

The  
Mitre



Reflections  
and  
Echoes

# THE MITRE

## Reflections and Echoes

126<sup>th</sup> edition

Eds. Loch Baillie and Sally Cunningham

Bishops' University

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126th edition

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“We acknowledge the Abenaki people and the Wabanaki Confederacy, the traditional stewards and protectors of the territories upon which we are learning. In performing land acknowledgment, we make what was invisible visible, and invite the land, the First Nations people, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into conversation. This act of naming – of inviting something into language – is an underlying principle of advocacy and lies at the heart of higher education. In institutions of higher learning, we have a responsibility to honour spaces for emerging and established voices to engage in productive, respectful, and sometimes even uncomfortable conversations where individuals are safe to speak truth to power, explore and challenge dominant ideologies, and call out injustices and inequalities in order to imagine new ways of existing.”



*For Dr. Claire Grogan,*

*who recognizes a need to reflect on The Mitre's past  
and who has worked to ensure that the voice of the publication will echo onward.*



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## Preface

When we first sent out a call for submissions relating to “Reflections and Echoes,” we asked the Bishop’s community to consider the differences between these two ideas and how they touch humanity. In compiling the works for this volume, we watched our initial concept morph into something more nuanced. The works we received explore many topics, but always find their way back to common ground. We have consequently divided this collection into six chapters, each of which examines a different take on this year’s theme.

Travelling from Bishop’s train tracks to an unnamed coffee shop to just outside the Garden of Eden, every section reflects similar motifs: origins, journeys, and finding one’s way back home. While you may not find many literal echoes or reflections within these pages, the original theme can still be found at the core of each and every piece.

We hope that this edition of *The Mitre* encourages you to reflect on the familiar and embrace echoes of the unknown.

Loch Baillie & Sally Cunningham  
Co-editors



**i.**

*in this odd moment of ours*



## On Track

*Janan Chan*

One night, Mark and I walked the train tracks. I don't remember what we talked about, but we smoked joints and I could feel my heart. The tracks went in two directions: one towards Lennoxville and the other to somewhere we'd never been. So we walked away from town and talked about life.

"Why are we here?" Mark asked. "Like on Earth."

"To have a good time, I guess."

From deep in the forest, the lights of the university were bright and small. The night was cool and the trees on both sides of the tracks swayed in the breeze. There were no street lamps. Farther along, we heard a horn. It went off several times and occupied the space around us. Mark and I looked at each other. I smiled and he laughed.

"There's a train coming," Mark said.

We climbed into the ditch alongside the tracks. The trees above us swayed and the train's headlights shone in the dark. The ground rumbled and the train came towards us moving faster than I had ever seen. The first car passed, still blowing its horn, and carried a wind that nearly blew me over.

"Get down!" Mark shouted. But I insisted on standing, stretched my arms wide, and let the wind pass over. It was a feeling most similar to being alive.

"*WOOOOO!*"

And the train kept coming. It seemed to have no end. The rumbling was rhythmic – a steady *da-dum, da-dum, da-dum* as it passed with the sharp sound of brakes. And even though it must have been a different train, I couldn't shake the feeling that I had seen it before, and that many before me had stood where I stood then. Everything was new, yet familiar.

Finally, the train passed. A final *da-dum*. Mark got up and I walked onto the tracks. The train's tail-light grew smaller. The horn sounded again, this time farther away.

"That was stupid," Mark said, and lit a joint.

"Oh well... so, should we stay on this track?"

**coaticook**

*Rosemin Nathoo*

god gave a child a micron pen  
asked her to draw the horizon line  
and she made the wobbly townships' hills.

I try to be like her,  
too large to belong to anyone  
when I run unsteady  
when I trip on a root  
when I ask the hills  
for a mother

forgetting myself all their cradles.

I try on the girl who drew the world,  
mud underneath her fingernails,  
toes the size of a cornfield, I  
remember where I'm from

from my own hopeful invention,

I try to reflect the girl drawing the world  
because I was asked, because  
from the hills I was given.



**tiny hill palace** *Rosemin Nathoo*

## **On Sacred Land**

*Frank Willdig*

Gas-guzzling metal marauders proceed  
to rip up the earth for pleasure and greed  
with a phalanx of blades, our mighty trees fall,  
until there is barely a forest at all.

And desolate scars are all that remain,  
as the soil runs off with a steady rain,  
in wrack and ruin lies nature's decline,  
now all that remains is one lonesome pine.

No pools of water reflect gleaming skies,  
no birdsongs echo through towering trees,  
what once was green now withers and dies,  
and a ravaged wasteland is all that one sees.

But let us remember our hallowed past,  
give high praise to all the stewards who held fast,  
how they treasured the land and took great care  
to leave to the white man clean water and air.

## Kevin's House

*Marguerite Dakin*

Blue toenails on the cracked tile floor,  
she pulled off her guard suit. Her  
hair smelled like chlorine as it fell, tangled,  
in front of her face. Blue cans stood  
next to the shampoo, shells of shower-beers past.

She heard shouts from the beer pong room  
(in another life it was a dining room)  
and washed her hair without soap.  
Trashy pop from the speakers, smiles loud.  
She grabbed a plastic cup and matched up.

She'd sat on this floor, deep in drunken talks.  
She'd slept on that couch and in that bed.  
She'd jumped off this roof, climbed through that window,  
bled in this kitchen and run down that road.

It was the high school party she never went to,  
the lies she never told her parents.  
It was her teenaged rebellion, aged twenty.  
That was the summer, and this  
was the house.



**Journey of the Magi** *Dimitri Vouliouris*

## Home Alone

*Dimitri Vouliouris*

I live in Québec and Tuesday is “Home Alone” day. So, through coincidence, luck, and a bit of serendipity, nobody is home on Tuesdays. It’s one of my personal holy days: revered, treasured, and anxiously awaited.

At precisely 8:00 a.m., our trajectories part in a blaze of activity. The teenagers are launched, my adorable wife – who has cunningly packed her entire teaching schedule into one day – sets off happily for work. Even the cat has things to do and leaves for the forest by the river to inflict mayhem on the local chipmunk population.

More significantly, not a soul returns before the stars come out on Tuesdays. So when everyone is gone, the door closes and I am irrevocably and deliciously alone.

A brief explanation is in order: I like my family. They are good people (in fact, they are both extraordinary and lovely people, but that is beside the point). The point is that after a certain age, one’s soul craves solitude in reasonable doses like fish in a fishbowl crave the ocean. It is only in solitude that you can sit quietly and actually meet yourself and sort of look the real you in the eye. The presence of the “Other,” even in trace quantities, changes you in subtle and not so subtle ways. It brings out someone else. Someone you may or may not like. In solitude you think nothing of bursting into an aria in fake Italian. If you want to attempt a pirouette or eat twelve oranges, you do it. Any of the harmless but decidedly odd things that make you unmistakably you become possible. And that is why I like being both home and alone. I like brief periods of solitude, and home is the place where I feel most at home.

Three weeks ago on a glorious summer Tuesday, I stood on the porch and waved a fond goodbye to the last living creature making an exit – the cat. I had prepared a delightful and ornate breakfast that would, as my grandmother would say, “glue” me to the rising sun. It wickedly revolved around bacon (a forbidden substance in our vegetarian home), a fresh baguette, and the best coffee in the province.

As I got ready to sit and savour the fruits of my labour, I noticed that a huge truck had pulled into our secluded front yard.

It looked like something a circus would use to transport elephants or orcas. My first thought was that this cannot be a coincidence since our house is, by design, impossible to reach. It lies way off the trodden path on a street masquerading as a driveway with numbers that follow a bizarre, mystical sequence. In most post-Enlightenment societies, street numbers either go up or they go down, not both. Well, ours go 14, then 10, and then miraculously back up to 12. It is a place of legend; a Bermuda Triangle for pizza delivery boys and an El Dorado for delivery professionals.

My eyes widened with horror as I witnessed a burly workman approaching the house. He was about to ring the bell when I opened the door.

*“Bonjour, monsieur.”*

*“Bonjour,”* I replied, and then cautioned him with, *“Mon français est très pauvre.”* It was a routine incantation that I always added as a kind of insurance against lexical misunderstandings and to invoke a measure of pity and forgiveness.



Untitled Dimitri Vouliouris

“*Ge-ra-rd*,” he told me (pronounced *zher-a-ourd* in Québécois). “To change the furnace.”

“The furnace...?” I asked. “The *whole* furnace?”

“*Ben ouais*,” he replied. “We cannot change half a furnace. Of course we could put it off till *novembre, si vous voulez...*” For a second I toyed with that thought. Solitude now, freeze later.

“Aren’t you supposed to come *mardi*?” I said.

“It is *mardi, monsieur!*”

“Ah! Is that right?”

And then the monstrous repercussions of thinking *mardi* meant Thursday instead of Tuesday became clear. This was the mother of all misunderstandings. All the chores I had meticulously scheduled for Thursday were landing on my holy day! At least the workers would be in the basement and I could isolate myself up on the second floor.

They started to unpack equipment that looked like it could be useful in oil exploration and then moved into the basement. I mentally thanked the Lord that furnaces live in basements and retired to the upper floor where only muffled clangs could be heard. I naively felt that the day of solitude could still be salvaged even if it did turn out to be a bit clangy.

I’d barely sipped my coffee for a second time when the doorbell rang again. I marched back downstairs and was greeted by another, “*Bonjour monsieur.*”

“*Bonjour,*” I replied. “*Mon français est très pauvre,*” I cautioned once again. It was our new cleaning lady, Madame Beausejour, armed with yet more heavy equipment.

“Er... Maude, aren't you supposed to come on *mardi*?”

“It is *mardi, monsieur*,”

(Ah yes, of course I knew that. *Mardi* is Tuesday, not Thursday!)

