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Play showcasing Viola Desmond's historical stand grew to span period of four decades

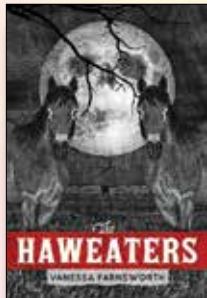
Part exploration, part memoir, David Elias's latest book answers the riddle of why barns are often red

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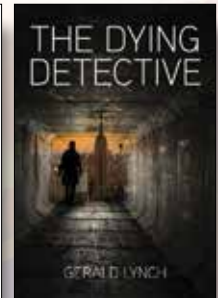
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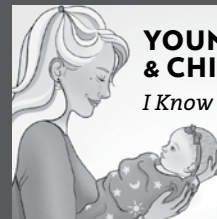
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Like a jigsaw puzzle, novel's series of stories follows theme of broken parental relationships

Sense of place evoked through Albertan themes, political commentary in Katie Bickell's debut

by Margaret Goldik

ALWAYS BRAVE, SOMETIMES KIND

Katie Bickell

Brindle & Glass–TouchWood Editions

\$22.00 pb, 272 pages

ISBN: 978-1-927366-91-2

Available as an ebook

Katie Bickell's debut novel, *Always Brave, Sometimes Kind*, is a series of stories reminiscent of a jigsaw puzzle, with pieces that interlock and build into an extraordinary, complex picture of Alberta through two decades.

"At various points throughout the creation of this novel the walls of my office were covered in Post-it notes with lines drawn from characters and dates and family trees," Bickell says. The result of this creative industry is a richly textured and absorbing book.

It begins in 1995 in a hospital dealing with government cutbacks affecting patient care, an exhausted Doctor Rhanji, and nursing students filling in as volunteers. The child Jude is introduced in the first chapter – he is the thread guiding the reader through *Always Brave, Sometimes Kind*.

The narrative occasionally flips back in time, weaving in the stories of other characters, fleshing out details. And the characters are a mixed bag. As well as Dr Rhanji and Jude, we meet Lacey, Patricia (daughter of the fearsome Mariam), tough kid Shannon, and their teacher, Mrs. Simpson. And, as they say, a cast of thousands.

"As I wrote Shannon and Lacey's stories, new elements or characters were introduced, and I started imagining stories for the newcomers as well," explains Bickell.

"While these stories didn't have a clear collective sense of forward momentum, the Albertan themes were starkly obvious: all included jabs at current or past government policy and/or popular culture, and all embodied a sort

of salt-of-the-earth, self-determined grittiness, ambition, and simple warmth that I think is reflective of many of us 'Prairie people.'"

Bickell touches on many of the societal issues affecting Alberta in the time period covered: ups and downs in the oil industry, missing and murdered Indigenous women, politics in First Nations communities, and consequences of the '60s Scoop.

To portray these topics realistically, Bickell had to do "so much research."

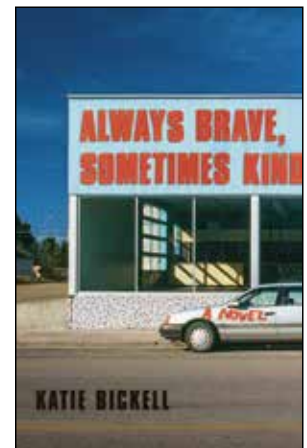
"I've always been interested in local current events, so I was pretty on top of the things I was studying, but I was constantly going back to recheck dates and facts like the 1995 laundry workers' strike, or the 2002 Alberta teachers' strike," she says.

"When it came to such topics as missing or murdered Indigenous women, residential schools, or Indigenous politics, I was very fortunate to receive insight in this area from Indigenous leaders I was working with at the time."

Another strong theme is that of absent mothers. Broken parental relationships are part of the Indigenous characters' stories, but are not limited to them: other mothers and daughters are separated by mental illness, lack of loving, or bad parenting skills. At the same time, there are instances of healing throughout the novel, as it builds to a very satisfying ending.

Bickell employs the mantra "Always brave, sometimes kind" in her own life. "There's one thing I owe others: kindness. There's one thing I owe myself: courage," she says.

"I try to move through life with these gifts in either hand." 🌿



Katie Bickell

CHLOE BICKELL

La Betty bows before the altar of materialism in satirical tale

Jeanne Randolph's latest work reveals the ridiculousness at the core of consumerism

by melanie brannagan frederiksen

MY CLAUSTROPHOBIC HAPPINESS

Jeanne Randolph

ARP Books

\$18.00 pb, 120 pages

ISBN: 978-1-927886-41-0

Available as an ebook



Jeanne Randolph

Jeanne Randolph's latest book, *My Claustrophobic Happiness*, is a satire that, in keeping with her ongoing artistic and intellectual projects, skewers capitalism and "mock[s] consumerism whenever possible."

My Claustrophobic Happiness centres on La Betty, who believes that materialism is her calling. Randolph, a Winnipeg-based author, artist, and psychiatrist, says La Betty "is the obverse of St. Anthony of the Desert (251–356 CE). The temptations of St. Anthony are an artist's treasure trove. His biography depicts in lurid detail every demon, phantasm, shape-shifter, anti-Christ, temptress, and sprite that assailed him as he sat naked in a cave in Egypt.

"So as I was reading Athanasius's fourth-century biography of Anthony, it occurred to me to ask, 'What is the 21st-century equivalent of this extremist?'"

The book is structured around a series of vignettes wherein La Betty's

meditations on various luxury objects are intruded upon by various perverse interruptions.

Whether these interruptions take the form of echoes of old myths and traditional stories or whether they are reminders of social movements and values outside those of La Betty's condo and collections of objects, she identifies them and banishes them with various advertising slogans.

"Advertising agencies are doing their best to create characters with rudimentary stories you can't forget," notes Randolph. "Myths, however, offer a variety

of conclusions about life and how to interpret it. Advertising offers only one conclusion – 'If you buy this you will be happy.'"

However often La Betty dismisses the old myths and the humanistic echoes of the past, Randolph contests the notion that they are defeated by her dismissal.

"The actual old myths," she says, "belong to a complex cultural tradition in which battle, nature, and strict

social mores predominated. Our technological predicament is not a tradition; it is presented as our material reality. There are no strict social mores in North American life, and battle is virtually virtual (gaming) and an ordeal foisted upon the underclass.

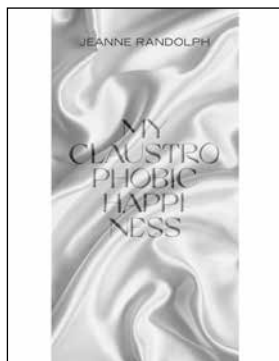
"As to why the old myths seem unable to stand up to slogans, maybe they do when alluded to, especially in song lyrics. Maybe they recur as metaphors."

Randolph reveals consumerism to be ridiculous in part by leaning into the distortion caused by the clash between weighty mythical and moral interruptions – from Midas to the Green Man, from mental illness to the racist underpinnings of consumerism – and the sterile, "freeze-dried" language of advertising.

She illustrates what this attentiveness to distortion might produce with an anecdote from her childhood.

"My mother was relaxing in a rocking chair on the veranda. Some misguided neighbour had given me a fake cheerleader's baton with sparkling grit glued all over the ball end," Randolph recalls. "Rage impelled me to push the baton under the rockers. I became fascinated by how splintered, mashed, fragmented, yet still glittering this object became. The process was magical. It was a metamorphosis!"

"My mother yelped, 'Jeanne, you are so destructive,' which did not seem to me at all pejorative." 🌿



Bringing the 'lost rich culture of Lahore' to life through short stories

Translating Zubair Ahmad's collection from Punjabi a careful, three-year process

by Bev Sandell Greenberg

GRIEVING FOR PIGEONS:

Twelve Stories of Lahore

Zubair Ahmad

Translated by Anne Murphy

Athabasca University Press

\$22.99 pb, 128 pages

ISBN: 978-1-77199-281-7

Available as an ebook

Rife with loss, yearning, and betrayal, Zubair Ahmad's thought-provoking stories delineate the lingering effects of the 1947 Partition. Not only did it leave Punjab divided between India and Pakistan, but it also forced many of its inhabitants to migrate,

his parents among them. "I grew up with memories of left-behind homes, places, and a full life," says Ahmad about the inspiration for his short-fiction collection, *Grieving for Pigeons: Twelve Stories of Lahore*.



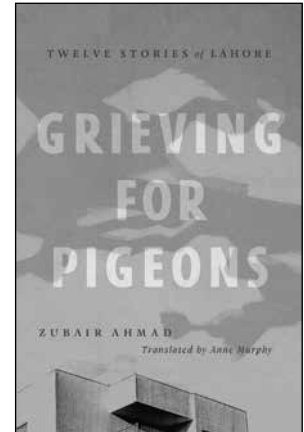
Zubair Ahmad

The title of the collection echoes the notion of displacement. "Lahore is a city full of pigeons, but it's considered a bad omen to displace them," says Ahmad. "They build nests over the air-conditioning fans of big buildings. People wait till no more eggs or babies are present. Only then are the pigeons removed."



Anne Murphy

Written in intimate, lyrical prose, Ahmad's stories reflect changes in his characters' attitudes over time, often due to politics. "I was young in the '70s and Pakistan got its taste of the first democratic government. Then we had a martial law government in 1977 and all freedom, liberty, and openness were gone."



Some stories deal with male friendship. In "Waliullah Is Lost," the narrator tells of his friend's bullying by a teacher. "Bajwa Has Nothing More to Say Now" involves a boyhood friendship that falters because of disloyalty.

Other stories involve changing landscapes. In "Dead Man's Float," the protagonist ruminates about neighbourhood houses that no longer exist, except in his dreams. "Sweater" tells of the narrator's migration to Italy, only to return to Lahore a year later to be with his own people.

Ahmad is a retired English literature professor who taught at Islamia College in Lahore where he currently lives. He has penned three short-story collections, two poetry books, and a collection of essays, all in Punjabi in the Shahmukhi (Pakistani) script.

Ahmad was the 2014 runner-up for the Dhahan Prize for Punjabi Literature for his second short-story collection. He is also the first Pakistani Punjabi author to be translated into English.

Grieving for Pigeons is Anne Murphy's first book-length translation. Head of the Asian Studies department at UBC, she first met Ahmad in 2014 because of her interest in the Punjabi movement in Pakistan. "His stories appealed to me because of their vivid portrayal of loss and pain," she says. "It was a joy to read them in the original."

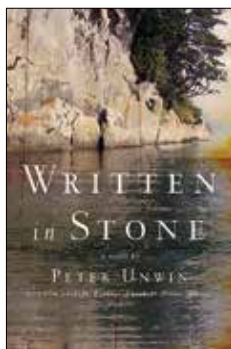
The translation process was highly collaborative, spanning from 2015 to 2018, and conducted entirely through email and WhatsApp. Even so, there were challenges.

"The Punjabi grammatical structure is much different from that of English," Murphy explains, "so while I did not want to change a lot from the original, sometimes I had to. As for the idioms, the issue was how to keep the flavour of the original text but make it understandable to an audience not familiar with those idioms."

Ahmad hopes his stories will be included in South Asian studies courses at university and read by a general audience.

"My stories are about memories of the lost rich culture of Lahore and the Partition of Punjab," he says. "Many Punjabis in Canada would love to read my stories." 🌿

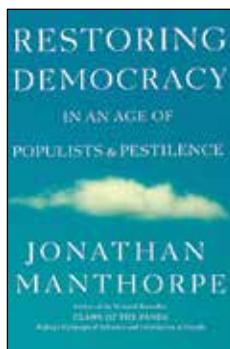
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Peter Unwin

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Jonathan Manthorpe

From the author of the bestselling *Claws of the Panda* comes a thoughtful account of how we can save democracies from the populists and other forces who are dumping political discourse down to sandbox antics.



AFTERMATH A Firefighter's Life

A Memoir by
Bryan Ratushniak

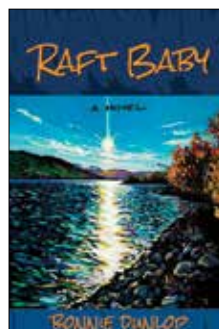
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Shape-shifters and Sky Spirits come together in novel incorporating Dene language

Katljà tackles issue of domestic violence through interconnected stories

by Laura Kupcis

LAND - WATER - SKY / NDÈ - TÌ - YAT'A

Katljà

Roseway-Fernwood Publishing

\$21.00 pb, 176 pages

ISBN: 978-1-77363-237-7



Katljà

The layered and poignant novel *Land - Water - Sky / Ndè - Tì - Yat'a* weaves through time and space, introducing characters – some human, some spirit – from periods as far back as time immemorial into the future. Author Katljà, from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation in the Northwest Territories, beautifully blends English with the languages of her Dene roots.

“It was important for me to incorporate language as much as I could in keeping with the timing of the story,” Katljà says. “I also wanted to make sure that each character had a very special name in the language that meant something significant. Place names are also referred to in the Dene language in order to show readers that it is possible to incorporate Indigenous languages in mainstream literature.”

Readers are first introduced to Àma (mother) who falls under the spell of a stranger, more animal than human.

“The character of Àma is based on my own motherly instincts and comes from experience in domestic relations that were physically violent,” Katljà says. “It is a tribute to mothers who have lost their children and to those that have suffered from partner violence.”

Yat'a (sky), a gift from the Sky Spirits, controls the northern lights and brings with her the potential

to overthrow evil. Her nemesis, the leader of the Naàhga, is, according to Katljà, based on shape-shifter stories used by parents to scare young children.

