

THE MITRE



THE MITRE

131ST EDITION

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THE MITRE
Lenses & Light
131st edition

Eds. Manu Bissonnette and Lucie Casinghino
Bishop's University
2024

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131st edition

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Mitre has been a staple of Bishop's University since 1893 and has ever since been produced on the traditional and unceded territory of the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy. Only in 2017 have we begun to acknowledge this fact.

We acknowledge the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy, the traditional stewards and protectors of the territories upon which we are learning, and the violation of their rights. In performing land acknowledgments, we make what was invisible visible and invite the land and the First Nations people into our conversations.

The lenses of the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy deserve to be explored. Their light deserves to be shed. This acknowledgment is a step toward a reconciliation in which Indigenous perspectives are shared and valued. This act of naming is only the first step towards reconciliation. We must tackle the difficult conversations that call out both prior and ongoing injustices.

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EDITORS' NOTE

We each see the world through different lenses. Our identity and background, our personal insights, shed light on our vision of the world. Every perspective brings something new to the table. Perspective, like light, reflects and refracts.

Through art, one can delve into the confines of their own perspective and explore the light they shed on the world. Through art, one can contrast other lenses and feel the light of others.

In the pages that follow, we hope that you discover the lenses of our contributors. We hope you feel the light they bring to the world. But, most of all, we hope you appreciate how your own lenses, your own light, are reflected and refracted.

Manu & Lucie

A deep space photograph showing a dense field of stars and galaxies. The stars appear as bright, out-of-focus points of light in various colors, including yellow, orange, and blue. The background is a dark, textured expanse of space, possibly showing the structure of a galaxy or a nebula. The overall tone is mysterious and cosmic.

“Bound by the black-rimmed sea of night”
—*Frank Willdig*

KNIFE TO A GULL FIGHT

Sophia Cumming

on the pier, i saw
two gulls fighting. one cried out,
the other swooped down,

biting the crier's
face. the attacker recoiled,
then snapped at the eyes.

pinned down by the neck,
held and twisted by the foe,
the gull's eyes blackened.

the air a cloud of feathers,
my mother and i tried to

walk away, but a

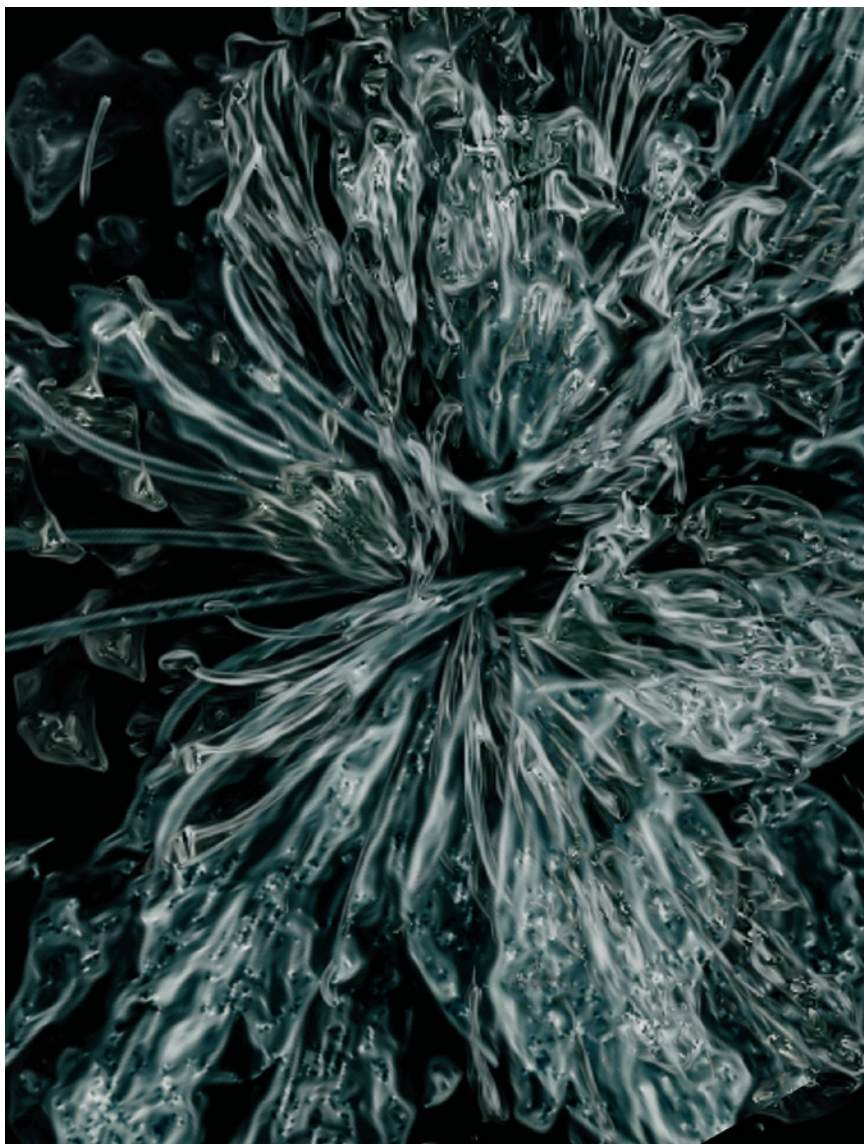
man crabbing nearby
asked if they could be mating.
only a man could

look at this moment
the victim pinned down, screaming,
neck contorted, and

eyes gouged out, trying
to get away, and think "they
must be mating".

PATRONUS

Carella Keil



STARLIGHT

Ann Oxford

Why do you fear the stars?
Do they fill your dreams?
Why do you fear the sky?
Does it haunt you in your sleep?
Why do you fear the night?
The empty spaces and dark rooms?
Was it because of all those walks,
Lit only by the moon?
Why do you fear the black veil,
Pierced with blinding light?
Why do you run in from the car?
Why do you clutch your coat so tight?
Why don't you ever stargaze?
Why are your curtains always drawn
When darkness falls and stars appear
And not opened until dawn?

What are you afraid of, really?
Being vulnerable? Or alone?
The sheer vastness of the sky?
The emptiness? The unknown?
What makes you fear the stars so?
What truly frightens your heart?
What is it about looking up
That makes you fall apart?
Are you reminded of your past?
Starlit nights, filled with tears?
Or is it completely abstract?
Afraid of stars, afraid of fear.
Now that I take the time
To get to know you, to observe,
I realize this fear
Is even more absurd

You're reminded of yourself
When you see the glittering night
That everyone admires
But no one gets quite right.
Not science, nor photos,
Not words, nor art,
Can understand or reproduce
The heavens, more than in part,
And when you see the sky reflected
In your eyes, every day,
When placed under the stars
You simply run away
Because you're afraid of being a mystery
You want to be fully known
And you know that you will never
And seeing the stars hits close to home

But maybe if you look to the sky
The sky will look to you,
It may not see you fully
But will know there's stardust in you, too.
And perhaps if you look to the stars,
You'll find that you can see
The reason that they scared you
Was because of similarities
You drew between yourself
And the night filled with stars
Both full of what others call beautiful
But you see as scars
Both too large to understand
But people still try
And it's worth it because
I saw the starlight in your eyes.

THE CITY IN LIGHT

Frank Willdig

From high above, the sky is lit
with the brilliance of our man-made day;
fireworks flash and such colours flare
bound by the black-rimmed sea of night.

From these commanding heights
smoke cannot sting the eye, cannot choke,
and the fires are harmless,
to bedazzle the night.

But the moment is fleeting.
We must move on.
An hour before dawn, Phosphor will rise
and be obscured in the smoky glare.

We fly by and as avenging angels,
drop our payload and move on,
we hear nothing of the strident clamours below,
and the distant fury of vengeance.

A LIGHT IN THE SHADOW

Jolène Lessard



ROT OF THE LIMELIGHT

Emerald MacIsaac

Cocoon of primal senses
Feeding feeble drives of lust.
Fettered feet tied to the fences
Of greener sides from tabloid dust.

I knew that I would make it,
Light would shine upon my face,
But I lay still in the limelight
Of the moon with mental lace.

The sun is harshly close,
I feel its heat upon my hand,
Though it's nothing but reserves
From a world that I demand.

I struggle to remember
What the darkness took from me.
The endorphinic shots of pleasure
Hear not my desperate plea.

I wish I'd never seen the grass;
Its colours bleed and fade to red.
I'll fight from my restraints
Until my dearests find me dead.

Though they'll only really find me
When they chase this phantom high.
When they leap up to the fences
Chasing grass on greener sides.

Now, I'm forced to watch them
Live a life of lavish peace.
Knowing that they're only happy
When their thoughts begin to crease.

I am nothing like the people
Who frolic in the weeds
Of fancy, high-end parties,
Branding vice to all our needs.
I want to live in sunlight,
But in meadows I'd forget

That this is but a stupor
Of cathartic self-regret.

I wish I could've seen the pastures
That I dreamed of as an infant;
A perfect little place
Where death was not so nighly instant.

I cannot feel my fingers.
I chuckle as the gleam
Of rays bounce off my retinas,
Inducing manic self-esteem.

For only but a moment,
My bonds were never tied;
I am free to lose my breath
Running from the other side.

Though... it's only but a moment,
Now I burn up in the heat.
Unprepared, I lay in starlight,
Tasting dew of sweet defeat.

The blaring sirens rapture
Realizations that I complied
To be the earth that lies down under,
Feeding dreams on greener sides.

From the light's refractions,
The colours fade and dull.
The acid burns my being,
Breaking bones and cracking skulls.

I'm a shell of hollowed echoes
Filled with hopes and aspirations
Emptying onto fertile soil,
Feeding greener generations.

I hear my helpless whimper
As I become my earthen bed.
The green is disappearing
As it all bleeds into red.

As my heart begins to falter
After all the things I've tried.
Only now I start to notice:

It's greener on the other side.

I KNOW YOU

Emily Beaudry

Dear, Darkness

I know you -

Nothing but a shadow from afar,

The closer I get the less I see -

I have dreamt of you before.

The deep shadows that cloak your face -

Your silence unrecognizable,

beneath your torn, molding robes – then.

Bundled in a blanket I recognize,

Purity, impossibly small.

