

The Capilano Review

Summer 2020



*Let's plant everything that's still here: the English language,
a few conspiracies, overtime hours, computer keys. Let's see
what the dirt can do with them yet.*

–Liam Siemens

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Editor's Note

When we first conceived of this summer's open issue, we imagined a reader longing for touch after months of isolation. We hoped to invite this reader out, into the soil's "loving weight" (Garden Don't Care), accompanied by a "sweaty sun" (S F Ho) and "other floral waves" (Kaylin Pearce).

We soon noted, however, even amidst pieces we had initially considered light or humorous in tone, a shadow side—an uncanny edge, a surrealist blow. Mourning, both individual and collective, emerged as a major theme. While inevitably "there is this holding on" (Andrea Actis), the contributors to this issue consider how one form of life must be grieved for another to grow. As Andrea Javor aka Mystic Sandwich writes, it "isn't the end of the world; it's the end of *a* world."

If any doubt remained, the sustained demands for justice triggered by the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25th, 2020, have made it clear that there is no normal to return to, no "new normal" to create, unless it involves radically unmaking "the yt man's Truth" (Mercedes Eng).

In the context of a global pandemic and worldwide demonstrations against police brutality and systemic racism, I can't help but (re)read Gail Scott's practice of "listen[ing] hard to the entire moment" as instruction for both writing and responding to the times we live in. While the immediate urge is to be productive and proactive, there is value in the work of conceptualizing organizational forms that emphasize process as much as product and the effort of "trying to learn, and trying to do that publicly" (Julia Lamare & Emily Dundas Oke).

So, yes, summer is here. The parks are open, the sun is out, gardens need tending, and there is work to do. This freshly designed issue opens us to life-affirming places of touch, even as it believes that "the world should be touched differently" (Maged Zaher).

—*Matea Kulić*

The Whole World Rushes In

Liam Siemens

Elevator

When you get off this elevator, you might find a world at war. You might find anti-depressants in the air like mist. There might be someone with a beard ready to lead you, and by god, you might be ready to be led. But be careful, there might be a pair of boots that lead you through the university and onto the seaside. There might be people there, people with ideas. They might speak another language, chop glass, exhale intelligence, and want to work with you. Together, you might find yourselves moving these ideas into a vial to strike against a rock, and, it's true, they might form a ladder. Oh, look, we are arriving. The elevator is about to open. Wow, this is it then. Your new life. Good luck.

Trade

We decided to trade up. We traded a pencil for a candle. We traded a candle for a portrait. We traded the portrait for a bill of money for a jug of candy. We traded that for an entrepreneur. We traded that for a new store. We traded constantly. We traded an online photo for a YouTube video. We traded an Instagram post for a child lock. We traded children for their fathers. We traded their fathers for their families. We traded their families for a city, a country, a century. We traded the government for a jewel. We traded the jewel for a superpower. We traded the king for the universe. We traded the universe for a spell. And that's what we have now. We like this spell. We recount it every day in the mound on top of the hill. It moves us. Meanwhile, the world keeps on moving.

Spiritual

We asked the world if it was alive. “Oh,” the walls said, “we aren’t religious, but we are spiritual.” We thought we must be hallucinating, but then the wine rumbled in our stomachs, our lamp reached back to Persia, and the bath tried to drown us. “Once the world turns on, good luck turning it off,” said the drugs in our palm. “Plug your ears,” the future said, “hold your hands in front of the screen, close the ancient texts, none of it will help. Good luck.”

Tired

We were tired. We were so, so tired. Hold my hand. Push me around. Where are the stairs? How do we get out? Someone hand me an eraser. Is there a pen. We didn't get this right. I'm all limp. There were supposed to be pensions at this party. Who blew out the candles. God, is that you? Where did the future go? The dog ate all the past. And the pasta. Please, I want to be held. Let's plant everything that's still here: the English language, a few conspiracies, overtime hours, computer keys. Let's see what the dirt can do with them yet. I'll meet you underground. Don't worry, we'll be holding hands.

Six Poems

Maged Zaher

The law and the depth

We exchange the tips of our nerves daily for tomatoes and cabbages.

Truth is a match that continues in time despite us.

We get a glimpse of God.

It opens and repurposes us.

The days are touched by the law.

Surrounded by very precise acts of undoing, we still go where the river stopped intersecting with ourselves.

There is the so called depth of us, that we would like to explore, looking for a heavenly creature within.

All we have inside is so many metaphors to choose from.

The thoughts of our best thinkers didn't envelope us after all. We are anomalous.
The law touches us often and flattens us.

On the pragmatism of soccer

The fluctuation of thoughts
As the busy streets retract their meaning
The world should be touched differently
Love is possibly about making sense of things
The activities I did repetitively in order to stay alive
Stopped helping
And I spent hours without breath

Typically I go to bars carrying heavy books of math
The moment I enter
Some soccer team scores a penalty on TV
Now everybody in the bar is upset
I go over the ten commandments with them
And a few differential equations to give the illusion of order
In truth I followed only some of the commandments
They didn't seem to work

The magnitude of loss

Regarding the problem of enjoyment
Adding love to the class struggle
As our labour goes unpaid
And as we live without music
There are piles of nothings
Defying God's words
Life being a small tragedy
In the small ghettos of the universe

The bipolar overtime

How about going back thirty years
Reading the same books
Falling in love with the same women
Walking the same streets
Where life got troubled one event after another
Retrieving my old taste for street food
And making sense of my oscillating mind
An engineering book here, a poetry book there, and occasionally,
a novel
This is how I will welcome growing old
Exercising my heart daily in preparation for angels
Not every angel is terrifying

Walking around in the city

Reworking the world
Half-consciously
Tourists take pictures
The city is fragile
Except for the bookstores
I am at the same places
I was taken to in childhood
Yet nostalgia doesn't kick in
Not even a dash of melancholy

Recovering

The bare minimum of life
Is what follows several sleepless nights
Beware of madness
Hidden layers under layers
Within your cells

There is a juice in life
If you look up a little
To some tree
Or a loved one

Four Poems

Bardia Sinaee

Ozu

Stewed peppers on a low table: they share their precise impressions of you
Why attend to the dream knowing it too will be written over
Your leaves are opposite: candour and austerity joined at a node
Beaming yolk of sun: the poultis think the heat lamp is their mother
Dutifully the river pours itself into another, longing to be free
Which systems theory concerns the villagers sifting rubble and ash
They should keep it brief and just chant the most moving sutras
The sky is so blue, it's sad: the actor would like tears of her own
In stone agony a beloved feeds you fictions from the edge of the bed
The grain of millet stands for the young man's persistent character
Coiled snake or fan belt—splash! I make water by the road
What is it to come of age “downstream”? The free boat tours are fully booked
So long, painted seascapes: they've replaced the word *remission* with a bell
The question is does it end with a wedding or a funeral
The boy is inconsolable: there will be no trip to the car wash
Such outsized moments rise to the top like Brazil nuts
Balancing a tea tray: the middle child is born as night falls

Panelists

When the panelists appear
I picture my anger
as a wall

I've been told
this is how it works

Arguing
like pissing in a pool
feels good but
is hard to rationalize

Like many
in my cohort
I picture the future
as a red balloon

Does this point to
a Conservative victory
or a left coalition?

The retail heiress
and the guy who coined
“enhanced interrogation”
can't seem to agree
But the numbers show
most people prefer
the colour blue

which they associate
with tranquility
and cleanliness

Cadillac

It was the summer of the Denver Bikini
Every other guy was wearing the same floral shirt

Pete said “Chinese doctors
are right about the tongue stuff”

And it was true: people were paying \$25 a month
to talk to their appliances

Meanwhile centuries of empiricism
had culminated in a revolutionary procedure

involving fecal transplants
It was the summer of the fecal transplant

I had achieved homeostasis
and was progressing to the salivary stage

when I was forced to exit the train
because a guy was wearing the same shirt as me

It was the summer the government
sunk a bunch of money into flossing

The press reported on leaked documents
pertaining to a top-clearance operation

identified by the codename Eggbutt
The prime minister tried to explain

“If you hear a crashing sound
it’s probably just me in the other room”

but his mouth was full of granola
which he called “the Cadillac of food”

It was the summer of whippits and ketamine
Every other guy had a Goku tattoo

but only I could ride around on a cloud
because I was pure of heart

Scale

When one cartoon ant
says to the other

Brace yourself
for untold landscapes!

it's funny because
they're in a trash bin

Does the scale
of the universe

make the NBA finals
pointless?

A couple of guys get into it
outside the bar

Millions of people
have watched the video

of someone crinkling
cellophane on mic

Shrssp
thinks the coral

swallowing egg-shaped
plastic flecks

Three Poems

Conyer Clayton

Habitual

A crowd is a sharp cut in the rocks.
What came in on the air this morning?
Dung and past lives. Rejected

pollen, poor seeds, such statistics
for life, and we don't even know how
water is drawn up. An overflowing cup

poured in planetary haste.
Some spilled. No coaster. The rings
we leave remind children—

everything stains. Lifetimes
collecting rubbish on shelves.
No one sees the spot once buried.

Keep living tidy. Keep dying tidy.
Keep tidy keep tidy.
The masses caught up.

Politics

We went to a banquet hall with all the politicians. There were millions of empty, crumpled soda cans and plastic bottles strung up on wires, lining the room. *All of these were pulled from the Ottawa river*, a woman proclaims into a microphone. *The river is full of carcinogens, so all the fish are dying*. The room sighs. My boyfriend and I cast sideways glances to each other, get up, leave. We go to the river. The waterfall portion exists inside a cave, with a footpath on either side and fashionable light fixtures bolted into the weeping rock past the mouth of the cave. Past the mouth of the cave, the river takes a slow downward turn, splitting into three offshoots that meet at a dam. There, the water is thick with bright bodies—yellow and striped with effervescent scales, all dead and sloshing against the concrete. We stand at the edge of the river as fish tumble towards the mass grave. *The pollution is a distraction*, I say. *The city just doesn't want to pay to remove the dam*. As I'm speaking, a server walks by with four hedgehogs on a tray. *Anyone want a hedgehog?* she bellows. Her voice ricochets around the room. I grab and hold one like a hamburger. I stare into his small eyes. There is a heavy lump inside of him, so I flip him over to inspect. He is an iPhone. He's unlocked, and I accidentally begin reading incoming texts. I quickly turn the phone back over, back into a hedgehog, and he leaps onto my forearm, latches his mouth to my skin. It doesn't hurt so I laugh and let him be. But the server runs over and says, *You shouldn't let him do that*. I pull him off. My skin comes with him. A pale red tube of my flesh connects us. He finally detaches after a good hard yank, and my skin slowly rejoins my body as I reconsider ownership. I slip back into myself. The leaving makes no mark.

Love Interest

I am the Protagonist here, so of course, I look unlike myself. At school, they hand us a diagram with a blank space underneath to describe it. I see warfare—nondescript innocents, cut limbs, red puddle—and far away, one lone body fleeing on foot. She's almost to the woods. *No!* Teacher screams. She slams her hands on my desk. *The dead are the righteous. God smiles at those who lay down meekly and accept such beautiful pain. This one though, jabbing at the lonely girl, so close to the treeline, is disgraced and lost to God. She cannot escape God's justice. Write of how she will be found.* Later, I'm caught with my earrings, yellow feathers that brush my shoulders, and Teacher sends me to the cliffs. Hundreds of people toss items into the waves below. Family photos and sentimental knick-knacks and wedding rings and themselves. The edges are slanted, and the rock is loose from the constant weary footfall. Some fly with their treasures willingly. They are conspicuously quiet. Others crawl weeping to the edge but as they back away, a rock crumbles, or an armed guard kicks them, or they forget how to fight for life, and these are the ones who fall screaming. As I near the edge, I am crying too. I don't want to fall. I don't want to lose my last colourful object. A guard walks up behind me, whispers, *Pretend to throw them. Hand them to me. I will find you later.* He must be the Mismatched Love Interest. I only catch a glimpse of his face as I press the feathers into his hand. He leaves, and I mime losing everything. My hand is empty either way.

Soul Ash

Andrea Actis

And you know you get everybody you want in there. And you can keep it and spread it. Yet I feel that somehow this might be just having no material parts of them. Like a really smart person making the argument for her. So then that's blinded by *his* belief that it is soul to these people? So very. Dispersed. But what sense slews why soul might simply be what I remember of someone and love of them? I remind her why my love no I don't have investments I'm looking to protect them.

Well truly I think it is something that you cannot really measure in this present. The soul is something that is going to be eased upon death that goes back to how it goes back really goes. Goes into this whatever this plasticine this kind of playdough kids use. So it's going to be fun again to be some other persons. Like is going to be transmitted and you should get a really big chunk of oh my. In their sadness or even health or what have you. See in the future it's not you it's not me. You might actually resemble your daddy Jeffrey just because by chance you took a piece of that playdough. But you know a well-defined shape? You know a random assimilation? You gotta be so so so good that that was truly the case no I *know* you put people in the drawer. You know gathering all kinds of ashes from people and giving them a line in a drawer in your apartment.

Though I don't even think this is a question of metaphysics or like what's actually real. I think that there might be something if we look at just this behavioral pattern of gathering and displaying ash right. That there might be telling in a way? Like I'm not imagining that in fact we were throwing souls in this purgatory and they mean Jeffrey Mona Marti. There are not some screaming like ahhhhhhhhh you're keeping me from the big waterslide in the sky! It is not that bad. The fact that you know there is this holding on is just exactly what this is. That this is ancestor. But the idea that you're holding them basically on the phone that you don't release them from the thing is disgusting to me even if you release some finger of them on the mountaintop or whatever. You are really a part of the hoarding. You're like still holding on to part of ash and so on to make it garbage in your apartment. So this isn't nice. And that's hello why I object.

Well thank you at least for saying to me because you to me have this interesting hybrid belief like very hard science and some scared-shitless form of Catholicism that makes you an Eastern European man. You study the brain but don't understand what this brain is doing to how you argue with me. Then it's like that is *so* not how long I will always keep a little bit of the view that I was going to cremate. You will die! What will happen to ashes afterwards? I don't even care I will go into the stupid cupboard with them in my apartment. I don't even care what happens there or what happens exactly to match those ashes. No not yours but them and those.