She leaves behind her legacy, a son, Dahti (dew), whose character is inspired by Yamozha, a hero and a warrior that travelled the North for centuries and left his mark in different locations across the territory, Katljà explains.

The novel follows several more characters inspired by traditional stories. Deèyeh (calm water) was born in the North, but sent to live with a foster family in the city when she was young, and as a university student she has the chance to assist in an archeological dig close to her homeland.

Her character is drawn from accounts of water creatures in the Great Slave Lake, Katljà says. Lafi (girl) moves to Coppertown for adventure and falls for a man who isn't exactly as he appears.

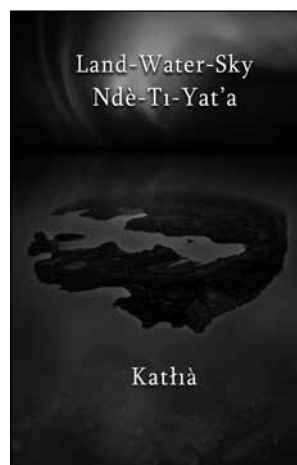
“I wanted every character to be connected in some way, and I left it open for there to be complete novels for each character's backstory,” Katljà explains.

“Many of the events in the book are based on similar experiences that I've had in my life, such as child apprehension. I wanted to keep the issue of domestic violence at the forefront to open the difficult conversation around familial violence and sexual harassment.”

This is a book filled with lessons and warnings, hope and inspiration, and Katljà hopes readers can identify with some of the characters.

“I hope that they will be able to make the connection to the themes of the book, which are respecting women, children, and Elders, as well as the land and water,” Katljà says.

“I'm hoping that readers will become interested in learning more about the North and the connection to the spirit world and the rich Indigenous knowledge that we still have here in the North.”



Crisis leads to a crash course in parenting, a decade into a child's life

Annette Lapointe's novel complicates ideas of the 'bad mother' and 'unlikeable woman'

by Margaret Anne Fehr

...AND THIS IS THE CURE

Annette Lapointe

Anvil Press

\$22.00 pb, 320 pages

ISBN: 978-1-77214-151-1

Annette Lapointe's novel *...And This Is the Cure* wastes no time in drawing its readers into the immediacy of its narrative.

Allison Winter, radio/podcast celebrity with the Public Broadcasting Corporation and curator of cutting-edge talent and punk trends, arrives in Winnipeg from Toronto in response to a grisly family tragedy involving her estranged 11-year-old daughter, Hanna. Claudia and Ethan, Hanna's adoptive parents, were murdered by Claudia's son who then took his own life – all while Hanna was in the basement listening to music on her headphones.

The novel unfolds as Allison and Hanna learn to become mother and daughter and make room for each other's lives in a process more crucible than conciliation.

Annette Lapointe, a Giller Prize nominee for her first novel *Stolen* in 2006, shares her inspiration for writing *...And This Is the*

Cure. "I began with the vision of a pre-teen or teenager judging me. I don't have kids (just nieces and nephews), so I haven't been through this, but I could suddenly hear a girl of about 12 telling me that I was embarrassing.

"As someone who's deeply self-conscious but aspires to be cool, I was cut to the quick by this imaginary girl. That led me to imagine what it would be like to begin

parenting a decade or more into the child's life – how that would be different from other kinds of parenting."

Lapointe hopes that readers will begin to understand that the idea of a "bad mother" is complicated. So is "unlikeable woman." She says, "Allison is a difficult person in a lot of ways, but she's had to create herself more or less by herself, and she does try to be 'good.'"

Winnipeg also served as inspiration. "It takes me a

long time to learn a city well enough to try writing about it," says Lapointe. "I started writing *...And This Is the Cure* just about the time I moved away from Winnipeg (I got an academic job, so I had to go). I missed the city terribly, and I was surprised how much it had felt like home. I wanted to capture what it was like to be there. I got a real kick out of Winnipeg."

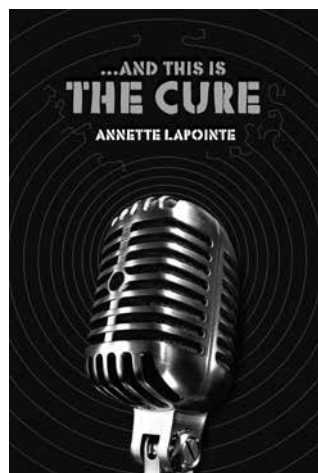
As for literary inspiration, Lapointe counts Miriam Toews's *Summer of My Amazing Luck* as a favourite. "I adore her books, and she's really the author I studied to know how to write about Winnipeg."

While Lapointe thinks the book will ring true for people who know Winnipeg and who have experienced the punk scene and a life "dealing with conservative family while imagining yourself as a sophisticated, cultured person," she would be equally delighted if a reader with a completely different background told her that they'd liked the book.

"I hope [readers] think at least parts of it are funny," she says. "Obviously, much of the book is dark, but I tried to have it carry a comic thread – the idea that everything will be alright in the end, so if it's not alright, it's not the end." 🐾



Annette Lapointe



MORE FICTION MYSTERIES

THE DYING DETECTIVE

Gerald Lynch

Detective Kevin Beldon is lured out of retirement by the international police force asking for his help with a serial killer investigation. He soon suspects the involvement of Dr. Ewan Randone, the evil mastermind responsible for the deaths of Beldon's wife and son 10 years earlier. (Signature Editions, \$19.95 pb, 320 pages, ISBN: 978-1-773240-77-0, available as ebook)

FALL OF NIGHT

D. K. Stone

In this third book about Rich Evans and his relocation from New York City to Waterton, he returns to Waterton to discover that the body of his estranged ex-girlfriend has been found in a remote mountain lake. (Stonehouse Publishing, \$19.95 pb, 320 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988754-30-7)

THE UNLOCKING SEASON

Gail Bowen

In this latest Joanne Kilbourn Mystery, Joanne is collaborating with Roy Brodnitz on the script for a six-part TV series about the tangled relationships between the families of the father who raised her and of her biological father. Before the script is finished, Roy dies mysteriously. (ECW Press, \$32.95 hc, 350 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77041-528-7, available as ebook)

THE UNPLEASANTNESS AT THE BATTLE OF THORNFORD

C. C. Benison

Tom Christmas, amateur sleuth and vicar of the English village of Thornford Regis, has returned in this Father Christmas novella, in which a boisterous battle re-enactment results in an actual death – by pike. Once again, Tom uses his sound knowledge of human nature to see below the surfaces and solve a compelling puzzle. (At Bay Press, \$15.95 pb, 124 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988168-41-8)

OTHER NOVELS

ARBORESCENT

Marc Herman Lynch

This darkly funny and absurdly gothic debut novel strives to articulate the Asian immigrant body through ghosts, doppelgängers, and a man who turns into a tree, as the lives of neighbours Nohlan Buckles, Hachiko Yoshimoto, and Zadie Chan become more otherworldly and intertwined by the minute.

(Arsenal Pulp Press, \$18.95 pb, 224 pages, ISBN: 978-1-55152-831-1, available as ebook)

DISAPPEARING IN REVERSE

Allie McFarland

This combination mystery, road novel, and coming-of-age story follows a young woman who, convinced she caused the death of Devin five years ago, sets off on a journey of grief and discovery when she sees a current photo of Devin posted online. (University of Calgary Press, \$24.99 pb, 240 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77385-143-3, available as ebook)

GENOCIDAL LOVE

Bevann Fox

Presenting herself as "Myrtle," Fox blends her real-life truths with fiction to recount her early childhood on a First Nation reserve, her horrific experiences of abuse at residential school, and her story of battling to recover her voice and stand up for her right to compensation, a process that was yet another trauma at the hands of colonial power.

(University of Regina Press, 256 pages, \$89.00 hc, ISBN: 978-0-88977-747-7; \$21.95 pb, ISBN: 978-0-88977-741-5; available as ebook)

THE MIRROR'S EDGE

Alex Passey

Thirty-year-old Rath isn't exactly happy with his life – he drinks too much and the constant monitoring and advice of his AI chip Moe is really getting on his nerves. Then Rath finds his way into an untainted parallel universe where he has the opportunity to change things.

(At Bay Press, \$29.95 hc, 360 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988168-23-4)

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A fast-paced, behind-the-scenes look at forty years of journalism across Canada and beyond, from veteran CBC correspondent **REG SHERREN**, known for his work on *The National* and as the host of *Country Canada*. \$24.95

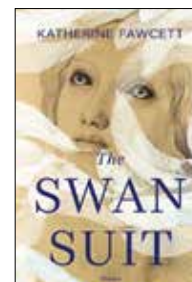
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the Heart
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KATHERINE FAWCETT offers up folklore for contemporary life. This devilishly funny collection of short stories blends the banalities of everyday dilemmas with elements of magic and the macabre. \$22.95

DOUGLAS-MCINTYRE.COM

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

ONCE REMOVED

Andrew Unger

This gentle satire follows Timothy Heppner, a frustrated ghostwriter struggling to make ends meet in Edenfeld, a small Mennonite community led by a mayor bent on progress (in the form of strip malls). Torn between his loyalty to the Preservation Society and his need to make a living, Timothy finds himself in an awkward position when he is hired to write an updated version of the town's history book.

(Turnstone Press, \$21.95 pb, 288 pages, ISBN: 978-0-88801-709-3)

ONE Madder Woman

Dede Crane

This historical novel vividly recreates the life of Berthe Morisot, the only female member of the Impressionists, charting her complicated relationship with her sister and her love affair with Édouard Manet, against a backdrop of upheaval and war in mid-19th-century Paris.

(Freehand Books, \$23.95 pb, 400 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988298-68-9, available as ebook)

ROUGH

Robin van Eck

Set during the flood of the Bow River in Calgary in 2013, this debut novel tells of Shermeto, who after intervening in a bar fight, finds himself in the hospital, where he must come face-to-face with the part of his past that he is trying to avoid – his daughter Kendra.

(Stonehouse Publishing, \$19.95 pb, 240 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988754-26-0)

STILL Me

Jeffrey John Eyamie

James Khoury has a couple of alter egos: James-the-Salesman, personable and funny, and James-the-Golfer, who doesn't get nervous when CEOs of important companies watch him perform. In the end, though, he's still James, the father of a teenager who won't even pretend to share his passion for golf, and husband of Faith, who may finally be fed up with his Hall of Fame closet of golf shirts.

(Turnstone Press, \$21.95 pb, 288 pages, ISBN: 978-0-88801-713-0)

TINY RUINS

Nicole Haldoupis

This coming-of-age and coming-out debut novel follows Alana as she grows up and discovers and tries to understand her bisexuality while keeping it a secret. Readers are given glimpses of her fragmentary and touching memories.

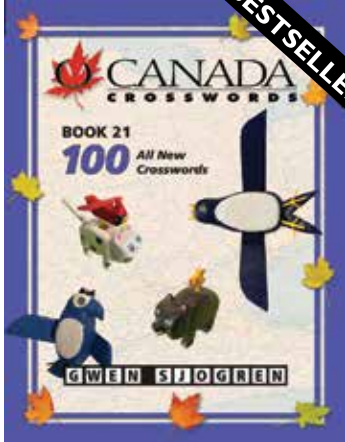
(Radiant Press, \$20.00 pb, 88 pages, ISBN: 978-1-989274-38-5, available as ebook and audiobook)

TO REFRAIN FROM EMBRACING

Jeffrey Luscombe

A suicide attempt results in 38-year-old Ted being hospitalized. Without him at home, his wife, Gloria, struggles with financial worries and slowly re-embraces her Indigenous identity, and his 10-year-old son, Josh, has to deal with his nascent sexuality, lack of peer acceptance, and fears about his father's mental health.


(ARP Books, \$25.00 pb, 352 pages, ISBN: 978-1-927886-39-7, available as ebook)

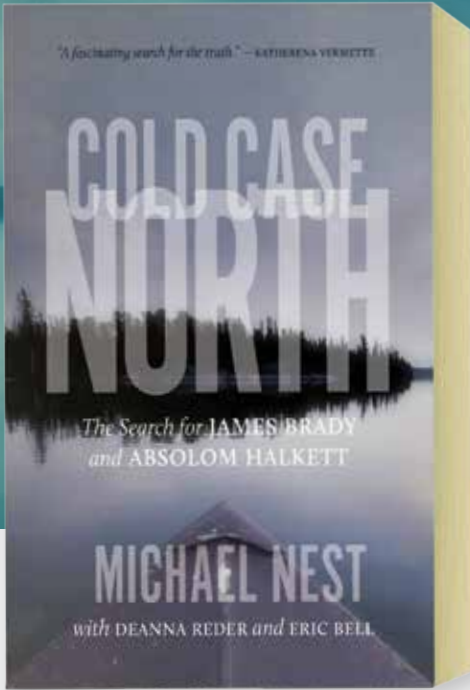


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Charlie is neurodivergent, preoccupied with numbers, and searching the streets of Montreal for his lost love, a woman he had presumed dead but whose number popped up on his call display. This novel explores the human psyche and the imperfect, disordered ways we love each other.

(Freehand Books, \$22.95 pb, 384 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988298-55-9, available as ebook)

SHORT FICTION

THE LIGHTNING OF POSSIBLE STORMS

Jonathan Ball

Framed in the story of Aleya, whose regular café customer one day leaves behind his book of short stories (dedicated to her), this collection of varied and bizarre stories blends

humour and horror, dreams and destruction.