With only a moment to gaze, to shudder,

Before I remember what was lost -

You bare your teeth,

And crunch -

A tooth falls from a blackened mouth,

Eyes bleed onto the figure on the floor -

And I ignore it.

I Ignore that small figure, that child,

My figure, me?

And I watch your face crack,

With a grin made of mildew.

Rotting grey skin slides

Free from your frame,

In sheets on the floor, piling -

becoming the bundle of blankets.

Leaving it to be forgotten.

Burying what is dead -

Turn from the darkness and show,
Bare, that unwilling error -
That struck between ribs,
in your blistering back.

Daggers hanging,
falling from your empty skin,
Collecting themselves,
by the figure on the floor -

Were we sisters once?
Did we share a name?

WHEN I WATCH MYSELF

Nicole Rayner

On the street I am a figure
Stagnant like a thousand figures past
No more or no less of anything than anybody else
And when I search inside the eyes of those that pass me by
There are no remnants of me that linger in their vision
Yet when I watch myself I'm tethered to the eyeline
I am not a holy figure in this space I swell inside
I am vermin in a pest trap waiting to be disposed of
When I watch myself you all want me dead

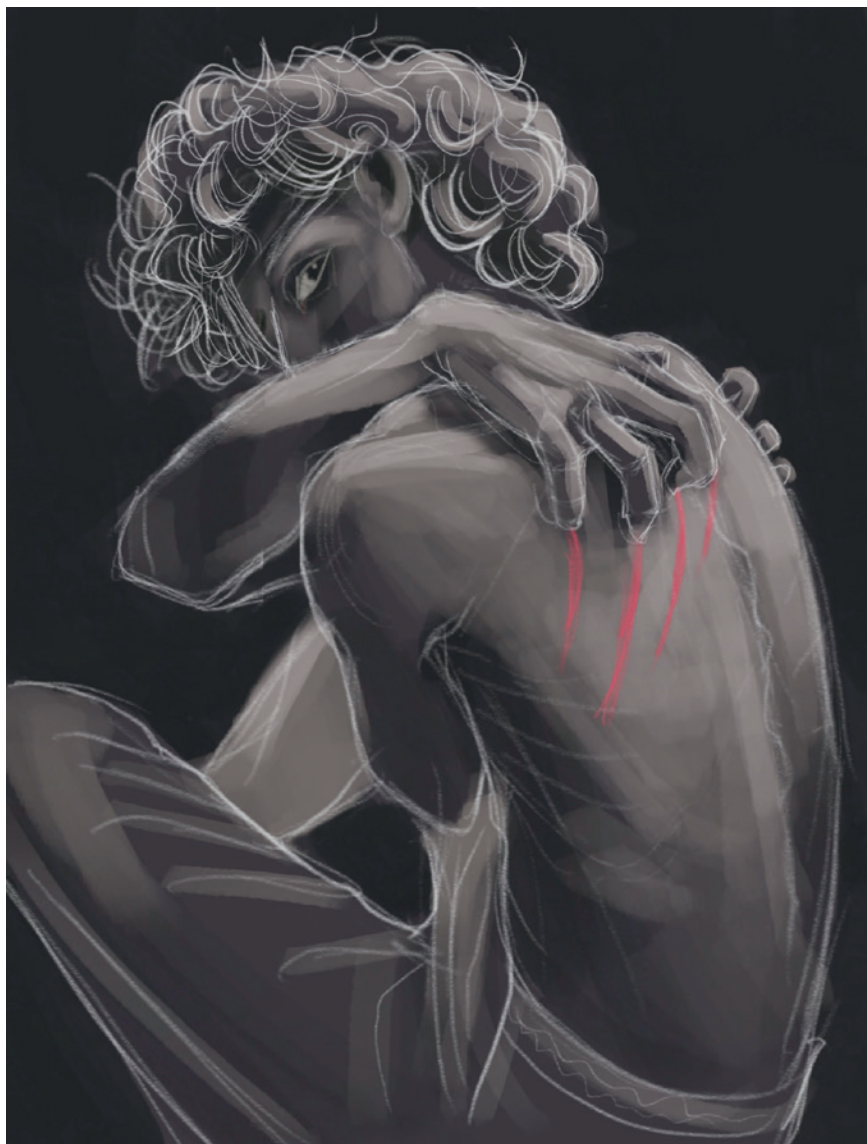
In my bathroom I am a body
A blank slate of skin and hair
Every other body is the same as mine
And this structure carries me within its bones with adequacy
Yet when I watch myself I am something infected
There are parasites inside my veins and my mouth
My bones and my tendons will turn against me with time
I am never quite safe within this rotting shell
When I watch myself I have begun my decay

In my bed I'm translucent
A thing in its simplest form
There is nothing to hide and nothing to show here
I am a naked being at the starting line of the world
Yet when I watch myself I am half-formed and mangled
There are sinister creatures that crawl through my body
Thoughts that I can't look in the eye
I wish to purge my cavities of these alien ideas
They must exist in me because I tell myself as much
When I watch myself I'm imprisoned serving life

In the face of others I am intangible
But no one is ever truly understandable
I could never carry the weight of all the versions of myself
That exist between the eyes of every person that has seen me
Attempting to cheat physics with this desired super strength
Is a futile endeavor
Yet when I watch myself I am something to be destroyed
When I watch myself I am a charity case at the best of times
I can never stand tall no matter how I stretch my back
If there is worth inside of me I'm not sure how to make it glow
I can't seem to scrape off the tar stuck to the good things in me
When I watch myself I am filthy

DERELICT ANGEL

Cécilia Alain



THE STYX

Tomas Peck

And so,
as I float down the river Styx
in a worn rubber tire,
Hallelujah, I cry, with passion and belief.
to the tune of a joyful choir
I am dead they say. Dead.
Life's greatest crime
We have no chance for anything.
We just waste our time.
But what does that matter?
Fuck it. It's done!
A new journey awaits,
a new thing has begun.
They say no one will remember me;
that time-honored curse
"Good riddance", says I,
as I ride in my hearse
Made of rubber. I tire,
and rest my eyes shut,
while the weight of sleep brings the water
closer to my butt.
And the lovely waters rock
this babe to sleep again.
May I find another piece.
Forevermore. Amen

WHAT IT IS TO BE SHARP (WHAT IT IS TO DO ONE'S DUTY)

Safia H. Senhaji

I was a sharp child, they said, cut like broken glass and striking like a broken chord wherever I went.

I was sharp, once, and bright and full. Now there is nothing left, no space to be sharp or any other thing; only the lonesome and silent task of a role never meant to be mine. Emptiness. The world as out of place as an untuned harp, broken and jagged in a way it never ought to be. A body, sleeping and still, tucked in sheets of purple mourning in a hall now as lonely and haunted as the palace's alleged ghosts.

I used to be sharp, once, bright and living and always too close to true oath-breaking. Now my heart is locked in a barely-moving chest in a wing that has now become a sick-room, a foreign grave. Heavy lies the sceptre, and its duty, a bond unbreakable and tight, more than any physical constraint.

How is one meant to make the proper forms, remember one's place, fulfill all duties, if your world has ended? A question once asked from illicit mauve lips, from a sharp child grown into a brazen woman. You never did answer, properly; never did listen to what I was actually saying, what I actually feared.

The answer, of course, is that one... doesn't. Especially when it is the whole world that mourns.

What else is there? What solace can be found, what conviction in living truthfully?

Did you know? There are ghosts within these thousand halls, angry and grieving and bitter, refusing to be fully erased regardless of oaths and duties. Or so it is said. Profaning the very walls, with its collections and archives and food stores within. Shadows that walk among us, the number growing ever-more now that the doors are fully open to all.

(What was I supposed to do? What was duty and responsibility and ethics if not this, you who were born and raised for this and yet now gone—)

The physicians say to have hope. There is none to be found. There is none to be found when days turn to weeks turn to months, when time is stopped because there is no answer to be found. There is no hope when duty comes in its silent and grave aspect, demonstrating need and resource allocation and the core principle of never failing to try and save the one.

Ghosts are here, or so it is said. Mercenary and intangible and an affront to all basic principles. Did you know?

Oh, brother dear, though I think you always doubted my words of devotion. Of affection. Your daughter's black dancing shoes thrum against the cobbles of the courtyard, against painted stone and under the light of a night sky. Now it is almost every day. An occurrence becoming ritual in its nature.

I was a sharp child, they all said of me, and I became a defiant being, or so I knew myself deep in bones and heart and tightly-woven oaths.

I ask not if she is in pain. It seems the pain of the body as rules and laws and oaths are broken, over and over with each step, is solace from the pain of the heart.

I think I almost understand it for myself.

I was a sharp child, deliberately vibrant. She, this daughter of your heart and blood, is an oath-breaker, deviant and uncaring and willingly condemned. Look at what has happened, at what has become of us. The errant daughter of the throne now Regent-elect in her sharp metal chair and wood-carved cane; and the mad princess, ruler-in-waiting, in joyful midnight black as she dances outside night after night with her ghosts for company.

One does not blame another for which they have no control over. That is a core precept, one I do practice from one sunrise to another. So it is not your fault, your sickness, your unending sleep. It is not your fault the world has become sharp and broken and heretic in ways it never ought to be.

It is not your fault.

But here too, is the truth. One cannot go on when one's world is now over. There are only ghosts and mistakes and actions one never thought one would take, and decisions you would never make that I must take responsibility for.

You are gone, at least for now, and the world has been reborn anew. You never did believe my word, my sincere truth; I doubt that this would change now.

It has been rebuilt and reborn, and in that world I will fulfill my duties.

King of the City of a Thousand Gods, ruler of the Palace of a Thousand Archives.

This I promise you, in my bones and heart and the oaths that keep me in the now. For I am a daughter of the City too, and I choose these ways and duties and oaths. I will do my best, for your daughter and your people. Somehow, we will survive. Somehow, we will. Some may never thrive, but many will, for that is what duty demands. Serve as well as you are able, and never stop trying to save the one.

