: we salute you, and we remember you. We will continue to honour your courageous actions and your family's undying support and love through our empathy and acknowledgment of your sacrifice.

Although I have never experienced this type of sacrifice firsthand, it is a reality that my family has experienced since WW1. Beginning with my Great-Great-grandfather Harper Lawson Lazier, who served as a lieutenant commander in WWI, WWII, and the Korean War. Or my Great-Great-grandfather Nigel Holbeche, who served as a pilot of a heavy bomber squad in the Battle of Britain. My 2nd cousin. General Timothy Lazier, lost his life fighting in Kuwait in the early 90's. Someone whom I never got the pleasure to meet in my lifetime but who holds a special place in my heart nonetheless, my grandfather, Donald Grant Lazier, served as a private for two years in Germany during WW2. So, as you can probably see, I've grown up hearing stories of the war my whole life. More specifically, what it was like for my family members to have to make the sacrifice of letting their loved ones go off into danger without knowing if they would return. I've also heard stories from the perspectives of my family members who served and how the undying love and support from not just their families but from their countries is what pulled them through and gave them the strength to return.

Now even to this day, we continue to acknowledge members of our military in Remembrance Day ceremonies across Canada by reading a poem entitled "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae. This poem was written in the spring of 1915 after one of McCrae's closest friends was buried on a battlefield along with many other soldiers who passed. All with graves marked with a single wooden cross and poppies blooming all around the soldiers' graves, as if the world was giving its thanks to their service. This prompted John to write a poem about seeing these beautiful poppies grow on the blood-soaked fields. To remind us of all the beauty that can come out of a tragedy, as well as it was a way to give a voice to the soldiers who couldn't tell their own stories.

“In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields. Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.”

This poem teaches us three core values: faith, sacrifice, and love. The faith that we as a country have to have in our servicemen and servicewomen to fight for our freedom. The faith that our servicepeople need to have in themselves to withstand such a traumatic and life altering journey. Most importantly, the faith that family members of servicepeople need to carry with us at all times to maintain the hope for a positive outcome.

Now, to touch on love and sacrifice. Familial love is one of the most powerful forms of love that we have in this world, the type of love that continues despite all the sacrifices that one has to make for another person. The love that will wait years for you to come home and love you even more when you return. But despite this love, there are still challenges that military families will go through. People who have not served in the military can often struggle with understanding the experiences and emotions a soldier feels upon returning. Soldiers may struggle to reintegrate back into the family dynamic, which can cause further disarray in a family. The sacrifice that is needed by a military family and our military personnel doesn't end when the war does.

In fact, there is a multitude of long-term negative effects for the soldiers themselves, which can vary between genders. Sarah Moore touches on these differences through her article entitled “The Impacts

of War on Global Health,” which she wrote for a medical news site called “News Medical Life Sciences.” An example of gender differences may be a man who has served time in the military or experienced combat is “traditionally more likely to die or become injured in battle.” A woman, meanwhile, is “more likely to be left to face the lasting consequences of conflict on her health.” On top of that, the health risk is much more significant for a woman involved in war than it is for a man, as access to obstetric care is non-existent in war countries, which “significantly impacts the safety of giving birth.”

All of this is to say that war brings so many negative and life-altering effects to everyone who is directly involved or by proxy such as military families or citizens of these war-torn countries. Unfortunately, the fight to keep our country and other countries safe will continue, but this is why we have Remembrance Day. So, take a few hours out of your day to remember those who have fallen in the fight for peace and thank those who are still fighting for it. Additionally, Remembrance Day is a time to thank all the families for their sacrifices and the undying love that has fueled our military to endure all the hardships that they have and will continue to face.