I let her in and grouchily retreated to my citadel of solitude once again. Slightly less-muffled bangs now emanated from the ground floor, which, interestingly enough, complemented the furnace clangs. The result was like an excerpt from a neo-Stravinsky horror movie soundtrack – specifically the crescendo when the chainsaw-wielding zombie is about to bash down the door. The day was progressing somewhat differently from the blissful Zen solitude I'd had in mind.

But, I thought, at least these are people who I can safely avoid and hide from. No exchanges of pleasantries or small talk; no excruciating discussions about the weather. Nothing would be required of me.

Just as I was about to resume my exercise in retaining inner calm, I spied my friend Jude in the front yard carrying his guitar case. I rushed to the door. One more doorbell ring and I would mentally crumble. I greeted him and found that he had come for music practice.

“Hey, Jude – aren't you supposed to come on *mardi*?”

“Yo... wake up... it is *mardi*,” said Jude.

Jude entered, realized that the cleaning lady was an old acquaintance, and *ensemble* they proceeded to loudly catch up on twenty years of news. Apparently they had a common relative that raised goats.

And just as I thought that the borders of my house had become too porous to contain my fleeting dream of solitude, another actor arrived on the set. The four cords of firewood that were supposed to be delivered *mardi* had just arrived with a loud crash and their ex-owner was excitedly chatting with the furnace guy about BTUs and the price of wood.

Not to mention the UPS van that showed up half an hour later, or the intense discussion about the ethics of brokerage fees that I had with the driver. When I finally saw a solitary teenager back early from school trudging up the driveway, I didn't even flinch. I was like one of those stallions in training corrals that you see in cowboy movies. My soul had been broken.

And this was the moment when I knew that my “Home Alone” day had retreated way beyond my control. My soul would simply have to wait. I gave up, brewed some coffee, and joined them. The final scene was straight out of one of Bruegel's busy paintings: masses of quaint people in a bustling front yard going about their daily affairs.

But these people were assuredly different. They were all unified by one attribute: a complete and utter indifference to my petty needs of solitude.



ii.

*when I ask the bills / for a mother*





**Wounded King** *Yann Audin*

**Prairie**

*Sophia Cumming*

home is golden, glowing yellow  
from sun to stars to soft sweet flowers

up high, persistent sunshine  
burns bright all year,  
smiling down in abundance  
as we bask in her glow

at night, stars wink  
at their earthly equivalents  
as streetlights gently illuminate  
the corners the stars can't quite reach

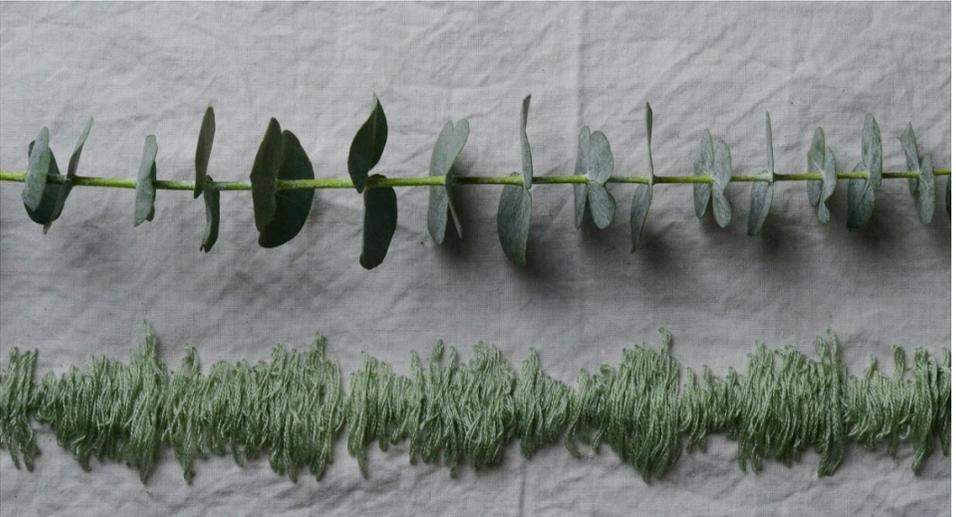
in fields, the radiance of canola  
blankets the dark earth,  
adding seeded sunshine  
to patchwork prairies

## **A Thought**

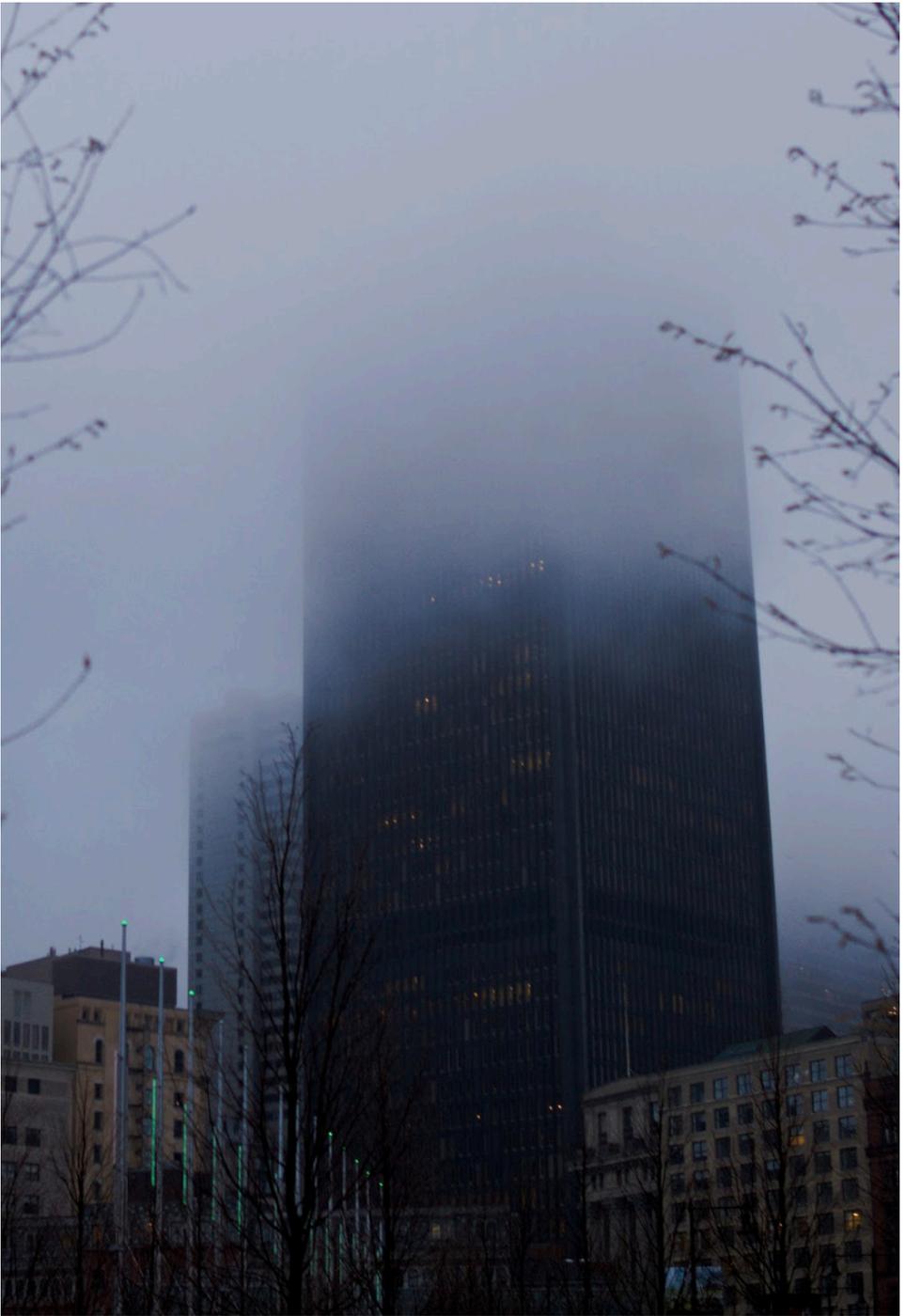
*Frank Willdig*

Spindly trees that in concrete grow  
are all that are left for those who don't know  
there once was a time when this place was green  
and a meadow and river could always be seen  
by playful children whose days have passed

now towers of glass reflect towers of glass.



**Echoes of a Song Once Sung** *Brenna Bird*



**Boston Mist** *Yann Audin*

**white-tailed deer through glass**

*Rosemin Nathoo*

a white tail would be invisible here,  
in a fog, all the fields snow-dusted.  
the stakes are not the same:  
I look outside with my house flies and mice  
and all of the beetles who've tamed me,  
beside a hibiscus flowering,  
but the skinny-legged cervids lost in low cloud  
surely don't joy in snow as I do,  
surely care nothing for stop signs.  
but human, persistent, we clear the land,  
leave grass, grain, grapes,  
inadvertently, we all seem tamed;  
and when I drive by in our champlain sea  
there seems to be no co-flinching,  
we seem to share curiosity.

is love who we believe to have tamed,  
or who we slowly change  
but always seems somehow  
wild?



**Orion's Belt** *Theresa Graham*

**the echo and the rain**

*Sally Cunningham*

stumbling home after Summer  
(sun-fried)  
hear the rumpled sheet landscape  
call you home

to a child's sandpit of haphazard hills  
and chopped-open skies on water

and the rain –  
it sings already,  
who I was and will not be



iii.

*I see things I don't want to see*



## **Orpheus in a Coffee Shop**

*Max Crowther*

the beautiful is behind me

i can feel  
petals stirring  
in light seaside breezes

hear sighs through shaped lips  
and harmonic jaws  
and symmetrical cheekbones

i know eyes smoky grey  
are back there  
telling me

i have no right to look

saying it's ugly  
to acknowledge beauty

they may be half right



**Untitled** *Isabelle Vaux*  
*based on art by Hatawa Cemehoba*

## **Me too?**

*Marguerite Dakin*

Walking through a crowded party,  
I felt a pinch under my skirt.  
I didn't look. He's not worth it.