BLACKOUT OR BACKOUT

Kendra Buchner

Men are like sommeliers
They sip women like wine
Breathe them in
Say they're full-bodied and fine
Perhaps a little on the dry side
Figure out what to pair them with
Cleanse their palette
Move on down the line

I'm not a wine
I'm a cheap tequila with the worm
I won't kill you, but I'll make you squirm
In the morning, you'll wake up with regret
But there's something so addictive about nights you can't remember
But will never forget

REDACTED WOMAN

R.A. Garber

Born [redacted] May 1979, Iryna Danylovychna [redacted] human rights [redacted] citizen [redacted] humanitarian and medical professional, who exposed problems in the Crimean health care system. She collaborated with independent media outlets [redacted] reporting on politically motivated trials [redacted] occupied Crimea, and [redacted] [redacted] harassed [redacted] in account of her journalistic reporting and trade union activities [redacted]

[redacted] abducted [redacted] and forcibly disappeared [redacted] occupied Crimea, on 29 April 2022. That same day, Russian security forces [redacted] searched her house [redacted] seized her phone and equipment. Danylovychna was eventually located by her attorney on 11 May 2022 in a pre-trial detention centre in Simferopol. She [redacted] torture [redacted] ill-treatment [redacted] detention [redacted] forced [redacted] confession without having read it. She was subsequently charged with 'illegal purchase, transfer, storage and transportation of explosive substances or explosive devices' under Article 222.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and listed as a 'foreign agent' by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation [redacted]

On 28 December 2022, the Feodosia City Court sentenced [redacted] [redacted] prison [redacted] fined her 50,000 Rubles (approximately \$670) [redacted] On 29 June 2023, the Supreme Court [redacted] occupied Crimea [redacted] the verdict, reducing her sentence by one month. [redacted] transferred [redacted] to the Russian Federation on 24 July 2023 and is currently held in Penal Colony No. 7 in Zelenokumsk, in Stavropol region, Southern Russia [redacted]

In March 2023, Danylovychna went on a hunger strike in protest against the persisting lack of adequate medical care in prison. According to her family, she has [redacted] lost hearing in her left ear [redacted]

Scores of Ukrainian citizen journalists and human rights activists are [redacted] currently being kept behind bars in occupied Crimea and in the Russian Federation on politically motivated grounds, including Server Mustafayev [redacted] who [redacted] in PEN International's 2022 Day of the Imprisoned Writer [redacted]

Campaign. PEN International has repeatedly called on the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally [redacted] devastating war [redacted]

FAMILY TREE

Angela Leuck

My great-aunt was the self-appointed
guardian of the family genealogy.
She kept track of every birth and death,
knew the names of those who'd
come over from the old country
and their descendants.

All neatly transcribed in her careful
script onto the branches
of the family tree.
Except for me—the adopted child.
Blood is thicker than water, she'd say.

At family gatherings, there'd sometimes
be stories told about adopted kids and the terrible
things they'd do to the folks who took them in.
“Bad blood,” someone would whisper,
and everyone would nod.

And then, invariably, another relative
would sum it up: the apple never falls
far from the tree.

But not theirs!

I was left feeling like
a sparrow with nowhere
to perch.

Or a bit like Eve, with an apple
in my hand, and thinking, what's all the fuss
about a god-damned tree.



“when hoar frost coats the trees”
—*Sophia Cumming*

WHEN HOAR FROST COATS THE TREES

Sophia Cumming

and a soft breeze sends shimmering
glitter everywhere, when the air shines
with crystals, and the cold gnashes at my skin,
when i see a tiny rabbit nibbling
on last summer's dead geraniums,
whose colourless leaves peek out
from beneath porcheside snowdrifts
and when chickadees fill the morning air
with song, sloughing snowy sleeves
off the branches they so tenderly perch on,
i feel less compelled to lie naked in the snow
less like i want the tiny glass like shards to rip my skin open
less like i want to bleed out on the boulevard
less like i should stare at the blinding snow
until my pupils ache and my eyes water
less like the only way i can feel something
is to do something brazen,
when hoar frost coats the trees,
i pause.

POLLINATED

Carella Keil



FOR AKI KAURISMÄKI

Jordy Mäkelä

I would drink up every lake in the land of a thousand lakes to become a fountain in whatever garden you grow—perhaps it's tomatoes or potatoes or tulips or all of the above. I don't care.

Just let me flow.

REMEMBER HOW THIS FEELS

Jeff Parent

This open deer
is a crawlspace,
the hollow lure of it
red and velveteen.
You could imagine
the curve of a fox there.

Snow will come soon
and bury the heath
but the carcass will live on,
dry and taut, staring
into its last humid season
and every eager threat.

There is no ceremony here.
This is a summons
intimate, fundamental.

A jay calls.

Now go.
Remember how this feels.

HERALD OF THE HIGHLANDS

Elisha Davidson-Yee



A FLOODED ORCHARD

Noah Bishop

A flooded orchard,
Farmer's wasted potential.
When winter's cold comes
Children will skate happily.

PANDEMIC WINTER

Sophia Cumming

on the eve of our second lockdown
an old man eats dinner alone.
his third-floor living room
illuminates the alleyway –

artificial light warped by the wind
dances with a barren branch,
leaving shadows reminiscent of
a malnourished pit bull.

leafless trees reach skyward
begging the sun to shine
like bony hands pushing
up out of their graves.

the kiss of frost webs across my face,
and strands of hair that
billow on my frozen breath
become pinstripe icicles.

two weeks before the solstice,
the air smells of winter,
dry and sharp. all is still,
and the frigid night drags on.

BIRDS WE ARE BLIND TO

R.A. Garber

those who migrate
at night using the rotating
stars to guide their north-south paths

Sparrows—Blue Grosbeaks—Baltimore Orioles—
Dickcissels—Painted Buntings—Chestnut Sided Warblers—
Scarlet Tanagers—Eastern Bluebirds—Black Billed Cuckoos—
Swamp Sparrows—Hermit Thrushes—Black Crowned Night Herons—
Great Blue Herons—Least Sandpipers—Hooded Warblers—Vireos—
Black Throated Green Warblers—Magnolia Warblers—
Rose Breasted Grosbeaks—Swainson's Thrushes—
they call to us on their flights

in 1896 in Madison Wisconsin, history
teacher Orin Libby heard 3,600
night flight calls in 5 hours

how have i not heard them?
never stepped out into
the dark, lifted my
face, opened
my ears?

ANTHROPOSPHERE IN MAPLE LEAF

R.A. Garber

Anthropo
sphere
in Maple Leaf
rows
of balsam
firs surround
our house. i couldn't
say how many acres.
in the spring, the owners
come out with crews to plant
the tiny trees, and when they're
a bit older, trim them. one day at our
door arrived a hapless worker who had
macheteed himself—south american blood
bleeds red and fast as anyone's—we grabbed
a clean sheet to wrap tight around
his arm and off he was taken to the
hospital. in the summer, a tractor and
tanker come to spray pesticide on the trees,
probably against their main enemy, the spruce
budworm. but we are not sure; it also withered all
the grass between the rows. maybe they used two sprays;
one for spruce budworms, one for the rest of nature. glyphosate?
in the fall, crews come again to cut down the biggest trees, sheathe
them in plastic netting, and then load them on
huge trucks. in the mud, their tires create ruts two
feet wide and almost as deep. our man-made landscape
in maple leaf does not loom as large in our great creation,
the anthroposphere, as do open-pit mines, oil and gas fields,
landfills, space junk, and the Pacific Garbage Patch. yet like the rest
of the anthroposphere, ours is inefficient at sustaining itself. finally came
the spring when all the fir seedlings turned dark brown in their rows, the earth
too depleted
and poisoned
to sustain them.

A COLD COMFORT

Noah Bishop

Thick sleet against a worn wooden sign
Garbage cans frozen in formation
Stores offer temporary refuge
Dry wheezes and muttered curses fill the air
Frosty windows create partial privacy
A truck sputters to life, as I drink tea the colour of cough syrup

TUMBLR 2014 DREAMSCAPE

Luke Munro



AUTUMN IS A LIMINAL THING

Sophia Cumming

a season defined by its great betweenness
described primarily as what it is not
it is not the sickly hot season of abundance,
nor frigid months of emptiness
here, it is barely a blip.

this too-short-time feels
like so many new beginnings, like
an early prequel to the new year. i revel
in the bittersweet end of the lazy days of summer,
and delight in the anachronistic sense of a second spring,
as birds gather at their annual convention
before they return to more tropical climes.

i love the crunch of leaves underneath my feet,
the bright blue sky against the yellow leaves,
the gentle rustle as a crisp wind
cuts through a grove of poplars.
in the evening, the air smells of warm,
torn up grass after soccer practice.

there is something special in that air -
plump with possibility, as it teeters
on the edge between muggy nights and bitter cold ones.
the mornings, brisk with a cutting sharpness,
hint at the winter, yet mild afternoons
soothe our tired bones, lulling us into bliss,
so sweet that we forget the morning's chill.

LEARNING TO RUN

Sally Cunningham

I'd stepped on a stone, towered over the canopy
and taken the dust and root trail back down again.
Lagging from fought winds and argued wins, I
pounded down the path out behind the row
of white houses until I collapsed,
lungs burnt by muddy spring air
then I limped inside and heated soup,
burnt from the freezer.

I'd run, twice, away from home and
then home again. Until I teetered,
yellow sneakers clinging to the slick rock,
and kindled shame. It was then I opened my eyes,
saw the wreckage and how far I'd come:
the lone wisp of smoke on a gentle blue horizon.

OPHELIA

Elsa Cunnington

The girl who was once one with the trees
snuck down to the river to forever be at ease.
She adorned herself in the dark ribbons of the ocean's rage
so she could escape the wretched confines of this age.
The ocean's embrace was wickedly frozen
but she could see the end, one step, a dozen.
And just like that, the ocean's blue
swallowed the girl you thought you knew.
Now she sinks beneath the waves
and forever dances over her graves.
Did she leave? No one knows,
except for the girl that sings her prose
The girl on shore sings to the sea,
and tempts the one who used to be
on the rocks beside her, holding her cheek,
telling tales of how she'd be free in a week.
For the wicked dream of this twisted love
had left her rotten and poisoned with the foxgloves.
She'd always been a girl of the trees
but now drowned so deep beneath the seas,
missing the girl she loved still on shore,
she was broken unburdened forever more.