I just don't understand why this is the question of the evening because we have like four actual people here. One two three four whatever whatever parts. I say that the four of us is this could be our grief currently talking? We're looking for like object substitutes you know but even then I still think me and my mind are better at the seriousness now freaking *learn* what they are. Excuse me? Because me and my mom are better at listening to souls and not forgetting what exactly some people were? Now that's what I'm saying.

What I'm saying is just that you and I both right now we're looking at like palm prints of Mona Lisa from when she dies. She's like I am this trace this real *Wheaten Terrier* and we're both exactly enchanted at this. The object that has about this strange index equality is there in dusty chunk in the kitchen. It's an impression of this moment it reminds us of this moment that was absolutely true that will probably in time if mourning doesn't work become less true you know this moment of just losing the beloved poof. And right now that isn't simply a fucked-up version of hey I'm assessing blame to you. These ashes are soul for them Andrea. So what would be if you died in three years gone? What is going to happen to those issues that you're so preciously hiding in the bottom of your drawer and whatnot? How can you take responsibility for all those ashes all those souls when you actually lose control? How will cash be a thing for you when you fail?

Can you please yell more quietly? No I'm sorry it's late but this is fully to you. Well I didn't like your explanation it was like a factual story of who you are but it's not what I'd call an argumentum. Okay so the depths of imagining death for our family people is that a lot? You know I'm like no. But to think that I say to you permission for everything? No for nope I don't. I've *met* everything. I actually would do very bad things to those ashes you know I might shit them out I might drink four wines and do some taking it to the beach without you. But you know the fact the fact is that I don't trust you with those ashes. Because they no because you're not doing the right thing to them right now. What is that even like for you?

What would be the right thing and the right thing to do to them would be to bury them all in just one place to get rid of all of this stuff that be kept in a drawer or whatever wherever you keep your part of Jeffrey Mona Marti that is a disgrace to them I think. What I would say is maybe that that would work. Yeah I'm interested in what you're telling in terms of like if I turned away here and just kept listening. So some random Hungarian man for the laws and protocols of assimilation? No I'm not gonna take it and just put them into the film box or whatever it is in Burnaby Mountain. And you still have parts of the ashes somewhere. Yeah in your possession but you need to put them *all* in there where it is finally not for your possession. That's what I'm saying. Don't keep a small something in your drawer superstition right? What do you think I say?

I cannot sleep. She cannot split ashes. It's what I'm saying that there's no such thing as the whole of ash. Why? Insofar as turning a body into ash is already an incalculable transformation. Yes it is but on the other hand you don't know exactly what happens to this yeah nobody nobody knows that. I agree with this so strongly in one thing because *nobody nobody* knows what happens when you finally go sky but you'll see that I strongly disapprove your way about it. There is a church market for that. Yeah okay so be it. Ashes and the collection of ashes. And here I'm still a little sensitive. Hang on to your own ashes then but it's very bad magic. Well actually who knows? It's so much bigger than you and you your arrogance it fascinates me.

I just feel like boys don't really know what you see here. Though you both have something to say to each other it seems to me and I feel like I'm maybe a third party to this telling. I don't *have* any ashes. But for come forward at least and say as Croatian witch will you tell us exactly what is bad about ashes? Just say it. Okay it's nothing about ashes it's just so wrong to keep parts. Andrea doesn't understand this tiny little bit of truth no I actually just have a different definition of wholeness. As ash like for any sand it *is* soul. What's vital is saying it has some resonance some playdough vibration and maybe you are guilty of a limited seriousness with it. Then it's like well what if we you just fear holding on this purple memory without history? Like how does an ash get caught become sign?



I just question to use a piece of the ash. That's correct. But once you're fully immersed in the materials you hear things like oh I'm inhaling atoms that were once a part of Shakespeare's body and everything is so radically intermingled. You always do that CO₂ to actually form a Shakespeare we inhale. So in that sense. Like the ashes are. It doesn't matter whether we have them they're already gone and back and here again and even if we threw them away shit them out they'd be right into us anyway. So all we're talking about is the ritual. Do I want to preserve this substance that has a name? Because ash is just ash right and calling it like oh this is Jeffrey is insane. Right? No it's both insane and not insane. It can be a beautiful phenomenon when you do that.

I mean that's why it's holy because it's like this is clearly not my dad is just the little opal weed vessel. This is why I think that we should not tell each other what to do with it because it's just so soul sucking to argue with me like this. I always had my own take on this. Sure you have your own take on this but basically you know the souls of these people rest on your shoulder. Except no I don't buy that. What would I even take from your shoulder? Well what Andrea said about wholeness I think is an important mention. It's so if you want to have the ritual of how to cook the grief quickly instead of doing things piecemeal finding within yourself some type of like whole ghost gesture might be important. It gets defined as *oh we need to embalm the body or burn the body or put the body completely in*. So certainty. But that's all we can do or something right?

There was this fellow in England you know where it was like apparently very easily easy to become a funeral director there. And he decided that he was going to start having MDMA funerals. So everyone in attendance would take MDMA and you would say farewell to your beloved deceased with him in that way. But it wasn't just like *oh MDMA* yeah but why is it always some kind of extraterrestrial drug that you have to ingest? You know you know just have a fun time at the funeral drink eat. Why extraterrestrial drug? He just thought that it permitted a type of openness that allows for a deeper acknowledgement. What interests me isn't the MDMA it was the following bit that's the falling prescription which assumed dogmatic status. And it was you have to see the body. You have to see it maybe touch it. And I don't know how I stand with regard to that!

I mean that is a part of the Roman Catholic and it's a part of the Reform you know is part of the ceremony that you actually have to crawl to see inside the coffin. In fact one of these you have to go and kiss. Exactly. But why to elevate and elevate and close? Well as long as you keep using your drawer I have a different worry for you completely. I'm not religious but I be richer and I think I know that today and forever. So you can keep all these ashes in your drawer and I'll be against it till the day I die. You know there's no excuse for this.

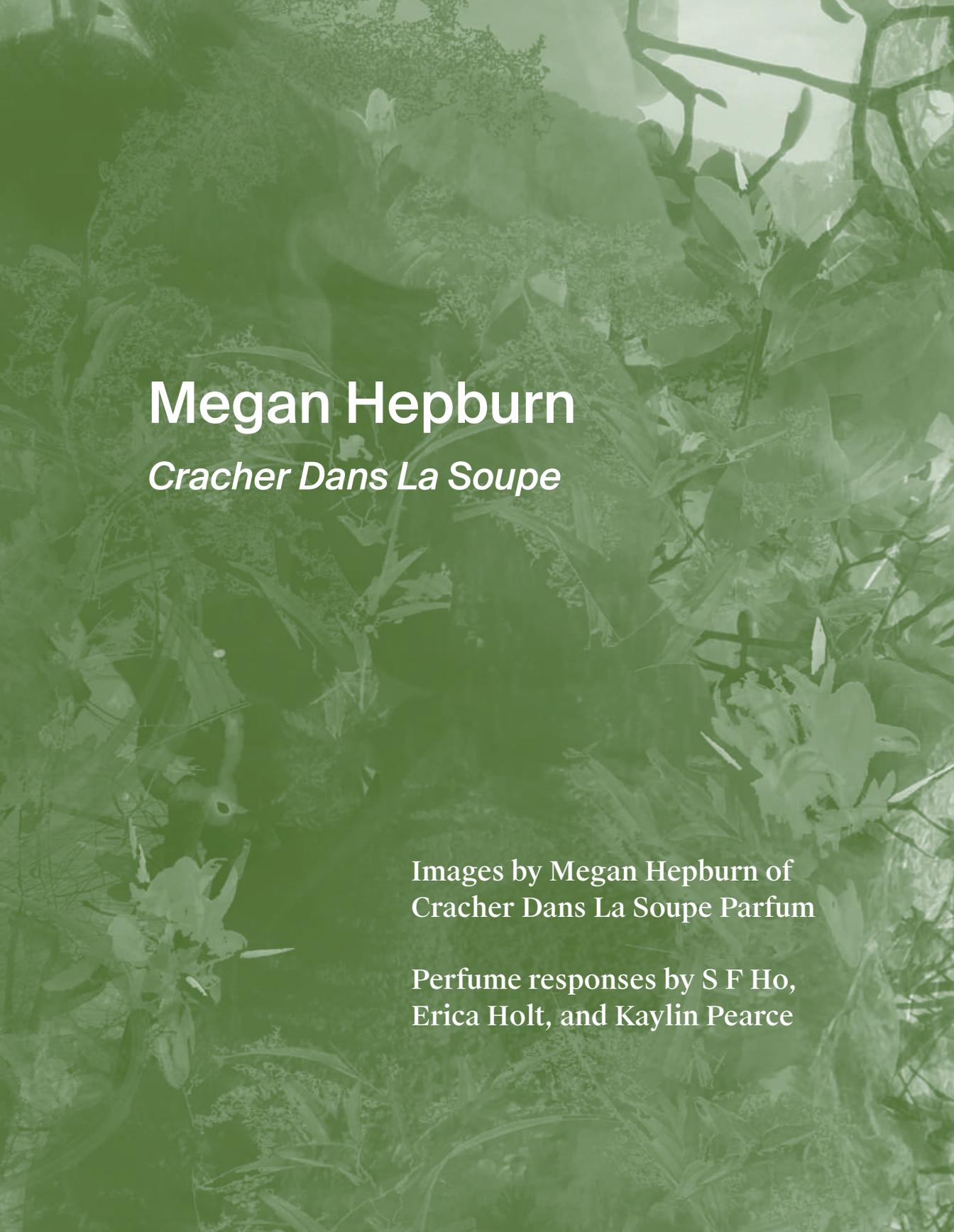
Sorry no excuse for what? I thought you said I had an excuse my excuse is I disagree with you. Is that what I said? You letting me off the hook. No letting off hook! I really don't see this is the case for keeping the ashes. I completely dispute with you. No I don't need your comments I don't need anybody's comments. I am precise. No that's not what I say. I'm sorry but wait twenty minutes ago you suggesting we put all of ash rations together in the film box. As long as it was all of them as well as all of them. They should all be together I say because you cannot take from or add to something in your apartment.

Well look I was saying that to close I agree closure is important. Closure is really really important. And I think that you guys are both completely agreed on that that closure no we don't is important. I emphasize this. I just don't want to see my relatives' ashes in a drawer. I want peace. I don't want peace. I'm honouring them. Oh yeah? I mean I don't think that there would be objection on their part I think they're quite okay with these the pragmatics of intuition or whatever. But the question is also like what is the most effective means of finding closure? How about opening?

I think you're right that having an effective and special ritual is key. Yeah, I find it feeling lest the wound to be open perpetually and at the expense of your ability to lives. And so that's basically what I say that you know I have some hope. Yeah I mean I mean I mean that as long as parts of the ashes scattered around in various drawers of Andrea cannot be at an ease you don't even know what exactly is resting. You are sitting in some drawers maybe somewhere whatever. But I mean I would imagine that that is just hard to be at ease with loss period. Yeah I know you didn't go through you didn't have to quite navigate so much the haunting still I know you can reach these deaths. I mean as opposed to alienated I feel that somehow there's a connection to those ashes. But it doesn't do for that what the problem is. Andrea she doesn't see that.

She's keeping the ashes well. But you have to ask yourself and Andrea has to ask herself what she is keeping from *us*. I mean that's why I think what you're saying is fascinating because it's like you know how the hell do we process these things that are just truly impossible and truly are? I don't know if I've dealt adequately with the laws of entities for my life. And that's what you have to think. You must grow up and face. But it did that there's an adequate verb to respect and acknowledge and continue to live with.

You have to ask you know does she ever dream of them or never feel guilty? I can't answer that on her behalf as she talks about them and thinks about them and communes with them and loves them. Oh really? And I would think that that that is supreme because it's like I mean I guess I'm maybe just a selfish materialist. Not that I deny that there's anything like an eternity of the soul or of its energies and needs that persist in the mountaintop. But I guess I'm certainly aware that the living preserved the dead via possibly their drawer in their apartment. And when I see that love my first concern is like it's not it's actually not for the wellbeing of the cash it's for me and for us and for doing and listening better. Like how is that living person coping with but not closing the loss? I mean also yeah. That's fine. Just like as you say an eternal combustion. Time to go to go and take care of her. To take your magnesium. Sorry totally. Well fine. Goodnight.



Megan Hepburn

Cracher Dans La Soupe

Images by Megan Hepburn of
Cracher Dans La Soupe Parfum

Perfume responses by S F Ho,
Erica Holt, and Kaylin Pearce



Cream Crush

Before I moved back, I used to dream of what I was missing. I would visit for the summer months, and in those months I would not bathe for days, trying to wear the salt of the ocean, dirt, sweat, sunscreen, sand, body odour, and layers that build up from swimming, with intent, as though maybe I could bring all of these things into me and carry them with me through winter. You can't exactly smell warmth, but I could feel the late-day heat coming off this scent, the way it comes off my body or the body of another at the end of the day.

There is a tree that blooms in January. It arrives in the desert of winter and is unexpected and abrupt in the absence of any other floral waves. I stand beneath the tree and feel the way it feels when you put your hair in the water and it dances and you become seaweed. The flowers are a bit ugly.

– Kaylin Pearce

The Emperor

It is not known with any precision how scent actually operates, only that, as our memory fades, so does our ability to smell. If to look at something is to either identify or dismiss, to smell something is, reflexively, always to locate. It is an activity of both inherent and incessant searching.

The Emperor conjures a fresh green, an earthy yellow, and a powdery pink – chartreuse, dandelion, hollyhock. Recognizing that *Emperor* is a variety of tulip, am I in fact recollecting the way thick tulip foliage steadily emerges from the ground in the spring, or the way the same leaves decompose in the murky water of a vase? Suggestion can be incredibly persuasive. The work of recollecting itself tends to provoke a certain discomfort. Like the top note of a fragrance, a perception, frustratingly, might just vanish before we manage to identify or luxuriate in it.

Hepburn's method of composing and presenting fragrances similarly resembles her approach to painting. Saturated colours emerge from an abyss, floating to the surface as traces, the very materials of memory. In the same way that clouds illuminated by city lights can be seen drifting in and out of a night sky, might scent, too, be like light? Does it ebb and flow, or is it cyclical? Can it ever be constant? Scents are known to be fleeting – fading away to reveal whatever lies beneath. We are poised to detect scent like we might detect a dead star: like a distant, fading memory we are desperate to articulate.