A family’s love is a powerful force that lets your family members know that you are there for them and you have their back through the good and the bad. This support gives people strength unlike anything else. It is because of military families’ love that our soldiers have the strength to go out and fight for freedom and peace. So let Remembrance Day not just be November 11th, but let it be every day that we acknowledge the sacrifices made for us and our lives. Let us take a moment of silence, let us read “In Flanders Fields,” and hear the voices of all the soldiers who couldn’t tell us their stories. Let us just simply Remember.

All Our Little Wisdoms: An Interpolation of Pangur Bán

Louise van Oel

1.

I and Pangur Bán, my cat,
’Tis a like task we are at;
Hunting mice is his delight,
Hunting words I sit all night.

I have this eight-stanza poem by a ninth-century Irish monk up on the wall in my room. It hangs about at my eye level, a little to the left of my desk. I bought the small poster at Trinity College (which was one of the highlights of my visit to Ireland last summer), and it was one of the first things I put up in my new apartment upon my return to Montreal.

I spend an unfortunate amount of time at my desk—being somewhat of a monk in temperament if not in practice—so this poem and I are in each other’s company a lot. Like Pangur Bán and his monk once were. I am grateful for the amazing fluke of fortune that has allowed this simple, utterly unique little poem to survive for over 1200 years.

Pangur Bán, in Old Irish, translates to “white Pangur,” so we know the name and colour of this little fellow as well as his favourite hobby. We know that his owner was a hard-working scholarly monk, but not much else about either of them.

I have a white cat who likes to hunt, too. His name is Snorri. Sadly, he’s not here with me: he lives at my parents’ house in Belgium. The (half)dead mice he drags into the house to proudly show us are much more of a nuisance than a help, though, so I haven’t written him a poem for it.

Pangur’s hunting prowess was evidently appreciated. Snorri would be jealous.

2.

Better far than praise of men
'Tis to sit with book and pen;
Pangur bears me no ill-will,
He, too, plies his simple skill.

These days, for scholars “to sit with book and pen” is more often for us to stare at monitor and tap at keyboard. Mourn the aesthetics, love the convenience. Still, in effect, this unknown monk and I are at the same thing, 1200 years apart. Hunting words we sit all night, indeed. (Finals season for English majors.)

Pangur Bán was found in a manuscript which seems to have served the purpose of a private notebook, used by the monk as an outlet for his sundry scholarly interests. The poem is accompanied by "notes from a commentary of the Aeneid, some hymns, a brief glossary of Greek words, some Greek declension, notes on biblical places, a tract on the nature of angels, and some astronomy."^[1] This diverse manuscript was rediscovered at the monastery of St Paul's in Carinthia, a region of modern-day Austria.

A very dear friend of mine, whom I have known since we were thirteen and plan to continue to know for the rest of my life, is Austrian and half Carinthian. One of my favourite things about ancient literature, particularly when it's this small and personal, is that it allows me to feel a tenuous but real connection to someone who experienced a whole life in a completely different, irrevocably lost world. As well as the coincidental geographical connection to my friend, I too like plying the same “simple skills” of reading and writing that this monk once did (though, as much as it shames my Classics-loving soul to admit, I have yet to get to the Aeneid).

3.

'Tis a merry thing to see
At our tasks how glad are we,
When at home we sit and find
Entertainment to our mind.

There is another thing that draws me to this poem: the Irish monk wrote this “at home,” but at his new home in an Alpine monastery.

The Alps are not close to Ireland. Certainly not by medieval standards. What led this person to travel over the sea from his country, across a great deal of land, up and through a mountain range, to become a monk in central Europe? Why go so far? Why go *there*? Were the departure and the location his own choice, or not?

Did he bring his cat all that way? Probably not, but it’s fun to imagine Pangur in the medieval basket version of a cat carrier, in the arms of a traveling monk.

4.

Oftentimes a mouse will stray
In the hero Pangur’s way;
Oftentimes my keen thought set
Takes a meaning in its net.

Like Aeneas, the little “hero Pangur” got his own poem for his exploits. I don’t think the monastery mice would have seen the cat as a hero, but it’s endearing that his owner did. The monk was probably grateful that he didn’t have to get rid of the mice himself, so he could spend more time on his theology and Greek declensions.