REFLECTIONS

Sophia Cumming

our soccer field is an unnatural green,
just on the part where they play,
as if their cleats have aerated the grass
and their gatorade bottles fertilized it.

i write this from within a moldering window,
arms resting on the cool, painted concrete sill
as i stare out at the long shadows
and the glowing green parking lot moss.

a family traipses across the field,
the youngest kicking a ball, dreaming
of his football idols, as his older brothers rush ahead.
their mother follows slowly, carrying their bags.

i dream of a past when those long shadows
felt late into the evening, when days
and nights felt like lifetimes, and of a future
in which i escort my own children to the park at dusk.

LIMINAL LETTERS

Colin Ahern

The letters hanging in your name are windchimes,
My longing sighs will drift to make them ring when you aren't here.
Where wind will call, the chimes elegantly linger
Amid arboreal locks and ringlets of autumn.
The season whence first my trembling voice uttered your name like a repentant
hymn.
When winter's ragged claws swipe at these gentle chimes,
Your twinkling song will fill my mind with memories
Of the brushing shades of summer that grazed my ankles when first we met.
So when resplendent spring cranes its tired neck and casts
A wayward gaze of blooming lilies to enchant the melting evening,
I will see no roses, buds, or new life.
Others will find nighttime in spring to be an orchestra of darkness
Amid scents and songs of Night's twilight realm.
Where she may spread her abyssal wings to soak rays of moonlight
And fill the eve with the hum of bristling grass, owl's hoots, and dancing waves.
Truly others will be rapt in spring's lullaby as it sings new life
Through your chimes and calls burgeoning spirits
To throw themselves upon the forest's floor.
Instead, I will yearn for autumn's chilling breeze
And winter's wicked hail to quell the sounds of time's stomping boots
That clutter the air, so I may not hear the soft winds of spring
Pass through your name and murmur our parting sighs.

CUSP

Loch Baillie

The bird calling and no response.
I kick a stone, striated and bouncing
into a puddle runny with abandoned
sidewalk chalk, pastel swirling in
the grey. It has just stopped raining.
I was in a call quand il s'est mis à pleuvoir
à siaux and you said did you hear that
and I said April showers but you remind
me that it's May. Now look at this runoff,
look at the skeleton of the house that
will be built, the earth that will be dug up.
Can you hear the wind enveloping and
filling your ears? The buds popping
out of the bendy green branches in
white and yellow. Nos yeux nous piquent
because the air is no longer dead. Look
at the light, how it stays warm to the touch
long after it is gone.



“Symphonies of shadow and light”
—*Allyson Sirois*

PASSION FRUIT

Carella Keil



CHIAROSCURO

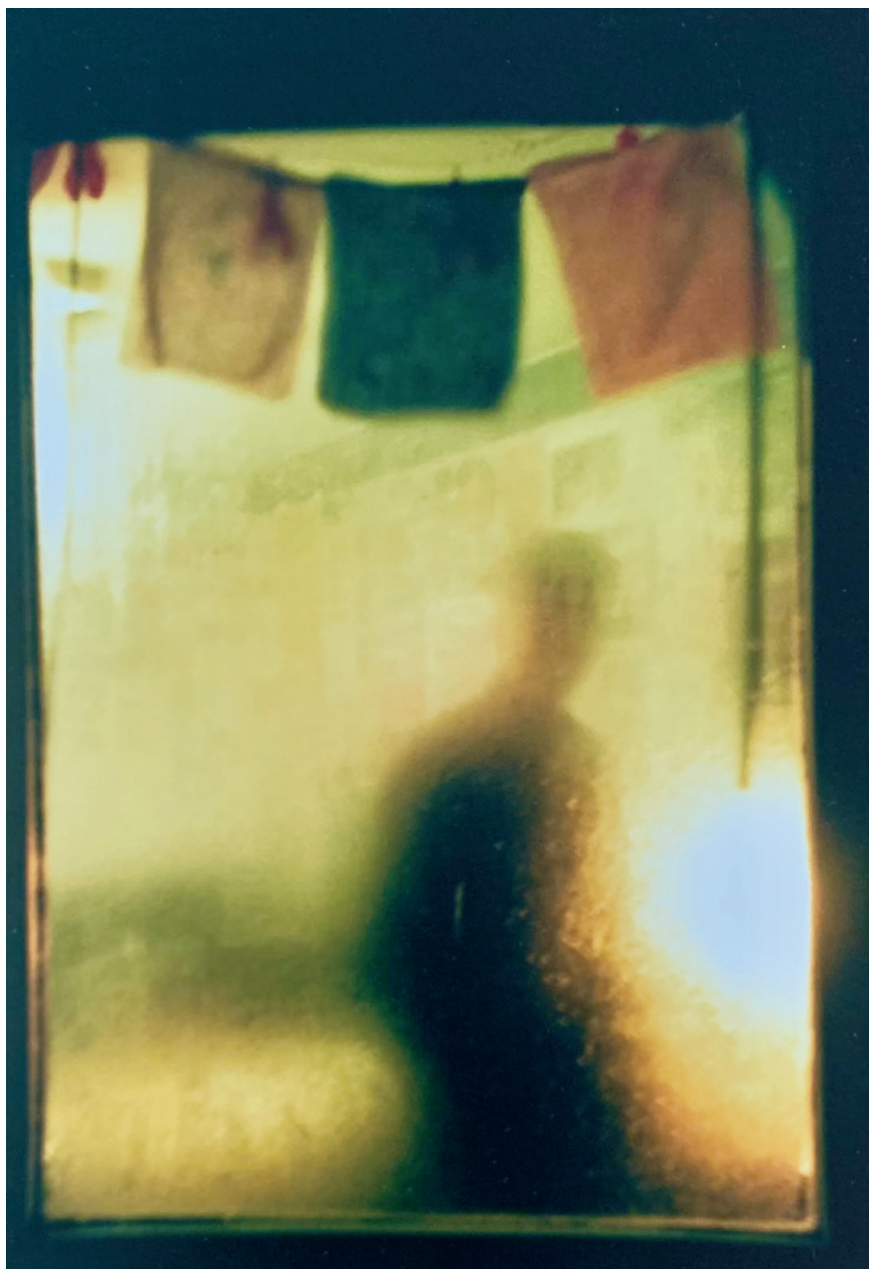
Kendra Buchner

You're the sun shining off the snow
You make everything glow
It doesn't matter that it's cold
Mundane things now feel bold
It's so bright that it's hard to see
You illuminate the darkest parts of me
Chiaroscuro
You're a work of art
God gave me a blank canvas
A brand-new start
One-dimensional and flat
Some linear perspective will fix all of that
Add some white
Then paint it black

It's so bright, but it's easy to see
You illuminate the darkest parts of me
Chiaroscuro
We're a work of art
God gave us a blank canvas
A brand-new start
A paramour paintbrush
And a palette in the shape of a heart

THROUGH THE WINDOWPANE

Luke Munro



I'VE BEEN WATCHING TOO MUCH WES ANDERSON

Luke Munro



ONE EARLY AUGUST EVENING

Sophia Cumming

one early august evening
on a twice-delayed budget flight,

i sit above the baggage hold and gaze
at a glittering sky, where the deep, unseeable

black of the ocean is met with the terracotta
tinged glow of seaside towns.

the day-past-full moon draped above looks askance
as if partially concealed in cloud, despite my one,

two, four blinks that assure me there are no clouds,
the sky a porous kerchief of navy, stars glimmering

through, winking back at the lights
on the wings of our little tin can in the sky.

later, we fly over a lake that looks like leather –
smooth and pebbled at the same time – and

a forest fire, rough around the edges, as if
caught in the moment a child lights a match

on their school project to gain old-timey-authenticity.
from above, the fiery trees resemble the embers

of a campfire, so much so that i feel the heat, hear
the crackling, and wish for a shoulder to lean on

and the latent possibility of a summer night.
smoke follows us for many miles after.

when the landing gear comes down, i peer
out the window, fruitlessly trying to read

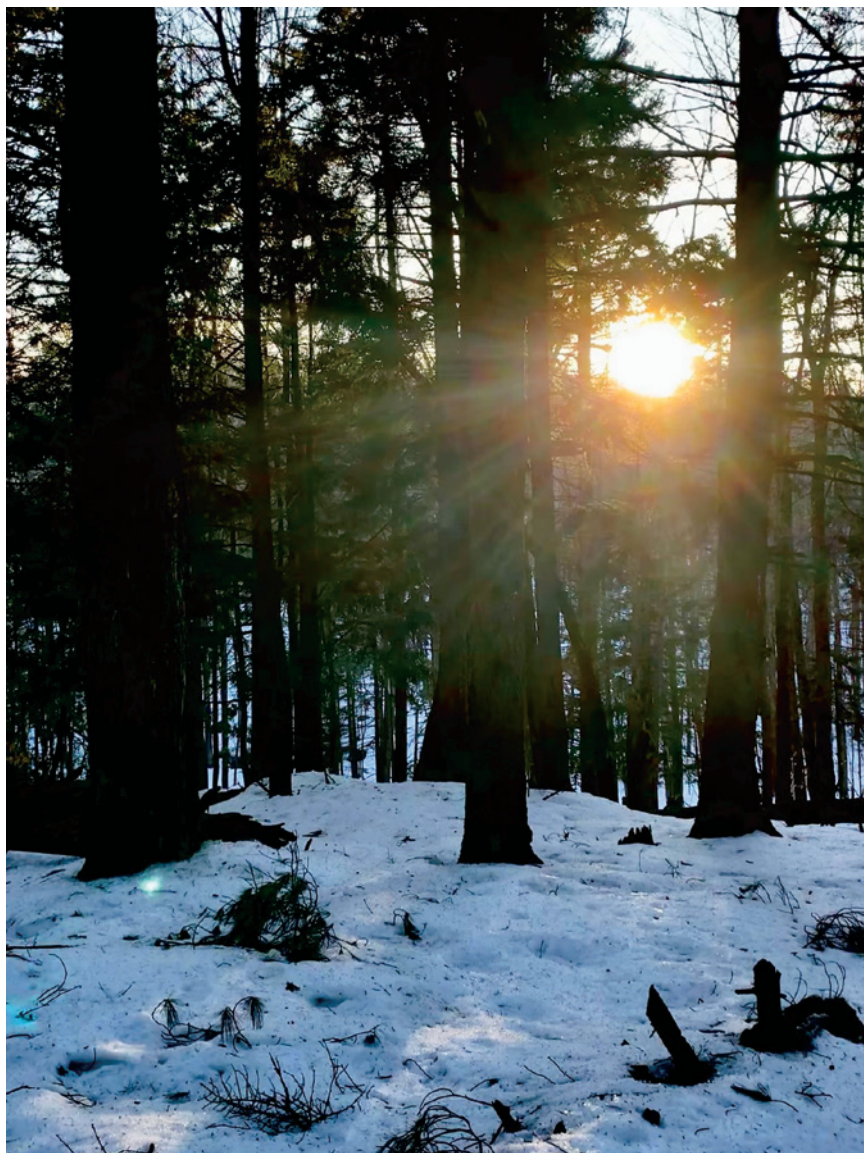
the orange map below, seeking familiar patterns
in the glowing maze of my hometown's street lamps

and headlights. in the early august haze that comes
with forest fire season, the streets look awash in sand.

and in the thick smoke, the moon turns orange, too.

