

# Editor's Note

I'd been thinking of this open issue as a "burning house" issue since that week in early July when Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were murdered by cops in Baton Rouge and St. Paul and a few of you were sharing that Kris Straub comic on your Facebook and Twitter feeds: "all houses matter," the one stick figure says to the other stick figure; "we should care exactly equally at all times about everything"; "my house isn't on fire, but i have dry rot. are you saying it shouldn't be fixed?" The absurdity of such reasoning and of the sense of justice it all too commonly invokes is driven home in the final panel when the second stick figure wearily suggests that such objections are pointless since the people in the burning house have already died in the fire.

It's been hard to keep up with all the houses on fire in recent months, weeks, days—hard logistically, hard emotionally. Like many of you, I'm both sickened and unsurprised that white supremacy won the US presidential election; that water cannons are now being used against water protectors in North Dakota; that half of my favourite CanLit authors, taking sides in a high-profile sexual assault case, would sign off on a letter informed by a logic not so far removed from that of the first stick figure in the #AllLivesMatter cartoon; that homeless residents in Vancouver's largest tent city are about to be forced out of their community into even more precarious living situations. I'm also sickened by my lack of surprise at these things. But the space I have for this Editor's Note is smaller than it was before our wonderful new designer, Anahita Jamali Rad, decided to increase our margins, so I should try to say something succinct about the kind of art and writing you'll find in these pages, about the spirit in which it seems to have been made.

To quote cover artist Marvin Luvualu António in his conversation with Merray Gerges: "Everything is war." Which is to say that everything is a pretty good reason for rage. Yet Gerges insists, and António will agree, that a corresponding aesthetics of what the two term *high stakes* "is ultimately a manifestation of unbridled vulnerability"—of a fearlessness rather than a fetishization of failure—and that such an aesthetics, crucially, "doesn't have a definitive set of formal or thematic qualities." You can't know ahead of time what high-stakes vulnerability will look or sound like on the page or elsewhere in life, just as you can't predict the impact of something based on its intentions. As a friend warmly cautioned when I began to work on this issue, "Your best could still be a problem." Or as Hannah Black puts it, "More is being asked of us historically than solo introspection or even introspection in twos and threes, more even is being asked of us than irony." So what additional tools can we wield, together in our different vulnerabilities, to help rebuild those houses that are structurally built to burn?

—Andrea Actis