Another wonderful reason for this poem to have survived: the feeling of catching a meaning in your mental net—finally understanding a conjugation, grasping an advanced argument in a scholarly paper, finding the perfect word for your essay title—is something students across time can understand. The thousands who came before this monk and the millions after.

I love thinking about the little people in history; how they studied, which books they might have loved, what they thought about. I think poetry about them (and their cats) is the most moving kind.

5.

'Gainst the wall he sets his eye
Full and fierce and sharp and sly;
'Gainst the wall of knowledge I
All my little wisdom try.

Often I feel like just a little person too, with what amounts to my little wisdom, going about the world with only the most tenuous clue as to what I'm doing.

Human knowledge is a big intimidating wall which in many ways has only become harder to scale since the monk's time. As an English and history student, I throw essay after essay at that wall while the world seems to care mainly for progress in STEM, not whether I can think of a new interpretation for a passage in a medieval poem.

Sure, the world may never notice or feel most of what literary scholars do. There may be no practical benefit to the rediscovery and translation of this or that obscure medieval text. But I care! We care! Practical benefit is not the only thing life is about; else, why would so much philosophy, art, and literature exist in the first place? It's all there to be cared about.

So yes, I will keep trying all my little wisdom 'gainst this wall I've chosen.

6.

When a mouse darts from its den,
O! how glad is Pangur then;
O! what gladness do I prove
When I solve the doubts I love.

Still, even when you have a credo to motivate your studies, confidence is not so easily attained as that. Doubts: finals season always gives me so many of them. Can I pull off this essay in time? Does my argument hold up? Am I even capable of having interesting original thoughts anymore?

Think of the monk, and try to frame these as doubts you can love—and solve. After all, the flip side to the anxieties of being a student is that there is also so much gladness to discover in this kind of life. Like when you find a fascinating text while researching, come up with a thesis you

know you'll be passionate about defending, finish an essay right on time... all those good things.

When December deadlines start looking like signposts spelling your doom, try to remember a medieval monk and his cat working alongside each other at the tasks they were made for, and take a breath.

7.

So in peace our task we ply,
Pangur Bán, my cat, and I;
In our arts we find our bliss,
I have mine, and he has his.

This poem on my wall has become an academic anchor of mine, in a way. Despite it all—doubts, difficulties, despairing times—at the end of the day, I remember I study the things I do because I love them. Simple as that.

In the arts of literature and historiography is where I find my bliss, and I couldn't be doing anything else. I am so glad I was born in a time when women at large can get an advanced education (unlike the times of our dear monk), so I can spend these years of my life with other people who sometimes get unreasonably attached to ninth-century cat poems. While plying my task is not always peaceful when there are grades to think about, I know that no one can convince me that my efforts aren't important.

I know the monk whose words are on my wall would agree with that. I'll leave you with this last stanza, which is probably my most favourite.

8.

Practice every day has made
Pangur perfect in his trade;
I get wisdom day and night,
Turning darkness into light.

The Seasons, Bruno Schulz, and Our World in Metamorphosis

Kat Mulligan

Night after enduring night, I liberated myself to the streets which were irritated with months' worth of ice. To Rachmaninoff preludes and Tchaikovsky ballets, I milled around the city in contemplation, extracting loose scraps of poetry from every stately building and hurried pedestrian. Even as I played the role of the tortured artist, with my cheeks rouged to a consumptive glow by the harsh Montreal wind and a scowl embittering my lips as a result, I could not have been more invigorated. After having suffered the weight of many winters' numbnesses, I had finally discovered this time around the secret to surviving the earth's least popular season: you must resign yourself to its claws.