THE ONE WHERE THE SUN SHINES

Jolène Lessard



FOLKLORE DANCER PAINTING

Alexis Nova Hazan Jepsen



ARTS AND CRAFTS

Alyssia Bernard

I am a mosaic of all the times I've broken before
All the shattered pieces of myself put back together
A stained-glass painting in my image

OUROBOROS

Allyson Sirois

I've been chasing home
craving its familiarity
its comfort
creating a universe
under which I could shelter
only to realize
that home had always been
within me

I've been chasing glimpses
in the abyss of nightfall
of dreams that once kindled my days
sparkled and glistened
tomorrow's wishful whispers
chasing echoes of a time
where I used to paint vivid hues
of moonlit fantasies

I've been chasing bygone days
and unfolded yet-to-bes
created a sanctuary
in my reminiscences
until I conceived
that home was not a place
but an embrace
of the chaos from today's pulse

as I journey through the corridors
of my mind's labyrinth
through the obsidian of my inner being
metamorphosis unfurls secrets shelved
symphonies of shadow and light
my perspective waltz
a kaleidoscope
mirroring my inner selves

and in this quiet introspection
as I embrace the darkness
find comfort in its sway
the cocoon I weaved
find its layers unfurl
nomad in my inner realm
where home now transcends
mere perception

TUG LIFE

Andrew Hutchins



LET ME SIT IN THE DYING LIGHT

Emily Beaudry

Let me sit in the dying light of day,
and think of you.
The warmth of the fleeting sun merely,
mimicking your caress.

The blinding yellow - in which I
ignorantly gaze - a figment of
imagination - the reality of remembrance
fading and blurred.

Let me sit in the cool light of dusk,
dreaming of what has been so carelessly lost.
The cycle of love and light,
repeated - stunting growth.

I would spend this frigid night,
and many more,
alone,
and frozen.

If your return was just as promised as the sun.
If the stars were not the mockery of life lost.
If the darkness did not condemn the light.

With warmth, love, light,
as nothing but entities in which,
we place our hope.

Let me sit by the dying light of day,
and wander off in impatient imagination,
to your comfort as the sun, too, abandons.

THE WORLD, A RIGGED STAGE

Emerald MacIsaac

Blessings be the puppet
Hung around by fragile thread;
My messy misplaced fingers
Binds one tensely 'round its head.

The way I see its movements,
Sudden jolts; hyperbole,
A soulless, whirling dervish
Overseen by soulless me.

To be emptied like a puppet
Is a curse alike no other,
No amusement enters me;
Though I know I cannot suffer.

My world is shining gold,
Yet I see in monochrome.
Valued black to blinding white
Is a gray space that I roam.

Oxymoron virtues.
Contradicting sins.
Intermingled half-hues
Of subconscious, whipping whims.

Their differences are normal;
Their countenance is clear.
I'm tangled in the mishmash,
Crashing waves into the pier.

Let the waves be placid waters.
Let my ocean mock a lake.
Let my soul be wired downwards
To where darkness turns opaque.

And when the water's shallow
Only then I'll tie my eyes
To the sunlight bright up higher
And then I'll start to rise.

Blessings to the puppet:
I hang by fragile thread.
My bless'd fingers fumble
Along every word I've said.

I wish that I could be them;
Those with outlooks not as tragic.
I would need a hopeful exit,
Miracles and metamagic.

What could I do, my oaken image,
To stand with passion brazen?
What message must I mutter
To fulfill the incantation?

While lost, I pull the strings,
As I look up to the screen.
Seeing those who dance and smile,
Forcing feelings on the scene.

I don't know how they do it,
But I go outside to try
Being highly charismatic
Acting as there's coloured skies.

At first I start to fumble,
I crack, I cry, and fail
Though below I feel a rumble
Which beckons waxen quails.

I'm lost in mental lightning,
Yet feel sanguinely warm.
As other folk are brightening
The eye within my storm.

Melting, melting, melting.
Flames are blazen on my wick
And spread onto my strings
Slipping into nervous ticks.

Push ahead and focus,
Thinking with your head is wracked
Breathe and use your heart
To find your place within the act.

For once, I see a tint
A glint of golden accents.
Lining every meager movement
Made by me, despite my contents.

But as soon as faces turn,
My strings revert to slack.
And the colours quickly fade
To the values, white and black.

My strings can shift to taut.
I can dance the soulful dervish.
Only eyes can make me dance;
A worthless fate to nourish.

Those emotions and that colour;
An experience within.
But alone I fail to find them
Slithered deep beneath the skin.

The incantation's function
Is exactly what I'd hoped.
Should've aimed a little higher,
Now I'm bound, restrained, and roped.

If you ever see me smiling
With eyes that shine with life:
Then Dearest, let me dangle.
Do not free me with your knife.

FLESH PRISON

Josee Deschambault

When I was
Just a person
All Sinew and
No Bone

I would gaze up
At the lights
Hanging
In the Sky

How we dream
Of Bony
Prisons
When flesh
Calls our name

The foundation
Has been built
But I built it
In Your name.

SKIPPING ROCKS

Luke Munro



EXCERPT FROM THE MEMOIR OF THE LATE ROBERT THOMSON

Colin Ahern

Archivist's Note

Beloved reader holding this,

This memoir of Robert Thomson has been birthed through entries from his personal journal, accounts from family members, and records from local news organizations. This public endeavor ultimately seeks to exhume details of Robert's life that were previously shrouded by his secretive, yet humble lifestyle. This particular entry aims to reconstitute an evening at his print shop as described by his grandson, Francis Thomson. At the time, Francis was eight years old. Aspects of this account, while delightfully detailed, are reconstructed and, consequently, may hold some inaccuracies. Nonetheless, this section of his story is widely accepted as fact. This particular passage of Robert's journal, while innocuous to passersby, showed more care and extensive details not seen in any other entries. That evening has since been referred to as the last day that Robert developed a photo for any news organization.

Sincerely,

Your Faithful Archivist

A Noteworthy Passage from Robert's Later Years as Retold by Archivist #163

Robert's deft fingers shuffled reels of undeveloped film. Each frame featured a grisly car accident. The brown film spat out various angles on the same few wrecked cars. Bodies were often featured in the driver's seat. Moonlit scenes had dripped through the camera's aperture to sear themselves onto Robert's lens. Robert held the film up close. He looked hard into the eyes of a victim, as though he were seeing the man's perspective imprinted on his lifeless eyes. As if there was one more frame to see before his life was cut short.

Robert unspooled, inspected, and loaded the film onto a fresh reel and affixed it into the film tank. Robert checked, rechecked, and checked a third time that there was no wayward film in the room before flicking the lights on. Fluorescent light splashed across the darkroom. Overuse left much of the darkroom wanting for repairs. The table, stop bath, and film tank had cracks that taught silver tape concealed. The room, worn from decades of use, was Robert's inner sanctum. The long goodbyes that time forgot, Robert swaddled and rebirthed in this room.

Robert's phone buzzed and shifted along his desk. The subject was undoubtedly a deadline for these bodies to rise again. The sender was the Editor-In-Chief at the newspaper where he worked. He grunted in response before measuring and pouring sixteen ounces of film developer into his thirty-two ounce bucket. He topped the bucket off with water. After stirring well and consulting his bent metal thermometer, Robert moved to fill the film tank with the film mixture. The storefront bell jingled and broke the silence that had filled the well-lit darkroom. Robert turned and washed his hands in the sink. He twisted and pushed open the door with his back. The film mixture patiently watched Robert leave, waiting to be poured.

Robert was toweling off his hands when Francis leapt into his arms. Robert held Francis with one hand while his other reached to lower the storefront lights.

"You'll never guess what I found!" Francis' voice filled the storefront, causing Robert to reflect an impish smile back at his grandson. Francis produced a film cartridge. The edges were chipped. Its label was scratched and illegible.

Robert held up the cartridge, turning it over as if searching. "Where do I plug it into my computer?" The store's lights enveloped the exterior of the cartridge, begging to pierce and eradicate the cylinder's precious contents.

"Mom says it doesn't plug into anything, but that you can show me what's inside" Francis pointed to the door that Robert left ajar.

"Close it and I'll show you."

The darkroom was void. The dim red light accented the edges of the objects, but failed to penetrate into the large swathes of darkness of the small chamber. Where Francis may have felt fear in that darkness, the abyss comforted Robert. It was the only place to incubate images that are polarized and reversed, ready to be reproduced. Francis clung close as his grandfather popped the top off of the film cartridge. A snip of scissors later, and Robert freed the frilly film from the husk that held it. "I can't read this, it's too dark in here," Francis held up a sheet of scrawled instructions, "Is it a recipe?"