(Book*hug Press, \$20.00 pb, 260 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77166-613-8)

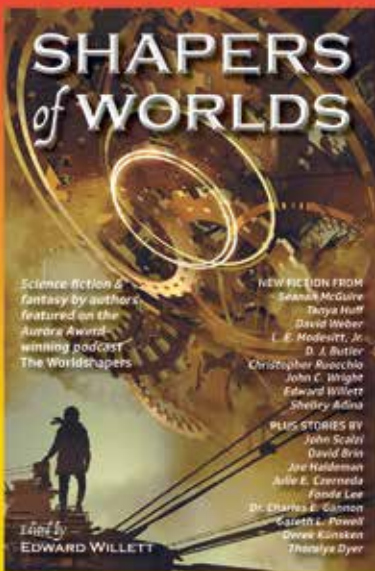
LOVE AFTER THE END: AN ANTHOLOGY OF TWO-SPIRIT & INDIGUEER SPECULATIVE FICTION

Edited by Joshua Whitehead

This groundbreaking collection showcases a number of emerging Two-Spirit and queer Indigenous writers – such as Adam Garnet Jones, Gabriel Castilloux Calderón, and Jaye Simpson – who show how Queer Indigenous communities can thrive through utopian stories that highlight their strength and resistance.

(Arsenal Pulp Press, \$21.95 pb, 196 pages, ISBN: 978-1-55152-811-3, available as ebook)

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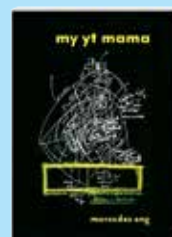
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Improvisations 1–170

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Mercedes Eng continues her poetic investigation of racism and colonialism in Canada in the follow-up to her BC Book Prize-winning book of poetry, *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes*.

978-1-77201-255-2; \$16.95; Poetry



Mégantic

A Deadly Mix of Oil, Rail, and Avarice

ANNE-MARIE SAINT-CERNY

The fruit of five years of work and interviews with nearly a hundred people from various backgrounds, *Mégantic* examines the causes and after-effects of the 2013 Lac-Mégantic rail disaster. Anne-Marie Saint-Cerny reveals how the tragedy was not an accident, but rather was knowingly caused by powerful people and institutions far removed from the town itself.

978-1-77201-259-0; \$24.95; Non-fiction

Collection comes together through staying with poems, letting themes reveal themselves

Tree as a symbol of life pulled Sarah Klassen's poems together, inspired new ones

by Kyla Neufeld

THE TREE OF LIFE

Sarah Klassen

Turnstone Press

\$17.00 pb, 120 pages

ISBN: 978-0-88801-717-8

For Manitoba poet Sarah Klassen, writing poems is an exercise in waiting. The process she went through for her newest collection of poetry, *The Tree of Life*, was no different.

"It is easy to fall in love with one's writing, become too easily satisfied with it and rush into publication. Better to stay with a poem, wait, improve it, before sending it out for publication in magazines or in book form," she says.

"When I've written for several years and enough poems have accumulated, I begin to think about putting together a manuscript, I look for unifying elements. And usually they aren't impossible to find."

At first glance, with section titles like "Rise and Go," "Perchance to Dream," and "Ordinary Time," the book's seven parts seem disparate. However, they soon reveal the unifying themes of nature, spirituality, and children, with the tree as a symbol of life standing at the centre of it all.

"The central image of the tree of life appeared somewhere in one of the poems, and it appealed to me as a central metaphor and also as a title for the collection, since all of the poems are about life, past or present," says Klassen.

"As I searched for the best way to arrange the poems, I found places where I could sneak in a reference to the tree of life, adding lines here and there and even writing new poems with this in mind."

Klassen wrote most of these poems after she moved into an apartment with windows facing the river. "I could look down from my balcony and see the trees and clouds reflected in water and watch the return of water birds in

spring and the occasional fox or deer emerging from the trees. Or I could look up to the ever-changing sky," she says. "Beyond the visible, the [in]visible. Beyond creation, the creator."

She adds, "As for the children, they are always part of our journey, whether past or present, as companions along the way. They are our responsibility. And they are also our future. They belong in our stories and poems."

The power and resilience of women also feature strongly in this collection. Bible readers will recognize the stories of Eve and Hagar – two of the more controversial women in scripture – and those unnamed women, like the concubine from the Book of Judges, who are given new life and a voice in Klassen's poems.

Klassen decided to write about women from the Hebrew scriptures in 2016, when, to mark the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in Manitoba, *Prairie Fire* magazine invited submissions to a special issue focused on women's suffrage.

"The original texts provide the raw material, sometimes in great detail, sometimes so sparingly that there's lots of room for reimagining," she says. "These women's stories are rich in courage and suffering. Their experiences continue to be reflected, in some ways, in the lives of women today."

This collection is the result of years of exploring, reflecting on, and connecting ideas, observations, and experiences. But like Klassen says, "A poem is worth waiting for." 🌿



Sarah Klassen



Self-declared trickster poet now leading quieter life, with more energy for his own work

Dennis Cooley's 30th book aims 'to please, delight,' quite simply

by Ariel Gordon

THE MUSE SINGS

Dennis Cooley

At Bay Press

\$24.95 hc, 168 pages

ISBN: 978-1-988168-36-4

Over the 40 years of his career, Winnipeg's Dennis Cooley has been a professor of English at the University of Manitoba and a publisher/editor at Turnstone Press, among many other titles.

But the role he most identifies with is trickster poet.

"I guess for me it means mischief," Cooley says. "You hope for fortunate accident, the happy error. I suppose it involves a willingness to look foolish, to relish nonsense. I specialize in mock-indignation and parody. The trickster takes unseemly pleasure in rhymes and puns and wrenchings, provocation too."

He learned to be playful from his mother Irene, whom he eulogized in a previous collection.

"She was a modest woman, and offended by frank sexuality, but she was always joking and teasing, loved to play in language," Cooley says.

While Cooley retired in 2011, he hasn't slowed down. 2020 will see the publication of *The Muse Sings*, his seventh book since leaving the university.

"I have fewer meetings, fewer reports, fewer papers to mark," says Cooley. "I don't miss that much. But I do miss the verve of the university. I lead a much quieter and more sedentary life these days. The good part is that I have a lot more time and energy for my own work."

Cooley's goals for his 30th book are simple.

"To please, delight," says Cooley. "I am trying to see what I might make of the muse as literary trope. More generally I want to see where writing has taken us and where it might go."



Dennis Cooley

As a creative writing teacher, he is used to emphasizing craft over inspiration, but he knows it's not that simple.

"However much we value the acquired and necessary virtues in poetry – skill, knowledge, research, revision, imitation, influence, practice – the old gifts of inspiration remain powerful," says Cooley.

"They are embodied traditionally, and through the collection, as the muse, who I treat with affection, humour, and gratitude."

Though *The Muse Sings* contains a multitude of voices – the poet, the muse, and even the poems themselves – it also works with silence.

"The gentler, more meditative pieces contain a lot of silence," Cooley says. "The broken, abbreviated, and hesitant lines convey silence, I think. Many of the poems are given to a comical bravado and self-mockery."

Writing about writing is not all that different for Cooley from writing about other subjects. He believes that many, if not all poems, are meta-literary in some way.

"We are already written, and we engage in rewriting what is given to us," Cooley says. "We recognize that language, writing, poetry are central to our experiences, generative, some would say. When you are a writer you are a writer among writers, you hold conversations with dozens of writers, many of whom you will have never read or ever heard."

What better way to write about writing than to go straight to the heart of it, the muse?

"If you write about the muse, you are throwing yourself from the outset into the trope, and to the texts that have been written off and around it; you are into writing about writing from the start." 🌿



Duncan Mercredi's 'weird way of looking at life and land' collected in retrospective

Only collection from Winnipeg's Poet Laureate currently in print draws from past alongside newer work

by Ariel Gordon

MAHIKAN KA ONOT: The Poetry of Duncan Mercredi

Duncan Mercredi

Selected with an introduction
by Warren Cariou
Wilfrid Laurier University Press
\$18.99 pb, 88 pages
ISBN: 978-1-77112-474-4

Duncan Mercredi's biography is straightforward. He's a Cree/Métis writer and storyteller originally from Misipawistik (Grand Rapids), Manitoba, and the current Poet Laureate of Winnipeg.

But these lines, taken from the poetic afterword to Mercredi's upcoming new and selected, *mahikan ka onot: The Poetry of Duncan Mercredi*, are a



Duncan Mercredi

much better introduction: "A blue collar guy in a white collar world living in a tie-dyed neighborhood writing in broken english dreaming in cree in a concrete forest my

skin a chameleon of colors from a whiter shade of red in spring to the dark brown of summer to the earth tones of fall and then the darker shade of white in winter and you ask me why are you confused."

As with the poet laureate gig, Mercredi had to be convinced to take on this career retrospective.

"To tell you the truth," he says, "I didn't think anyone would be interested in my weird way of looking at life and land, and my stubborn stand on having someone edit what I've written: 'my words, my mind, my heart, if you want changes, speak to the old ones, they gave them to me.' Warren understood that, and I'm really thankful for it. I'm sure he shook his head a few times."

He's referring to Métis scholar Warren Cariou, who selected the poems and wrote an introduction. Cariou believes that Mercredi has had a huge influence on contemporary Indigenous poetry, both as a mentor and as a poet.

"Even though his first four books went out of print a few years ago, he has remained a legendary presence in Winnipeg's poetry scene because of his performances of new and old work," says Cariou. "I jumped at this chance to help bring these rich and uncannily honest poems back into print, along with some of Duncan's amazing newer work."

mahikan ka onot includes poetry from Mercredi's poetry quartet, *Spirit of the Wolf: Raise Your Voice* (1991), *Dreams of the Wolf in the*

City (1992), *Wolf and Shadows* (1995), and *Duke of Windsor: Wolf Sings the Blues* (1997).

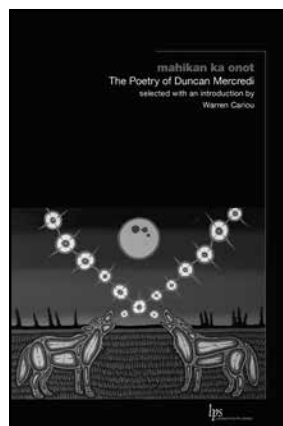
Though he is looking forward to seeing this book in print – and hopes that people will latch onto the newer work – Mercredi is not sorry that the plans to launch it have been postponed or shifted online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Thank the great mystery for the pandemic – it's kept me from having to appear in places I am uncomfortable going to including book launches and touring," Mercredi says.

Most recently, Mercredi embarked on a special coronavirus poetry project, which he posted to Facebook, and intends to publish as a chapbook, as well as a longer manuscript of poems that form a biography of sorts.

"So far, most of the pieces centre around Misipawistik 'before hydro.' I might have to rethink my idea of including pieces that take place after hydro, the Cranberry Portage years, the blue collar years, and my Winnipeg experiences," says Mercredi.

"It could end up being 300 pages of poetry and little stories of 'how the hell did I live this long?'" 🐾





Becoming Our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice, edited by Julie Nagam, Carly Lane, and Megan Tamati-Quennell reflects on international Indigenous methodologies in curatorial practice from the geographic spaces of Canada, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia to assert specific cultural knowledges, protocols and relationships. These knowledges are grounded in continuous international exchanges and draws on the breadth of work within the field.

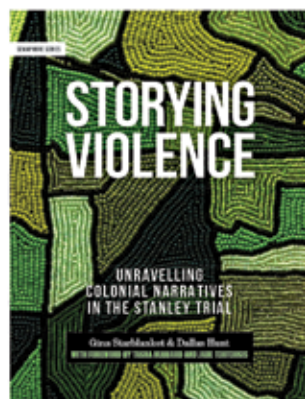
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—from the foreword by Dr. Kathy Absolon, Associate Professor and Director, Centre for Indigegogy, Indigenous Field of Study, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University

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MORE POETRY

THE BONES ARE THERE

Kate Sutherland

Sutherland's fourth collection of poetry takes the form of collage: pieced-together excerpts – from travellers' journals, ships' logs, textbooks and manuals, individual testimony, and fairy and folk tales – that tell stories of extinction, drawing connections between the demise of various animal species and human legacies of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, and misogyny.

(Book*hug Press, \$18.00 pb, 112 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77166-625-1)

BURDEN

Douglas Burnet Smith

These poems take readers to where journalism can't reach, as they tell the story of a 17-year-old British soldier who was shot for desertion during the First World War. Told by his friend, who was commanded to be a part of the firing squad, this account makes it clear that Private Herbert Burden committed no crime, but was suffering from PTSD. (University of Regina Press, \$19.95 pb, 80 pages, ISBN: 978-0-88977-772-9, available as ebook)

CHILDHOOD THOUGHTS AND WATER

John McDonald

Taking the forms of beat poetry, spoken word, performance art, and lyrical verse, this collection journeys into the memories and events of an urban Indigenous warrior's struggles to reconnect with a language and culture that seem always out of reach.

(BookLand Press, \$16.95 pb, 80 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77231-119-8, available as ebook)

CROOKED AT THE FAR END

Gerald Hill

This latest book in Hill's The Man from Saskatchewan series is playful and far-reaching. Early 20th-century celebrities from literature, music, and film gather at Emma Lake, a poet laureate details the events of his tenure, and the natural

world of a mountain is documented in a notebook.

(Radiant Press, \$20.00 pb, 84 pages, ISBN: 978-1-989274-41-5, available as ebook and audiobook)

ESKIMO PIE: A POETICS OF INUIT IDENTITY

Norma Dunning

This collection examines Dunning's life experience as an Inuk who was born and raised and who continues to live south of 60, as she maintains/reclaims the Inuit language and culture despite the many assimilative practices that Inuit continue to face.