With my summer spent in a constant state of socialization and my autumn spent winding down and trying my hand at love, by the winter I had returned to what I always knew— symmetry is the stuff of pleasure, and for my many months of elation I had to balance the scales. Whether or not we like to admit it, beauty exhausts us in time; winter arrives to alleviate this pressure. In spiritual hibernation, unobserved, we become familiar with ourselves again. This talk of seasonal transition brings me to Bruno Schulz, who, by cruel design, has not lived to see these winters, springs, summers, and autumns of which he has aided my enjoyment. Bruno Schulz was a Polish-Jewish artist and writer, one of the three titans of the Polish literary avant-garde of the twentieth century, whom I discovered on Goodreads while in the throes of a Polish literature craze. Often named the Polish Kafka (although many scholars and readers alike, myself included, hesitate to adopt this title), he was known for his slim body of short fiction work, in which a sole protagonist named Joseph hops from story to story, navigating a variety of ages and fantastical scenarios. A theme I have been turning over in my head since my first read of his work is his concept of material metamorphosis.

Schulz's writing is characterized by a deep reverence for all matter, whether constructed into living beings or inanimate objects. This reverence stems from his idea that all matter undergoes a constant

metamorphosis in order to return to its metaphysical essence. Matter is perfect, and it is merely the forms that portray it that are inadequate. Therefore, this distortion is a necessary process in the laying bare of our surroundings. In "Essay for S.I. Witkiewicz," Schulz explains that, "the substance of that reality exists in a state of constant fermentation, germination, hidden life. It contains no dead, hard, limited objects. Everything diffuses beyond its borders, remains in a given shape only momentarily, leaving this shape behind at the first opportunity... This migration of forms is the essence of life" (Letters, 113).

Since all matter is subject to change, can we not also say that the seasons undergo this very same metamorphosis? After the cold of winter relents, in comes spring; it is the same earth, only wearing a different face. Its form, in varying states, is a shroud thrown over an unchanging core.

The geographical location also determines the face a season wears. Spring in Canada is a trial wholly unlike that of spring in Virginia, where I grew up. My best friend once told me that I, a March baby, was born in winter—but where I'm from, my birthday was always the herald of spring, when we would flock to the outdoors and recognize an otherworldly optimism rolling in from out of town. Spring here, on the other hand, lasts only a few weeks and follows a tug-of-war between the clouds and the sun, where one feels as though they are stumbling through a tunnel whose end merely suggests light. It is as if winter were stubbornly bleeding out onto the land that its knuckles are whitening around.

With Canadian spring feeling more like a concept than a reality, we could liken it to a subdivision of Schulz's metamorphic matter. Not only are tangible forms given reverent attention, but so are what Schulz names pseudo-flora and pseudo-fauna. One cannot touch these things of second-order creation and they are liable to be missed by distraction, but they are all the more essential in maintaining the organism of our world. These are the "old apartments saturated with the emanations of numerous existences and events; used up atmospheres, rich in the specific ingredients of human dreams; rubbish heaps, abounding in the humus of memories, of nostalgia, and of sterile boredom" (Tailors'

Dummies, 37). Pseudo-flora and pseudo-fauna also belong to the metamorphosis that Schulz describes. As quickly as the moonlight strains through the battered roof of a farmhouse and inspires awe, so does it, too, vanish into the black clot of night.

Next, summer arrives, and unmistakably—in full force, like a tangible object. As was the case in winter, I set my mind to following the tenets of this more attractive season. I swam in the river under a willow tree until a Jean Drapeau park ranger reprimanded me for my indulgence; I pirouetted around NDG and served lemon posset on my balcony; I chased my friends to the swing set at midnight as my mouth brimmed with laughter. The trick, though, about summer—which, as it turns out, is not the case for winter—is that to resign oneself to the season is to live in unawareness and folly. Our hibernal period of contemplation is over. The soul abounds without thinking why or how.