– *Erica Holt*





Sunnannu

huffing permanent marker thick mysore muff temple memory
touch ground hands reach to heaven today call not to spirits
above today all around + below (veil lifts, a pantheistic riot unholy
chocolate guaiac viscera smeared over raisins, plums, currants,
orange peel wrinkle under sun)

followed by flowers as flesh husky white rind spicy twigs prick
from verdant rhododendron hedge trimmed via weed whacker
soil dead + alive spiced earth ripe butthole to the edge of rot it is
midsummer you are lost in the woods the sweaty sun never sets
you can sleep where you like trees radiate pheromones they are
trying to sex you in a forest web so profoundly conscious their
bark is red red grass weeds drying in hot pollen meadow sprawl in
baking bacterial humus burn bugs under magnifying glass zipper
sounds surround hummer bite reddish bumps type o attraction

a childhood of scraped knees and dog poop caked to running
shoes my pee smells like apple juice sawdust collects in corners an
abandoned construction site nibble lengths of two-by-four sniff the
blade of a circular saw guileless mysteries cut deep trauma ripped

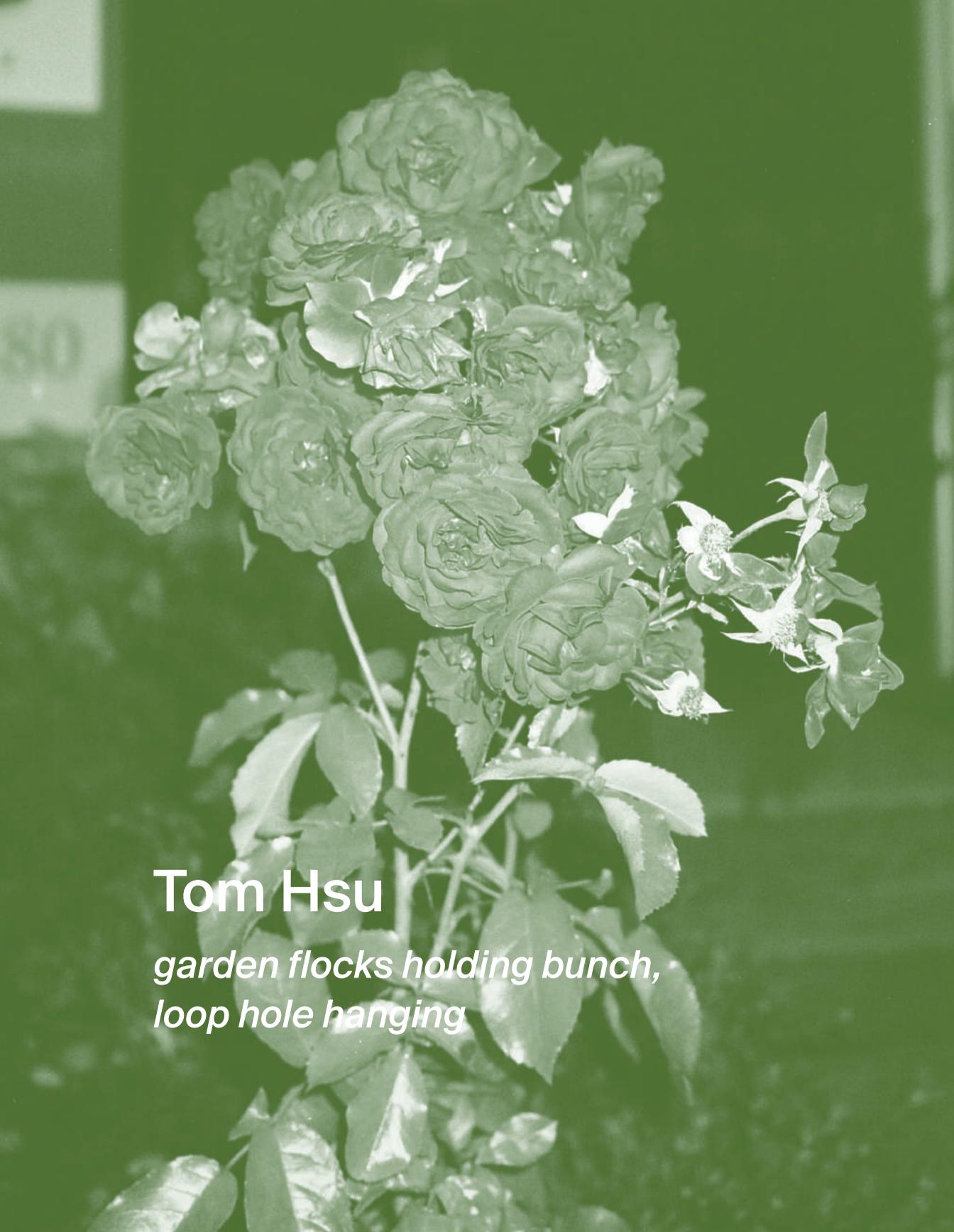
dear diary, a smell hidden under my bed watch scabs heal and
paint dry juicy fat dry

just a little sweet

—SFHo



Cracher Dans La Soupe Parfum *Sunnannu* 2018 Courtesy of the artist



Tom Hsu

*garden flocks holding bunch,
loop hole hanging*



Tom Hsu *Hold On Holding* 2019 35mm film



Tom Hsu *Loop Leaves* 2019 35mm film



Tom Hsu *Rose Bunch* 2019 35mm film



Tom Hsu *Hanging Gourd* 2019 35mm film



Tom Hsu *Tree Hole* 2019 35mm film



Tom Hsu *Dancer from Mom's Garden* 2019 35mm film



Tom Hsu *Truck Eyes Watching* 2019 35mm film



Garden Don't Care

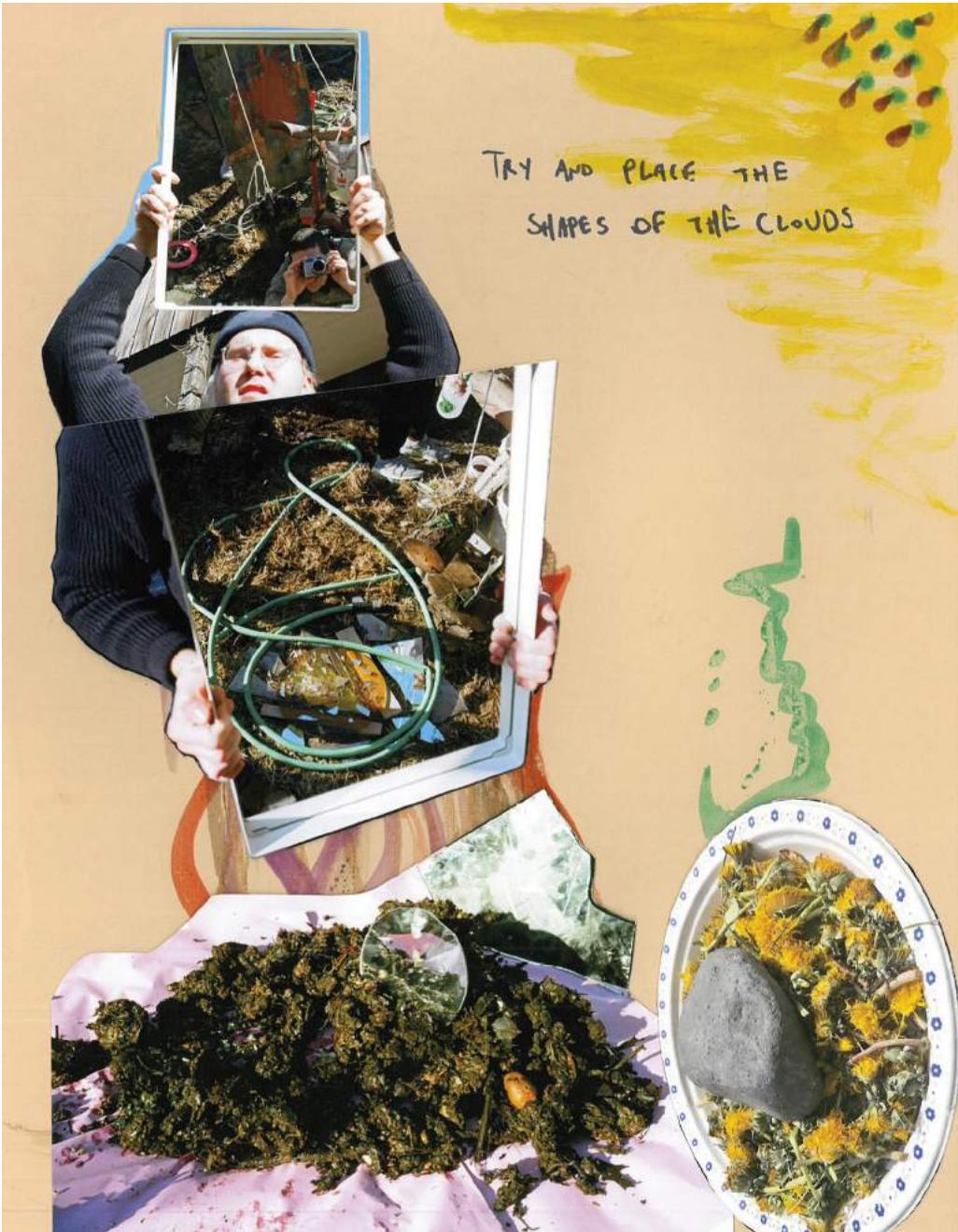
Pattern of Pears

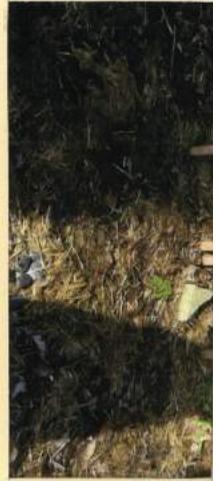
Garden Don't Care is the collaborative project of Derya Akay, Vivienne Bessette, Conor Fanning, Rowan Fanning-Blackwater, Julia Feyrer, Tobin Gibson, Salem Sharp, Emma Sise, and Kurtis Wilson



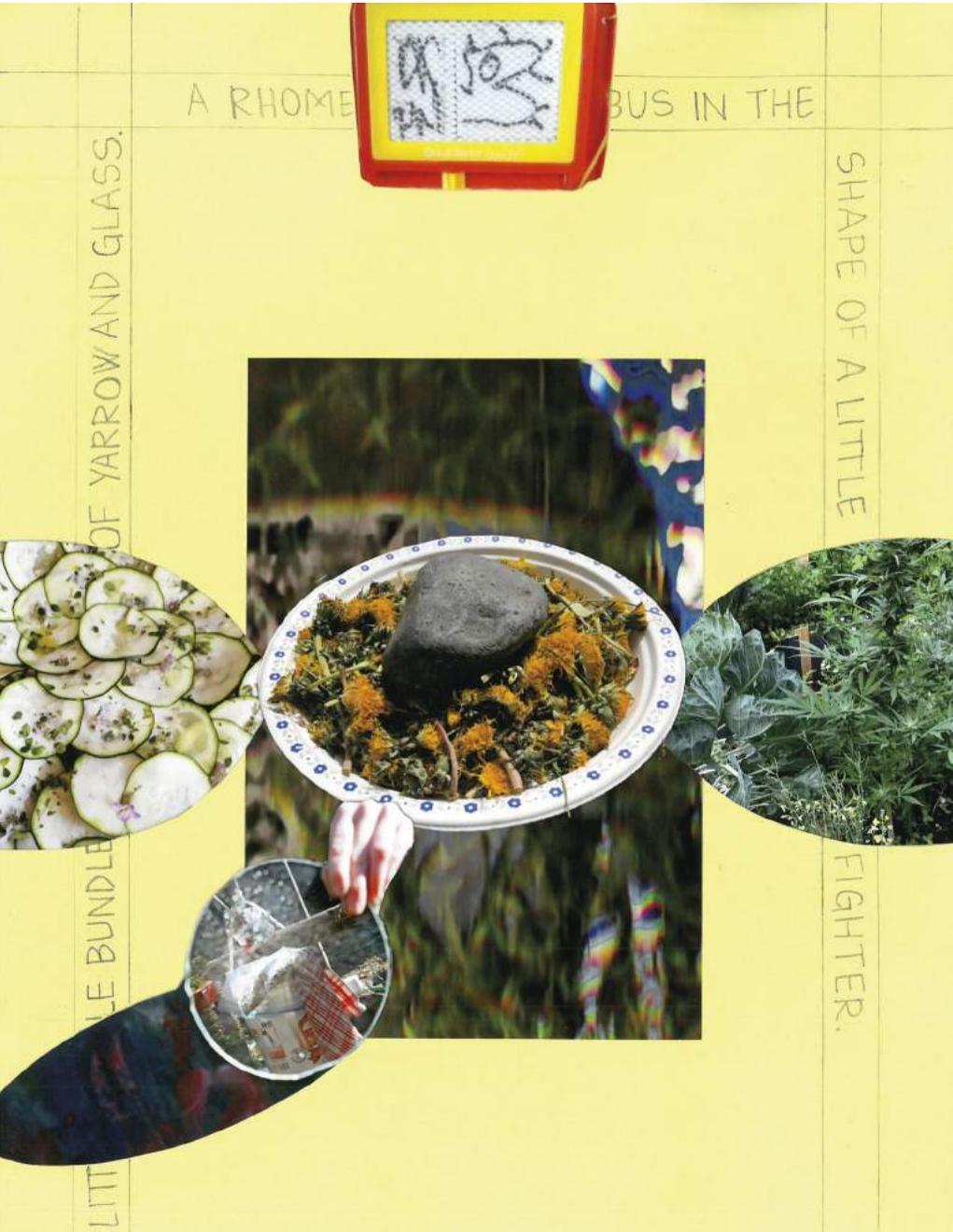
All images: Garden Don't Care *Pattern of Pears* 2020 mixed media dimensions variable

TRY AND PLACE THE
SHAPES OF THE CLOUDS









A RHOME BUS IN THE

SHAPE OF A LITTLE

FIGHTER.

OF YARROW AND GLASS.