(BookLand Press, \$16.95 pb, 72 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77231-113-6, available as ebook)

FOOTLIGHTS

Pearl Pirie

These poems trudge through the wreckage and the comic, searching for joy, facing fears, and shining light into the dark. Pirie juxtaposes perspectives of the tiny with the astronomical, and ranges from forest floors to city skies with images from nature and "civilized" life.

(Radiant Press, \$20.00 pb, 76 pages, ISBN: 978-1-989274-32-3, available as ebook and audiobook)

GOD WILL PROVIDE: WALKING BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT

Len Mac Lellan

Touching on subjects such as family, a feeling of home, the highs and lows of teaching, and how we treat others, Mac Lellan's poems are a launching pad for readers to reflect on their own lives and consider what is truly important in life. (FriesenPress, 126 pages, \$21.99 hc, ISBN: 978-1-5255-6595-3; \$18.49 pb, ISBN: 978-1-5255-6596-0; available as ebook)

NOTHING YOU CAN CARRY

Susan Alexander

These poems – rooted in a keen sense of place within the natural world – take an honest, sometimes ironic, and sometimes broken-hearted look at how the self and society are implicated in the

current climate crisis and the systemic complexities surrounding it.

(Thistledown Press, \$20.00 pb, 80 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77187-198-3)

OUTLASTING THE WEATHER: SELECTED AND NEW POEMS, 1994–2020

Patrick Friesen

Covering 26 years and selected from eight previous collections, these poems are infused with the kind of knowledge that comes from having weathered many seasons, having lived a life without the certainty of belief, while still remaining open to wonder.

(Anvil Press, \$20.00 pb, 208 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77214-153-5)

TREE TALK

Ariel Gordon

This long/found poem is the result of a project during which Gordon spent two days sitting on a patio on Sherbrook Street in Winnipeg, re-foliating an elm tree with snippets of poems written by her and passersby who felt inclined to contribute. The final assemblage asks the question: What does it mean to live in the urban forest?

(At Bay Press, \$19.95 hc, 96 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988168-27-2)

WALKING ON THE BEACHES OF TEMPORAL CANDY

Christian McPherson

In this collection, the meandering, often self-deprecating, poet considers and records moments of truth and insight – moments such as imagining the view from the top floor of a hospital or wearing his dead stepfather's jacket – as he registers his joys and regrets, and raises rants in postured outrage.

(At Bay Press, \$24.95 hc, 296 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988168-40-1)

Non-linear memory play explores addiction as a 'wild-eyed, howling beast'

Through dark matter, Beth Graham uses humour as a healing force

by Luis Reis

PRETTY GOBLINS

Beth Graham

Playwrights Canada Press

\$17.95 pb, 96 pages

ISBN: 978-0-36910-129-7

In her play *Pretty Goblins*, Edmonton-based playwright and actor Beth Graham explores themes of sisterhood, addiction, and the overwhelming effects of trauma.

The play's title, and her initial inspiration, came from the text of Christina Rossetti's poem, "Goblin Market," which also explores sisterly love and addiction.

"Christina Rossetti does not shy away from frightening material and the pain that comes with addiction," Graham says.

"In some ways, my admiration of the author's fearlessness gave me the courage to dive into painful subject matter. I have an emotional response to her poem whenever I read it. I drew on this response when I was writing. It fueled me."

The result is a non-linear memory play, moving fluidly from the present to the past and back again. Graham came to this structure indirectly.

"Initially, I didn't really know where I was going. I began by writing about the twin sisters growing up as an exploration. I tried to find moments in their lives that defined their relationship and tried to track where Lizzie's addiction came from," she explains.

"So, I had all these memory scenes that I didn't quite know what to do with. I felt that I needed to tie these memories to the present. There needed to be a reason for Laura to recall the past with her sister in order to make sense of her present moment. I needed the memories to become active."

Also tying the moments of the play together are a number of symbolic, natural images.

"One of the first images I envisioned, while writing *Pretty Goblins*, was of a woman on all fours howling at the moon. The woman couldn't even put what she was feeling into words. She could only howl. I wanted to understand what was making her howl," says Graham.

Nature appears in the play as both a destructive and a healing force.

"There is the dark, feral animal that exists within Lizzie in particular. She can't seem to control her coyote blood, passed on to her from her mother. This idea came from witnessing addiction



Beth Graham

in others. Addiction is a wild-eyed, howling beast. It has the ability to control someone from deep within and to tear them apart," explains Graham.

"Then, there is the connection that the sisters

have to the night sky. The sky is a place of solace and guidance. Lizzie loses sight of the sky when she is in the city."

Humour is also a healing force as it helps Graham, and the audience, get into and through the dark material. "It is so important for me to find the humour in a play, especially if the events are of a serious and dramatic nature. The humour reveals the resilience and humanity of the characters. It is what makes me (and hopefully an audience) fall in love with them," she says.

"It took me a while before I could start writing the more painful scenes. Lizzie and Laura go through a lot together. But, I had to uncover the pain because that's what fuels Lizzie's addiction. Pain is what binds the sisters together and it is what tears them apart." 🌿



MORE DRAMA

BUG

Yolanda Bonnell

This solo performance and artistic ceremony highlights the ongoing effects of colonialism and intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous women, as it presents the Girl and her efforts to overcome her addictions, and the Mother, who recounts memories during Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

(Scirocco Drama-JGS Publishing, \$15.95 pb, 72 pages, ISBN: 978-1-927922-66-8)

THE EX-BOYFRIEND YARD SALE

Haley McGee

This hilarious and daring autobiographical play smashes together personal divulgements, mathematics, interviews with Haley's ex-boyfriends, economics, and the politics of commerce in a quest to determine what romantic relationships

are actually worth, to calculate the cost of love.

(Scirocco Drama-JGS Publishing, \$15.95 pb, 72 pages, ISBN: 978-1-927922-65-1)

FORGET ME NOT

Ronnie Burkett

Internationally renowned playwright and puppeteer Burkett has created a world, "The New Now," where written language is forbidden and forgotten, and those who want love letters written must go to the secret and illegal camp of She, the Keeper of the Lost Hand.

(Playwrights Canada, \$19.95 pb, 96 pages, ISBN: 978-0-36910-157-0)

SERVING ELIZABETH

Marcia Johnson

Tia, a Kenyan-Canadian film student, is an intern in London on the production of a series about Queen Elizabeth, when she learns about an episode in 1952, when

Princess Elizabeth visited Kenya and Mercy, a restaurant owner and staunch anti-monarchist, was asked to cook for her. (Scirocco Drama-JGS Publishing, \$15.95 pb, 72 pages, ISBN: 978-1-927922-62-0)

SUITCASE/ADRENALINE

Ahmad Meree

These two powerful plays examine the effects of war and the refugee experience. *Suitcase* urges audiences to reassess the significance of their possessions, their relationships, and all they have left behind. *Adrenaline* follows Jaber, a refugee from Syria preparing to celebrate his first New Year's Eve in Canada.

(Scirocco Drama-JGS Publishing, \$15.95 pb, 72 pages, ISBN: 978-1-927922-64-4)



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BRAVE & BRILLIANT
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Ken Hunt

978-1-77385-054-2 PB | \$18.99 CAD
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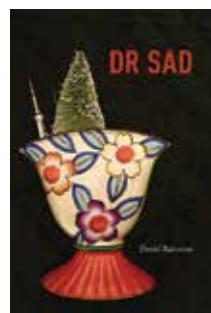
The hands of humans split the atom and reshaped the world. This is the history of nuclear discovery told in necropastoral poetry from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene.



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Gil McElroy

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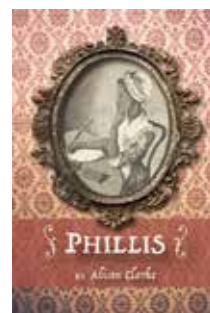
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Stephen is a gay, middle aged poetry teacher with a new job and an HIV diagnosis. This tragicomic novel is an intimate examination of the difference between living life and simply enduring it.



PHILLIS
Alison Clarke

978-1-77385-135-8 PB | \$18.99 CAD
98 pages

These poems reach through time to tell the remarkable story of Phillis Wheatley, the first African American woman to publish a book of poetry, and who did so while she was enslaved.



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Homage to Phillis Wheatley casts poet, who was enslaved, as historical role model

Alison Clarke's first poetry collection links Wheatley to other key Black historical figures

by Steve Locke

PHILLIS

Alison Clarke

University of Calgary Press

\$18.99 pb, 158 pages

ISBN: 978-1-77385-135-8

Available as an ebook

A poet, a slave. An ode to freedom. In Alison Clarke's first poetry collection, *Phillis*, the award-winning YA author of *The Sisterhood* series draws from her work as a spoken word artist and member of Alberta's Stroll of Poets to craft an homage to Phillis Wheatley, the first African-American woman to publish a book of poetry, who, remarkably, did so while enslaved.

"I found her to be an interesting person to write about," says Clarke. "Many people could learn from Phillis – what she went through, what she had to do to not only publish her book of poetry, but to get her freedom."

Reaching through time to embody Wheatley's first-person voice, Clarke crafts pieces that explore a more intimate view of a writing career alongside the brutal injustices of slavery than Wheatley herself expressed in the 1773 publication of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*.

Wheatley was once critiqued for leaving out those personal details – her voice is illuminated in pieces such as "Voyage" where Clarke writes the response, "It's too painful. Why write about a life that was ripped from you? I can't. I won't. I deal, I sleep with enough ghosts hanging about me."

In the first section of *Phillis*, Clarke explores how her character's poetic voice was shaped by the teachings of Western languages and literary figures, while still retaining the stories and memories of her homeland. What seems most significant about the character is that

rather than losing a sense of self, Wheatley was able to adapt, be empowered, and succeed against her own oppression.

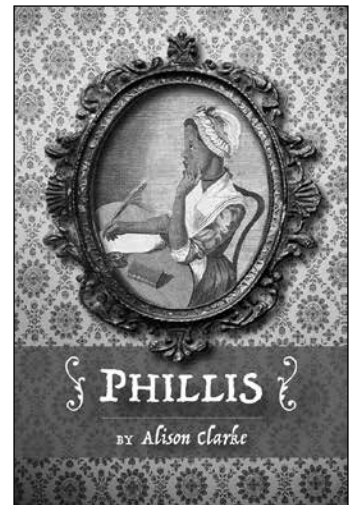
Clarke says, "I think it was her belief in her Ancestors, and connection to her parents, even though they were far away and she would never see them again. In Black culture, in North America, the West Indies, as well as in countries in Africa, there is a strong belief about the importance of the Ancestors."

This belief in the importance of historical role models carries into the second section, in which the poems leave Wheatley's point of view to dip into other figures in African American history, whose voices are heard carrying her legacy in their own thoughts and actions.

In "Blessings: 1911," Clarke speaks through Harriet Tubman to honour Wheatley: "I might not be able to read or write, but I know Phillis that you were the first, to lead our people out of the wilderness to the Promised Land. It starts with one."

For Clarke, Wheatley's legacy lives in a voice that speaks through generations of empowerment and resistance, and is heard by those who speak back as they march in support of Black lives today.

"I think *Phillis* shows people protesting today that things are possible, but we still have a long way to go," says Clarke. "The fact that she died alone, with a child at her breast, even though she was very accomplished, illustrates the fact that then, and even now, opportunities for people of colour are lacking, and very much a challenge to grasp." 🌿



Alison Clarke

Writing across multiple genres no small task – but managing schedules and headspace helps

David A. Robertson finds ‘commonality that makes it comfortable’ to work with different types of writing

by David Jón Fuller

THE BARREN GROUNDS, *Book 1 of The Misewa Saga*

David A. Robertson

Puffin Canada

\$21.99 hc, 256 pages

ISBN: 978-0-7352-6610-0

Available as an ebook and an audiobook

BLACK WATER:

Family, Legacy, and Blood Memory

David A. Robertson

HarperCollins Publishers

\$32.99 hc, 288 pages

ISBN: 978-1-4434-5776-7

Available as an ebook and an audiobook

BREAKDOWN,

The Reckoner Rises series

David A. Robertson

Illustrated by Scott B. Henderson

HighWater Press

\$21.95 pb, 64 pages

ISBN: 978-1-55379-890-3

ĖKOSPĪ KĀ KĪ PEKOWĀK / **WHEN WE WERE ALONE**

David A. Robertson

Translated by Marsha Blacksmith

HighWater Press

\$21.95 hc, 32 pages

ISBN: 978-1-55379-905-4

THE EVOLUTION OF ALICE,

Reissued Edition

David A. Robertson

HighWater Press

\$19.95 pb, 240 pages

ISBN: 978-1-55379-917-7

Available as an ebook and audiobook

Winnipeg-based David A. Robertson is a busy guy these days.

For starters, he has three new books coming out this fall. There's *The Barren Grounds*, Book 1 of The Misewa Saga series, a middle grade fantasy novel; *Breakdown*, the first graphic novel in his The Reckoner Rises series; and his memoir *Black Water: Family, Legacy, and Blood Memory*.



David A. Robertson

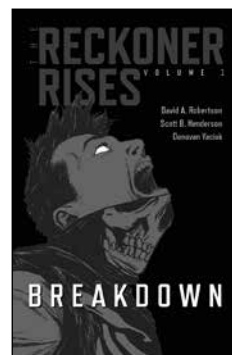
Robertson's own life, and that of his father, is also being shared in his five-episode CBC podcast, *Kiwew* (the title is a Cree word meaning "he goes home").