Standing outside a bar, I called a friend  
so that *he* would see I'm busy,  
that I didn't want to talk to him.  
He didn't see.  
And kissed my unresponsive mouth.

I pushed him off, brushed it off,  
I can take care of myself.  
He was drunk  
and boys are stupid.  
But I stay on the phone until I get home.  
Because boys are scary.

At first I thought I couldn't contribute.  
That it never happened to me.  
The things they yell at me  
out of car windows  
are not rude or vulgar.  
But they are still yelled.



Untitled Morgane Demers-Davis

## Pieces

*Farah Ormelet*

A 4-year-old girl. A salmon outfit. Home. Family friends visiting. Playing hide & seek. Two boys, 8 and 10, one counting, one grabbing my hand. A closet. Darkness. Excitement. Laughter. A hiding place. Warm hands, warm lips. Closeness. Whispers: *Move your lips like dat. Pull down your panties like dat. Let me touch you like dat. Dat's right.*

Strangeness.

Salmon outfit. Darkness. Time.

Forgetfulness.

A house party: one old friend says hi. A conversation, an accidental touch ...warm hands ...warm lips.

Weirdness.

Time. A wedding. A pink dress. Guests. Smiles. A reception. A dance floor. An old friend in the room.

Sudden nervousness. A need for air, for space,  
for disappearance.

Time. Walking in the park. A little girl wearing an orange outfit. Triggered memory.  
Pieces.

A summer outfit. A closet. Hands. Lips. Did it happen for real? My innocence. But he was a kid.

My innocence. But he didn't know. My guilt.

He probably forgot.

Awareness.

It did happen.

My shame. It did. My inner tears. It did. My rage. It did. The realization. It did. The written words, the spoken words:

“I remember.”

## **Wet Devil**

*Holly Burke*

Who are you?  
You are unrecognizable  
What's that?  
The wet devil is speaking:  
he likes to come  
out on nice, happy days.  
He ruins those times with his filth.  
I hate him, he hurts  
my mind, he bruises  
my soul, and doesn't care. You say  
he's gone, but in a week he'll return,  
there are times when he doesn't leave  
for long. Enough is enough,  
but the words don't come out,  
it hurts too much but he doesn't  
seem to see

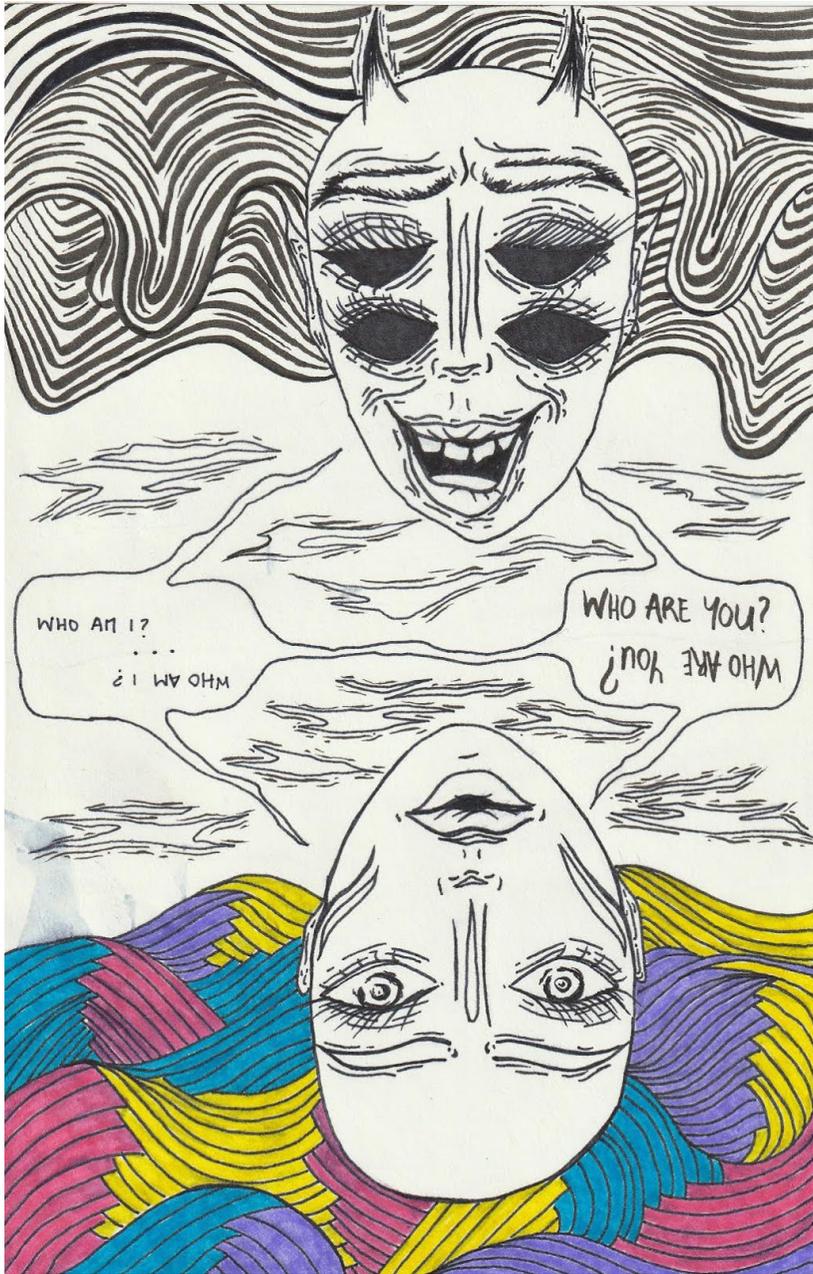
What can I do?  
Should I leave?  
(I shouldn't)  
I'm afraid, afraid  
of what he will do next, who  
will he hurt  
next?



iv.

*revere the reversals*





*mirror* Miranda Serrano

## **Eroding Rose**

*Alisha Winter*

Sweet rose in a smothered fire,

How did it feel to be plucked?  
To be wrenched from the warmth of your bed?  
Were you hostile like something wild and unfed?

Sweet rose drunk on coals,

Why did you singe so slowly?  
The smoulder started deep within  
your petals like gospel hymnals.

Sweet rose delicate no more,

Crisp burnt rose, dusty and baked.  
How did it feel to be plucked?  
Why did you singe so slowly?

Sweet rose stolen.  
Burned.  
Broken.

## Still

*Theresa Graham*

There are bad days, like today. Today is a bad day.

Not the worst day, but a bad day.

I see things I don't want to see and sometimes I almost see things and decide I don't want to put myself through seeing those things, but if I don't see those things, I don't know what they really are and then I won't know how to protect myself from those things.

I've had two scares today. Scares that ruin the day. Make me paranoid.

I go back to the worst days.

Tell me not to worry. I know I don't have to worry and I shouldn't worry but sometimes I want to die because I don't know what to do with the worry.

I want to be cremated when I die.

I have to be.

Tell me it's gonna be okay. Make it true.



**Incense** *Yann Audin*

## **Now what can I do?**

*David Edmond*

I sit here alone,  
it is seven at night.  
I sit and I think  
of all you had said.  
Of all of the trips  
we had planned  
for our years in the sun.

Each night at this time,  
we would have our dessert.  
We spoke of the things past,  
of friends old and new.  
We would note, too,  
of those passed away,  
but with nary a thought that we could too.

I remember you saying,  
there is always tomorrow  
to clean up the mess.  
But while that is true,  
it doesn't apply to shared time together.  
Life doesn't guarantee our tomorrows.



**Reflections** *Jeremy Audet*

## **Get Home**

*Jeff Parent*

On that some late day overcast  
you wink in where the end of the battle began  
out by the house your grandfather built,  
where he fed all those shocked men.  
Watch them turn him out  
with bayonet points  
and bandaged hands  
for wrongheaded notions of gold, or God,  
or some untraceable sorcery lost in your skittish data  
decompiling into a fevered aura of  
homesickness and animal fear  
from the strain of history.  
Back older than an unbidden memory of Dad,  
of him saying,  
“Something’ll get ya one way or the other.”  
quietly, over minute-steak and coffee,  
with the canker sores to prove it.  
And when the science fiction abandons you,  
listen for...  
for a telephone,  
is the best advice I can give you,  
or a locomotive,  
and head for that.  
Head for that,  
that you may find  
some line home.



**i'm still in love with you** *Miranda Serrano*



V.

*the disconnect between*





**Silence** *July-Ann El Baze*  
*Mt. Hutt, New Zealand*  
*Digital photography*  
*2018*

## Antediluvian

*Loch Baillie*

*i. Eve*

Bury our clothes by the Garden,  
meet me outside in the dark.

Isn't Thursday, so we're unlike ourselves—lying  
under cherry trees, sucking fruit pits till numb tongues;  
spitting stones over shoulders to see how far they will go,

And they will go, won't they?      Go?  
Go.      Spit stones. Babble badly. Toe the edge.

Where is that? Tell me.

It's not a drop-off,  
not a border,  
not an end.

Tell me, I don't want to leave  
here Tomorrow. Tells me: *We're already tempted.*

*ii. Cusp*

It's a miracle we didn't  
fall sooner.

In leaving, I thought of how green it was—  
all the trees and all their animals and how we named them  
just to forget—

in what world was this okay?

Outside the Garden, we went  
up a mountain, looking for that Perfect Place.