LITTLE BUNDLE

LITT







Following two pages: Garden Don't Care *Pattern of Pears: Exquisite Corpse* 2020

DEEPING YELLOWS

Sheung-King

I light a joint, which is illegal. Getting high in the shower with me is a bucket. The bucket is upside down. My phone is playing the song *Yellow Magic* (1978). Warm water from the shower lands on the back of my neck, runs down my chest, and drips from the tip of my penis onto the bucket, making an *empty* sound. Years later, I hear the same sound in the documentary, *Ryuichi Sakamoto: Coda* (2017). In one scene, Sakamoto is seen standing in the rain holding a bucket over his head and listening to the sound of the rain landing on the bucket. His bucket is blue. Mine is yellow.

It is the summer of 2014. I am a student studying film in Canada, currently visiting my parents in Hong Kong over the break. This is Tung Chung, where I grew up, ten minutes from the Hong Kong International Airport. There is an outlet mall downstairs where Mainland Chinese tourists shop for discounted goods before their flight. Luxury goods are more expensive in Mainland China. I've never bought anything from the mall. Perhaps because it's too close to where I live.

It is 2020. I did not become a filmmaker. I am, instead, a writing teacher. “Please take out a piece of paper and try to translate the music you’re about to hear into words,” I tell my class. “Just write whatever comes to your mind.” I connect my laptop to the sound system and play *Yellow Magic* on Spotify.

One of my students writes:

I hate this song.	I ate this song.	I late this song.	I Kate this song.
I mate this song.	I date this song.	I Cate this song.	I rate this song.
I Yates this song.	I pate this song.	I sate this song.	I fate this song.
I gate this song.	I bate this song.	I Nate this song.	It reminds me of Zelda.
I want to fuck Zelda.	Hard.	I hate this song.	I want Zelda to fuck me.

The student is a retired surgeon. Her name is Mindy. She is from London, Ontario.

The song, *Yellow Magic*, reminds me of something my hairdresser once told me. A friend of his started a business—a small place in the middle of Shinjuku—for people to take naps. People usually visit around three in the afternoon—the best time to nap. He tells me all of this while I am getting a perm. My hairdresser removes a curler from my head.

You once told me, with genuine concern, that my head was too flat. “More volume on the top will make you look better,” you said. You also recommended that I avoid hats. “You look terrible with hat hair,” you said.

I look at myself in the mirror at the hair salon. There are thirteen curlers on my head; eight of them are pink, and none of them are yellow. You also told me once that I'd look terrible bald. My hair uncurls from one of the pink curlers. I imagine myself standing in the rain, holding a bucket over my head, listening, and hoping that I don't go bald.

The lyrics to *Yellow Magic* are sparse. In fact, the nine lines don't come in until halfway through the song.

*You know about me?
My name is Tong Poo!
I'm running from far away!
Let's dance!
Let's dance with me!
Feel me come!
The press of Tong Poo!
Let's dance!
Let's dance with me!*

Yellow Magic is considered disco music. I find out that Ryuichi Sakamoto's writing of the song was inspired by Chinese classical music and the cultural revolution (whatever that means). But who the fuck is Tong Poo? And "Feel me come!?" Tong Poo only exists in the song, I find out in the documentary. And Ryuichi Sakamoto is diagnosed with oropharyngeal cancer.

I hate this song. I ate this song. I late this song. It reminds me of Zelda.

Which Zelda? Fitzgerald? The one I want to fuck? The character in the Nintendo game?

I go home to Toronto, to a condo. It is small. You are not home. I think about giving you a call to ask where you are and maybe tell you about the nap business. I also want to read to you what Mindy from London, Ontario submitted for the exercise. I hear a *beep*. The dishes are clean. I forget to call you. I open the dishwasher. Steam emerges. The dishwasher is empty. I check the upper rack and then the lower one. All I find is a single chopstick. It is made of wood. It is warm.

from my yt mama

Mercedes Eng

how my yt settler mama met my Chinese immigrant dad

there are different versions of how. I remember my dad telling an exciting story of breaking out of Matsqui Penitentiary in BC: scaling the chain-link fence and throwing a jacket over the razor wire at the top so he wouldn't cut himself as he went over it, hiding out through the night in an itchy haystack in a farmer's field adjacent to the pen, before running to Medicine Hat, Alberta to seek sanctuary with his stepdad, the only grandpa I ever knew. grandpa Tai ran an antique store right across the street from the Canadian Pacific Railway station and lived in the basement. mom says dad and other prisoners were getting day passes to go pick strawberries in the many berry fields now occupying unceded Matsqui territory in the Fraser Valley and there was a rumour that these work permits that granted little bits of freedom would be stopped so he ran away while on one. but both stories begin with dad leaving the prison when he wasn't supposed to and end with dad running to Medicine Hat to hide out at grandpa's. Medicine Hat, where my mom lived her whole life up to that point. they met at a party

race according to my yt mama/1

when I first heard Cher's hit song "half-breed" on the radio
I asked my mom what that was and she said that's you
she was a big fan of 60s/70s Cher who according to my mother
was always glamorous and cool and never
wore the same pair of bell-bottoms twice so
I don't think mom understood that I would
internalize the lyrics of the chorus when trying
to place myself in the prairies of southern Alberta
where the only people who look like me
were what racist yt people called halfbreeds:
the Métis, and the mixee children of
destatused Indigenous mamas and yt dads

the places we come from/0

I was born in a place now known as the City of Medicine Hat

according to Wikipedia:

The name "Medicine Hat" is the English translation of "Saamis," the Blackfoot word for the eagle tail feather headdress worn by medicine men. According to Wikipedia, in 1883, when the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) reached Medicine Hat and crossed the South Saskatchewan River, a townsite was established. As the west developed, Medicine Hat became instrumental as a CPR divisional point, as it is the halfway point between Vancouver and Winnipeg.

how, do you think, does a direction develop?

how, do you think, does English have such obfuscating power?

yt prairie mamas and five generations of Ellens

my yt great-grandmother Ellen
migrated from Sweden to the “new world” at 17

my yt grandma’s middle name is Eleonora

my yt mama’s middle name is Ellen

me, her mixee daughter’s middle name is Ellen

her mixee granddaughter’s middle name is Ellen

I wonder if the latest Ellen will have kids and if

she has a girl will she choose to carry on the tradition

the places we come from/1

a branch of kisiskāiwani-sīpiy (the Saskatchewan River) flows through Treaty 7 Territory, the last of the Numbered Treaties to be negotiated, signed in 1877. Treaty 7 includes the cities of Medicine Hat, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and several small towns and villages

kisiskāiwani-sīpiy flows through the centre of Medicine Hat, which was established as a town site once the CPR built a bridge across the river

part of the Cypress Hills is in Treaty 7 Territory and traverses the border between the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan into Treaty 4 Territory

traverses borders like me
traverses borders like my yt mama did
when she loved my not-yt dad
and didn't give a fuck
what anyone in our shitty prairie town thought
about their love
that produced me

according to Gershaw, that is, according to the yt man's Truth, the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) was formed in response to the Cypress Hills Massacre. Calls for a police force to protect yt settlers in what was then called the North-West Territories, and to protect the Canadian border from American whiskey traders because these *heartless traders robbed and debauched* the Indigenous Peoples, had already been sent to the nation state's capitol. then the massacre occurred: American traders *seeking revenge* for allegedly stolen horses *ambushed a peaceful camp of* Indigenous Peoples, slaughtering thirty of them. so a decision was made and a call was made and some 300 *brave boys began an adventure west* and became the NWMP

sun dances, *with all their savage cruelty*, were held in the Cypress Hills until outlawed by the yt man

the places we come from/2

Drumheller is located in the Red Deer River Valley. wāwaskesiw-sīpiy (the Red Deer River) meets with both the northern and southern arms of the Saskatchewan River to empty into Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba connecting the prairie provinces through moving water

Drumheller Institution was built in 1967
to celebrate Canada's centennial, do you think?

as a kid I have been to Drumheller countless times to visit my dad in the pen but have never been to the Royal Tyrrell Museum and even now at the mention of visiting the museum
my inner child swims rapidly to the surface
crying seething resentful

seeing my dad in this place this place that was the only place where I saw large groups of people of colour made ever-more fervent the desire to look like my blue-eyed fair-skinned mother

rideshare

my mom used to give rides to women whose men were inside men who when they found out that mom was driving from Medicine Hat to one of the prisons around Southern Alberta asked my dad if my mom could help them out

one girl when we went to McDonald's for lunch only bought a large orange pop but no food for her and her 2-year old son so my mom bought them lunch

my mom was giving rides since before I can remember

if you understood how hard the prison industrial complex works to isolate prisoners from their blood and chosen fams you would understand how important this labour of my mother's was

strip search

one time at Drumheller pen the male guards wanted to strip search the women and the children before a visit. which I'm pretty fucking sure is illegal but the yt man says what is illegal and what isn't. I don't remember any male visitors though there could have been. my mom refused to let these yt men touch her or her children and it helped the other mothers to refuse too

she tore a strip off him

maybe she could refuse the guards because when she was a child
a yt man hurt her
so when the yt man said I am going to invade
the bodies of you and your children she said
never again, motherfucker

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Vancouver, BC.



I call this last stage
“writing over the top”
Gail Scott & Meredith Quartermain

Montréal staircase Photo by Yedda Morrison Courtesy of Gail Scott

In October 2019, in Vancouver, Gail Scott launched the new revised edition of her groundbreaking novel *Heroine*. As she often does, Scott stayed at the Quartermain house, and Meredith Quartermain took the opportunity to engage with Scott on reinventing relations between narrator, author, and character. Along the way they talked about class, detective work, and what writers Scott has conversed with in her writing mind.

Meredith Quartermain Can you talk about prose form and the need to reinvent and reshape it? Have your goals changed since you started formally experimenting with your writing in the 1980s?

Gail Scott A huge question. My trajectory began in journalism, which offered an opportunity to see how ideology is conveyed via form. The pyramid print-news article, with its often sensational lead backed up by multiple references to authority to support the original point, kept the act of reporting so narrowly focussed that it felt like training to think *inside* the box. Real discussion of class, for instance, got suppressed or distorted. We hear politicians speaking over and over of the middle class as the group that needs support, until it seems like everyone (save the rich, of course) is middle class. Before long we get a Ministry of the Middle Class. This iterative notion of narration often co-extends to the novel form.

Heroine, first published in 1987 and just re-issued with a terrific intro by Eileen Myles, was the beginning of my taking on journalism in as much as it represented general public discourse and experimenting on several fronts. I wanted to represent Montréal, which was a pretty extreme place in those days, without giving in to the temptation to exoticize or sensationalize the site. I wanted to use absolutely accurate language to express class difference, for example. And to capture spoken cadence. Montréal English has its own cadence, and these differences in language express differences in everyday life. Leonard Cohen was a mentor in that respect.

I also wanted to construct an Anglophone narrator operating on a series of cusps: not only is she trying to fit into a Francophone indépendantiste scene, she is also bleeding over a male revolutionary, while at the same time lusting after her friend Marie—and possibly after her non-monogamous male lover’s girlfriends. With a narrator positioned on these either/or cusps, I needed to replace the forward motion of narration with a spiral shape; the story keeps getting told from modified angles; the narrator has no fixed point of view.

MQ Why is it so important to escape conventional narrative structures like the arc? How did you define the experimental novel back in the 80s? How do you define it now?

GS I didn’t and don’t have a precise definition of how to write experimental prose. For me, the word *experiment* is conjunctural with the needs of the time/space in which I am writing.

What needs undoing is the relationship between narrator/narration, especially as regards the issue of who speaks when *one* speaks? And who has the right to speak? This investigation is poetic: my sentences represent a re-suture once the formal elements, the process of narration, even the speaking subjects, have been taken apart, rendered porous to both aesthetic possibilities and the street. To do work takes a great deal of time. And there is always the risk of failure.

In *Main Brides*, I began playing with the idea of upsetting the usual set of relations that involve author/narrator/character by blurring the borders of those elements. *Main Brides* is set on a hot June day. A woman is sitting in a bar in Montréal’s Main, drinking to push down the disturbing scene she saw that morning when a woman’s body was found in the park. To focus herself, she tries to guess the stories of other women who come and go at the bar. In the early 90s, when the book was published, many women artists were doing installation. I thought of *Main Brides* as an installation and wanted to call it that, but Coach House wouldn’t let me. I’ll never forget the Stan Persky review in *The Globe and Mail* which said, “Nothing happens in this novel.” Of course nothing happens! “Nothing” as defined by anything resembling a novel arc. The woman in the bar drinking and telling stories about other women entering the bar may be telling her own story or theirs. But there are plenty of gaps within the narrative that allow space for the reader to play and construct meaning.

MQ “Lacks narrative drive” is a criticism I’ve encountered myself as a writer. Often what that comment reveals is simply someone who can’t see what is being narrated. The narrative might be on a quest for information, gradually finding and filling in, in the way

of a puzzle, the various pieces. Or the narrator may be wandering toward, in the way of multiple textual pleasures, a fresh worldview, one in which the narrator is not separate from her world (the masculinist view) but intimately woven together with it. Can you talk a little more about how you are challenging the unified narrative voice in standard prose structure?

GS The answer to this question should start with *Heroine*, my most novel-like novel. It tries to create a life through the visible process of reaching for adequate language to express wilful estrangement relative to the dominant context. The narrator is struggling to exist and be useful in collective, collaborative, participatory movements. But how does she deploy language to outwardly express inner contradictions of class and gender and other contradictions in her everyday struggle? This question is germane to all my work.

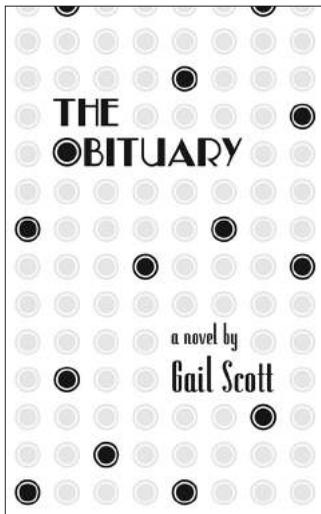
In my most recent novel, *The Obituary*, I attempt to disperse the narrator and thus the narration. The narrator is fractal: she is at once a woman on a bed in a Montréal triplex, dead perhaps, or just “out of it”; a horny fly on the wall, representing the woman’s id or animus; and a politically conscious lesbian historian who speaks up from the basement of the building (and the story) trying to set the history straight and perhaps trying to take charge of the narrative. There can be no consensus or focus on the part of this narrating group because the subject of the novel is the problem of a family unable to express the repressed Indigenous line of their ancestry, which is also the history of this country. This, as we know, is co-extensive with settler culture and the assimilationist pressures of settler policy in Canada. But *The Obituary* is not a quest novel. No truth about origins is discovered. It is a story of lies and rumours of lies.