Aside from the new works, he also has a new edition of his award-winning debut novel, *The Evolution of Alice*, featuring a new final chapter; a Cree-English edition of his Governor General's Literary Award-winning picture book, *When We Were Alone*; and German editions of *When We Were Alone* and *Strangers*, the first YA novel in his The Reckoner trilogy.

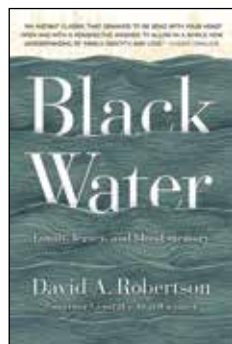
How does he juggle so many different genres? "I've been adapting to different types of writing over my career, but there's also a commonality that makes it comfortable," Robertson says. "And that's trying to find the thread – what the narrative is – that holds the story together. I don't think it's that different in non-fiction and fiction, in a way – because you have to think about what holds it all together, and you still need to have the journey."

Telling the story of his life and writing fiction are not so very different, he says. "It's about finding the truth in the story, but it's also about finding the truth in what you want to say."

Robertson's early writing took the form of graphic novels, and his love for that form continues in his new



The Reckoner Rises series, which continues the story of Cole Harper, a First Nations youth with severe anxiety and the power and desire to save his community. In Robertson's The Reckoner trilogy of YA novels, Cole was a superhero figure with a great origin story, so he is a good fit for comics.



Robertson's adult novel, *The Evolution of Alice*, was first published in 2014 and garnered acclaim from readers and critics. Unsurprisingly, he considered writing a sequel to the open-ended novel about Alice, her daughters, and her friend Gideon.

"The characters always seemed to be real to me," he says. "That's one of the things I heard most from people who read the book."

He started a sequel, but says, "I really just wanted to drop in on them and see how they're doing."

The result was a short story, published in *Prairie Fire* in 2017, which became the final chapter of the novel in the new edition.

And now, Robertson is writing for middle grade readers, too. *The Barren Grounds* tells of two foster kids, Morgan and Eli, who find their way into another world, a sort of Indigenous Narnia, where their adventures help them to understand issues of identity and home – familiar territory for Robertson.

With so many projects on the go recently, on top of working a day job and parenting, Robertson says he has to schedule his time carefully. "I can't work on a middle grade fantasy, like *The Barren Grounds*, and right after work on the memoir, and then work on the graphic novels."

He spaces his writing times out. "For me, the important thing is getting into the right headspace, because the writing styles are different, the characters are different, the language has to be different."

Sadly, as Robertson worked on his memoir and podcast, his father passed away at the end of 2019. On top of the enormous effect that had on him, he says he also had to consider whether, and how, it would change the work on *Black Water* and *Kiwew*.

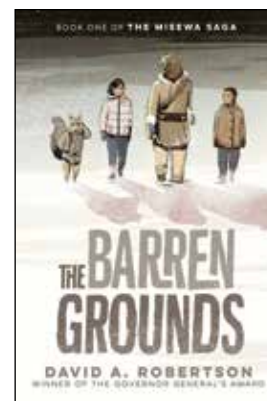
The podcast, especially the last episode, changed more than the memoir. "I thought it was nice to take the opportunity, as hard as it was to write that episode and perform it, to be able to really honour him," says Robertson. "In the end, it was a good testament to the man that he was, the father that he was. I was glad to be able to do that, as much as I would prefer not to have had to do that."

Now, he says, he frequently re-listens to that episode. "It helps me to feel like he's with me."

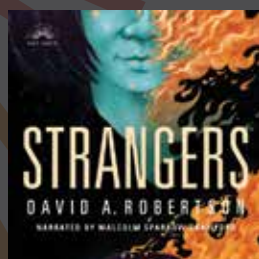
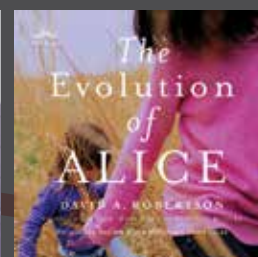
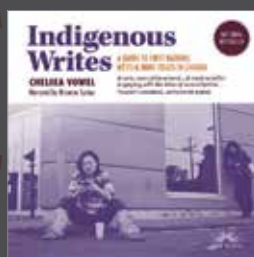
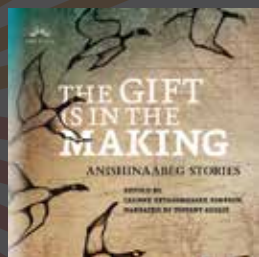
The memoir wasn't affected as much, although he did rewrite the epilogue, as a goodbye to his dad. "It allowed me to celebrate his life," he says.

Currently, as Robertson gears up for a busy fall, like many authors he is navigating a new reality for book-related events as gatherings may be restricted owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, he's looking forward to introducing three new books to readers.

"I'm excited for each one for different reasons," he says, "and I'm proud of them." 🌿



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50-year-old case of two men disappearing revisited, investigated from Indigenous perspective

Community in La Ronge disbelieved RCMP report, contributed to authors' work

by Margaret Anne Fehr

COLD CASE NORTH:

The Search for James Brady and Absolom Halkett

Michael Nest, with Deanna Reder and Eric Bell

University of Regina Press

318 pages, with b/w photos, maps, index

\$89.00 hc, ISBN: 978-0-88977-754-5

\$24.95 pb, ISBN: 978-0-88977-749-1

Available as an ebook

Cold Case North: *The Search for James Brady and Absolom Halkett* by Michael Nest with co-authors Deanna Reder and Eric Bell peels back over five decades of history by revisiting the cold case that has hung like an impenetrable cloud over La Ronge, Saskatchewan, since 1967.

It was in June of that year that James Brady and Abbie (Absolom) Halkett, two prominent members of the Métis and Cree community on contract to a mining company, were airlifted to one of the Foster Lakes to undertake prospecting in the northern region. Their boss would arrive a week later to find the camp deserted and no trace of the two men.

The RCMP conducted an extensive two-week search but abandoned it, concluding that Brady and Halkett had lost their way in the bush, and the case was deemed unsolvable.

Deanna Reder, *Cold Case North* co-author and Cree-Métis literary critic and associate professor at Simon Fraser University, has strong family ties to La Ronge and environs, and was approached by her uncle Frank Tomkins – then almost 90 years old – to investigate the case from an Indigenous perspective.

Realizing that a project of this scope would need more human resources, Reder enlisted her cousin Eric Bell – a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and owner of La Ronge Emergency Medical Services – to provide access to local people and knowledge of the area, and



Michael Nest



Deanna Reder



Eric Bell

Australian freelance researcher and author Michael Nest to document their findings.

“I’d just arrived in Canada, and it was literally three days when Deanna called and asked if I was interested in this cold case,” says Nest. “Deanna told me about the disappearance of Jim and Abbie – both Indigenous activists and prospectors – and how the dominant explanation centred on a conspiracy by white business partners involved with them in a mining venture.”

What followed was an itinerary of on-site investigations, interviews with residents of La Ronge, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Lower Foster Lake; many phone calls and emails; and a trip to the Glenbow Archives in Calgary where

Jim Brady’s papers are kept. Two and a half years later, a full draft of the manuscript was ready.

La Ronge citizens, who had never believed the RCMP’s official report that concluded Jim and Abby simply got lost, were initially wary of further investigations.

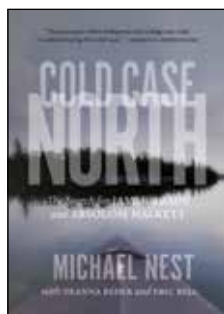
Nest states, “Investigating missing persons cases, especially when they are presumed murdered, is a delicate matter. The challenges are manifestly greater when coming in as an outsider and when the missing are Indigenous, for Aboriginal communities have rightly learnt

to be skeptical of police and other investigators.”

Indigenous knowledge, dismissed by the original investigators, was essential to getting the full story. Working together with people who know the land was key.

“*Cold Case North* is a story about the outdoors and local knowledge: how to read the land to look for clues, what those clues can tell us, and how people behave when in the bush,” Nest says.

“Our collaboration with co-author Eric Bell, and other Cree and Métis people who gave us information, was invaluable in this regard.” 🌿



Play showcasing Viola Desmond's historical stand grew to span period of four decades

Andrea Scott's play shares how 'activism can be a simple act of quiet resistance to inequality'

by Paula E. Kirman

CONTROLLED DAMAGE

Andrea Scott

Scirocco Drama-JGS Publishing

\$15.95 pb, 104 pages

ISBN: 978-1-927922-3-7

Viola Desmond made history in 1946 when she refused to leave a whites-only area of the Roseland Theatre, a movie house in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. She was then convicted of a minor tax violation for the one-cent tax difference between the seat she paid for and the more expensive seat she used.

Desmond's confrontation of racial segregation and discrimination was a catalyst for the modern civil rights movement in Canada.

"We owe her a debt of gratitude," says Toronto playwright and screenwriter Andrea Scott, whose play *Controlled Damage* explores Desmond's life and act of bravery. "A lot of the freedoms we take for granted are the result of her standing up for herself and speaking truth to power."

The play was originally to be written for children. However, like many literary plans, things went in another direction.

"After many years, drafts, and theatre residencies," says Scott,

"*Controlled Damage* transitioned into an adult two-act play with 23 characters played by 10 actors in a story that spanned four decades."

The world premiere of the play was by Neptune Theatre in Halifax in February of 2020, where it sold out before opening night. However, *Controlled Damage* was set to be published even before the production was secured. A lunch meeting with her publisher about a piece in a collection of plays led to a mention of *Controlled Damage*.

"She asked about the play, and as I described one scene I'd recently finished, her eyes welled with tears and she said, 'I think we'll want to publish that play. That sounds so beautiful,'" Scott explains.

"It felt amazing and validating to have Scirocco Drama believe in the potential and beauty of my work."

The play's title has multiple meanings. "I've had people slip and call it *Damage Control* and I kind of love that mistake," Scott says. "Controlled damage is the process by which

the natural, strong fibres of Afro-Canadian hair are broken down with chemicals in order to make it soft and easy to manage. To me that is a perfect analogy of what Canada tried to do to Viola Desmond in 1946 – break down her natural strength and resistance to conformity."

Scott hopes people experiencing her play "understand that activism



can be a simple act of quiet resistance to inequality," she says. "What I hope readers/audiences take away from the play is the complicated history of racial injustice in our country, where the voices of the marginalized are silenced by not acknowledging the racism that has kept Black, Indigenous, and people of colour from reaching their best potential."

And today, with Black Lives Matter protests against the continued oppression of systemic racism gaining momentum, Scott adds, "*Controlled Damage* should remind us all not to be complacent about our rights and freedoms again. Being sweet, kind, and smiling is no longer enough to be treated with fairness."

"The control we thought we had may have been an illusion, and now it's time to stand up, straighten our spine, and fight. Control is never given willingly, it must be taken. I hope everyone sees/reads this play and knows that their voice has more power than they think." 🌿



Andrea Scott

Strong sense of Manitoba's Interlake's chilly landscapes in new crime novel

Tale follows official murder investigation alongside book club members' sleuthing

by Shirley Byers

AND WE SHALL HAVE SNOW, a Roxanne Calloway Mystery

Raye Anderson

Signature Editions

\$17.95 pb, 260 pages

ISBN: 978-1-77324-066-4

Available as an ebook

Raye Anderson's crime novel *And We Shall Have Snow* – the first in her Roxanne Calloway Mystery series – is set in the Manitoba Interlake area, one of the winteriest of locations in a wintry land. "I've always liked winter," says Manitoba-based Anderson.

And much of the business of the novel engages with various aspects of winter – frigid temperatures, frozen lakes, and snow.



Picture an isolated, snow-covered dump. The ideal place to conceal a murdered body? A body in pieces? Somebody thought so.

The village dump is where the remains of the beautiful but not always beloved Stella Magnusson are found. A local girl, Stella was the creator of an annual music festival, an event that brought a little money and a little grief to the town.

Corporal Calloway and her team begin an official investigation. Sasha, Margo, Phyllis, Panda, Annie, and Roberta, members of a local book group, launch their own investigation. Sometimes the edges of the two endeavours rub up against each other, sometimes they overlap. It's a small town, and that's how small towns work.

Anderson was born in Scotland, and she moved to Manitoba's Interlake in 2007.

She has a strong background in theatre, having managed theatre schools in Calgary, Ottawa, and Winnipeg, and she has written scripts with students, historical plays for Parks Canada, and an award-winning video script.

When she moved to the Interlake, she got involved in drawing and painting, but missed writing.

"I started doing writing exercises to get going again, with a friend, and one week the assignment was to write something in a style that we liked to read. I like to read murder mysteries, so I thought I'd try that," she explains.

The result was the first chapter of *And We Shall Have Snow*. "I knew right away that it was going to be a book. Over the next seven months I wrote a chapter a week. It felt like the book was writing itself. It was a complete surprise – a good surprise."

Anderson writes with a combination of knowing and not knowing.

"I make the story up as I go along. I need to know exactly where the story will take place, who dies first, and where the body is found in order to start, but that's all," she says. "I am currently writing the final chapters of Book 2, and I still don't know what will happen to one of the characters. I won't know for sure until I write it."

That love of the genre will take her places.

"I love crime fiction," Anderson says. "I think it's underrated as a literary form. I learn so much about life in different countries from reading crime novels."

And readers will learn a lot about the Interlake and human nature from Anderson.