And all the way up, you asked about God  
and I knew it was bad, but so far behind  
us.      At the top, hazy strangers, me, perched on the ridge

in the distance I saw a Great Rain—

and I pointed with one arm,  
and with the other reached back for you, but

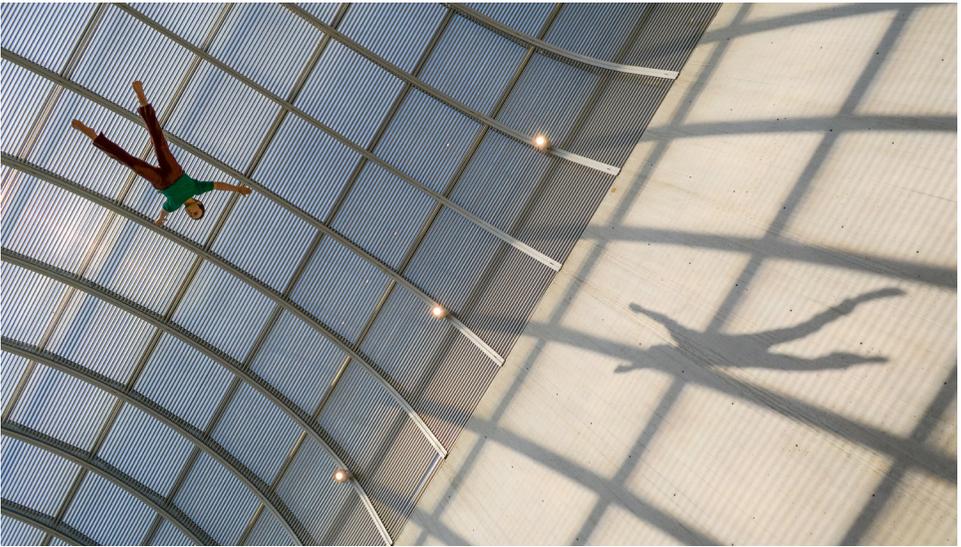
gone

somewhere

else

you said:

*Swim.*



**No Other**

*Photograph by Brenna Bird of Jonathan Borofsky's  
"I Dreamed I Could Fly" (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)*

## Fallen Stars

*Meghan Van Wyck*

Two figures slipped into a low-lit bar on the corner of Eckleburg Street and Maplewood Avenue. The bar was occupied by older couples and lonesome men. A sweet melody escaped from a beat-up jukebox by the door, filling the space. Only the barstools were empty, cracked vinyl deterring the regular patrons from sitting on them.

Leo directed Clover to the bar and they slid onto two seats at the end. A stale and unfamiliar smell invaded Clover's nose as she slowly scanned the bar, fascinated by how each Group of people was interacting at their tables.

"Don't inspect them," Leo warned under his breath. Then the bartender walked over and greeted them with a charismatic smile.

"What'll it be?" he asked.

"A whiskey sour and the best fruity drink you have," Leo replied.

"Comin' right up."

Clover debated where to rest her hands - on the counter, on her lap, on the counter again - as the seconds ticked by on a strange-looking clock. It was shaped like a house and hung behind the bar. Clover curiously examined the busy wooden contraption. She jumped as the bartender clunked their drinks on the counter in front of them. Clover watched Leo as he raised his rocks glass and brought it slowly to his lips. She lowered her eyes to her own drink and mimicked his actions, learning. She took a sip and struggled to swallow the exceedingly sweet mixture. At that moment, the sound of chimes interrupted her thoughts as the door opened.

A man a little taller than the doorframe ducked into the bar. He acknowledged a Group of men by the door but favoured striding to the bar over joining them. His boots left muddy, inconsiderate tracks across the wood floor. Clover gaped at his attire: blue on blue on blue. The stranger took a seat two over from Leo and greeted him with a nod. He seemed fascinated by the people beside him.

"Where are y'all from?" he asked, meeting Clover's eyes. She froze, unsure of how to react or what to say.

"Oh, you know, everywhere and nowhere," Leo replied, coming to Clover's rescue. The stranger nodded. He ordered a rum and coke and kept glancing at the two beside him as he waited for his drink.

"You don't see a lot of young folk around here anymore," he remarked.

"Well, we're just passing through."

The man's eyes found Clover's again. "Can you speak girl?"

Leo was about to defend her but Clover piped up a timid, "Yes."

"Well darlin', my apologies."

Clover furrowed her eyebrows and was about to ask a question when Leo whispered, "He means he feels bad."

"Oh." Clover offered the man a small smile and looked back to Leo.

He brushed blond hair away from his eyes revealing their artificial green colour. Clover could easily see the small outline of the contact lenses he had had such difficulty putting in.

The stranger next to them placed a crumpled piece of paper on the counter and thanked the bartender. Clover stared at the purple bill long enough for Leo to notice. He explained that it was a method of payment.

Still curious, Clover asked: “why do they have to pay for things?”

“That’s how this world works,” Leo replied.

Clover watched the bartender open the cash register and smile softly to himself. He must have been listening to their exchange. The bartender lifted his eyes and greeted her gaze with a wink.

The front door of the bar was thrown open once again, breaking their eye contact. A gust of cool wind entered the space and everybody around them noticeably shivered. Clover was still amazed by how cold people got. It was only “Late October,” but everyone was bundled up in oversized coats with fur hoods. Clover felt warm all the time, though. This disparity made her miss home, miss the light.

Three busty women with puffy hair and loud outfits entered the bar. Despite their small number, the women made the room feel crowded. They scrutinized each and every person in the place until all six eyes came to rest on Clover and Leo. Clover couldn’t stop staring at them, and unfortunately the women interpreted this as an invitation to approach.

“Well aren’t you a pretty duo.” One woman gushed. Clover assumed her to be the ringleader of the Group. It was Leo’s turn to look confused.

“I mean you’re a nice couple” the woman drawled. Clover thought back to her Human Studies class... Families and Relationships... Couples... oh.

“Oh... no... we’re just friends.” Clover fumbled.

“That’s what they all say these days, can we join you?”

Leo looked to Clover. She shrugged, so he extended a hand to his left indicating that the women could sit beside him.

“We just got back from a party,” another woman boasted.

“I can see that,” replied Leo.

“It was quite the bash. We tried to get more people to join us here afterward but it looks like not too many people showed up.”

“How unfortunate,” Leo said.

“Looking for privacy?” The third woman asked, still attempting to define their relationship.

“No, just looking for quiet.” Leo’s voice was laced with impatience. The women’s mannerisms put Clover on edge. She had never been exposed to people like them. Noisy, conniving, and too curious.

Thankfully, the bartender came by and Clover was saved from having to divulge anything.

“What can I get for you ladies?”

“Three martinis: make one dry and one with an olive.”

“It’ll be a minute.” He directed his answer to the women but shot Clover and Leo a knowing glance.

The music in the bar had been turned up, and Leo looked to Clover with a mischievous smile.

“Do you want to dance?” he asked. Clover felt her cheeks warm and she smiled shyly. “Come on,” he summoned.

He stood and took Clover by the hand, gliding her to the middle of the dance floor.

“This feels weird,” Clover confessed.

“Everything’s weird here. We might as well make the most of it.”

Leo’s hand found her wrist and Clover flinched slightly. He then delicately guided her hand up to his shoulder and she giggled, immediately thankful for the music. Leo brushed a strand of hair out of her eyes and placed one of his arms around her waist. He scooped her up effortlessly and placed her light form down slowly, so her feet rested atop his. Then he entwined the fingers of their free hands and his feet began to move off-beat to the music.

Clover felt how sensitive this body was. She could feel all the rough and smooth patches of Leo’s hand touching hers. She hadn’t realized how lonely and detached she felt before he had made contact. At home, everyone was connected. Clover was always aware of the stars. Loneliness was not a word that existed in her language before coming to this strange place. Is this what it’s like? She wondered. An endless sinking feeling that could only stopped with a human touch.

“We are the only ones dancing, should we be this exposed?” Clover asked.

“Everyone was looking at us anyway. Besides, I’m more afraid of those women.”

“Me too,” she agreed.

The melodies rose and fell. Leo kept his eyes on Clover, and after a few songs, Clover noticed everyone let out a collective sigh of relief as the women left. She and Leo made their way back to their place at the bar, their half-finished drinks holding their spot. A new hour was dictated by a squawking bird, which exploded from the wooden clock, startling Clover. She started to sweat and her cardigan felt itchy against her skin. She placed her hand on her drink glass, which still held a couple of ice cubes, in an effort to cool herself down. Her eyes found Leo’s and the right side of his mouth turned up in a sleepy smile. She calmed down a little and admired the perfectly round glass still gripped in her hand. A circle with no end, much like the lives they were living.

Clover watched a woman at the opposite corner of the bar walk behind a wall and disappear. The wall was bare save for a small discolored poster of all the known planets.

“Where is she going?” Clover asked

“I don’t know.”

“We shouldn’t,” he cautioned.

“Let’s find out.” She started to stand when Leo placed a protective hand on her arm.

“We shouldn’t,” he cautioned.

“You’re the one that brought me here. To get me used to this world. Let me see it.”

Leo’s hesitation was written all over his face. The lines of his forehead scrunched as his eyes pleaded with her to drop this request. Clover wasn’t the type and he knew this. Rather than letting her go alone, Leo stood up and told the bartender that they would be right back. Leaving their drinks behind, Clover led Leo to the back of the bar. They dipped behind the bare wall and found a dimly-lit descending staircase.

“Ready to go down the rabbit hole, Alice?” Leo asks.

“What?” Clover replied.

“Never mind,” he said with a light laugh, shaking his head.

The staircase was too narrow for them to walk beside one another. Light, music, and voices becomes more apparent as they descended farther. Leo reached the cool basement floor first and scanned the room. A small space with a low ceiling and grey rock walls. He made eye contact with two built men standing a few feet away, his glare a warning.

Clover’s eyes had a different purpose. They rested on the strange people around her. People leaning up against one another or sitting on strange green tables, cluttered with colourful balls bearing numbers. The woman she saw earlier now sat in a booth against the wall, her mouth touching another’s.

*Strange place to do that,* Clover thought.

“They’re kissing” Leo explained, picking up on her confused expression.

Clover’s elbow found his ribs. “Yes, I got that, thank you.”

Leo’s hand rested on the small of her back and she immediately straightened.

This was only the second time he had ever touched her there, but the small gesture held all her focus and within seconds was the only thing in the world. He leaned into her, and for a split second, she wished his lips would touch hers. But instead, she heard his voice ask, “Satisfied?”