Robert tapped the sheet, "this will let us translate light into memories." Francis stood on a three-legged footstool to peek onto the counter. Robert toiled, bones creaking, to develop the reel. Francis gazed as his grandfather performed his ritual. The negative space of the room seeped into Robert's wrinkles, making him appear more vibrant and angular. The old man danced through the early stages of development. At last, Francis' photos caught up with the car accidents. The ritual was interrupted. Robert's hands lingered over the mangled bodies entombed in the film tank. Francis' eyes peered upwards to Robert. Robert gave him a weak smile before removing the reel from the film tank. His hands pried the reel of flesh from incubation. It was slick with fluid and the negatives were

half-developed. Robert's stomach churned as his eyes passed over the misshapen bodies splayed out in his hands. The aborted memories screamed to return to the film tank and incubate once more.

"What are these photos telling us?" Robert's eyes moved over to Francis' reel resting on the worktable. His curiosity chafed against Francis' unseen frames and subdued his nausea. The boy was tying his shoes.

A shrug preceded his reply, "I dunno. Mom says not to peek and that it'll help you." Robert put the new reel into the film tank and subtly pushed the bodies away on the worktable, far from Francis' reach. Robert smiled so he would not wretch. The carcasses yearned to be seen again, as though attention would pull the mangled husks out of the mouth of death. Robert fed them a brief, sickened, glance. It was better that Robert looked instead of Francis.

Robert grunted as he lifted and poured the film mixture into the film tank, "Next time you'd be better off taking them digitally, it's much faster."

Francis frowned, "But there's no fun to that, the photos are all hollow. This way, we fill them up."

"Be careful which photos you develop."

Robert gave Francis the film tank to agitate while he closed up the store. The film reel would have to remain in utero for fifteen minutes before being extracted from the film tank. Robert turned his "open" sign, gathered the day's few receipts, and shut off the front lights before returning to Francis. The day's work yielded four visitors, not counting Francis. The shop's traffic had dwindled as of late and would certainly be winked out by the eventual popularization of modern filmmaking in a few short years.

"Will we get to see you this weekend grandpa? Mom wants help to get ready for Christmas." Francis' words were cast like fishing lines from the shores of his lips but never reached the crashing waves of Robert's ears. Instead, Robert ran a crinkled hand through his gray hair, and sighed.

"Your mother will be missing you, you'd better run home. I'll finish developing the photos for you tonight." Robert instructed Francis. The boy, crestfallen, turned over the film tank and kissed his grandfather's cheek. Robert walked to the store's register and, after some clicking, clacking, and tapping, the register sprung open to reveal a few lonely bills. Robert gave Francis a few dollars for candy before seeing the boy off.

Notably, Francis claimed that Robert muttered something to himself as the boy turned to leave. However, as the words were uttered, the boy bumped into a display, whose noise obfuscated the intonations of Robert's statement, thereby leaving the sentiment's contents unknown. Robert made no note of his statement in his journal and Francis decided that the sentence must not have

been important enough to ask for repeating, so there is nothing to be done about this lapse in information.

Robert was alone again in the darkroom. He drained the film tank before refilling it with Stop Bath. His tender fingers delved into the womb to keep the film from falling out. Shoulders taught, he moved with a slow grace that was informed by repetition and care. Robert developed images like a waltz, every action was direct and efficient. Film soaked as he gathered clothespins. If not for his immeasurable appreciation for silence, Robert might have hummed gently to mirror his motions. Robert unrolled, separated, and hung his film to dry overnight. The reel of mangled corpses remained untouched. They begged Robert to cast a glance in their direction.

In the morning, Francis' negatives revealed scenes from a Christmas dinner. Robert and his family sat around a dining table in one frame, opened gifts in another, danced in a third. Each shot held Francis as a baby. The photos hung along the drying clothesline like wind chimes but they did not ring out, for there were no longing sighs to disrupt them.

However, Robert's film of car accidents, along with the other three cartridges labeled "Aug-21-TO Times" found their way into darkroom garbage, the last of their kind that would enter Robert's darkroom. The film of bodies writhed in the recess of detritus. They would exist there for fleeting days, all the while yearning to return to the film tank. The dark, womb-like chamber that rebirths moments. The film mixture, like embryonic fluid, was a distant dream for these cadavers. When their days of proximal hope were past, they were shuffled off to a landfill where light would strip the flesh from their bones and leave them as traceless white sheets. The images would only remain in Robert's memory

Closing Remarks from the Archivist

This event would mark the end of Robert's career as a photojournalist. As the emergence of digital media prevailed, Robert's commitment to philanthropy and his community was bolstered. Robert was commonly known to be kind and loving, but melancholic. He lived out the remainder of his years with loved ones and passed away with the tradition of analogue photography.

BURN AS YOU PLEASE

Carella Keil



THE POET WRESTLES WITH TWO MEN

Angela Leuck

The first man—the young one—
was blonde and reckless, who she admired
from afar because she
didn't want involvement,
was determined
to escape that mill town. She's not the type to end up
in a trailer with
a raft of small kids
and a cheating husband with
the kind of smooth
strong body
that would never
be owned.

The second man, an artist from China—
that big mysterious country—lived
through the cultural revolution,
digging latrines
in the desert
for Mao.
In retrospect, he tells her, these were
the happiest times.

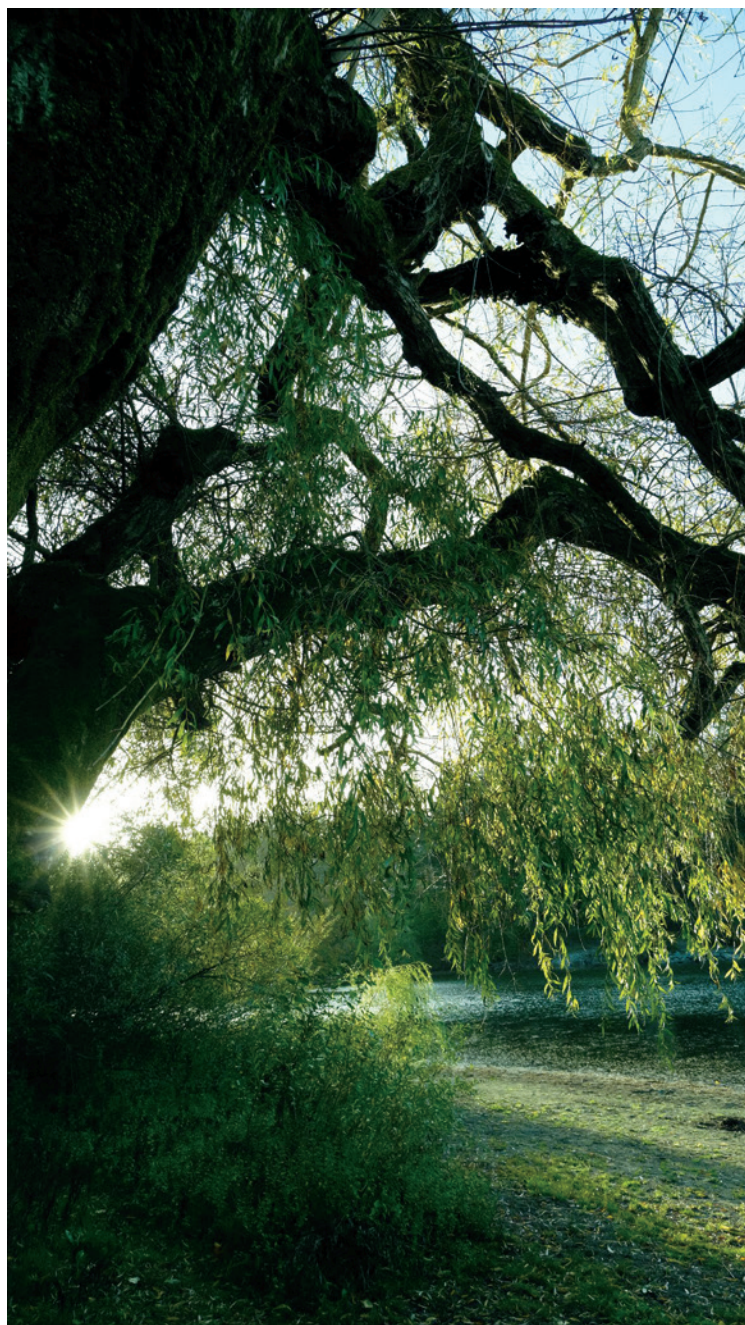
After the death of his young son, he devotes his life
to painting,
to kneel at the eternal
altar of art.

No, this second one is distant,
she can't grasp him between her hands.

He's elusive as a rare bird,
an occasional sighting,
a jotted note
in her field guide.

DOWN BY THE WEeping TREE

Andrew Hutchins





“There is magnitude in the/miniature”
—*Lynette McGuire*

ISPY

Luke Munro



ANTECEDENT RECURRENCE

Lynette McGuire

there is magnitude in the
miniature, I find moments
like these as though time
never passes, like I am stood
still on your staircase or the edge
of your fingertips, like without
begging these moments to stay
they still would never leave.

our hearts beat on in
continuance, I still can't
tell whether time exists or
if I am always where I was,
whether I ever pulled out of
your driveway, ever stood from
your table, or fell from your
arms outstretched. whether mine
are outstretched still.

in some ways it never mattered
whether I was a moment
or a memory or myself,
I couldn't tell the difference
if you asked me. but as lines crease
my face I know only to trace them like
wooded trails two decades ago,
these places I have found again,
these places I was never gone from.

somewhere off in the distance
I can't help but think more
will come to us, like hands in wet
clay you built me into someone
I always was but never thought
to be. until then I'll fill pages with
the dull heartbreak of nearness,
where all that once was still is,
and whatever will be
has always been.

ODE TO ASABIKESHIINH (AFTER SHERI OSDEN NAULT)

Kay Nadjiwon



A mother swaddles her child, secures them in a tikinagan, and places it on her back as she walks deeper into the forest in search of mushkiki. Her back begins to ache from the weight of the tikinagan, so she leans the baby up against a large Giizhik while she continues to search nearby. The baby begins to cry when it can no longer see their mother. A curious Asabikeshiinh hears this sound and descends from the Giizhik, landing on the top of the tikinagan to investigate. Unsure of what to do, Asabikeshiinh begins to fret and spins a web to distract the child. This silk weaving caught the light beautifully, holding the baby's attention long enough until the mother returned. This is the origin story of the dreamcatcher. A symbol of love and protection. The intricate woven pattern captures good dreams and confuses any bad dreams, tricking them into leaving through the centre hole of the web.