"I hope to capture a strong sense of place in my stories. I'm curious as to how people behave under stress (it's that drama background)," she says, "and I like the juxtaposition of a place that looks beautiful but is also dangerous." ❧



Raye Anderson

Prairie books worldwide

To coincide with Canada's virtual presence at Frankfurt Book Fair 2020 and to promote Canada's Guest of Honour status in 2021, *Prairie books NOW* has rounded up a selection of titles by Prairie authors and publishers that have recently been or are soon to be published in German editions. Visit prairiebooksnow.ca for over a dozen more titles, as well as short descriptions of each book.

CHOR DER PILZE by Hiromi Goto, translated by Karen Gerwig

CHORUS OF MUSHROOMS (published in Canada by NeWest Press)
(Cass Verlag, €22 hc, 272 pages, ISBN: 978-3-944751-24-5)

JONNY APPLESEED by Joshua Whitehead, translated by Andreas Diesel

JONNY APPLESEED (published in Canada by Arsenal Pulp Press)
(Albina Verlag, €18 pb, 272 pages, ISBN: 978-3-86300293-0)

EIN KOMPLIZIERTER AKT DER LIEBE by Miriam Toews, translated by Christiane Buchner

A COMPLICATED KINDNESS (published in Canada by Knopf)
(Atlantik Verlag, €12.90 pb, 304 pages, ISBN: 978-3-45500675-9)

WAS IN JENER NACHT GESCHAH by Katherena Vermette, translated by Kathrin Razum

THE BREAK (published in Canada by House of Anansi Press)
(btb Verlag [Random House], €20 hc, 416 pages, ISBN: 978-3-44275821-0, available as ebook)

JETZT ENTSPANN DICH MAL! WARUM WIR GETROST AUFHÖREN KÖNNEN, ANGST VOR FALSCHEN ENTSCHEIDUNGEN ZU HABEN by Timothy Caulfield

RELAX, DAMMIT! A USER'S GUIDE TO THE AGE OF ANXIETY (published in Canada by Penguin Canada)
(mvg Verlag, €16.99 pb, 352 pages, ISBN: 978-3-74740227-6, available as ebook)

UNTER DER MITTERNACHTSSONNE: PORTRÄTS INDIGENER GEMEINSCHAFTEN IN KANADA by Paul Seesequasis, translated by Leon Mengden

BLANKET TOSS UNDER MIDNIGHT SUN: PORTRAITS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN EIGHT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES (published in Canada by Alfred A. Knopf Canada)
(btb Verlag [Random House], €25 hc, 192 pages, ISBN: 978-3-44275889-0, available as ebook)

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Interdisciplinary, holistic approach to Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 6th Call to Action

Editors hope to create a country 'in which violence against children is unthinkable'

by Paula E. Kirman

DECOLONIZING DISCIPLINE:

Children, Corporal Punishment, Christian Theologies, and Reconciliation

Edited by Valerie E. Michaelson and Joan E. Durrant

University of Manitoba Press

\$31.95 pb, 288 pages

ISBN: 978-0-88755-865-8

Available as an ebook



Valerie E. Michaelson



Joan E. Durrant

that are harmful – such as corporal punishment.

“I thought, ‘Why is this a call to action for the government? The church needs to own this one.’”

Michaelson contacted Durrant,

a professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, and together they reached out to others for guidance, such as Mark MacDonald.

MacDonald was then the Anglican Indigenous Bishop and is now the Archbishop of the newly formed, self-determining Indigenous church within the Anglican Church of Canada, and he ensured that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis voices were kept at the centre of the book.

“Having Indigenous ancestry from both his mother and father, and growing up among the Ojibway people, Bishop Mark has first-hand experience of the impact of the residential schools on the lives of families, and the ways that Indigenous concerns are woven into the fabric of Canadian life,” Michaelson explains.

A two-day forum at Queen's University led to *Decolonizing Discipline*.

Durrant and Michaelson wanted readers to be able to examine the issue holistically. So, three distinct strands of expertise are woven together: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis knowledges and lived experiences; academic research evidence, with several of the authors from the health sciences; and the perspectives of church leaders and Christian theologians.

Durrant notes, “It's very unusual to have these three distinct groups collaborating on a common project, but every author we invited to participate was very excited about the opportunity to contribute to

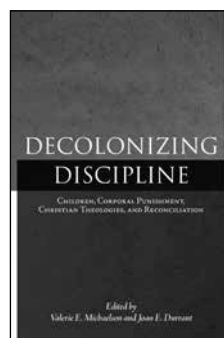
such an interdisciplinary exploration of the issue. When we put all the pieces together, a powerful narrative began to emerge.”

Despite the evidence of the lifelong harm corporal punishment causes children, Canada has still not repealed Section 43.

“This book is just a very early step in true reconciliation,” Michaelson

says. “Our hope is that this work will push boundaries, begin conversations, and help bring an end to harmful practices that have been taken for granted as normal.

“Ultimately, our goal is to participate in shaping this country into one in which violence against children is unthinkable. Illuminating some of the forces that have contributed to the colonization of discipline and imagining a new way forward is one step toward this goal.”

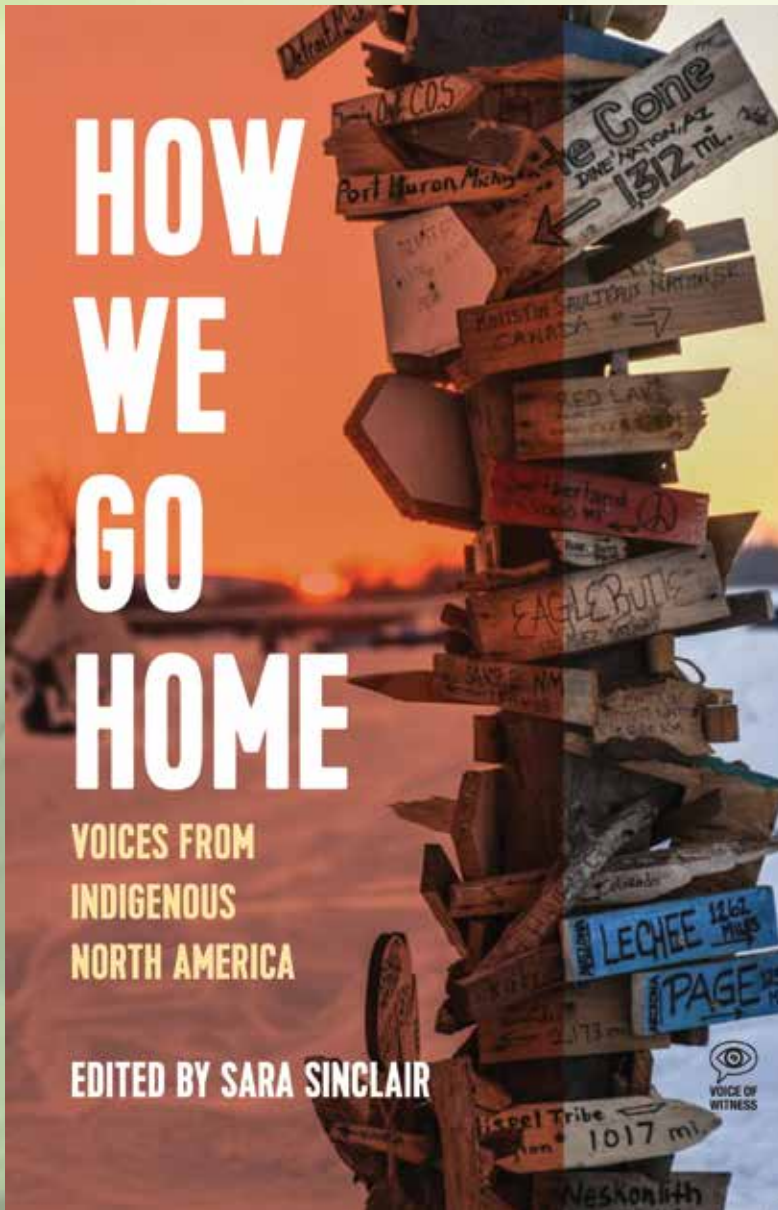


Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released 94 Calls to Action in June of 2015, urging reform of policies and programs in order to repair harms caused by residential schools. Call to Action 6 addresses repealing Section 43 of Canada's Criminal Code, which allows the corporal punishment of children. Editors Valerie E. Michaelson and Joan E. Durrant responded to this call by bringing together diverse voices in *Decolonizing Discipline: Children, Corporal Punishment, Christian Theologies, and Reconciliation*.

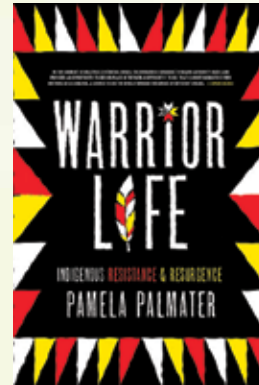
When the TRC Calls to Action were released, Michaelson, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Sciences at Brock University, spent a lot of time thinking about the call to repeal Section 43.

“It surprised me – not because it was a Call to Action, but because it was a call to the Government of Canada,” she says. “My experiences in the church and studying theology gave me some insight into the power of theological messages, and how they can justify behaviours

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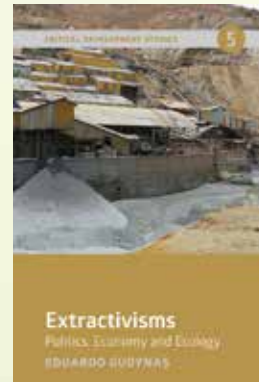


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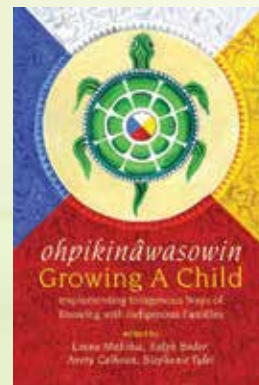


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Part exploration, part memoir, David Elias's latest book answers the riddle of why barns are often red

Aside from being homes for animals, Elias finds barns to be 'places of quiet refuge and even spiritual reflection'

by Shirley Byers

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BARN:

A Voyage of Discovery and Contemplation

David Elias

Great Plains Publications

\$24.95 pb, 192 pages

ISBN: 978-1-77337-050-7

Manitoba author David Elias has had plenty of barn time in his life. In his new book, *The Truth About The Barn: A Voyage of Discovery and Contemplation*, he tells how as a teen, he toiled one long summer with his grandfather, an older brother, and a hired man dismantling a turkey barn – a colossal structure, almost 300 feet long and wide as a football field – board by board, nail by nail.

Those nails were almost impossible to remove and each one had to be saved because the plan, and it was successful, was to haul the barn pieces to a new site on another farm and put it back together, board by board, nail by nail. Elias's father, who created the plan, didn't participate in the actual labour, Elias says. "That wasn't his style. He was more of an idea man."

So with that, and other less-than-cool barn experiences, the young Elias came to associate barns with menial and distasteful tasks. He never dreamed that one day he would seek out barns and think of them, as he now does, "as places of quiet refuge and even spiritual reflection."

There were several incidents that probably pointed him in that direction, he says. One happened on a visit to the Mennonite village of Neubergthal in southern Manitoba, which has been designated a National Historic Site. There he toured a number of restored buildings including a housebarn.

He discovered that the barn portion of the dwelling had been moved there from another village many miles to the west, where it had originally stood. "When I made inquiries as to which particular village it had come from, I was told that it was Neuhorst – the village my mother grew up in! That experience stayed with me and kind of got things started," he says.

When his short non-fiction piece "The Idea of the Barn" presented at a writers' conference left listeners wanting more, Elias set to work.

The Truth About The Barn is an exploration and celebration of the barn: the parts of the barn (including the mangers, loft, cupola, and weather vane), barns in books and movies, animals that live in barns, barns that have been repurposed, the spiritual experience of barns.

It is also part memoir, providing insights into Elias's family life as a child and stories of significant experiences that took place in, around, and behind the barn.

A section on the construction of the barn offers an explanation as to why barns are almost always red. Frugal farmers mixed their own paint from skim milk, lime, boiled linseed oil, salt, and ochre. The precise recipe is included.

Elias is primarily known as a fiction writer, with six books previously published. His most recent novel,

Elizabeth of Bohemia, was shortlisted for the Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction and the Foreword INDIES Award – Historical (Adult Fiction).

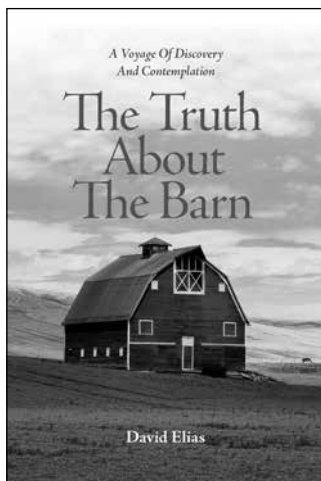
These days he has been working on poetry, a children's book, another historical novel about Elizabeth's brother, Henry, and another non-fiction book.

"So I'm keeping busy." 🌿



David Elias

ANTHONY MARK



Oral history of Madeeha Hafez Albatta ‘communicates the collective Palestinian story’

A White Lie is first book in series of seven to chronicle lives of ordinary people in Gaza

by Laura Kupcis

A WHITE LIE

Madeeha Hafez Albatta

Women's Voices from Gaza Series

Edited by Barbara Bill and Ghada Ageel

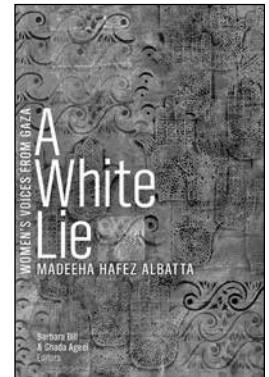
University of Alberta Press

\$24.99 pb, 236 pages

with b/w photos, foreword, introduction, chronology, notes, glossary, bibliography

ISBN: 978-1-77212-492-7

Available as an ebook



the importance of education, Albatta rallied the community to guarantee the right to education for thousands of refugee children arriving in Gaza in 1948.