*Not nearly,* she thought, but replied with a breathless, “yes.” Leo took her hand and led her deeper into the dark.

A man stumbled out of doorway, and took a couple steps forward before his friend placed a hand on his shoulder to steady him.

“Woah man, take it easy.”

“I’m fine,” he slurred. Then he froze, mouth agape. “What the hell? Why is she glowing?”

Clover's heart pounded and her chest started to hurt, the unfamiliar sensation causing her to panic even more. She looked to Leo with eyes as wide as worlds.

"Relax" he whispered

"The Seer's drunk."

Clover trembled, her body exposing her fright. The man's friend apologized to Leo and guided the drunken man away. Clover's eyes begged Leo to get them out of this place. He nodded and led her back upstairs.

They returned to their stools and Clover was lost for words. She grew increasingly aware of Leo's presence with every passing moment. He was more assimilated than she was. She was hesitant to come here knowing this might happen. Leo placed a hand on her knee and squeezed lightly to reassure her.

"It's okay, you're okay."

The door to the bar opened, disrupting Clover's nervous energy, and she said a silent prayer of thanks. Leo's hand left her knee, and she felt cold for the first time. Two men dressed in muddled green and black enter the bar. They wore identical rectangular necklaces. The one man wrapped his arm around his friend's shoulders, but the similar features of the men suggested that they were closer than that. They sat at the bar and talked about being back home, seeing their mother.

Clover stared at them longingly. Affected by so much pain and suffering yet so joyful as they reminisced. As much as she wanted to, she would never know the complexity of human love. She glimpsed at her reflection in one of the many windows lining the bar. A faint white glow encapsulated her body, marking her as different. A direct indicator that her and Leo were not meant to fit into this little piece of the universe.

Over the course of the night, the sounds and temperatures of the bar had become more familiar to Clover. All the locals had slowly made their exits with bags under their eyes. The drunk Seer who had almost ended their adventure was the last person to stumble out of the bar, glancing at Clover one last time before leaving. By midnight Leo and Clover were the only ones left.

"Are you ready?" Leo asked.

"Yes," Clover said with a sleepy smile.

Leo paid the bartender for their drinks in coins. He thanked him and collected the empty glasses from the counter. Leo and Clover stood awkwardly and gazed around the bar.

"Ah, cheer up," called the bartender. "We all feel a little lost sometimes."

They both smiled at him and their eyes twinkled with a bright light visible only for a second. They gracefully made their way towards the front, the door closing behind them. The bartender collected the loose change, dropping the coins individually into the cash box. He noticed that one was a little out of place and turned the heavy coin over in his hand, admiring the blue-tinted silver. It would have been a dime but in the place of a ship was a star.

"Well, I'll be damned."



Looking Up *Yann Audin*

## **Chips**

*elsa cattelan*

It doesn't take much intelligence to know a Poor Man when you see one. People used to call them broken, and they are. The poor very much are broken, but no one calls them that anymore. I can't remember why.

I think it's not all that politically correct.

I never liked the change myself. Then again I traded being adaptable long ago. Even my Card tells me. I used to be extremely adaptable. I was a mutant, born with a quality, not just emotions. Then he broke and I had to give up being adaptable to survive. He really broke, b-a-r-o-q-u-e, broke.

Wait... no, that's not right, is it?

Gambling is what did it; all he needed was a little empathy. A little bit of empathy and he never would have broken. It wasn't even for him. He wanted empathy so his son could be a better man. That's an okay thing to want, right?

See his son was one of those stories in the paper. One that makes you sad and just a little bit happy, because thank God it didn't happen to you. His son was born without empathy. That, or a cradle robber came by. I like to think it was a cradle robber who came. Life is a lot simpler when there is someone to blame for your misfortune. Blame let's you sleep at night.

He never got any sleep. He didn't believe in the cradle robber tale. And really, that shouldn't have mattered much, since the story you tell yourself doesn't change the situation. But it does change how you act upon it. See if you are truly filled with guilt and self-hate when faced with a problem you tend to migrate towards the solution that will most effectively destroy you. And when I say migrate I mean you are headed straight towards that brick wall of a solution as fast as you can, running until the whole world is a blur and sounds mash together as if all your other senses are on fire from the sheer colossal amount of information forced into your path that you don't even bother to register, your eyes fixed straight ahead at the point just off the end of the high dive where you know you're going to go, never admitting, not even after the police reports and the broken limbs, the hospital bills and the scars that you always secretly knew the pool didn't have any water in it. And when I say destroy... well.

The ending is never pretty.

He never got any sleep. He went to a gambling house one night. He needed the empathy. Authorities decided long ago that anyone without empathy was nothing but a threat. I don't know which authorities, maybe it was us. Maybe it was them. Either way now they execute the ones without empathy.

He did not approve of this future for his son. So he played his hands to win the pots, and in the pot was empathy.

The only problem was that that pot didn't come right away. There are emotions you can do without, emotions that, if you are lacking in them, the authorities won't care.

There are more than just two options for a person missing happiness... or hate or sympathy or melancholy or boredom or lust or greed or curiosity or silliness or a thousand other things. Oh, it is a sin for a person to lose something as priceless as curiosity or as powerful, even, as hate. It is a shame to lose melancholy and a tragedy to lose silliness, but never a crime. This means that it will take a long time, a continuous lack of luck and dire circumstances for a man to throw his empathy into the betting pool. Either that or he is sure he is going to win and is kindly warning the other players that he is collecting the pot and that they should fold while they still can.

It almost never means he's bluffing.

Only a severe amateur would dare to bluff with his empathy in harm's way and it is always easy to spot an amateur. That little fact goes against how all amateurs think, so let me be clear to them right now:

I can spot you all a mile off.

He never put up his empathy into the pot. Not even when he was sure he was going to win. He knew its value. He would not tempt fate. That was not his ruination.

He was gambling night and day, looking for a man more desperate than himself. But desperate men are hard to find.

There are only three ways a man may become anything at all... and only two ways to become desperate. The third way that is of no importance to this example, is to buy the chip from a Soul Man. Only, no Soul Man carries around desperation, not even the stupid ones. They all know that no one is going to buy it.

It requires a very specific and a very extreme mix of chips to produce desperation. See, desperation is one of those rare emotions that are Chemed. Not born, but made from too many of the wrong chips. We all have more emotions than anyone lets on, that's why you can be so consumed with rage one moment, and happy the next. Never mind the fact that each and every person is born with chips each of a different size and capacity, not to mention the people who buy more chips of a certain kind off a Soul Man, none of that changes the fact that everyone has a limit to how much they can feel. And certain chips, when activated, turn off others. There are reasons for this, chemical equations that when balanced and completed show you that science can explain it if you care enough to listen to it all.

Which not many people do.

I do remember that scientists have not found the hormone that switches completely off the desperation chip. It is always there.

Well, I think it is. I can't quite remember the article. I read the paper ages ago. All I know is the first way to become desperate is by Cheming the toxin yourself. I made sure to know this so that he would know it too and I warned him over and over about what he was doing to himself. Thing is, he had a surety about him, a surety that in the next pot someone would throw in empathy. And he could survive, he could push through, he could make it, for one more pot. Just waiting for a desperate man. ....But not too desperate. Why? You already know why. I can't remember why, but I

know there's a reason. But you know already.

Fine.

Let me think.

*A man can earn his Chemed betrayed  
By Revolution, debt and trade,  
But shirk a man with hands displayed,  
For desperate men are Giver made.*

You must always watch out for a Giver. Never let a Giver give. You can see them on the sidewalk; it does not take much intelligence to see a Giver. Sometimes, though, amateurs can't really tell the difference between a broken man and a Giver. Not until they give. Then, well, there's no point in identifying the man. Who cares, a Giver who's given is just a broken man once again. Granted, he'll be a good deal more broken, or maybe he'll be less broken. I can never remember if a Giver gets richer or poorer, I do know for certain it is one or the other, though. That is for sure.

What is also for sure is that desperation is fifty-percent of the time gotten from a Giver. One man Chemes it, another man receives it. A firm handshake from a stranger is really all it requires. Only when an emotion has driven them half-mad, until it is unbearable to live with and they are too afraid to die, only then does a Giver give. And a Giver never gives goods.

If they did, of course they wouldn't be called Givers, then they'd be Revolutionaries, and though everyone loves a Revolutionary, no one wants to be one. Why give away what good we got? He knew a Revolutionary wasn't going to come.

But the empathy did, the empathy came, eventually, it came. Funnily enough, it didn't even come from a desperate man. It was a Soul Man who lost the pot with empathy but won the game against him. A Soul Man who knew going into it that he was going to lose the empathy and win the rest.

The first thing the Soul Man did was put the empathy on the table... see, it wasn't the Soul Man's empathy in the first place. Well, yes it would have fetched him a pretty penny but this Soul Man had bigger plans in mind. Even the most expensive of emotions will only go for so much... besides the only people who would want and could afford the price of empathy are few.

Either way, the Soul Man knew that he would get a lot more money by—in exchange for losing the empathy—sucking him dry of everything else that he had to give. And the Soul Man did this very well. They sat at the table for hours, him losing more and more of himself – happiness, sadness, curiosity, melancholy, cruelty – everything except his own empathy, memory, the little bit of love that reminded him of why he needed to win, and the smaller bit of wit that let him play his last hand. And he did win, if you can call it that. He did get the empathy, but he got so broken, so poor, just so crippled and mangled and all those other words that aren't politically correct anymore.



**taught** *Theresa Graham*

I do remember finding him in that wreck, the blackened, stained alley, crying and weeping and so destroyed from the inside, desperately holding that empathy chip. I dragged him home, I don't know how I managed it. But I did, and he gave his son the empathy. They cried together for hours. How could they not?

For the first time, the son felt the father's pain as his own.

It was a long night.