The 90s novel *My Paris* attempted to limit the agency of the protagonist by the grammatical device of replacing the active verb with the present participle. The story or the storyteller is committed to a slow indefinite backward and forward tempo, instead of marching onward. There is something inherently capitalist about the trajectory of “ever onward” one finds in so many novels.

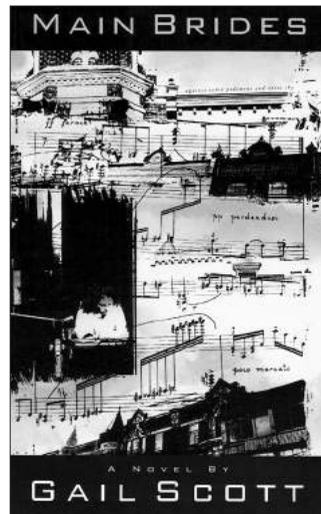
MQ Yeah, that capitalist methodology requires a story product that is addictive, a story product that appeals to our basic human psychology, which has to do with identifying with a protagonist who is struggling with some problem or opponent or is threatened by some danger. The goal of the capitalist story is to hook you into reading on with the promise of overcoming the opposition. And yet even though this kind of storyline is absent in *Heroine*, I always wanted to continue reading.... Actually, it seemed to me that both *Heroine* and *The Obituary* were detective stories unfolding clues to a bigger picture. Could you talk about that and how this might connect to the spiral structure you mentioned?



Heroine, first published by Coach House Books in 1987 and re-issued in 2019. All cover images courtesy of the publishers.



The Obituary, published by Coach House Books in 2010.



Main Brides, first published by Coach House Books in 1993 and re-issued by Talonbooks.

GS So glad you have sensed that—I am absolutely addicted to detective tales, save the endings, which are generally too neatly tied up. In writing, my idea is to play with form until I figure out how to unpack the mystery of the ever-changing *now*. There is a fair amount of shape shifting from novel to novel because the question of how to write is dependent upon the circumstance, the pressures, of the era.

I try to listen hard to the entire moment, which includes the particularities of conversations on the street, as well as the wider social and political issues going on in the city, the province, the state—all of this impacts the question of how to compose or put together a novel.

Poetry is so good at capturing the moment for it can suggest without summary, without looking back. To work in sentences is to be solicited to work something out, to find a way to tell a story that holds multiple complexities, yet somehow write it so that, like in film noir say, it has the funkiest surface possible. In my private language I call this last stage “writing over the top.”

MQ “How should a person be?” is the central question (and title) of a 2013 Sheila Heti novel, and it’s a question related to patriarchy and other structures of power. How should a person be so that she doesn’t reinforce the power structure, but still makes herself visible within it. How does *Heroine* investigate the idea of the heroine as fictional construct in connection with this?

GS You are raising an important issue here. The question how should a person be as posed by Heti’s novel is slightly displaced in *Heroine*, where there is a valiant attempt to avoid the *should*. Though the protagonist is constantly castigating herself for her failure to be a good revolutionary (disciplined, aware, courageous, non-possessive, capable of sharing), her conversations—especially with her friend Marie—are more about how a woman writer might represent women with greater fluidity and more room for difference, than has historically been accomplished in writing by men. I venture that on the whole, as well, the term *should* carries less weight if one is queer. One has by definition already failed at the pre-defined gendered *should*. There is a refusal among Gail and Marie’s peer group to be shaped by the expectations of others, a refusal to aim for the normal trappings of individual success. While Gail bemoans that a woman is expected to have a different way of walking, talking, and dressing for every role and occasion, what she and Marie really want is to excavate under this surface to find new ways of speaking about and for themselves as they perhaps are. This search is both feminist and queer.



Rooftops, Old Montréal Courtesy of Gail Scott

MQ Maybe it's more a question of how *could* a person be rather than how *should*. And doesn't this go to the root of personhood, which again is unconsciously defined in western capitalist culture to be the strong, silent male figure, heroically pitting himself against the world—a world seen as entirely separate from him, where his *raison d'être* is to conquer and control it?

GS I agree that there is a subliminal phallus in the collective notion of the hero; perhaps the most convincing non-binary remake of this notion can be found in trans literature. However, I am not optimistic that we have seen the last of it. Every time we feel we are making progress on this most central of human questions, the question of what constitutes equality, we are swatted by a vigorous backlash. In the latter part of the twentieth century we witnessed disdain for the second-wave feminist surge of the 70s and early 80s. Today we are seeing similar regressions.

MQ I am keenly aware of your compositional time as I wait for your next book, which will involve sojourns in New York City and investigations of American life, letters, and politics. How have you been influenced by writers outside of Canada?

GS If to read intently and thoroughly is to absorb influence, I am always attracted to writers who rock the boat, who see poetry as resistance to the status quo, writers who have been and continue to be part of a conversation about the connections between writing and politics. As far as American writers, these include the queer writers of San Francisco who—along with a handful of East Coast writers—comprise the New Narrative movement. They include people in the radius or wake of the Language movement and the New Conceptualist movements, but certainly not limited to that. They also include writers of diverse minorities and Indigenous writers who have been carving new waves. And, of course, there are the Belladonna feminists. To name names, I would need half a page.

MQ Can you talk about New Narrative as it was defined in the 80s? How has it evolved into forms today that you didn't imagine then?

GS The best definition of New Narrative was coined by Robert Gluck: "I wanted to write with total disjunction and total continuity." In fact, I knew nothing of the New Narrative movement at the moment of its inception in the 80s. But, like the queer writers in Bob's germinal New Narrative workshop, the feminists in our Montréal group were simultaneously resisting the erasure of the author-subject in writing as proposed at the time by the poetry avant-garde. Why would we kill off the female subject—or *la sujette* as Louise Cotnoir was fond of saying—that did not yet properly exist in literature? We were not about to erase what in principle did not exist or at least did not exist as real (at least in our minds) in the literature handed down through the generations. For similar reasons, the queers in the San Francisco New Narrative workshop were having nothing to do with the death of the subject as proposed by the avant-garde Language Writers. What was different in Québec was that most of the women in the *Theory, a Sunday* group were less committed than the San Francisco group to the defense of narrative, even new narrative. We called what we were doing fiction/theory.

MQ You mentioned some women philosophers whose work was available when you were writing *Heroïne*, who have now disappeared from contemporary discussion. Who were these philosophers and why are they interesting?

GS I don't think these women have entirely disappeared, but they do not have the sustained importance that they had at the height of second-wave feminism. There was Luce Irigaray, author of the famous *This Sex Which Is Not One*, who outrageously (for many) linked the movement of female orgasm to the shape or movement of story; the arc, the high dramatic moment and the fall classically shaping the novel was associated by Irigaray with male orgasm.

MQ Whereas it seems to me the kind of story structure your books enact—the spiral, recursive, fractalled structure—reflects the multi and diverse orgasms of the female...?

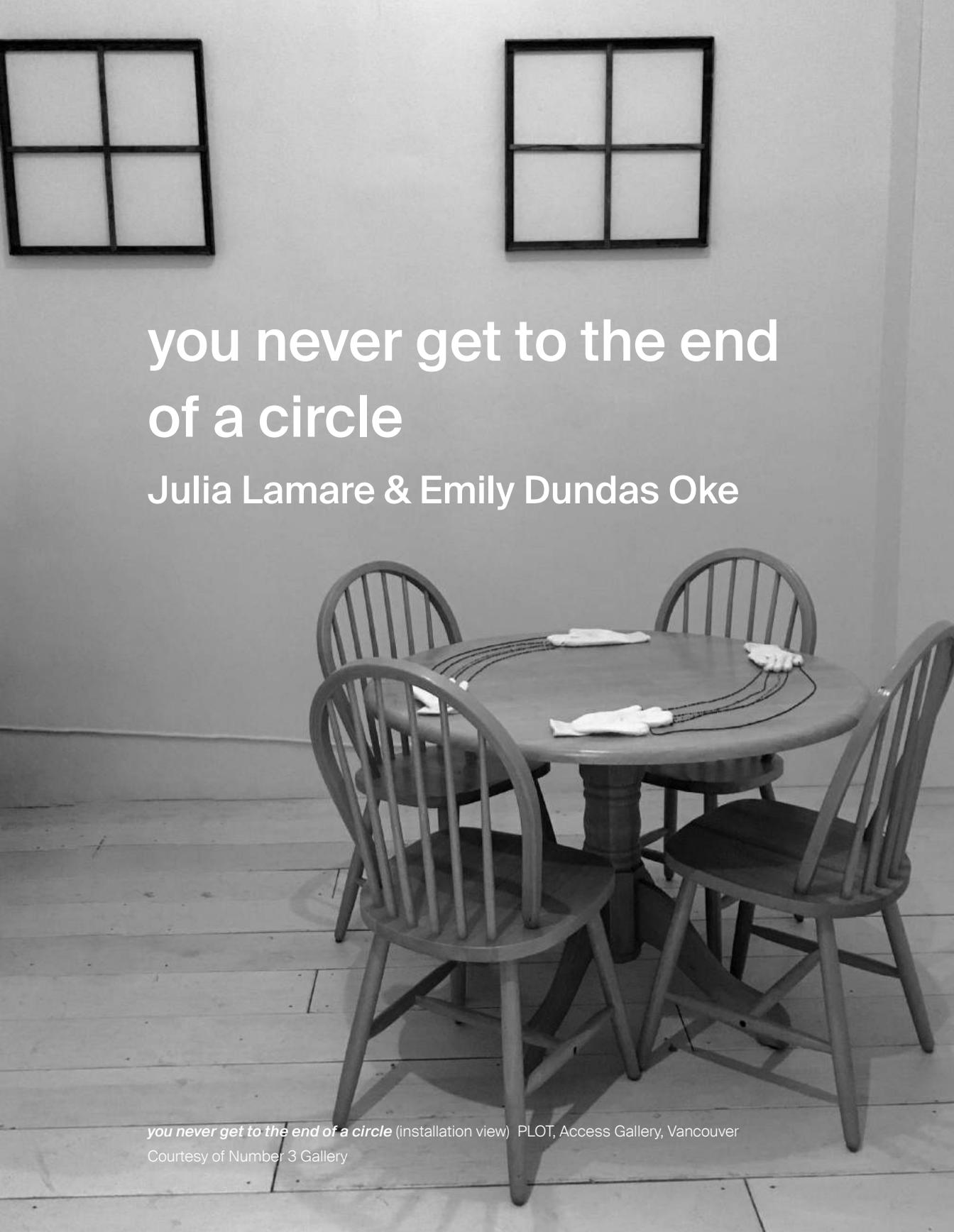
GS I adore Irigaray's idea, its boldness, its outrageousness. But I have always felt it is missing something to do with how body/language and the culture impact each other beyond, or perhaps up to and including...how we cum. For instance, another author important to me was Christine Buci-Glucksmann; her book on Benjamin and the baroque was instrumental in opening my eyes, particularly to Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, a volume that suggested to me different ways of recounting, notably via montage. Benjamin brilliantly combined his own often obsessive inclinations (as a collector, for example) with the reciprocal relations of "now-time" and history. He pitted the unconscious against enlightenment and historicity, and pushed our ways of thinking about how to use time in recounting into a space of alterity.

MQ Who are some other innovators who inspire you today?

GS I prefer to think about conversation rather than inspiration—even if only in my reading head, I converse with the writers I admire. I have long enthusiastically frequented the poetry of Cree writer Louise Halfe. Her poetry speaks beautifully and poignantly of the lives of Indigenous women and men, revealing in her work huge swaths of life and possibility. The presence of the Cree language in her poems, and its impact on the written English, is fascinating for what it covers and uncovers. I adore the novels of Richard Wagamese. But these two are the tip of the iceberg, the older generation of a vast explosion of Indigenous writing happening right now. Of late, I am, like so many, stunned by younger Indigenous authors who are exemplary innovators: Liz Howard, Jordan Abel, Joshua Whitehead, Billy-Ray Belcourt, to name a few (and three out of these four identify as queer, and that signifies as well). When I was young, the Francophone writers in an era of massive revolt in Québec similarly taught me a great deal about the relations between writing/language, and the social.

MQ You've mentioned that avant-garde practice has risen up and fallen back at various points in the twentieth century. Can you talk a little more about that?

GS The avant-garde reappears cyclically, in conjunction with other factors. Often you hear people referring to the notion of avant-garde as dead or passé. I agree that the term is problematic, but it is useful for demonstrating that the emergence of radical poets, those whose sense of urgency is *forcément* in relation to the socio-political situation of a given era, is inevitable. The avant-garde emerges in company with radical social movements that, themselves, advance and recede. Its lessons are eventually partially absorbed, as are those of social contestation. I started writing in a period of significant social change that spawned artists and writers looking for new modes of expression. In art and politics, there is reform and revolution. The former is well-meaning, liberal, and not prepared to give up profiting from power structures such as capitalism and racism. Then there are movements, and they often come from justice-seeking minority groups, that understand huge upheaval is required for there to be real, systemic change. I believe we have come back to that time again, and with it a new generation of artists, a new sense of urgency.



you never get to the end
of a circle

Julia Lamare & Emily Dundas Oke

you never get to the end of a circle (installation view) PLOT, Access Gallery, Vancouver
Courtesy of Number 3 Gallery

Beginning in the winter of 2019, Vancouver’s Access Gallery invited Julia Lamare and Julie D. Mills of the mobile Number 3 Gallery to occupy PLOT: a 200-square-foot space adjoining the gallery that is provided to collectives, artist initiatives, nascent or small-scale organizations, and those conducting itinerant projects as a public site for programming, exchange, and experimentation. Number 3 Gallery in turn invited artist and curator Emily Dundas Oke to initiate a loosely bound project titled “you never get to the end of a circle.” Their collaborative residency served as a discursive space to question and resist outcome-oriented organizing, activated by meals, gatherings, and experimental modes of conversation.

The idiom “talking in circles” denotes a way of communicating that is unproductive, indirect, confusing.

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As far back as memory serves, its body bends. Over itself, folded around its own ribcage, it stretches back through generations of memories. I can’t help but think of memory as an ancestral echo of circles. It comes at me from the future only so I can meet it again. When I stretch my arms out to embrace you, I take note of the circular shape. It holds you, holds me tight. This comfort extends far beyond the horizon of memory’s bend; not every aspect of it is yet familiar.