“Madeeha’s narrative was selected to be first in this series because her life experience and personality overlaps with, corresponds to, and unites all of the women represented (whether a native Gazan, a refugee, a mother of prisoners, a villager, or an exiled returnee),” Ageel says. “To a large extent her life journey corresponds to and communicates the collective Palestinian story.”

Albatta witnessed some of the most turbulent periods of Palestine’s recent history while bravely living as a teacher and principal, an activist and a community organizer, and a mother.

“Her story reveals how these periods shaped Madeeha’s life, forcing her to take unimaginable decisions and actions to safeguard her family and what remains of Palestine,” says Ageel. “Her narrative embraces very fine details of ways of Palestinian collective life under different eras, unearthing vibrant culture, old traditions, customs, and important and critical features of Palestinian society that readers rarely hear of.”

The series depicts the history of Gaza from the viewpoint of its people, Ageel says, giving “a reading of the human history beyond and behind chronologies.”

Ageel and her co-editor Barbara Bill met in Gaza, where Ageel was Bill’s Arabic teacher. Over the course of three years, they met, interviewed, and translated and transcribed the oral histories of seven Palestinian women.

Ageel notes there is a distinct overlap across and among the seven testimonies, forming a profound collective memory of the shared Palestinian experience.

“Read on its own, each individual story represents the experience of several generations,” she says. “The entire series of seven, however, tells a story of a people. It breaks down statistics and dates and a chronology of conflict into concrete details of actual survival and resistance, complex human emotions, specific difficult choices.”

Through first-hand accounts of Palestinian women, the Women’s Voices from Gaza series presents the lives of ordinary people from the late 1920s until the early 2000s, forging an understanding of the history, culture, and traditions of Palestine.



Madeeha Hafez Albatta

“The collection of stories, set in Gaza, allows the world to step inside the lives of the women of Palestine and learn first-hand what would otherwise remain buried in the hearts of those unable to access an audience,” co-editor Dr. Ghada Ageel says. “The series is a journey into the lives of Palestinian women filled as equally with uncertainty and loss as they are with hope.”

In total, seven stories will be published in this series.

The first book, *A White Lie*, is the story of Madeeha Hafez Albatta (1924–2011).

Albatta was raised in Khan Younis, a town in the southern area of the Gaza Strip. A “little white lie” she told as a schoolgirl changed the entire course of her life, affording her the opportunity to attend college. Through hard work and determination, she became a

teacher while still a teenager.

By the age of 22, she was promoted to school principal, the youngest in Gazan history. Always recognizing



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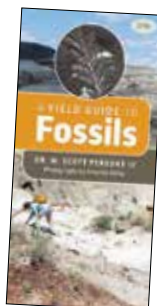
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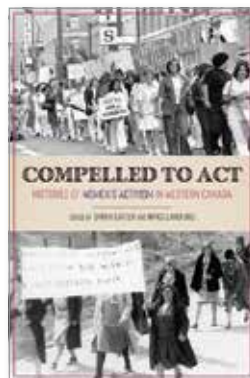
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CHALK DUST: MEMOIRS OF A PRAIRIE TEACHER

Dianne Miller

This collection of stories by a Prairie teacher, vice-principal, and principal recalls Miller's full educational journey, first as a student and then as a long-time educator. Miller is both entertaining and introspective as she considers the personal, pedagogical, and societal changes she experienced over the years. (Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, \$19.95 pb, 152 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988783-51-2)

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This poignant memoir tells how Dominique Rankin, intended to succeed his father as Hereditary Chief and Medicine Man, was torn from his family and Algonquin upbringing at the age of eight, and entrusted to the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school for Indigenous

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Edited by Charlotte Schallié, Helga Thorson, and Andrea van Noord

This book with 21 contributors brings together scholarship, activism, poetry, and personal narratives from some of the last living survivors of the Holocaust to tackle the changing face of genocide and human rights education in the 21st century. (University of Regina Press, 320 pages, \$89.00 hc, ISBN: 978-0-88977-770-5; \$39.95 pb, ISBN: 978-0-88977-764-4; available as ebook)

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

BEAVER, BISON, HORSE: THE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND ECOLOGY OF THE NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS

R. Grace Morgan

This interdisciplinary account of the ecological relationships the Indigenous Peoples of the Plains had to the beaver, bison, horse, and their habitat for thousands of years prior to contact is a game-changer, and provides critical information on how the beaver manage water systems. The book includes a foreword by James Daschuk and an afterword by Cristina Eisenberg. (University of Regina Press, 292 pages, figures, maps, photos, references, \$89.00 hc, ISBN: 978-0-88977-794-1; \$34.95 pb, ISBN: 978-0-88977-788-0; available as ebook)

A BETTER JUSTICE? COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR CRIMINALIZED WOMEN

Amanda Nelund

This book offers a concise and carefully reasoned analysis of alternative justice programs for criminalized women, specifically those in Winnipeg, drawing on interviews with staff and documents from alternative justice agencies. Nelund calls attention to the potential these programs have for greater social justice. (UBC Press, \$75.00 hc, 198 pages, ISBN: 978-0-7748-6362-9, available as ebook)

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Weaving text, testimony, and experience together, with evidence drawn from archival material, oral history, and environmental observation, Luby explores Canada's hydroelectric boom in the Lake of the Woods area, revealing that it was the inverse of a boom for Indigenous communities along the Winnipeg River. (University of Manitoba Press, \$27.95 pb, 256 pages, ISBN: 978-0-88755-874-0, available as ebook)

DETROIT'S HIDDEN CHANNELS: THE POWER OF FRENCH-INDIGENOUS FAMILIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Karen L. Marrero

This book examines the role of French-Indigenous kinship networks in Detroit's development as a site of singular political and economic importance in the continental interior. The influence of these networks grew as members diverted imperial resources to bolster an alternative configuration of power relations that crossed Indigenous and Euro-American nations. (University of Manitoba Press, \$31.95 pb, 302 pages, ISBN: 978-0-88755-908-2)

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This collection of personal narratives about the refugee experience in Canada includes critical perspectives from authors from diverse backgrounds, including refugees, advocates, front-line workers, private sponsors, and civil servants. These stories humanize the global refugee crisis and challenge readers to reflect on the

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KURDISH WOMEN'S STORIES

Edited by Houzan Mahmoud

This collection gives 25 women, ranging from 20 to 70 years of age, authorial freedom to write about their personal experiences, including imprisonment, exile, disappearances of loved ones, gender-based violence, uprisings, feminist activism, and armed resistance, from 1960 to today. (University of Alberta Press, \$29.99 pb, 224 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77212-536-8, available as ebook)

NONE OF THE ABOVE: NONRELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE US AND CANADA

Joel Thiessen and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme

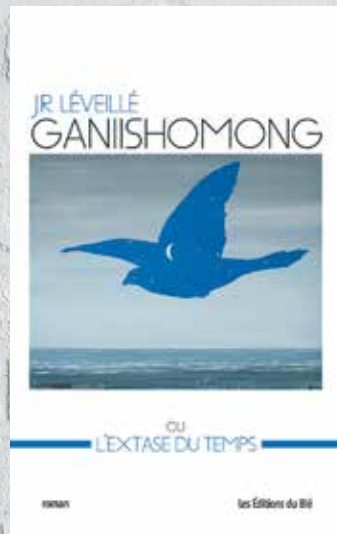
The authors look at survey and interview data to explore how a nonreligious identity affects a variety of aspects of daily life in the United States and Canada in sometimes similar and sometimes different ways, offering insights to illuminate societal and political trends. (University of Regina Press, \$34.95 pb, 266 pages, with tables, figures, notes appendices, bibliography, index, ISBN: 978-0-88977-748-4, available as ebook)

DES NOUVEAUTÉS EN FRANÇAIS



***Et fuir encore* - Rossel Vien - Nouvelles - 186 p.**

Cette réédition du recueil réhabilite la mémoire et l'œuvre de Rossel Vien et rappelle, s'il en est besoin, que l'auteur peut être reconnu comme un des pionniers de l'écriture homosexuelle.



***Ganiishomong* - J.R. Léveillé - Roman - 156 p.**

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Une exploration linguistique, émotive et naturelle des lieux où l'autrice a transité au cours de sa vie. Une rose des vents d'une grande géographie de l'intime, du féminin et du social.

Ces livres sont publiés dans la **Nouvelle Rouge**, collection dirigée par J.R. Léveillé, qui révèle les jeunes talents émergents du Manitoba, de l'Ouest et du Nord canadiens. Les oeuvres parfois hybrides et multilingues, définissent dans leur forme et leur sujet, cette nouvelle génération d'auteur.e.s.



***Inédit* - Eric Plamondon - Théâtre - 88 p.**

Le premier ouvrage de cet artiste multidisciplinaire présente le désordre des émotions de ses personnages, et explore plus largement l'art queer.

Les Éditions du Blé - Saint-Boniface (Manitoba) - ble.refc.ca

Les Éditions du Blé remercient chaleureusement le Conseil des arts du Canada, le Conseil des arts du Manitoba, la Direction des arts du ministère de la Culture, du Sport et du Patrimoine de la Province du Manitoba, ainsi que ses fidèles lectrices et lecteurs toujours au rendez-vous.

Magpie a metaphor for NeWest's publishing ethos of collecting genres

Press currently branching into noir, magical realism, revitalizing poetry with Crow Said series

by David Jón Fuller

Sometimes, a publisher needs a bird's-eye view. For Edmonton's NeWest Press, there's a specific one that fits.

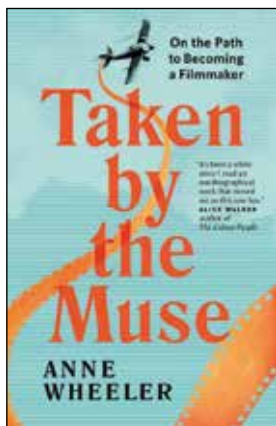
"Magpies are all over Edmonton," says the company's general manager, Matt Bowes. "They like to collect things, and I think that is reflected in our eclectic publishing program."

It's not surprising, given the company's origins. The *NeWest Review* was a multi-faceted magazine founded in 1975 by a collective of writers and academics. That led to the founding of NeWest Press in 1977.

"It was kind of a magpie, wanting to publish everything, a quality built in from the ground up," says Bowes. "The magazine wasn't just doing fiction, it was doing poetry, it was doing reviews, it was doing all kinds of stuff. So we've always wanted to publish everything, regardless of whether that was a good idea – it comes with the territory."

NeWest publishes fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. Its writers include playwright Sharon Pollock, novelist Angie Abdou, poet Gerald Hill, and many more. Recent titles include Heidi L. M. Jacobs's novel *Molly of the Mall: Literary Lass and Purveyor of Fine Footwear*,

which won the 2020 Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour.



There are three employees, including Bowes. Claire Kelly is the marketing and production coordinator and Christine Kohler is the office administrator. A board of directors acts as the publisher.

Bowes joined NeWest in 2012, starting as the company's marketing and production coordinator. He was impressed with the way the company valued its writers. The general manager then was Paul Matwychuk.

"Paul really cared about the authors' experience in working with us, and trying to make it so it was enjoyable," Bowes says, "both in the artistic sense of having your work out in the world, but also in the practical day-to-day sense of just dealing with the office – being respectful colleagues with the authors – so I try to keep that going myself."



Matt Bowes

He adds that since many of the people NeWest works with are debut authors, helping them on their publishing journey is important.

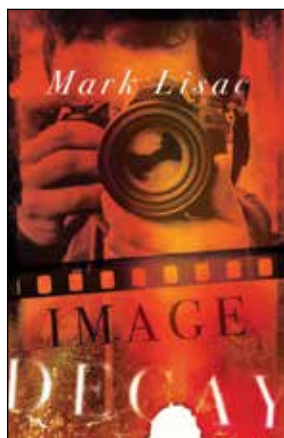
In 2015, when Matwychuk stepped down, Bowes succeeded him as general manager.

He says managing the multiple genres NeWest publishes can be a challenge.

In 2017, for the press's 40th anniversary, they revitalized their poetry presence with the Crow Said series. And while they've been publishing mysteries for years, they're expanding into noir territory, such as Niall Howell's *Only Pretty Damned*, which was shortlisted for the Sixth Annual Rakuten Kobo Emerging Writer Prize. They've also moved into magical realism, with books such as Bruce Cinnamon's *The Melting Queen* (also shortlisted for the Ratuken Kobo Emerging Writer Prize) and C. J. Lavigne's *In Veritas*.

Bowes says that diversity is driven by what is submitted – in part because they focus so heavily on debut writers. Of the roughly 10 books NeWest publishes a year, five to six of them are by new authors, forming the core of the press's Nunatak First Fiction series.





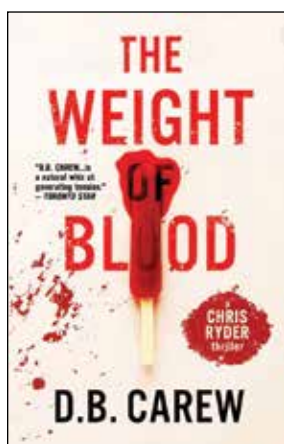
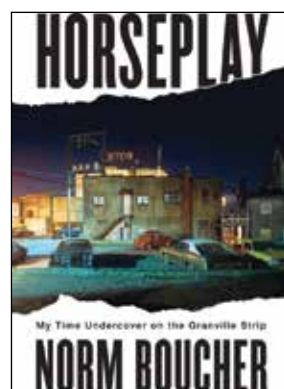
“It’s a delicate balancing act to get a season together, but I think we have a little bit of something for everybody,” says Bowes.