But it was a longer year as I slowly got him put back together. It took all of my money to even start the process. I had to get him enough emotions so that once I paid a Soul Man to get rid of his desperation, it wouldn't come back. Soul Men may not buy desperation from you but they certainly know to take the money people offer them to get rid of it. I don't remember how they did it without becoming desperate themselves, but I remember it wasn't pleasant. I think it had something to do with coma patients, but I don't know.

After that I ran out of money.

So I found my own version of that brick wall solution. I like to think I didn't run quite as hard or quite as fast or even quite as straight into that cement-filled swimming pool of a solution. I do, anyway, like to think that.

See, I never gambled and I never bet, but I did sell a lot of things to get the money to the Soul Men. Like my talent, my ability. The one I was born with. Sold to an amateur Soul Man for so many 'useless' emotions, you could almost call it stealing. Of course, he told me later I did steal, too. Not emotions, but money. I don't remember what or when, but I'm told that it's true.

Let me make one thing clear to you now: I am broken.

Not very broken, but broken nonetheless. See, I gave away the little things, the things I wouldn't notice were gone, like the laziness of a Sunday afternoon, that mix between relaxation and serenity... see, I thought I wouldn't miss it if I kept both relaxation and serenity... but it's funny, even with both of those, it's not quite the same. It's okay though, I don't miss it, I gave up nostalgia. You might not think that that would get me a lot, but you'd be surprised. Some people love nostalgia.

I gave more emotions away too, but they get boring to list. The only other interesting thing I gave away was my memory. Not all of it. Not so much that I don't remember myself and who I am, not so much that I don't remember him and his son... but I've forgotten who he is exactly. And I forget his name and sometimes my name and all the Soul Men's names. I know he is someone to me, he comes home, or I come home and there he is with his son. He doesn't always realize how bad it is, my forgetting, and so he doesn't always know to remind me. So I play a game, a good game, where I guess who he is. And sometimes he... you... ask me questions to help the game.

I'm good at the game, I know this, I just don't precisely recall how good. But I'm smart. Really smart, even though sometimes people treat me like I'm simple instead of just broken. People forget that intelligence isn't memory.

I know which ones will be the worst too; I know when I meet them which people will condescendingly mistake intelligence for memory.

So let me be clear to them now,

All you snobs,

I can spot you a mile off.

Just like how I saw that swimming pool solution, and I ran anyway. I knew, I always knew I would lose. I knew I wouldn't be able to watch you get broken and not save you from it. But it's okay. Yes, I find it hard to accept change now, and remember names now and feel nostalgic and all those great things, but it's okay.

Because I never sold my happiness to a Soul Man.

And people may have called me a Revolutionary for what I did for you, but I just called it love...

Oh,

There, see?

I know you again.

## Parables for the Beat

*Josh Quirion*

i.           airborne pulse

revere the reversals that let you be another kind, of another mind,  
of a heartbeat irregular and pulsating charmingly, attracted to  
the electricity that lets you find another, moonblind you—see.  
and take time, time to grind what you thought was your life into  
a fine powder, behold a fine danger, combustible, detonate,  
& let your life be that way,  
a fine blast.

ii.           a wretch like me

everyone loves a monster, observing it, absorbed by its spectacle and the predictable  
terror of its life, but no one wants to be there when it wakes up, no one wants to bathe  
it and feed it and listen to it tell  
of its dream of being a  
flower.

iii.          n(m)obility

why so still  
when to wake and ache  
can satiate the psychotic stillness  
that cooks manic and undisturbed

make beat the mindless maladies  
the chronic march, a fool afoot affront all  
the tomes of terror & old artful stasis  
crack the calm indolence, and perform  
the noblest function, wake, ache –

v

m

e.

o



**Reach** *Stephen Levac*  
*Model: Sezen Asan*



vi.

*meet me outside in the dark.*



**raise act**

*Josh Quirion*

on the floor of a metro car on the orange line, slowly, a wasp crawls

like it forgot the art of flight, a sad sight, even if i've heard well of its burn,  
even if i heard quite of its malice, arbitrary nature of hurt, indiscriminate ache

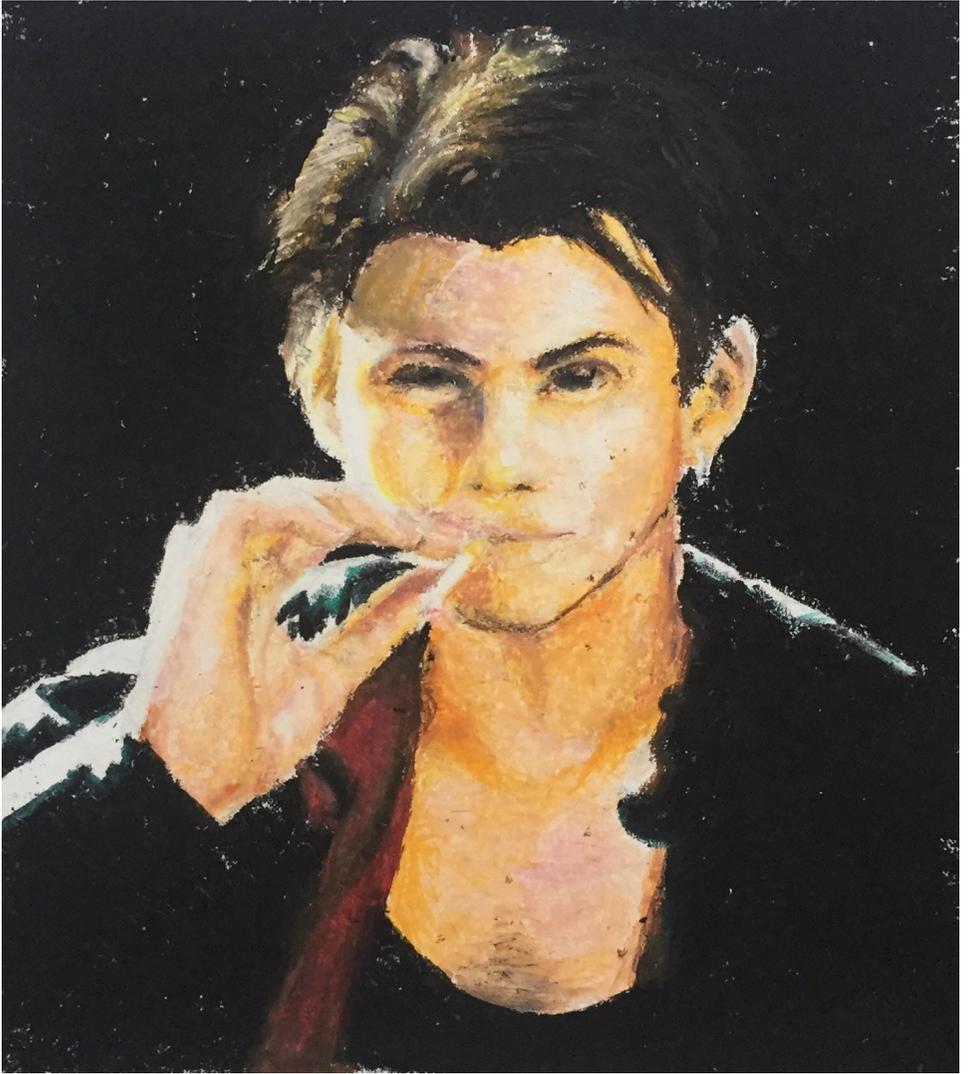
one woman, who too heard of it, i infer—because in her eyes there is a flash  
revealing something between fear and memory or memory of a fear or fear  
of a memory—sees me see it, and she's here now, in this odd moment of ours.

it seems hurt, if that's possible, can an insect such be hurt so, and who'll help it,  
save it, one of us perhaps, but would i even help a boy if he was crawling such,  
would that woman, the bystander, rubberneck, accessory, witness, would she?  
surely i would. without hesitation but i cannot speak for her, the big onlooker.

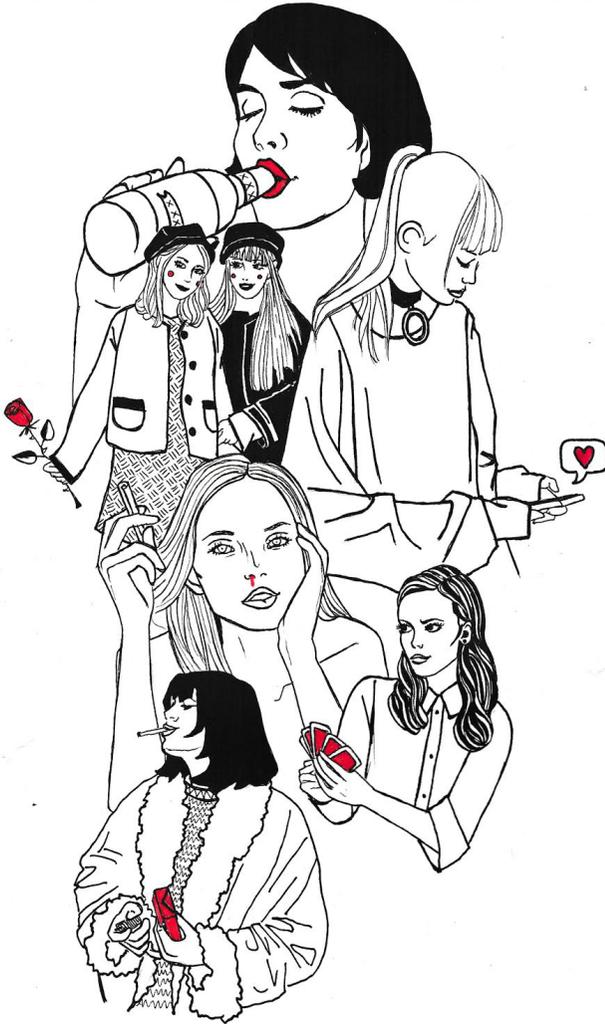
i see her see me see it, and politely she, with her face, ask, insist, that i deliver  
us from the little thing, it has disturbed, invaded a fragile and normal nothing but  
this is, perhaps, a moment for tolerance, for reconciliation, what want you here  
little guy, what ails thee, surely me you can trust and i you and don't mind her  
she is from time forgotten, trust parameters minimal because of others, not you.

don't take it personally. wherever it crawls, i make way, removing shoe, bag,  
book, too, and minutes and prejudice and by and by and oh my it has become  
domesticated. it trusts me, and i it, it seeks refuge beneath my black shoe when  
she, the spectator, eye-fucks it, bigot, she knows not your heart, little one, she  
knows not your individuality, one little guy in a large brutal world, remain here,  
asylum, sanctuary, i'll protect thee, you're fair, you poor victim of representation.

lady-look-at-my-business is minding her own now, and herbert is safe under my  
shoe—sherbrooke, mont-royal, laurier, rosemont—we're going home, herbert, i'll  
have you honey and you can sleep inside—so long as you do not fly. oh, and herbert,  
would you look at her! she's a little light. you know, i believe in her age, the littlest  
people shine the smartest, and she'd accept you regardless, she'd hold you and  
she'd listen and you could sleep under her shoe too and—herbert, herbert, herbert?  
no! the little light begins to cry, lady stands, walks over to the wasp and squish.