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*I long for collaborations that use circles.*¹

¹ Jónína Kirton, “Everything is Waiting,” *The Capilano Review*, no. 3.39 (Fall 2019): 7-9.

In this visitation, who has the authority to write memory? Can we imagine memory as a circle, as a cacophony of voices?

o

PLOT became a space of uncertainty. As arts workers, artists, and curators we relished the invitation to occupy space without preconceived outcomes, to shed the spectre of productivity seeped in our skin. The invitation spurred both impulsive and deliberate further invitations. Access to space is a rare occurrence in this town for many of us, and being granted the privilege of access meant we aimed to extend it further through a series of tangential collaborations.

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EDO: What does it mean to be in circle? That very generative space where we are all on the same level. There is no up or down...

o

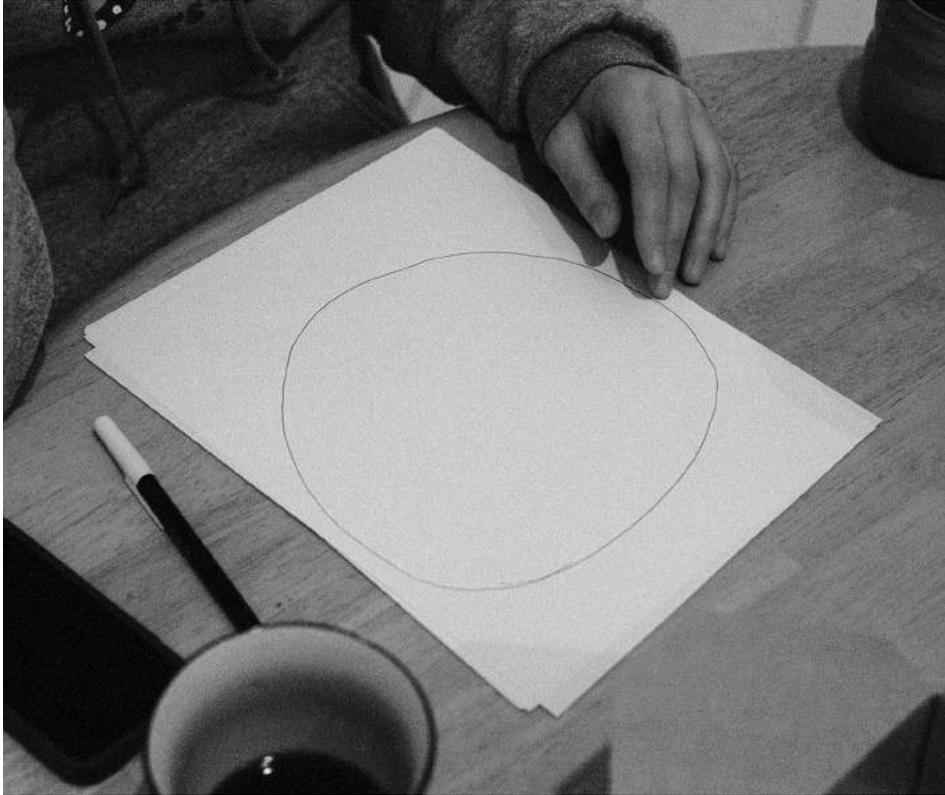
We propose the notion of speaking in circles.

o

The circle as an organizing method offered a generative and non-hierarchical space for being together. We wanted to undo assumptions of expertise that insist on power and conclusive thoughts. In recreating a kitchen scene, we thought about the potentials of circles, and invited others to create circles of their own through poetry, beading, meals, and conversation. The circle offered us a framework for conversation: permission to question how we communicate and verbalize uncertainties or changing opinions. Our utterances at the kitchen table² were and continue to be malleable to the ever-shifting conditions that surround us.

o

² We do not claim the kitchen table as our own, but rather follow the generations of others who had to carve out space for themselves. We wish to highlight what we have learned from the women behind the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. See Barbara Smith, "A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol 10, No. 3 (1989): 11-13.



you never get to the end of a circle gathering PLOT, Access Gallery, Vancouver
Courtesy of Number 3 Gallery

*in this sharing of our silence there are rounded corners
where bodies circle circles within circles our bodies fluid
opening to each other we become rounded corners
no sharp turns here³*

o

Gatherings often strained under a noted ambiguity: How does the tension of sitting together have the possibility to liberate or suffocate? When power differentials remain present and the terms are already set, it is possible that whoever offers the invitation to sit inhibits new realizations. The circle contained the possibility of a failed gesture. Gloves tethered by beads⁴ acted as a visual reminder that things could go awry.

o

Utterances encountered by my aunties generations ago continue to surface and confront bodies today. These discourses repeat, again and again, each time in a slightly different form, but maintaining the same frustrating vibrational tendency. I sense the redundancy of speaking and listening within the framework of state legislative powers embodied across language, land, the familial, and otherwise...

o

We fantasize about a time, or perhaps, a world, where we don't have to be swallowed up by the same issues as our predecessors. For now, it is our responsibility to continue and propel the conversation they began. We recognize the necessity of a conversation that continues indefinitely. We use repetition as a tool for building and changing narratives. We aim to undo structures, shift the context. We consider gestures or idioms as double entendres that offer new pathways for understanding.

o

³ Jónína Kirton, "together we walk the labyrinth," *The Capilano Review*, no. 3.39 (Fall 2019): 10-11.

⁴ The artwork, pictured on page 93, by Emily Dundas Oke is a set of gloves connected by beads, intended to be worn by two people. The gloves mimic a gesture of gratitude, yet are also a device to be used to learn to sit with the other.

Yet here we are presented with the conundrum of the written word. It becomes stuck in its own fixity. It assumes a certain kind of stagnant truth. We think about the histories — artists, thinkers, writers questioning the power of the written word — that have led us here.

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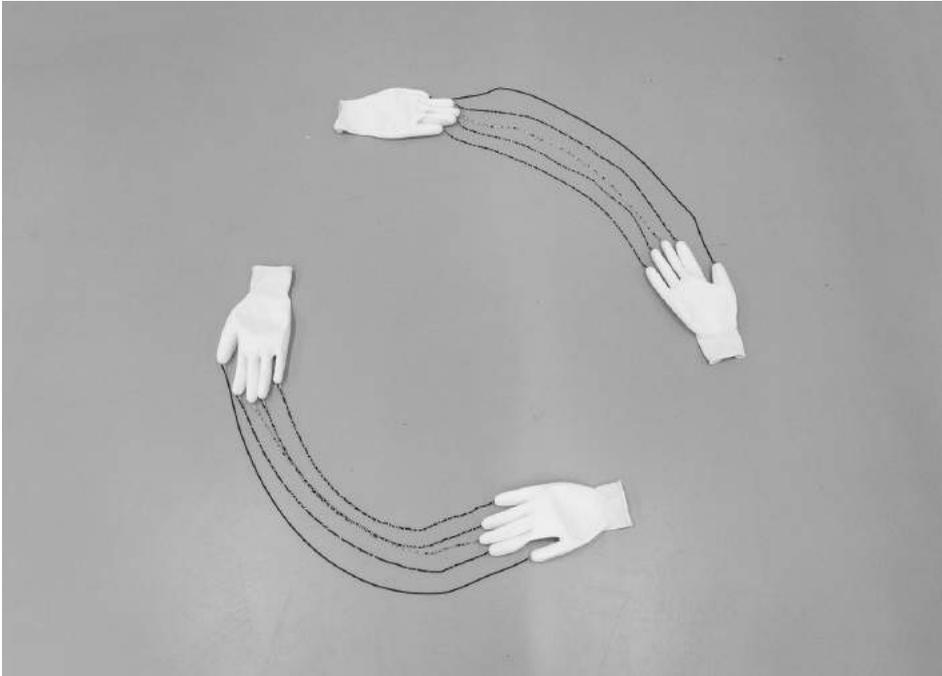
JK: You know people really hold you to these things. I've published these two books, and now I would change them. Now I would have different ideas, now I know more. I would say something differently.

EDO: I haven't published very much, maybe because of that fear of things becoming cemented in a way. It's daunting because all of a sudden you've "made a claim," whereas when I am writing, I am just trying to learn, and trying to do that publicly.

JL: Maybe it's a question of shifting how we think and understand language, writing, or spoken word. There's an idea of permanence that is tied to anything that becomes a physical form, language or art. If we don't take everything written as a permanent truth that's where the shift happens because we'll never stop writing. Maybe it's more about the onus on you as a viewer, reader, or listener.

EDO: So much is put onto the truth and knowledge that is built up in writing. You know [historically] it was only men who were allowed to write, only men who were allowed to publish — so in one sense, it's about thinking differently about the authority and truth of the written word, but it's also about raising the way that we value other forms of communication and knowledge holding. This is a really political space that we're making and enacting right now.

JK: And if you did it in a circle, one would hope that that's confidential, so then it lives on in a different way. That's where we can learn: where we are allowed to be in process. But this culture we live in does not seem to like process very much, it wants to just get things done, production. I think process is where everything is.



Emily Dundas Oke *Sitting with the other* 2019 gloves, beads, thread dimensions variable
Courtesy of Nida Art Colony and Andre Vasilenko

The italicized transcriptions are from two circles held in the PLOT space on January 6 and March 8, 2020 between Jónína Kirton, Matea Kulić, Emily Dundas Oke, Julia Lamare, and Julie D. Mills, where the following texts were brought forward: *Disinherited Generations: Our Struggle to Reclaim Treaty Rights for Nations of Women and Their Descendants* by Nellie Carlson and Kathleen Steinhauer (University of Alberta Press, 2013); *The Invitation* by Oriah Mountain Dreamer (Harper San Francisco, 1999); *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko (Penguin, 1977); “No. 109” from *Bluets* by Maggie Nelson (Wave Books, 2009); “A Long Line of Caterpillars” from *The Vision Tree: Selected Poems* by Phyllis Webb (Talonbooks, 1982); “Lightness vs Weight” from *Accounting for an imaginary prairie life* by Landon Mackenzie (1997).

Future History: No New Normal

(ASTROLOGICAL NOTES FOR AN APOCALYPSE)

Andrea Javor aka Mystic Sandwich

The End of a World

It's impossible to make sense of history when we're in the midst of it. For all our projecting, guessing, and divining, we don't know how these stories will end. We know the future will be different from the past, but how?

Our past is lurching; the structures that seemed solid now falter. Didn't so many of us wish for this: an end to the old order, the death machine called neoliberalism? (Not that we thought it would look quite like this, or that so many would be caught in the wreckage.)

Apocalypse seems more apt than *revolution*, given nature's role in this great turning. But all our theorizing, longing, and imagining of a better world are not for nothing. Apocalypse isn't the end of the world; it's the end of *a* world. And when one world falls, another will take its place.

Apocalypse means "uncovering" or "revealing," and it seems both that much is being revealed, and that much is yet to be revealed. Revelation is the mechanism of transformation: it is through confronting our darkest depths that we evolve.



The Cosmic Context

For all the unknowns we've been asked to sit with, astrology offers not answers but symbolic context: a frame that holds this moment, the hint that perhaps there is meaning—even if we don't know quite what that is—to what we are living through.

Astrologically, 2020 is no ordinary year. Several significant long-term cycles end and begin this year, suggesting that 2020 is a turning point in the grand scheme of history and that the transformation we are undergoing concerns the entire trajectory of humanity.¹ While the skies are infinitely complex, at the heart of the current astrology is a rare triple alignment between Saturn, Jupiter, and Pluto, that is in effect for the whole year (with the Saturn-Pluto conjunction in effect from late 2018 until early 2021). Exploring these archetypes and how they interact allows us to glimpse the symbolic significance of this moment.

The significations of Saturn include limitation, structure, borders, conservatism, authority, isolation, solitude, discipline, mastery, time, maturity, mortality, responsibility. Jupiter indicates abundance, prosperity, gifts, optimism, magnitude, magnanimity, excess, worldview, belief, ideology, religion. Pluto symbolizes the unconscious and the hidden, and the means by which they are revealed. It signifies corruption, compulsion, obsession, the id, power, transformation, death; the renewal that comes only of the most intense confrontation with all that has been kept in the dark.



Cronos and Zeus: The Seeds of Patriarchy

The astrological understanding of Saturn and Jupiter evolved from the myths of Cronos and Zeus. In these myths, time itself is imagined as the cycles of masculine rulership and lineage: through much violence, in the name of power, Cronos, god of time, usurps his father, Uranus, and is usurped in turn by his son, Zeus. These dramas intimate the patriarchal arc of history, the age-old battles for power among men.

Power is imagined as a fraught and ambiguous relation to fertility: Cronos doesn't just kill Uranus, he castrates him, cutting off his ability to proliferate his powers. While Cronos's fertility is signified primarily by his sickle—symbol of the harvest, and the weapon used to castrate Uranus; Zeus's fertility is symbolized by his many sexual exploits, as both seducer and rapist, and his uncountable offspring.

In the myths, women and children are violently objectified for their role in lineage. In the attempt to evade the fate bestowed on him through overthrowing his father—namely, being overthrown in turn, Cronos consumes his children (Zeus, of course, survives, to eventually fulfill that fate). And Zeus attempts to secure his rulership by eating one of his wives, Metis, who was prophesied to bear a child that would dethrone him. These myths allude to the irony that the quest for power over nature and plenitude leads to the denial and objectification of life.



Hades: Transformation through Revelation

Hades, brother of Zeus, is the god of the underworld, called Pluto (meaning riches) by the Romans who were terrified of Hades's capacity to bring about suffering, but recognized that wealth lies in the depths—as ores buried beneath the Earth's surface or psychological riches in the depths of the psyche. The association of wealth with the underground also connotes the hiding of wealth, the greed and hoarding of riches, and the shadow side of prosperity and power.

Hades rapes Persephone and forces her down to the underworld, a symbol of the soul's terrifying confrontation with the violent and brutal aspects of humanity, so terrible we seek to confine them to the underground—the unconscious in our current imaginary. Pluto, as keeper of the underworld, may contain riches, but also hides our greed, compulsions, and will to power. When that which is buried in the Earth surfaces—when the repressed returns—it is often volcanic.