Ode to Asabikeshiinh is an effigy to my ancestors and the Anishinaabe tradition of storytelling, intricately weaving together care, community, and connection. This piece is rooted in Anishinaabe ways of knowing, yet transcends cultural specificity, inviting a universal audience to engage with the profound lessons embedded in Anishinaabe storytelling.

AUBADE

Loch Baillie

Cooled by the grey-blue wash of winter
morning We're laid out on bedsheets, the colour
practically drained from both our bodies,
our limbs posed, entangled perfectly
in a Pompeiian scene

Eventually, I wake up to your breathing,
watch you do that new and normal thing
watch the light crash violently through
the window in silent suicide, splayed on the hardwood

And just when I want to go back to sleep,
I find my pillow on your floor
sleeping on our clothes like a wild animal.

TALKING TO MYSELF

Alyssia Bernard

It's scary
It's supposed to be
What if I fail?
What if you succeed?
I don't think I'm good enough
How will you ever know if you never try?
You can't hide forever in this Schrödinger's coward experiment.
Never try, never fail
Never want, never lose
You'll have to get out one day
Open yourself and trust
Be vulnerable
Terrifying, yes, I know
But how long is this life of yours?
You'd rather die than lose face?
Look over your priorities.
You only got one of these.
Just try, what's the worst that can happen?
Don't answer that.
Just go for it.
I'm here, I'll still be here.
Well yes. I am you.
But see, I am you.
Doesn't that mean you want to try?
You made me up to convince yourself
That's progress!
Now if you would just listen to me
Life is gonna catch up to you one day
Every chance you shy from is a regret in becoming
Of course you're going to fail sometimes
You're gonna fall on your face and be laughed at
But isn't that a better story than "repressed my feelings and went to bed,
again."?
I know you don't think you're strong enough to fall and get back up
But it'll be okay

Because it always is!
Because you're still here!
Because you're stronger than you think
Because you deserve to live your life
Kill the cat, or save it
I don't care
But you gotta open that box
Do something I beg of you!

WISTERIA

Ann Oxford



THE ROCK BOTTOM MERCHANT

Emerald MacIsaac

I tend not to tell tales of woe
To any passerby so-and-so,
But my wry heart is wrenching
And I lay down here clenching
At something to give me some ease

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant,
A permanent scar,
My wares are my shoulders
To show you the stars.
They're so close to you,
But just out of view
To me and my blinding disease.

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant
Your outlook is dull
I'll give you a spyglass
To stare at the null
It's all that we cherish
In Rock Bottom's parish
Believing in something that ceased

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant
Giving something fantastical
An aim for your faith
Pseudo-ecclesiastical
Be it your lover,
Something new to discover
Wherever pulsation's appeased

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant
I hear your chest pound
Desiring life
An aeolian sound
All here is ashen
Yet you bleed still with passion
Believe me and my expertise.

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant,
I supply you with hope.
A bright everlasting,
A dangling rope.
To aid your escape
From Wallower's Cape
I watch you rise and I freeze.

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant,
The Spider's Thread's yours,
Your irises gleam
For crystalline shores,
And though I am wrought,
And it's all that I've sought,
I promise, it's your hope to seize.

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant,
In awe of your climb.
An untouchable angel,
An unreachable kind.

Eyes on the goal,
You never look down
To my personal hell
Alone on the ground.

I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant.

I'm a lost little girl stuck here for years,
Wailing alone and choking on tears.
I'd hate for any other like me to be lost
Locked down and toiling, alone in the frost.
Rock bottom's scary and cold in one way:
When the silence is ringing, your sins start to weigh
Down on your shoulders, it shatters your spine
You miss people passing to halt your decline
To a feral hysteria, a delusional state,
Where no one's around and nothing can satiate
Your lust and your envy, your wrath and your pride,
All of your needs you crossed and denied
Because others are worthy—they shoot for the stars
They're all constellations. I'm dying on Mars.
At some point this planet—this trenchlike depression
Was a livable space of somber expression
Gamblers, mothers, lovers, and fools
Rallied up here to master the tools
But they all found an exit—or some other solution
And I stayed behind with no resolution
I grasp at the fragments that let them be free;
Six feet underground, or ten thousand from me.
Wherever you fall, no matter how low,
You'll be the arrow and I'll be the bow.
You'll be the ocean and I'll keep the flow.
I'm the Rock Bottom Merchant, readied below.

PEAS IN A POD

Andrew Hutchins



THE LANDLORD SPECIAL

Nicole Rayner

Landlords love white paint. White, white, white, inside cabinets and on ceilings, coated too thick, dripping down white walls onto white window sills below. White over grease stains and candle wax and black mold and bed bug larvae stuck to the corner where drywall meets flooring. There is no history in a Toronto two-bedroom-plus-den (listed dubiously as a three-bedroom, of course), that hasn't been washed over with white paint.

In 2021 I rented a place with two friends in an old house on Lansdowne Avenue. Our ground-level apartment had three rooms. There was a two-bedroom unit downstairs, and two single units above us. They had us packed in that old creaky building like sardines. When I got the keys, the unit wasn't cleaned, so I spent a good 4 hours running a Clorox wipe over every tangible surface before moving in my boxes. When I started sweeping, the broom caught on a piece of paper stuck between the floor trim and the hardwood. It was a postcard, depicting a beautiful European town, with words on it in a language I couldn't identify - maybe Croatian, maybe Hungarian, maybe Slovenian, I had no idea. It was unaddressed, sticky, and covered in dust. I suspected it was from the tenants before us, or maybe even the ones before them. I didn't think too much about it, other than it would make a nice bookmark. I put it on the window sill and I kept cleaning.

Many other relics from past tenants would show themselves to me throughout my time living there. I found a bright yellow bookmark behind the furnace that was branded to a bookstore that didn't exist anymore. One day a polaroid of two girls smiling together appeared in the middle of the floor. I had no idea which deteriorating corner of the room it must've fallen out of. Our mailbox was constantly filled with letters, addressed to a different name every time, which belonged to nobody currently living in the building. I hoarded these artifacts, and when the bleak late-pandemic winter morphed me into something of a shut-in, I became a bit obsessive about them. I began to spin narratives about who these people were, what led them to this house, and what forced them out of it.

When we toured the apartment, the landlord told us that two girls had lived here together for 5 years before they went their separate ways. They must've been the girls from the polaroid. I imagined them, starry-eyed and fresh-faced, watching Toronto flash like glass in the sand from a distance, from Ajax or Malton or somewhere else as stagnant. It was 2016, when Toronto still had some allure; sure, it was gentrified and precarious, but Honest Ed's was still open. Things didn't feel completely hopeless yet. The city was bright, a fresh canvas of first times and unknowns. White paint. These girls were eager to start coloring.

It was fine at first, I'm sure. It's always fine when it's fresh. They must've decorated their place - our place - with such intricate artifacts of friendship and homeliness that it felt as though they were always destined to fill that space; a level of synchronicity I never even came close to feeling with that apartment. They took photos of everything; every wine-soaked dinner party, every cozy night in, every buzzing Friday evening before a night out. They strung these pictures across the walls and made a gallery of their lives. It was a coming-of-age movie, a honeymoon phase - they found a new love for the city and a rejuvenated love for each other.

Toronto is a beautiful place to wade in. It's dazzling to watch from a distance, a refreshing pool to dip your toes into on occasion. But once you get in too deep, it can be hard to keep your head above the water. Over time, the fabric threading these girls together began to wear thin. Money was tight, I'm sure, and every orifice that the apartment used to breathe began to get clogged - flyers, coupons, offers, feeble attempts to save a couple of dollars a month resulting in an advertising hell suffocating the mailbox. Every letter addressed to a made-up name, because the city could never let anyone have more than one cheap handout. Money saved in practical ways only to be blown on vices, a bottle of white each night, Pall Mall Smooths, escapism through streaming subscriptions and half-read novels from the cute local bookstore that provided more comfort in its aesthetics than in its content. They cluttered their walls with posters and art to match the technicolor billboards outside, while the gallery of polaroids went neglected and began to fall unnoticed in corners of the room. Life got hard to carry and they took it out on each other, I'm sure, because whether you intend to or not, it's hard to stop your burdens from spilling splashback onto those around you. They stopped having cozy nights in together, they'd go to different houses to prepare for nights out. One girl went on a vacation with her family, somewhere in the Balkans, and bought the other girl a postcard. The air was so tense in the apartment when she returned that she never ended up giving it to her.

I'm sure the move-out was anticlimactic, not broken off with a snap but with a fizzle, a slow erosion leaving the two hanging lifelessly apart. They helped each other pack in silence and hugged with tight lips on the front porch, cementing the rest of their years as used-to-knows, only reaching out to offer shallow happy birthdays and careless thank yous. It's heartbreaking, what white paint and suffocatingly close quarters can do.

I hope that I'm wrong about all of this. I imagined it ended this way because the polaroid was on my floor, not in their hands. But for all I know, they merely saw that one photo as a bad shot, disposable compared to the others. For all I know, that picture's absence was unnoticed amid their pile of memories, so rich and swelling that it was impossible to keep track of every specific moment. Sometimes I examined my walls and I imagined, if their pictures had still been stuck there after they moved out, how accurate would my assumptions have been? Would I have achieved a clearer picture of who they were? Would I have kept any of their art, stripping it of its sentimentality and incorporating it into my own world, or would I have thrown it all out and forgotten about it? If my posters had stayed glued to that wall after my lease was up, what stories would the next tenants have imagined about me, my interests, my life?