Despite the unique sluggishness of spring and the seemingly inexorable snow showers innate in Montreal, our planet knows how to arrange itself in proper doses. The seasons come at the right time. Too much summer seduces the soul into distraction, too much winter drowns it. In our particular geographical location, we have four even, bite-sized slices of atmosphere to chew on until full. How would we orient ourselves otherwise? A wet and dry season is not enough for someone like me, who chronicles time through the environment. We must watch things die in front of us, rub at our chapped hands, wonder when the rain will let up.

In Schulz's work, nothing is belittled. Like the seasons, matter presents itself in a balance and therefore must be respected regardless of its current manifestation. Schulz treats Joseph's father, a tree, a peasant girl, and a mysterious sanatorium with equal gentleness, recognizing how, in an instant, they could be swallowed by either nobler or humbler forms. While we cherish beings of first-order creation (beings easily cared for, with immediately recognizable beauty, created with love by a higher power) without much thought, Schulz sought to elevate the backwater, so to speak, to admiration—those forgotten scraps thrown out by the imperfect, incomplete world. For a tailor's dummy he showed great pity, plagued by the thought that

humans, in their unawareness of the slippery shapes around them and the inherent life imbued in them, are wont to maim these dummies with pins. As if turning over a rock to reveal a colony of bugs, Schulz illuminated through his writing a marbled reality in full rapture, twisted up and blended by change.

Unlike many acclaimed writers of his day, Schulz lived provincially for his whole life in the town of Drohobycz (a territory of the Second Polish Republic at the time, now part of Western Ukraine). It was there that he, on the 19th of November, 1942, was shot by a Gestapo officer in the city's ghetto while carrying a loaf of bread back home. It was the day before he planned to flee the ghetto to safety. But Schulz, despite living in and dying by the forces of one of the most wicked eras of history, did not write such oozing, dark prose as a result of his circumstances. Rather, he intended his work to be a declaration of life, a manifesto for the unconquerable vigor in all of us, delivered in odes to the underdogs of our reality—the ambivalent fathers, the small creatures, the sooty backrooms in disuse.

Finally, as August's gummy heat tempers into a crisp wind blowing into September, I would like to remember Schulz's teachings. Although he grappled with much loftier topics than the back to school season, it is worth pausing to examine our surroundings in flux, to appreciate what is discarded and what is ushered into the new season, and to remind ourselves that no form that captures the atmosphere is permanent. There is no reason to fear the dwindling heat or the encroaching frost. The earth, in its palatable summertime, was only recently a diamond glittering on the finger of someone soaring with the bliss of matrimony. Now, as the temperature's descent requires a bit more strength from us, the earth metamorphosizes into a high mark earned after a string of red-eyed library nights, a joy fiercely won. Again and again, no matter the insufficient forms it comes packaged in, all will cease to be the same as it was. However, with care, we may open ourselves to this change. The leaves will abandon the canopy, the sky will bruise, we will yearn for beauty, and finally, with patience, we will once again possess it.

CONTRIBUTORS

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“Where the Light Gets In.” She’s been published in such places as *carte blanche* and *Open Door Magazine*. Tina’s story “The Tending of Small Gardens” made the 2021 CBC Non-Fiction Prize longlist and was published in *Headlight Anthology*. Her poem “Foxholes” was shortlisted in *Room Magazine*’s 2022 Short Forms Contest.

Ennie Gloom (she/her) is a poet currently residing in Tiohtià:ke, where she is pursuing her MA in English Literature at Concordia. Her essays have been featured in *Yiara Magazine* and the Literature Undergraduates’ Colloquium at Concordia’s Academic Journal. Her poetry has been featured or is forthcoming in *Graphite Publications*, *Crab Apple Literary*, and *yolk*, for which she is now the poetry editor. Unhappy that she is, she cannot heave her heart into her mouth.

Grace Stamler is a multidisciplinary lesbian artist based in Montreal, Quebec. Their work, throughout its range of mediums—poetry, video, photo, and fibers—explores themes of reflection: the contrast between life and death, real and unreal, visible and hidden. From spirituality to earthly identity, everything has a reflection. Stamler’s work—existing as uncertain, psychedelic dream-states—is a glimpse into this uncracked mirror.