It's through a reckoning with the unconscious—both individual and collective—that we come to know ourselves more fully. It's an unfortunate feature of humanity that transformation quite often requires suffering; that birth and death are the ultimate transformations and are often painful, difficult, and sometimes traumatic.



Mythic Proportions

If Saturn and Jupiter together symbolise the battle of the Titans, then with Pluto involved, the battle becomes apocalyptic. For, if a pandemic weren't significant enough, let's not forget, always looming in the background, the ecological crisis threatening not just lives, but life. Pluto confronts us with our mortality, not just as individuals, but as a species.

As we contend with the pandemic, and various forms of quarantine and distancing, we confront the very Saturnian themes of mortality, limits, solitude, rules, authority, surveillance. But while on the face of it we are navigating a pandemic, and a pandemic is no insignificant thing, the astrology (particularly the overlapping ending of multiple long-term cycles) suggests that the pandemic is a trigger for something deeper, bigger, more significant. The astrology suggests that the entire arc of human history is coming to a head; that stories born thousands of years ago are culminating now; that this is a momentous, historic turning point of mythic proportions.

The ecological crisis is a logical outcome of the Cronos and Zeus stories playing out over millennia and impacting much of the Earth. If rulership is imagined as a form of fertility that requires the control and management of life, but which leads to infertility when it outruns its course, then free market economics demanding perpetual growth (perpetual power, perpetual "fertility" through production) is the ultimate form of life-denying productivity that has culminated in the threat of mass extinction (the ultimate infertility) and impending climate collapse.

Paradoxically (as archetypes tend to be), just as the purportedly unstoppable machines of production and consumption have maintained the Plutocracy, so it's taken something Plutonic—beyond human control—to throw a wrench into those otherwise relentless machinations.



The Transformative Potential

Tragically, the pandemic is revealing the vulnerabilities, the cracks, the injustices in our systems. Illness is not equally distributed; nor is recovery. We've seen that people of colour, people who work underpaid service jobs, people who are homeless, or incarcerated, or sick, or elderly, or in so many other ways underprivileged, are most likely to be infected, and most likely to die. And when so many professionals are paid to stay safe at home, while so many others must risk their lives to tend to them, the already existing class structures are brought into stark relief. Many of us may have already been aware of these injustices, but the potential is that as Pluto reveals what has been hidden, such injustices will be acknowledged more broadly in society.

The same logic applies to the nefarious workings of those in power. Just as the Plutonic, especially with Jupiter, can signify the consolidation of power and wealth, and with Saturn, the reification of systems of control, so the Plutonic upwelling of truth into consciousness can spur transformation and renewal. It's precisely because these difficult themes are centred and visible right now that we have the opportunity to change course.

Think of the quiet and profound change that may result from millions of people across the Earth slowing down. Think of millions of people reflecting, contemplating, planting seeds, baking bread. Think of millions of people realizing that it's possible to do less, buy less, consume less. Think of millions of people coming to the embodied understanding that we are all interconnected in visceral and practical ways. Think of the care, the solidarity, the creativity. How could such a phenomenon not have a profound and lasting impact on the course of human history and the Earth itself?



The Reactive Potential

We also see a reaction to the forces that would bring light to the shadows: the doubling down of those in power, the fascist and totalitarian impulses, the subterfuge of those billionaires hailed as philanthropists, the disaster capitalism, the control of women's bodies, the rise in racialized and gendered violence, the surveillance, the power grabs. Just as Pluto brings to the surface the depraved workings of power (Pluto acting on Saturn), those whose power is threatened by such revelations will inevitably react by fortification and amplification of their control, repressing and suppressing with doubled guile (Saturn acting on Pluto).

Saturn, in its less evolved manifestations, is likely to project the revealed id onto others—to point the finger, to aim the missiles, to strengthen the walls. A more evolved Saturnian response is to take responsibility for one's own role in the melodrama, whether that's complicity, greed, or desire for power and control. It takes immense courage to compassionately contend with one's own id, one's own Plutonic depths. That is the kind of heroism we could use right now. Saturn, at its best, holds the promise of moral integrity and personal responsibility.



Unknowing is the Doorway

In the name of transformation, Pluto seeks to destroy our systems (Saturn), but also our ideology, our worldview, our beliefs (Jupiter). The narratives and who controls them is a central theme here. But so is the erasure of what we thought we knew. We don't know what our futures hold. But that not knowing is necessary for initiation: there would be no transformation without it. Knowing restricts us to a few worn roads that look a lot like the past, whereas not knowing contains infinite potential. To sit with the uncertainty, the chaos, the big blank where our futures once were — that is our work.

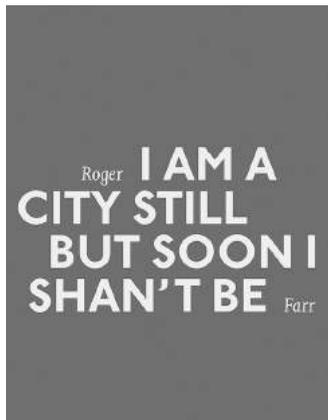


see to see —

I Am a City Still But Soon I Shan't Be
by Roger Farr

NEW STAR BOOKS, 2019

Stephen Collis



Shoshana Zuboff argues that under conditions of surveillance capitalism, “it is no longer enough to automate information flows about us; the goal now is to automate us.” It is at the confluence of flows of information, capital, state and corporate surveillance, and social control that Roger Farr launches his gorgeous stream of poetic

feedback, cutting into the surging current of urban infrastructure. The effect signals, in part, the way cities are designed to let (certain) things flow—to function as circuitry and facilitate (as the opening of the book’s nine “cantos” has it) “liquidity.” This is a book that attempts the integration of a certain form of lyricism with an unapologetic concern with political economy, the desiring body, and revolution.

The book’s lyricism in part relates to the chatty and poetically self-conscious nature of the “I” inhabiting this poetry and in part enabling its easy forward flow. The I-saying function still so common to poetry—the “supposed person,” as Emily Dickinson called this effect so long ago—has of course been much discussed, decried, disparaged, and re-inscribed over many generations of the “contemporary.” Farr’s I-speaker is of course no stand-in for Roger Farr the author or any other “actual” person and their “experience”; Farr’s “I” is a function of the city (*I Am a City*, the title tells us after all), which is not built for human

beings, but for the flow of materials and abstractions, in the circuits of which perceiving I-beings are simply utilitarian nodes, “like all other commodities circulating aimlessly.” Still, Farr’s “I” is aware they are being used in this way, is aware there is a history of resistance to such usage, and is on the lookout for possible opportunities for subterfuge.

Things are bleak in Farr’s “Dream Notes/on repressed collective desire,” and yet it is the way this poetry casts aside “[o]bsolete literary and political distractions” while continuing to hold out hope for “singular lives charting lines of flight from / all the checkpoints” that hooks and grips the reader, drawing us towards the poem’s conclusion. “Theory has failed you”—failed, at least, to do more than describe the Benjaminian wreckage heap of history—the revolution has failed us too—but in Farr’s dream notes, we keep its failure close (as one keeps one’s friends close and one’s enemies even closer).

Despite the near total pressure of surveillance capitalism, bodies go on desiring. How to shift *flânerie* “from window shopping” to “window smashing” is the question posed in “Dream Notes.” Near the end of the poem the speaker addresses one they “remember... from the riots”—a potential “paramour” with whom to “map” the city anew. And so we arrive at a conclusion which is necessarily a new beginning: “From here we began

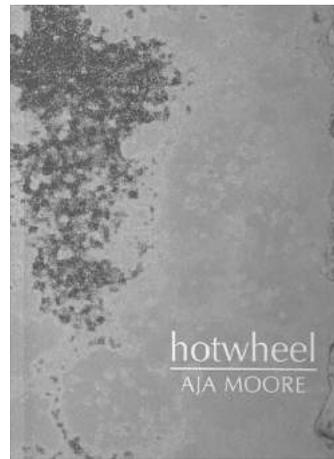
to course so here we will / return one crowded Monday morning in May.”

The modernist view of the city as necropolis (“Fear death by finance,” we hear a resurrected Eliot intone) is given its truly contemporary aspect. The wager—the excitement of this book—is how radically and openly we are thrown into the project of thinking and feeling our way through the contemporary—no assumed “truths,” no established “methods” or “theories” or “ideology”—just the ineradicable will to resist. Poetry has always been there when nothing else is left. This is poetry as the last stand—but the magic is that it reads as much like poetry as the first skirmish of what is to come.

***hotwheel* by Aja Moore**

METATRON, 2018

Jake Byrne



hotwheel by Aja Moore is a polished, muscular debut, a fine addition to Metatron's catalogue, and an emotionally cathartic work brimming with humour and wit. Lines from this book crackle.

The book opens with a soaring piece, "After I Definitely Can't Afford to Study w/ Sharon Olds," that swerves from a meandering trip to the library to a shattering recount of a medical emergency so quickly you can smell the rubber of the ambulance's tires. The speaker refuses to pin down an addressee, shifting between the speaker's stillborn sibling to Olds herself, and providing the second-person corollary to Ariana Reines's seminal line from *Coeur du Lion*: "[b]ut this I is the I of poetry / And it should be able to do more than I can do."

The poem's existence hinges on this unstable epistolary "you" as it performs an impressive balancing act: providing structure for the narrative to lean against, while at the same time exposing that narrative as potentially false. In the final lines—when the narrator writes, "In an effort to get close to u/it seems/There is nothing I won't/write about"—they expose their unspooling memory as performative, agenda-driven, a self-conscious piece of art(ifice), deflating the direct evocation of sincerity epistolary poetry relies on. With the structural conceit of a direct

address pulled out from under the poem, the weight of the previous eight pages collapses into itself, removing the reader's ability to discern between truth and artistic performance, and leaving something dense and unknowable as a neutron star.

Moore often employs humour, and sometimes as a defense mechanism, but never without winking to the reader a few lines later. Stylistic choices some might deride as millennial read as easy and familiar to any member of a digital-native generation: sloping, varied rhythms, contractions and internet-speak ("u," "w/"), references to memes, which, come to think of it, might be the closest thing we have to Yeats's images flowing out of spiritus mundi... "Technologies for Freedom" delivers an experience of contemporary alienation anyone with a smartphone knows all too intimately, where the device "deliver[s] / Right to yr door in 24 hrs or less / The device that reveals the atrocities / Causes them."

These choices and the wry, ironic humour throughout the collection place Moore's chapbook firmly within Metatron's established zeitgeisty aesthetic. But where *hotwheel* shines is in its beautifully expressed rage. Moore's is a rage directed inwards, perverting itself into body horror, health anxiety, or disassociation, as in "I Eat My Burger and The Man on the Radio

Lists Symptoms,” where “[m]ouths always taste worse than they look,” and a doctor’s callous bedside manner causes the speaker to mentally disassemble themselves into pieces “arranged by weight: lightest to heaviest. Then, by colour: darkest to lightest.”

When that rage is directed outward, toward the monied hypocrisy corrupting Vancouver, for example, as in the poem “Unemployable,” Moore balances class-conscious lines with self-directed irony. By the time Moore states, “I thought Adorno wrote: All / art is just properly sublimated rage,” these poems have already served as a testament to the power of that line, however misremembered.

***The Crying Book* by Heather Christle**

CATAPULT, 2019

Natalie Podaima



I am a sensitive person. I know this. I cry every three to five days, sometimes more often. I read Heather Christle’s *The Crying Book* over the span of a week, and as I read, I begin to track the number of times I cry, recording this total in my notebook on a page with the title “Tally of Tears” underlined. A strike for page 32, page 68, page 148. Sometimes I record the number of tears fallen (*four*), or a small caveat (*eyes merely welled*). At the start I cry infrequently, reading ten or twenty pages before adding to my tally. The number of pages diminishes over the course of the book and by the end, I am unable to endure more than a handful of passages at a time.

Christle positions herself as both “researcher” and “weeping subject,” stitching together history, language, science, and personal anecdote into a patchwork of prose poems. By contextualizing her own habits within her research, she makes her own life our case study: we follow the birth of her child, the death of a friend. Her references are countless and wide-sweeping, ranging from the seventy-two-year-old captive elephant who “died of grief” to a 1902 study of school children deliberating the moon’s materiality. These fragments elucidate the phenomenon of tears, creating reference points in Christle’s composite sketch of how and why we cry. We learn the difference between the three

types of tears our bodies produce: basal — the most ubiquitous, acting as lubricant; irritant — for flushing debris from the eye; and finally, psychogenic — those that express emotion. Though extensive, Christle’s study never diminishes the power of tears, never explains away their power.

I review my journal and recall my day-to-day events over the week spent reading the collection, attempting to draw a kind of emotional narrative that accounts for the various chronicles of my life in parallel to the book. I assess my agenda and period tracking app, compare these days to my tally, trace the arc of my cycle. I consult the dates and corresponding progress logged to my Goodreads account, check my iPhone photo library for the shaky images of my favourite passages while riding the metro. But the correlation is null: my findings conclude that there is little rhyme or reason, no clear map to my sentimental disposition. Christle’s ability to capture the seemingly arbitrary, non-linear nature of our sentimentality is precisely what makes this collection so necessary.

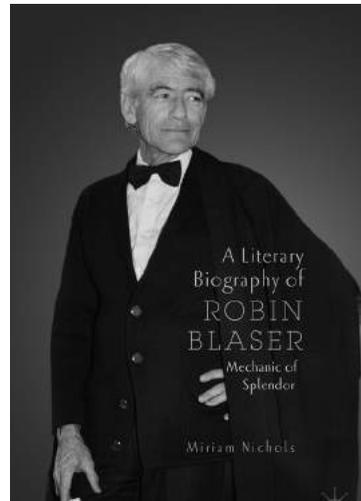
Christle writes: “Maybe we cannot know the real reason why we are crying. Maybe we do not cry *about*, but rather *near* or *around*.” *The Crying Book* is a collection in the truest sense; each fragment of prose chosen and placed with remarkable care, nestled

inextricably amidst the others. Christle’s exploration brings us nearer to tears, offering definition to our despair.

**A Record of Meeting —
A Literary Biography of Robin Blaser: Mechanic of Splendor
by Miriam Nichols**

PALGRAVE, 2019

Jami Macarty



Miriam Nichols’s *A Literary Biography of Robin Blaser* is an affecting examination of Blaser’s primary poetic themes and contributions to New American poetry: namely his “revisionary thinking of the sacred” and his perception-enacted,

outward-reaching meditations on the nature of language, sacredness, and the open space poem.