*JD Bernadette Labbé*



*A Modern Day Eve* Annie Butler

## Our Own Gods

Sally Cunningham

Melina liked driving at night. She liked the disconnect between the road and the ground, the tires and the road, how nothing felt grounded. No traffic, just her and silent velocity. She pressed her boot down on the gas pedal, felt the speed tick up, felt the highway lines blur. She could outrace the night like this. The speedometer inched higher, higher. Her passenger huffed in sleep. Melina slowed. Blinked. The eyes of the clock blinked back: 12:34 a.m. She turned the radio on – just enough to keep out the night – and glanced at the girl in her passenger seat, doused in electric light.

Arson slept in her seat, feet braced against the dashboard. Her knock-off Vans would leave new scuff marks on top of the other scuffs already on the dash. All products of the last three days. Melina sighed.

Arson's eyes flicked open under her thick bangs. She pushed herself upright in her seat.

“What the fuck are you listening to? Can you even hear it?”

“You were sleeping.” Melina reached forward and eased the radio knob up, filling the car with static before a buttery voice spoke into the car:

*“... every time a project fails, we give out a promotion. We love failure here.”*

“Are you serious? Turn that shit off. Where's the AUX?”

...

Arson took a noisy gulp of coffee then held out the Styrofoam cup for Melina, who took it and sipped. Cold and bitter. Arson reached for her cup back, but Melina held it to her chest. She took another careful sip – still cold. She grimaced at Arson.

“Do you have them?” Melina asked.

“Yeah, of course.”

Arson pulled two stones out of her back pocket and held them out in her palm. Melina had seen them yesterday in sweltering daylight when they were the colour of light denim, worn from years on the shore. Now the stones glowed black and blue from the dashboard lights.

Arson pulled back and rubbed them together in slow circles: a rasp and a clack, a rasp and a clack, a rasp–

“Not yet,” Melina said, “put them away.”

The highway lines flashed.

...

Arson liked riding shotgun at night. She liked how the world shrank to just the front seat and the road ahead, how everything felt grounded. No complications, just her and

Melina and the highway lines to race. She rolled down her window, felt the scream of cold air pierce through her hoodie, felt Melina look at her. She could say anything like this. Instead, Arson leaned her face into the night. Leaned into the cold and dark and calm of the rushing wind.

The squeak of cold fingers on Styrofoam brought her back. She rolled up the window to keep out the night and checked her pocket for the stones. They were still there, warm in her jeans as though they had been sitting in the sun; as sun-warmed as the day her and Melina had found them on the riverbank. Regular stones in regular mud. Melina had picked them up, her blonde hair swinging and sending refracting sunlight across the ground. “Rocks!” she had yelled triumphantly. Arson couldn’t remember what they had needed river stones for back then, she just remembered Melina’s wide, snaggly-toothed grin and the sun beating down.



**Untitled** *Isabelle Vaux*

Arson withdrew her hand from her pocket and looked at Melina. Same blonde hair, same snaggletooth, same sunny spirit. She hadn't really aged in all the time they had been friends. She had just become more herself, then in the last year, less. Had become a muffled version of the sparkling girl standing on the riverbank splattered in mud and youthful joy. Now she needed a haircut and probably a hug.

Arson rapped her knuckles on the window.

"We almost there, driver?"

Melina smiled a little, and bit back: "Well, what time is it?" Practical and cutting – the Melina that Arson liked best. Arson grinned. The clock retained a steady 2:17 a.m. She leaned back in her seat.

"Alright, alright. Fair. I'm just tired. Or wired, I can't tell."

Melina slid her eyes to Arson, raised an eyebrow. "Have more coffee. I just keep going straight, right?"

"Like, unless you see a big sign that says: 'TURN RIGHT FOR GOOD FUCKING COFFEE THAT'S ACTUALLY HOT' then for sure take that," Arson took another swig of coffee. "Otherwise yeah, it's straight on till morning."

"Aye, aye, captain."

Melina's smile met Arson's grin. Melina pressed the gas.

...

What felt like hours later, the road carved down. Evergreens crowded the highway, bringing the black night closer. Melina felt a rush down her spine. It was close. The clock hadn't changed, it still winked a blue 2:17 a.m. She slowed the car and turned the music down. Saw Arson sit up.

"Is this it?"

Melina didn't answer. She flicked on the high beams to see the narrowing road ahead. Her lights cut through the darkness, but the looming trees pressed in on the car. What earlier had been a highway was now little more than a dirt path.

Arson rearranged herself so she could sit cross-legged, knocking their coffee cup with her knee. She leaned her elbows onto the dash and Melina reached beside her to turn the radio off completely. Melina's fingers brushed Arson's bare arm where her hoodie had been pushed up. The clock's time held steady.

The car crept forward. Up ahead, the road widened into a parking lot. The headlights washed over cars parked where the highway should have been. The car rolled into the lot, the crunch of gravel too loud in the otherwise silent car. Melina pulled into a spot beside a hulking black SUV. She turned the car off – a new depth of silence – and looked to Arson, who was staring into the black outside the car window.

"I guess this is it," Melina said. "You still have the stones?"

"Oh shit, I chucked those out the window," Arson mimed tossing the stones. "You needed them?"

"Shut up. Let's go."

The dark parking lot was nearly full of both vehicles and sounds. Gleaming cars lined up nose-in down the centre of the lot: a race waiting to happen. The whisper of wind chilled Arson more than the cold. In the distance, the ocean. Arson slammed her door shut.

Melina felt the closeness of the night at last. She breathed in deep, pine and brine. She closed her car door gently, her fingertips buzzing. She spun to face Arson with a wild grin – this was it.

...

They stood at the edge of the parking lot peering at cedar trunks.

“I swear to God, I’m doing exactly as you’re telling me.”

“Let me try again.”

“Fucking go for it.”

Melina plucked the stones out of Arson’s hand.

“Please work,” she mumbled.

She rubbed the stones together in circles, the way that Arson had done in the car earlier. *Rasp, clack, rasp*. No wild magic appeared, no spine-tingling *other* came out. The trees were just trees, the wind just cold.

“Come on. It *has* to work.” The stones were warm. *Rasp and clack and rasp and clack*. Nothing. Melina could feel the tears building in the back of her throat, hot and panicky. She hadn’t cried in months; these rocks and their dumb ritual wouldn’t break her now. She started banging the stones, disrupting the gentle creak of the wind through branches. The night paused, its attention held. She thrust the stones above her head, one in each hand. Her eyes closed.

Melina heard Arson mumble something vulgar and opened her eyes. A path had emerged between the dense ferns surrounding the parking lot, leading into darker woods. Melina looked at Arson, who shrugged. She handed the other girl one of the stones then stepped onto the path.

...

The edge of the forest gave way to a ravaged moonlit beach. Black sand caressed the carcasses of hundreds of bone-white trees. Angered waves bit the shore and fog hung low over the roiling water. This was it. Melina stepped onto sand so fine that her foot slipped, and Arson had to catch her flailing arm. Arson then used Melina’s arm to point down the beach to a bonfire the size of a house, shadows writhing around its base. They didn’t speak, just clasped hands and walked towards the fire.

As they got closer, Arson could hear a sort of music. It built itself in the base of her skull, pounding without hurting. She could feel the dance. Her thumb tapped the rhythm on the back of Melina’s hand, she felt Melina bob her head to the same beat.

Melina squinted and the shadows transformed into figures – people, so many people. Dancing around the flames, in the fire. The music pulled at Melina. Her hand wove through the air beside her, calling the dance, the night, closer. She looked down at Arson then up to the bonfire, to reckless heat. A feral sort of smile grew on her face.

Before they could step into the roaring ring of light, a woman in a dress of patchwork layers stopped them. The woman's body blocked the music of the bonfire, leaving only the pounding of waves and a deserted black beach. Tall and sturdy, the woman wore a crown of antlers on top of knotted brown hair. She held out a gnarled hand.

Arson knew then that they had to give her their stones in order to hear the music again. She watched Melina hand over hers without hesitation, but Arson remained reluctant. She stupidly wanted to keep the sun-warmed memory the stone carried. But she wanted to stay with Melina more and Melina was already pushing past the woman into the crowd. Arson looked the tall woman in the eye as she dropped the stone in her knobby hand. Despite facing away from the fire, flames reflected in the woman's eyes, heating Arson's face. She held her stare, fire against fire. Then the woman nodded and let her go.

Once rid of her stone, the music returned louder and fuller than it had been on the beach. Music full of drumbeats and fantastical sounds that moved Melina's limbs in ways she could never do in the mirror. She flung her body into the crowd, she wanted to feel the music from inside them as well. Bare skin of a man's back slapped her wrist, shoulder blades dug into her ribs, a woman's eyes danced with hers. She loved it. The fire was everywhere, it was in her, it *was* her.