Haley Schokking is a Montreal-based fiction and poetry writer. She has been involved in literary communities all around North America as a graduate of Concordia’s Creative Writing program as well as Kenyon University’s renowned Young Writers camp. Her work often focuses on topics such as relationships, spirituality, and the feminine and she is never afraid to push the edge when it comes to themes around sex and sexuality. When Haley is not writing, you can catch her teaching yoga and the art of “free writing” at studios across the city.

Katie Cossette (she/her) is a Montreal writer getting her BA in Honours English Literature and, generally, just trying to do her best. Her work has been featured in *Lantern Magazine*, *Naked Cat Publishing*, *Ghost City Review*, and more. You can also catch some forthcoming work in *Alien Buddha*, *Wireworm*, and *Timber Ghost Press*. Katie is the co-founder/co-EIC of *Crab Apple Literary* and thus is awed daily. You can find her on Instagram ([nerd.i.am](#)) and Twitter ([cossette_katie](#)).

jc is a 22 year-old writer / visual artist / musician living in Tiohtià:ke / Montreal. They are currently in their second year of a Bachelor of Fine Arts program with a major in Studio Arts at Concordia University.

Ace Côté is a queer Canadian writer based in Montréal. They are currently completing their B.A. in Creative Writing at Concordia University with a focus on poetry and short prose fiction. They spend their free time reading, playing music, and participating in co-operative storytelling projects (playing Dungeons & Dragons). Their work, both creative and academic, focuses on the humanistic themes within science fiction and apocalyptic narratives.

Joel Robert Ferguson is a poet and PhD candidate of working-class settler origins living in Winnipeg, Treaty One Territory. His work has appeared in *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, *The Columbia Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Riddle Fence*, and elsewhere. His debut poetry collection, *The Lost Cafeteria* (Signature Editions 2020), was awarded the Lansdowne Prize for Poetry.

Olivia Hornacek (she/her) is in her last year in English and Creative Writing at Concordia and is already wrestling with her identity when she is no longer a student. She lives with her cat and beautiful haunting memories, both of which act as her muse. She hopes to continue to reside in Montreal and write as much as possible while making minimum wage.

Santiago Eastman Herrera is a Colombian ex-DREAMer who is now (happily) working on his Canadian citizenship. He's currently finishing a double major in English Literature and Creative Writing at Concordia after his stint in Mechanical Engineering turned out sour. In terms of literature, he's most interested in what makes people tick: class and racial inequalities, different experiences in the LGBTQ+ community, and the crunchy bits that appear when they all mix.

Jayde Lazier (she/her) is a second-year English literature student from Toronto. She loves writing a mix of poetry and journalism pieces and hopes to incorporate aspects of both into her writing for Soliloquies this year! She has worked as an editor of performance programs for the School of Toronto Dance Theatre and is excited to start as a writing assistant this year at Concordia

Louise van Oel (rhymes with "pool") is a published writer and Concordia student pursuing a Joint Specialization in English and History. She is Dutch, Swedish, and Canadian, born and raised in Brussels, Belgium. She'll gladly buy you a coffee if you'll listen to her monologue about ancient history and/or Old English literature, and can enthusiastically provide you with more fantasy and historical fiction book recommendations than you'd ever need (or even want). As a writer, she aspires to embody the intersection of Neil Gaiman, Natasha Pulley, and V. E. Schwab.

Kat Mulligan is a writer hailing from Richmond, Virginia and a third-year student in Concordia French studies. She has been published in Soliloquies, orangepeel, and others, and looks forward to exploring the publication world and growing as a writer. In her free time, she enjoys learning languages, reading the Eastern European canon, thinking about baked brie and never actually making it, and insisting on interrupting the indoor function to go frolic.