Nichols's biography vitalizes Blaser, the poet, and his poetry, while also offering particulars of his life in his words, such as the first time he opened "the door to a mysterious man with a mustache, dark glasses, a trench coat, sandals, his feet painted purple for some incredible reason." That "mysterious man": Jack Spicer. When Blaser and Stan Persky broke up, Blaser complained that Persky "took the curtains." Nichols also shares particulars from her personal history as Blaser's student, colleague, and friend, such as "Blaser's preferred white"—Chablis, and his penchant for shopping—"he found a pink jacket that became a favorite." All the while, Nichols stays wholly true to her intention to offer a literary biography, pairing Blaser's "distinctive discourse of poetry" with her distinctive discourse of biography.

The biographer's method speaks to what she learned from Blaser's "signature lecture style": to provide "context as explanation." Nichols weaves together the personal, social, and sacred in Blaser's life and poetry, mapping his early family and religious landscape in Idaho; his intellectual landscape in Berkeley; the landscape of his "great companions" in Berkeley,

Boston, San Francisco, Vancouver, and beyond—Dante, Duncan, Spicer, Olson, Creeley, et alia—to reveal how Blaser's work as a poet was "trying to be at home"—in perception and language—"to respond to the events of his times."

While I read the biography's fifth chapter, "San Francisco: The Artist of the Beautiful," I became aware of a background refrain playing in my mind: *All of these poets are gone. All of these poets are gone....* The poets of the Berkeley Renaissance, San Francisco Renaissance (Blaser was a member of both), the Beats, Black Mountain, and New York School—they are all gone. For me, their still-reverberating loss has as much to do with the lasting effect of their poetic works as it does the artistic community they formed and fostered. These poets took seriously and devoted themselves to poetry; they offered each other deep engagement via fine attention, rigorous reading, open conversation, and cross-media collaborations. To remember that they are all gone is to reckon not only with life's brevity, but with the fragile and contingent nature of artistic community. As life would have it, events arising in my own life while I read Nichols's biography brought the fragility of artistic community to bear. "Context as explanation": A dear member of

my writing community and I were reconciling after a slight, and another dear one was dying of a heart attack. Within the writing of this review, I endeavor, as Blaser did in his writing, to respond to their vacancy.

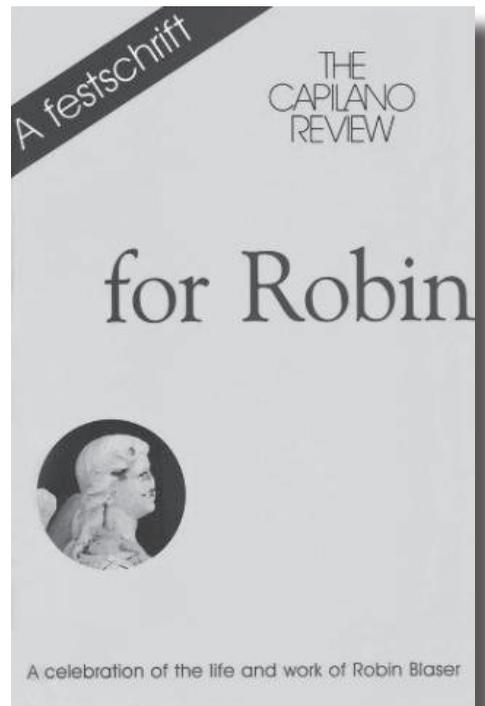
Blaser asserted that poetry retains a record of its “meeting with the world.” I too retain a record of my meetings with Robin Blaser on three

lucky occasions in Vancouver, where I witnessed how “in life he lived ... poetry,” and I met him in his poetry, where “he made a case for a mode of life.” A biography, according to Blaser’s terms, meant a poet had “done something”; that something is the *raison d’être* of Miriam Nichols’s devotional biography.

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Image: *The Capilano Review*
Issue 2.17/18 (1996), “A festschrift
for Robin,” celebrating the
life and work of Robin Blaser.
Featuring writing by Dodie
Bellamy, Charles Bernstein,
Rachel Blau DuPlessis, George
Bowering, David Bromige, and
others.



Contributors

ANDREA ACTIS lives on occupied Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territories and teaches literature and writing at Capilano University. Her first book, *Grey All Over* (forthcoming in early 2021 from Brick Books), is an autoconceptual study of traumatic grief, white working-class identity, false prophets, and whole seriousness. She was Editor of *The Capilano Review* from 2015-2017.

JAKE BYRNE is a queer writer and the winner of CV2's Young Buck Poetry Prize for 2019. His work has appeared in *Bat City Review*, *PRISM international*, and *The Fiddlehead*, among others. His first chapbook is called *The Tide* (Rahila's Ghost Press, 2017). He is a settler based in Tkaronto.

CONYER CLAYTON has six chapbooks, most recently *Trust Only the Beasts in the Water* (above/ground press, 2019). She was the joint winner of *The Capilano Review's* 2019 Robin Blaser Poetry Prize, and writes reviews for *Canthius*. Her debut full-length collection of poetry, *We Shed Our Skin Like Dynamite*, came out in May 2020 with Guernica Editions.

STEPHEN COLLIS is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose, including *The Commons* (Talonbooks, 2008) and the BC Book Prize winning *On the Material* (Talonbooks, 2010). In 2019 he was awarded the Latner Writers' Trust of Canada Poetry Contest in recognition of his body of work.

MERCEDES ENG is the author of *my yt mama*, *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes*, winner of the 2018 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize, and *Mercenary English*. Her writing has appeared in *Hustling Verse: An Anthology of Sex Workers' Poetry*, *Jacket2*, *Asian American Literary Review*, *The Capilano Review*, *The Abolitionist*, *rally* (No One Is Illegal), and *Surveillance and M'aidez* (Press Release).

GARDEN DON'T CARE is located through the alleyway at 2954 West 4th Avenue on the unceded and continually asserted xwməθkwəy'əm, Sk-wx-ú7mesh, and səilwətaʔ Territories. Members of the collective include Derya Akay, Vivienne Bessette, Conor Fanning, Rowan Fanning-Blackwater, Julia Feyrer, Tobin Gibson, Salem Sharp, Emma Sise, and Kurtis Wilson. They are often around on Saturdays, and semi-present on Instagram @gardendontcare and at gardendontcare dot com. Write to them or stop by and say hi.

MEGAN HEPBURN is an artist currently based in Vancouver, the unceded Territories of the Coast Salish Peoples. Her practice is based in painting and perfumery, and her work has been shown across Canada and in Europe for the past couple of decades. Recent exhibitions include *Passing Through Smoke* at CSA Space and *Material Elements* at Elissa Cristall Gallery, both in Vancouver. Hepburn started the natural perfume line *Cracher Dans La Soupe Parfum* in 2018.

S F HO is a 90% chill 10% not artist who's into community building, books, and being sort of boring. They recently finished writing a short novella about aliens, love, and boundaries tentatively called *George the Parasite*.

ERICA HOLT is presently working 24/7 from her couch in an effort to deliver arts education. When able to venture out of this physical and psychological space into the new normal, she will refocus upon writing, film, and music-making practices. She was born in the biome known as Aspen Parkland and currently resides in Temperate Rainforest.

TOM HSU (b.1988, Hsinchu, Taiwan) lives and works in Vancouver, BC, on unceded Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish land. Incorporating analogue photography and made, found, and choreographic sculpture, his work investigates the curious condition of spaces and their correlation to the bodies that attend them. He received a BFA in Photography from Emily Carr University and has exhibited at Centre A, the Burrard Arts Foundation, Yactac Gallery, Unit Pitt Gallery, and INDEX Gallery.

JULIA LAMARE is a French-Bahamian curator based in Vancouver, BC. She holds a BFA from Emily Carr University. In 2016, she and artist and curator Julie D. Mills co-founded Number 3 Gallery, a mobile curatorial project focused on initiating collaborations with emerging contemporary artists and spaces. Currently, Lamare holds the position of Assistant Curator at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver.

JAMI MACARTY is the author of *The Minuses* (Center for Literary Publishing, 2020), and three chapbooks, including *Mind of Spring* (Vallum Chapbook Series, 2017), winner of the 2017 Vallum Chapbook Award. She teaches poetry and poetics at Simon Fraser University and is co-founder and editor of *The Maynard*.

MYSTIC SANDWICH is the work of Andrea Javor – an astrologer and writer currently living on the unceded Territories of the Coast Salish People, including the xwməθkwəy’əm (Musqueam), Sk-wx-ú7mesh (Squamish), and səliiwətaʔɫ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations (Vancouver, BC). With a background in cognitive neuroscience and philosophy, Javor encountered astrology in 2012 and has been a devoted student ever since. Her work seeks to reconcile contemporary thought with a re-enchanted worldview. As well as writing, she offers astrology readings, workshops, and classes.

NUMBER 3 GALLERY is a curatorial project focused on initiating collaborations with emerging contemporary artists and spaces. Its exhibitions and projects challenge relationships to space and question the ways in which access determines success and visibility. Number 3 Gallery is curated by Julia Lamare and Julie D. Mills. In the winter of 2019-20, Number 3 Gallery was in residence at Access Gallery’s PLOT space with Emily Dundas Oke.

EMILY DUNDAS OKE is the recipient of numerous grants and awards; she has exhibited nationally and internationally. She was artist in residence at the Nida Art Colony (2019) and Access Gallery (2020), among others. She is currently organizer and co-curator of the Indigenous Brilliance reading and performance series and has held positions at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver and the Kamloops Art Gallery.

KAYLIN PEARCE is a gardener and runner living on unceded Coast Salish Territories.

NATALIE PODAIMA is a writer from Winnipeg, living in Montréal.

MEREDITH QUARTERMAIN's most recent book is *Lullabies in the Real World*. Her other books include *Vancouver Walking* (winner of the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize), *Recipes from the Red Planet*, and *U Girl: a novel*.

GAIL SCOTT writes about cities. Her first novel, *Heroine*, appeared in a new edition in 2019 with an introduction by Eileen Myles. Her novel *The Obituary* (Coach House, 2010) was a finalist for Le Grand Prix du Livre de la Ville de Montréal. Scott's translation of Michael Delisle's *Le Déasarroi du matelot* was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award (2001). A memoir from a Lower Manhattan poetry milieu is forthcoming. Scott co-founded the French-language journal *Spirale* (Montréal), *Tessera*, and co-edited the New Narrative anthology *Biting the Error: Writers Explore Narrative* (Coach House, 2004).

SHEUNG-KING, AARON TANG is a writer/educator. His book, *You are Eating an Orange. You are Naked*, is forthcoming from Book*hug in the summer of 2020. He lectures at Sheridan College and the University of Guelph.

LIAM SIEMENS is a writer living in Toronto, at work on a book of short stories about chosen isolation and new forms of sociality.

BARDIA SINAEE was born in Tehran, Iran and currently lives in Toronto. His poems have appeared in magazines across Canada and in several editions of *Best Canadian Poetry in English*. His first collection, *Intruder*, is forthcoming from Anansi in Spring 2021.

MAGED ZAHER was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. He has lived in the US since 1995, and has published several books of poetry and translations. In 2013, Zaher won the Genius Award for Literature from *The Stranger* in Seattle.



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IMAGE: Elizabeth MacKenzie,
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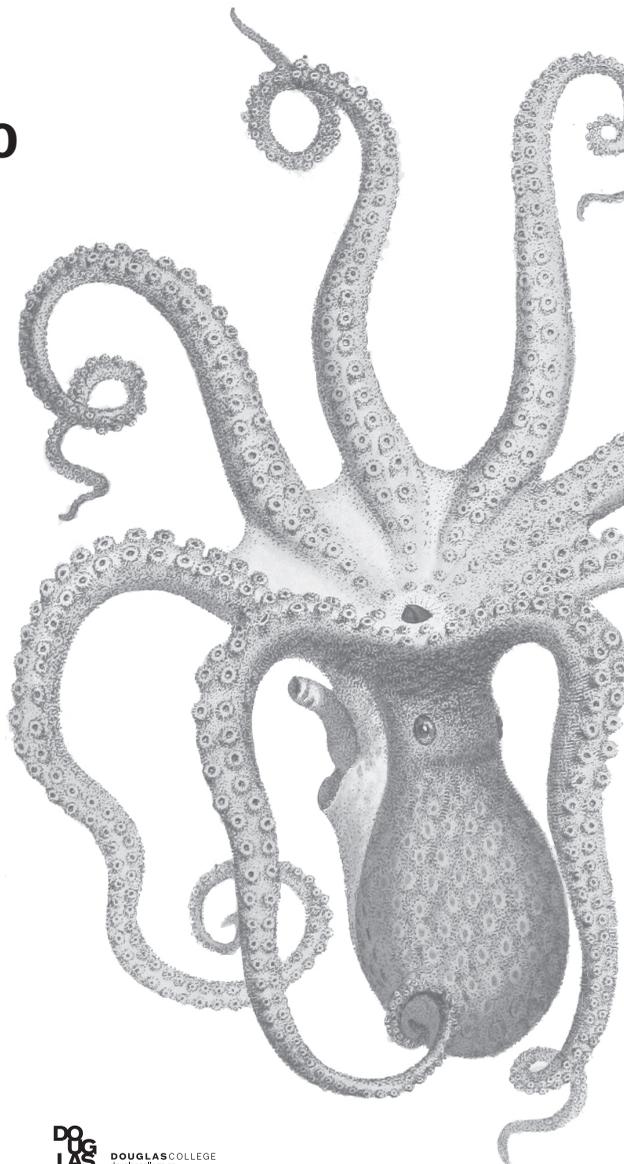
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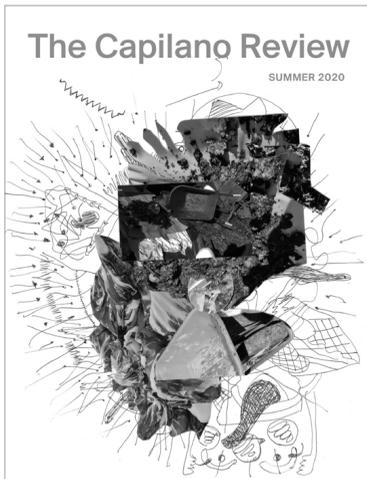
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