We only stayed in that apartment for a year. There were too many structural problems - we had bedbugs, a creature living in the wall, mold in the bathroom extractor fan, and a kitchen sink that kept falling through the counter - it felt as though we were biding our time in a straw house on the verge of collapse. As I stripped my bedroom down to its bones, tearing paper from the walls, I decided to drop a couple of relics of my own. I stuffed a photograph of my friends and I underneath the baseboard and I tucked an old page from my journal behind the furnace where I found the yellow bookmark. I wanted to be an enigma, the way these girls were to me. I had no reason to believe that the next tenants would even look, and if they did, if they would care. When all of my posters were finally torn down and packed, the white walls looked calico. The sticky tack left faded blue-green specks throughout the room, and the sun had bleached borders around where each canvas had hung. The space looked beautiful this way, the tarnished shell of something so worn, warm and lived in. When I squinted into the window from the moving truck, I prayed that my hidden papers would remain. I prayed that they wouldn't get swept up by an underpaid cleaner and thrown in a garbage bag, without the opportunity to be pondered at all. I mourned the outlines of my posters that stained each wall. Like everything sincere, I knew they would soon be covered by white paint.

WABI SABI

Allyson Sirois

once upon a time
a place we called home
endless ramen noodles
apple-flavoured beer
parent stolen weed
stranger looking friends
bored in winter
waiting for summer
drug-filled nights
dreading the days after

once upon a time
a place we called home
proud parents
or
absent ones
but
all the same children
seen as thieves of cheap stores
or
warriors on poverty's shores

once upon a time
a place we called home
living in a world
that seemed too dark
to see beyond our neighborhood
where stagnant indwellers
plagued with self-perceptions
of unescapable irrelevance
danced away boredom
under nightlights' radiance

once upon a time
a place we called home
breathing the air of a city
filled with inertia
with nothing to do
except kiss each other
with fumbling tongues
too much
saliva
too much
inexperience
sometimes our hands sliding
inside undeserving boys' pants
just so we could tell each other tales
of lives fit for the silver screen

once upon a time
a place we called home
long showers of burning water
washing away solitude
sleepless nights
on tear-drenched pillows
in a city we dreamed of leaving
but when the shadows were creeping in
we found light in remembering
that everything is going into
and
coming out of
nothingness

AT THE BEACH WITH MY YOUNGER COUSINS

Sally Cunningham

at the beach with my young cousins
I'm buried, up to the waist
in sand,
half-slouched – contrapposto –
leaning like Venus
when they found her between the rocks,
arms long-lost,
aloft apple – attached limb –
crunched apart in a sailor's fight,
ground into silt on the shore
into the body of Milos.
She was hauled away,
dusted off – exposed –
between the pillars,
limpid gaze open
for the coast,
for two hands still digging,
digging, in wet sand.

FOR WANT OF ANOTHER

Lynette McGuire



GATEWAY TO IRELAND

Shawn Barrow



CONTRIBUTORS

Colin Ahern is a third-year Honours English Literature student with a penchant for Gothic Literature. Colin spends much of his time writing creatively and playing pool.

Cécilia Alain is a Bishop's alumna ('22) with a B.A. in English Literature, Film and Fine Arts. She adores scribbling stories and sketches (for practice), playing with clay (for fun) and crafting prop swords (for a living).

Carella Keil is a writer and digital artist who creates surreal, dreamy images that explore nature, fantasy realms, portraiture, melancholia and inner dimensions. Her writing was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and she is a 2023 Door is a Jar Writing Award Winner. Her art has appeared on the covers of *Glassworks Magazine*, *Nightingale and Sparrow*, *Colors: The Magazine*, *Frost Meadow Review* and *Straylight Magazine*. [instagram.com/catalogue.of.dreams](https://www.instagram.com/catalogue.of.dreams). twitter.com/catalogofdream

Loch Baillie is a Bishop's alumnus ('21) and the co-editor of the 126th edition of *The Mitre*. He is the author of the poetry chapbook *Citronella* (Anstruther Press 2024) and his writing has additionally appeared in *Font*, *Maclean's*, *Maybe Magazine*, *yolk literary*, and *Tidewise*. Originally from Worcester, MA, Loch now lives and writes on the south shore of Quebec City.

Shawn Barrow is an Ontario Ex-Pat (against his will) working remotely from an apartment with no windows. He enjoys selling bowling balls and watching period pieces.

Emily Jade Beaudry is a double major in English Literature and Classical Studies. In her free time she enjoys reading, tending to her garden, and doing anything that draws creativity. Overall, she is inspired by nature, spirituality, and their effect on the individual.

Alyssia Bernard

Noah A. Bishop was born and raised in Stanstead, Qc, and spent much of his childhood reading. Although he grew up with a fondness for literature, it has only been in the last few years he has started writing poetry. Noah is currently studying English literature and Psychology, and plans on furthering his studies.

Kendra Buchner is a fourth year Honours Drama student with a minor in French as a Second Language. She is proud to announce that this is her fourth time being published in *The Mitre*. She would like to thank her friends and family for their endless love and support of her creative work.

Sophia Cumming ('20) is an English teacher in Calgary, AB. She adores her parents, who taught her to love literature and remain her biggest fans and closest friends. In addition, she loves house plants, small animals, coffee, and mini eggs.

Sally Cunningham ('21) achieved her MA English from MUN in 2023. She is currently based in Montreal and is a part of the Newfoundland Poverty Cove Playwrights Unit. Her poetry and prose can be found in *Riddle Fence*, *Accenti Magazine*, and several editions of *The Mitre*.

Elsa Cunnington is a first year student from British Columbia. She loves the ocean and her dog and enjoys spending her spare time writing prose and poetry.

Elisha Davidson-Yee recently graduated from Bishop's University ('23) with a BA in Liberal Arts and Classical Studies. She was co-editor of the 130th edition of *The Mitre*, and is excited to have some of her work featured this year. Her hobbies include reading, travelling, and spending time with her family.

Josée Deschambault is an Educations Major in her last year at Bishop's University. She enjoys writing poetry in her spare time, and promises to keep it utterly bizarre.

R.A. Garber lives in rural Maple Leaf in the Eastern Townships, where she pursues her passions for poetry, photography, art, writing and editing. She is editor of the *Townships Sun* magazine, and has authored a book of haiku, *One More Day* (Yarrow Press, 2024).

Andrew Hutchins is a young photographer. He loves to create images with unique style through lighting and story telling.

Jolène Lessard graduated from Bishop's university in 2023 with a BA in English Literature. She is now pursuing a Masters degree in « Traduction littéraire et traductologie » at the Université de Sherbrooke. She loves doing photography in her free time.

Angela Leuck is the editor of *Emergence: Contemporary Women Poets of the Eastern Townships of Quebec* (Studio Georgeville, 2021). Her particular passion is Japanese-inspired short poetry forms and she is the President of Haiku Canada.

Lynnette (Linnie) McGuire is a Bishop's ('22) and Queen's ('23) alumna who can be found these days researching politics, making art, and contemplating the weight of it all in Katarokwi (Kingston, Ontario).

Alexis Nova Hazan Jepsen is an aspiring visual artist and writer who explores the transitional spaces between gender, cultures, and geographies. A lifelong storyteller, he found their love for painting during his studies at Bishop's University. Their art is inspired by their experience as a queer, nonbinary immigrant and he hopes to lend a voice to others living in social liminality.

Emerald MacIsaac is like if a girl was lobotomized, and if that girl was later put in front of a type writer alongside infinite monkeys. From that, poetry is born.

Jordy Mäkela is a white boy who makes dumplings. He was a victorian child in another life and expectantly, he is currently experiencing dissentry.

Luke Munro is a fifth-year Fine Arts and Secondary Education major with a History minor. This is his fourth time working as a graphic designer for *The Mitre*, in addition to being published. He has always loved funky fresh, hippy-dippy, and silly things and has recently taken an interest in all things horror-related.

Kay Nadjiwon member of Batchewana First Nation, with ancestral ties to Neyaashiinigmiiing (Ojibwe/Potawatomi), is a trans* Two-Spirit interdisciplinary artist working in Treaty 13. They hold a BFA in Photography from Toronto Metropolitan University and are currently an MFA student at OCAD University.

Their artistic practice addresses common themes of identity, memory, trauma, and belonging. Much of their work focuses on personal narratives and family histories that are grounded in Anishinaabe ways of knowing. They explore the self in relation to land, lineage, history, culture, gender, and systems of oppression. Through photography, video, sculpture, beadwork, and more, they situate grief as a site of possibility for political engagement and spiritual connection.

Ann Oxford is an Arts Administration student with a minor in Mindfulness and Contemplative Studies. This is her second year at Bishop's, in which she's become a proud part of the Foreman Community ArtLab team. Writing has always been a pastime of hers, but *The Campus* provided her with her first experience writing journalism.

Jeff Parent imagines a day when some academic, somewhere, lifts a line from one of his poems, utterly removes it from context and uses it as an epigraph to the self-important, overpriced book they've written. That's the dream, baby

Tomas Peck is a third-year music student at Bishops University, originally from Magog, Quebec. He has written songs, short plays, and poems - some of which have been published in previous editions of *The Mitre*. In a way, he feels as if he is following in the footsteps of his grandmother, who was once a Bishops Student and also a Mitre Contributor.

Nicole Rayner is a writer and artist from Toronto, Canada. She has written for the likes of *Earmilk*, *Adolescent.net*, and *Liminul* Magazine. Nicole is inspired by rot of all forms: decaying relationships, cracks in society, bittersweet endings, old fruit, overplayed songs, roadkill, among much more.

Safia H. Senhaji is a second-year MA student at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, writer, and editor. Her book reviews have appeared in *Strange Horizons*, where she gets to gush about amazing stories and convince others to read them. This is her second story to appear in *The Mitre*.

Allyson Sirois is the fruit of two artistic souls & was basically born with a pen in her hand—the apple didn't fall far from the tree. In between travels in the realm of her mind, she enjoys yoga, blasting Lausse the Cat in her headphones, reading fever dream-esque books & studies Sociology. You can read more of her pieces at @unpackingbaggage on Instagram.

Frank Willdig is a long-time member of the Bishop's community who enjoys writing poetry.

EDITORS

Manu Bissonnette is a creative writer and a fourth-year Hispanic Studies student from Trois-Rivières, Quebec. She loves to write prose, and you can always find her with a book in her hands. Some of her favorite genres are fiction and fantasy, and she is a proud Potterhead.

Lucie Casinghino is a creative writer from the United States, currently attending Bishop's University in the English Literature program. She usually likes to say that her writing has been most influenced by Shirley Jackson, Ursula K Le Guin, Mary Oliver, and the films of Hayao Miyazaki, though this list varies depending on the day.