Arson watched. She felt the music, but it did not consume her. She watched Melina, watched her dance and bend and exist without boundaries. Arson hadn't seen Melina this carefree since drunken high school parties, what seemed like a different age. She watched Melina disappear into the tangle of reckless limbs and went after her. The fire grew hotter, grew louder in the crowd. She saw Melina's hair flip above the crowd and tried to follow it, but Arson's knees bent, twisted, danced of their own accord. She staggered. Tongues of flame licked the dancers. Flickers of orange light shadowed face after face after face that wasn't Melina's.

It was too hot. She couldn't breathe. She needed *out*. A masked dancer put his face right in Melina's, grasped her shoulders. She twisted away from him and into someone else. Arson. The smaller girl snapped a hand around Melina's wrist, bringing instant clarity. Her eyes were wide and dark, bangs askew. Melina stopped dancing. Stood still. Slowly, she reached and fixed Arson's bangs, drew her thumb down the side of Arson's face. The night shattered into light.

...

Melina looked over at Arson in the passenger seat, at their pinkies linked and resting on top of the forgotten coffee cup. She faced the highway lines, pressed the gas, and drove on to morning.

## **Birdwatchers**

*Janan Chan*

We will live off of peaches, explore nude beaches,  
find pleasure in birdwatching and taking off in planes.

We can take each other's last names  
and you can tell me your history.  
I'll give you my favourite books to read and you can send me essays you like.  
We can hike mountains and scuba dive in lakes.  
We can cook breakfast together or sleep late.  
We'll sit in bathtubs where I'll wash your back while you wash my feet.  
We'll spend the day exploring or do nothing at all.

You'll keep me warm and I'll sleep on your chest.  
I can drive if you want to close your eyes for a bit.  
We can walk around the neighbourhood and look at houses,  
talk about the trees we will plant and what fruits we like.  
We can have a small brick house with a fireplace and an outdoor shower.  
We can have dinner with your family or ignore them completely.  
We can donate our shirts or dress up nice.  
We won't shave or wash our hair.  
We'll wear the same underwear twice  
or eat ice cream for breakfast because it feels nice.  
Let's go to the continents we've never been to  
and you'll feed me what the travel guides recommend.

We can swim naked in all bodies of water.

I'll kiss you in the light;  
I'll kiss you in the dark.

## Acknowledgements

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Lastly, thank you Isabelle Vaux for putting up with our late-night editing sessions, for ensuring that we didn't kill each other, and for being the only person we know who could have endured us as long as you did. It's done — it's finally done!

## Contributors

### **Yann Audin**

Born of a Français and a Québécoise, Yann Audin is fascinated by world-building and unreliable narrators. As an undergraduate, he studied both physics and literature, and he is currently pursuing a master's degree in theoretical physics. His favourite authors are Frank Herbert, Heather O'Neil, Haruki Murakami and Borges. Yann likes photography, has a mostly inactive blog, and enjoys films, shows, and theatre.

**Jeremy Audet** has been infusing poetry and photography into his love for the outdoors and travel in the past years. He began studying English Literature and Environmental Studies at Bishop's in 2018.

**Brenna Bird** is a Bishop's University alumnae with a Major in Fine Arts and an Honours in Religion. She practices embroidery and photography and is exploring textile arts within their cultural context. She is currently working as Curator, Education and Cultural Outreach at the Foreman Art Gallery.

**Holly Burke** is a second year English Literature Major. She enjoys reading and writing in her spare time. This is her first time being published in *The Mitre*!

**Annie Butler** is a third-year English Literature and Fine Arts student at Bishop's University. You can find more of her art on Instagram @artbyheavensfull and for sale at The Koven in the Byward Market, Ottawa.

**elsa cattelan** is a fourth year biochemistry student, who has no idea what to do next career-wise. She does know that she enjoys drawing and writing, and so, here we are.

### **Janan Chan**

Half truth, half fiction, hired contradiction,  
Kid split, part grown, digging for room'o one's own.  
Graduate nomad fosters mapless ways,  
Goes on, accepts cool joys and sloppy days.

### **Max Crowther**

Born in Newfoundland, Michael "Max" Crowther is a writer, librarian, and educational consultant currently working at Bishop's College School in Lennoxville, QC. Max's work was first published in *The Mitre* twenty-five years ago while he was a student at Bishop's and it was the coolest thing ever. It still is.

**Sophia Cumming** is a third year Elementary Education major with a minor in Teaching English as a Second Language. She loves language, sunshine, coffee and her hometown of Calgary, AB.

**Marguerite Dakin** is a English: Film and Media Studies major with a Creative Writing minor. She is a Vermonter who is mainly concerned with cows and Sabrina the Teenage Witch.

**Morgane Davis-Demers**

“Don’t focus on the past. Don’t focus on the present. Focus on the future where I will rule the world.”

Morgane plays roller derby, draws, paints, and loves attention.

**David Edmond** Is a Scottish born Canadian. He attended Bishop’s under sponsorship of the Royal Canadian Forces from 1922 - 1966. He had a full career in the RCAF, retiring in 1996. With the death of his wife in 2009, he began writing poems with an emotional theme. He has published three books. He has remarried and lives in Granby, QC.

**July-Ann El Baze** was born in Nice, France and is currently studying at Bishop’s University in Québec where she is completing a double major in Biology and Fine Arts. She primarily focuses on sculpture, and aims to integrate her knowledge of science within her art to demonstrate how they can be complementary.

**Theresa Graham** was born and raised in the middle of absolute nowhere, technically a place called Bishop’s Mills, Ontario. Theresa is a second year Drama major, double minoring in Music and Film. Along with these three concentrations, Theresa favours photography, cats, purple, throat lozenges, ice water, and every aspect of filmmaking. She loves taking pictures of BUtiful people.

**Bernadette Labbé** is a second-year education student at Bishop’s University, she loves pastels and a good time.

**Stephen Levac** is a second-year drama major at Bishop’s University. He is primarily a portrait photographer with a fondness for neon.

**Rosemin Nathoo** is a Bishop’s graduate and previous editor of *The Mitre* (2018). As a wildlife biologist in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, NWT, she now facilitates conversations between communities, science, and wildlife legislation.

**Farah Ormelet** is a third-year undergraduate student at the University of Sherbrooke, completing a BA in English and Intercultural Studies and a certificate in Translation. She occasionally reads her poems at open-mic events at the university.

**Jeff Parent** is a local poet, Bishop's University grad, Class of 2014; former editor of *The Mitre*, and is currently enrolled in Concordia University's Creative Writing MA program. In addition to *The Mitre*, Jeff's poems have appeared in publications such as *The Fiddlehead*, *Lemon Hound*, *The/tEmz/Review*, *Words(on)Pages*, *Bad Nudes*, and *Taproot*.

**Josh Quirion** is a graduate of Concordia University's MA in creative writing. His graduate thesis, a novella entitled *Ashes of Auld*, has been downloaded from Google Scholar twenty-seven times! Why and by whom remain the great mysteries of Quirion's life.

**Miranda Serrano** is an international student from the Philippines studying secondary education and English. She has been drawing and painting recreationally for almost a year.

**Meghan Van Wyck** is currently pursuing a major in psychology with a double minor in pre-law and English literature at Bishop's University. She is grateful to have received the chance to write her own stories this year.

**Isabelle Vaux** is from North Vancouver, British Columbia. She is in her second year at Bishop's University studying psychology neuroscience. When she has free time, she loves to paint and draw. She also lives with the editors. Isabelle is very excited to have her art published but so thankful that it's over.

**Dimitri Vouliouris** was born in Athens, but has since lived in North Rhodesia, San Francisco, Belgium, and London. He has been teaching Computer Science at Bishop's since the era of punched cards. He discovered photography early on in life and the quiet pleasures of writing much later. He now lives in Lennoxville with a spouse of seemingly untold perfection, a mercurial step-daughter and a brawny cat named Pirrlo.

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

**Alisha Winter** is in the Secondary Education Program at Bishop's University with a Major in English and Minor in French as a Second Language. She aspires to one day teach English or French at the high school level and encourage her students to try their hand at all forms of writing.

## Designers

**Greta Jursch** is a graphic designer currently studying at the University of Redlands. She works for the university's communications department and interns at Foundation Films in West Hollywood.

### **Mallesh Madapathi**

Designer, programmer, entrepreneur, wanderer, Indo-Canadian. MSc computer science student at Bishop's University and a part-time student at the University of Toronto specializing in self-driving cars. See more of his design work in *The Campus* newspaper and at [www.iammplusm.ca](http://www.iammplusm.ca)

## The Editors

### **Loch Baillie**

Born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, Loch is an honours English literature student also pursuing a minor in French language studies. When he is not copyediting *The Campus* newspaper, Loch is herding half thoughts into poetry or chipping away at some of his abandoned prose. His writing has been featured in a fashion lookbook and twice in *Maclean's*. "Antediluvian" is from his forthcoming second poetry collection.

### **Sally Cunningham**

For the past 20 years, Sally has loved stories. Her first editing venture was helping her mom with now internationally-performed plays *...didn't see that coming* and *Sink or Swim*. An honours English literature student and film studies minor originally from Vancouver, BC, Sally sometimes writes poetry and stories in her (very) limited spare time. She still doesn't really know how to use a comma.





Yann Audin  
Jeremy Audet  
Loch Baillie  
Brenna Bird  
Holly Burke  
Annie Butler  
elsa cattelan  
Janan Chan  
Max Crowther  
Sophia Cumming  
Sally Cunningham  
Marguerite Dakin  
Morgane Davis-Demers  
David Edmond  
July-Ann El Baze  
Theresa Graham  
Bernadette Labbé  
Stephen Levac  
Rosemin Nathoo  
Farah Ormelet  
Jeff Parent  
Josh Quirion  
Miranda Serrano  
Meghan Van Wyck  
Isabelle Vaux  
Dimitri Vouliouris  
Frank Willdig  
Alisha Winter