Another challenge is to get the books into the hands of readers. While he’s happy to see NeWest titles on the pages of the books section of the newspaper, it’s even better when they’re getting coverage in other sections and reaching a wider audience.

And of course, 2020 saw publishers dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. “The coronavirus hit us in almost every single aspect” of the business, says Bowes, including shipping, printing, and organizing book launches and other events. NeWest moved to digital platforms wherever possible, which helped their in-house work flow.

Bowes adds that while they devoted increased attention to ebooks and audiobooks during the pandemic, print copies still make up 90 per cent of their sales.

The pandemic wasn’t all bad. Zoom events were well attended. And digital events, after being streamed live, can be posted later to social networks such as YouTube and Facebook. Bowes adds that for a while, every day he would record a video of



himself reading from backlist titles and post it to Twitter. Sometimes there was a direct effect with book orders coming in for the books he read.

“If you look at these events from an accessibility standpoint, we’re probably going to keep doing these things after the pandemic is gone,” he says, “because this is a way for people who maybe don’t have a bookstore close to them, or have a disability that would make it difficult for them to go to a bookstore, [to] essentially have the same experience as everyone else.” 🌿

GOth GIRLS OF BANFF

John O’Neill

These gothic short stories, set in the Canadian Rockies, reveal the violence inherent in nature and humans – in the majestic and impassive mountains, and in the characters who are a bit twisted, but also empathetic. This book features author-curated book club questions.

(NeWest Press, \$19.95 pb, 224 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988732-95-4, available as ebook)

HORSEPLAY: MY TIME UNDERCOVER ON THE GRANVILLE STRIP

Norm Boucher

In this true crime memoir, undercover operator Boucher recounts his eight months infiltrating Vancouver’s heroin scene in 1983, at the height of the War on Drugs. This assignment shaped his outlook on the role of criminal law enforcement and on the human side of addiction.

(NeWest Press, \$21.95 pb, 264 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988732-98-5, available as ebook)

IMAGE DECAY

Mark Lisac

Set in the 1990s, this political thriller delves into questions of identity and memory, the fears and secrets of established power, and belonging and alienation, as a cantankerous ex-government photographer seeks ownership of his prints. This book features author-curated book club questions.

(NeWest Press, \$19.95 pb, 320 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988732-89-3, available as ebook)

TAKEN BY THE MUSE: ON THE PATH TO BECOMING A FILMMAKER

Anne Wheeler

These creative non-fiction stories tell of Wheeler’s serendipitous journey in the 1970s as she became a filmmaker and raconteur. Experiences and adventures include a significant encounter with Margaret Laurence, after the making of *The Diviners*, and travels to India and south of Mombasa.

(NeWest Press, \$20.95 pb, 264 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77439-001-6, available as ebook)

THE WEIGHT OF BLOOD

D. B. Carew

This sequel to the crime novel *The Killer Trail* finds Vancouver psychiatric social worker Chris Ryder once again at the centre of a high-profile murder case: Marvin Goodwin, a young man who falls on the extreme end of the autism spectrum, is found at a murder scene covered in blood, and Chris is called in to see what he can learn about Marvin.

(NeWest Press, \$18.95 pb, 224 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988732-92-3, available as ebook)

Picture book shares a sense of maternal legacy along with interactive imagery

Illustrator and author's shared love of nature, of their home in Sask., showcased in visuals

by Laura McKay

I KNOW A WOMAN:

A Song for Mothers

Sharon Gudereit

Illustrated by Miranda Pringle

Your Nickel's Worth Publishing

\$14.95 pb, 32 pages

ISBN: 978-1-988783-53-6

I *Know a Woman: A Song for Mothers* is a loving tribute to the women who shape us. Adapted from the 2014 song by the same name, Sharon Gudereit's words are based in her personal experience.

"The song was written about my real relationship with my mother and how I feel about her," explains Gudereit. When she first told her mother that she'd written a song about her, she was keen to know how it ended.

"She was very happy, but the first question she asked me was, 'I don't die at the end or anything, do I?'"

In book form, Gudereit's adapted lyrics are accompanied by Polaroid-like illustrations that evoke common childhood experiences and memories.

"We really wanted to focus on the mother-daughter relationship dynamic in this book," explains artist Miranda Pringle. Other human family members are noticeably absent from the pages, making it a more inclusive choice for non-nuclear families. Pets, on the other hand, are in plentiful supply on every page.

"Mom has a way with animals, and I tease her that she is like Dr. Doolittle," says Gudereit, who adds that when she was growing up, "the pets sometimes outnumbered the people."

Mother Earth provides a warm backdrop in the illustrations, with scenery familiar to Prairie readers.

"The author and I are both from Regina, Saskatchewan, and wanted to feature the beauty of our home," says Pringle.



Sharon Gudereit

Changing seasons show the passage of time, but nature also provides an interactive element: butterflies hidden in each scene.

"Sharon and I are both teachers," explains Pringle,

"and we know how fun it can be for students to look for something special on each page. We also know, for many people, butterflies are friendly reminders of passed loved ones and that could be a neat connection for some readers."

Both the lyrics and the art carry a narrative of maternal legacy, of a mother and a daughter growing old and growing up, and nurturing the next generation.

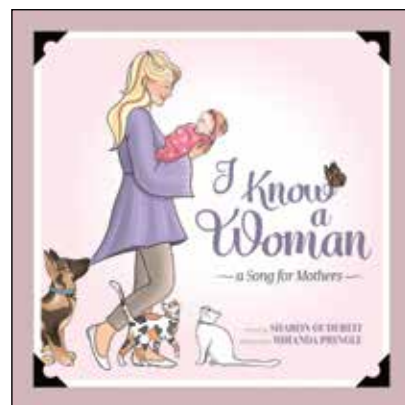
"I guess when I wrote the song, I was thinking that [my mom] is getting older and that day will come eventually when she will be gone," admits Gudereit. "Little did I know that the next year she would have a devastating

stroke, and we would almost lose her! Thank goodness that didn't happen, but when she is gone one day, her love and teachings will live on inside of me and my daughters forever."

I Know a Woman celebrates the relationships children have with the important women in their lives. "I want [this book to help children] reflect on and treasure the special relationship that exists between

themselves and their own mother (or *any* strong woman figure in their lives)," says Gudereit.

"I want them to realize how strong, courageous, and capable that woman is, but [also] that she was once a carefree young child just like the reader is now. I want them to know that her love will always be with them, even when she has passed on." 🌿



Miranda Pringle

Fast-paced spooky story inspired by abandoned sanatorium and role-playing games

Marty Chan's novel is written to keep readers engaged, even if they struggle with reading

by Amanda Sanders

HAUNTED HOSPITAL

Marty Chan

Orca Book Publishers

\$10.95 pb, 128 pages

ISBN: 978-1-4598-2620-5

Available as an ebook

In *Haunted Hospital*, a novel for middle grade readers, a group of young teens get more than they bargained for when they take their role-playing game to the next level by exploring an abandoned hospital, said to be haunted with the ghosts of tuberculosis patients who were the victims of experiments gone wrong.

Edmonton-based author Marty Chan says his spooky story was inspired by the Charles Camsell Hospital, an abandoned facility in Edmonton, which once operated as a tuberculosis sanatorium. After years of being abandoned, it is now being renovated into condos.

Another inspiration for this novel came from student responses during school visits.

"Students kept begging me to write a scary story after I told them about my haunted elementary school," says Chan, who tours schools and libraries across Canada, using storytelling, stage magic, and improv to get kids interested in reading. "When I asked for their favourite creepy settings, they'd often suggest either an asylum or a haunted hospital."

Role-playing games have made a major comeback in popular culture, and *Haunted Hospital* centres on one called *Spirits and Specters*, which has friends Xander, Omar, and Li completing ghost hunting-style quests orchestrated by Crypt Keeper Priya.

The kids are getting tired of Priya's standard cemetery location for her missions, so Xander decides to take the lead and make George Wickerman Hospital the site for their next adventure. Despite his preparations, he is as surprised as the rest of them at what they encounter while in the abandoned hospital.

Chan is no stranger to role-playing games. In high school, he was a Dungeons & Dragons Dungeon Master, and he even had the chance to do a live action version of the tabletop game.

"My friends and I joined other D&D nerds at a golf course where we pretended to be wizards and warriors on a quest for treasure," he says. "The golfers didn't know what to make of us as we ran around the wooded areas." And he says he'd jump at the chance to play again. "I think I still have my 20-sided die somewhere in the basement."

Haunted Hospital is Chan's second book in the Orca Currents series. These books are designed to appeal to all readers – ones who may struggle with their reading for various reasons, ones who want a fast-paced, exciting story, or, in the case of *Haunted Hospital*, ones who just love a good ghost story.

Chan feels he is a good fit for this series of accessible, plot-driven, high-interest books.

"I have a short attention span to begin with, so writing fast-paced stories with a lot of plot twists keeps me engaged with my own writing," he says. "I'm the kind of guy who will bail on a movie within five minutes if the plot doesn't grab me."

"I guess I'm writing these books with myself in mind as the reader." 🌿



Marty Chan



MORE YOUNG ADULT & CHILDREN TITLES

PICTURE BOOKS

IF THESE PLACES COULD TALK

Crista Bradley, illustrated by Wendi Nordell

This book – richly illustrated with both original art and reproductions of archival documents related to buildings, parks, streetscapes, and more, including photographs, postcards, architectural drawings, and even tickets and posters – showcases a diverse range of historical and contemporary places in Saskatchewan. (Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, \$19.95 hc, 40 pages, ISBN: 978-1-988783-59-8)

THE MOST AMAZING BIRD

Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak,
illustrated by Andrew Qappik, CM

When Aggataa goes for a cold winter walk with her grandmother, she notices the tulugarguat, or ravens, the only birds who haven't gone south. She thinks they are ugly in coats of feathers that don't fit, but by spring, when many other kinds of birds appear, she connects with one small raven in particular.

(Annick Press, \$21.95 hc, 40 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77321-418-4, available as ebook)

THE ONE WITH THE SCRAGGLY BEARD

Elizabeth Withey, illustrated
by Lynn Scurfield

A child tries to understand the life of a man he has seen sleeping under a bridge, and his mother explains how people's paths in life can be very different. In this simple narrative, a child's curiosity and perceptiveness act as catalysts for understanding fear, suffering, and resilience while exploring themes of homelessness, belonging, and compassion. (Orca Book Publishers, \$19.95 hc, 32 pages, ISBN: 978-1-4598-1855-2, available as ebook)

MIDDLE YEARS FICTION

HARVEY HOLDS HIS OWN

Colleen Nelson, illustrated
by Tara Anderson

This second novel featuring Harvey, the loyal and loving West Highland Terrier, reunites him with his friends at Brayside Manor, particularly young Austin, when his person Maggie decides to do her Grade 7 volunteer work there. The new resident of the retirement home, Mrs. Fradette, inspires Maggie to take an interest in local history.

(Pajama Press, \$22.95 hc, 288 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77278-114-4)

PIA'S PLANS

Alice Kuipers

Pia's plans to strive for the best start to go wrong when she loses an important race and has a fight with her best friend. Then, on the worst day of her life, she injures her ankle, fails a math test, gets detention – and also makes a new friend, discovers a new passion, and learns to strive for balance.

(Orca Book Publishers, \$10.95 pb, 112 pages, ISBN: 978-1-4598-2378-5, available as ebook)

MIDDLE YEARS NON- FICTION

THE EAGLE MOTHER, BOOK 3, MOTHERS OF XSAN

Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson),

illustrated by Natasha Donovan

Readers learn about the life cycle of bald eagles, the traditions of the Gitksan, and how these stunning birds of prey can enrich their entire ecosystem, as they follow Nox xsgyaak and her eaglets in the valleys of the River of Mists.

(HighWater Press, \$23.00 hc, 26 pages, ISBN: 978-1-55379-859-0, available as ebook)

IF A TREE FALLS: THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF DEFORESTATION

Nikki Tate

This book from the Orca Footprints series provides a balanced look at forest practices through history, the growth of industry, and the fight for preservation in the face of trees being cleared for agriculture, lost in wildfires, and harvested for the valuable products they supply. Readers can find out what to do to protect forests, which play a critical role in climate moderation.

(Orca Book Publishers, \$19.95 hc, 48 pages, with colour photos, ISBN: 978-1-4598-2355-6, available as ebook)

JOURNEYMAN: THE STORY OF NHL RIGHT-WINGER JAMIE LEACH

Anna Rosner

This first-person biography of Ojibwe right-winger Jamie Leach, son of the legendary NHL star Reggie Leach, follows his trajectory from his childhood years watching his father play to his first goal in the NHL, and touches on summers spent on Lake Winnipeg, the World Junior Hockey Championships, life in the minor leagues, and his eventual draft into the NHL as a Pittsburgh Penguin.

(Yellow Dog-Great Plains, \$14.95 pb, 104 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77337-054-5)

YA FICTION

UNDERLAND

Colleen Nelson and Nancy Chappell-Pollack

This sequel to the futuristic novel *Pulse Point* introduces 12-year-old Ama, an Underlander who lives under the City, digging for brine, the City's real energy source. Meanwhile, 18-year-old Sari lives above, unaware of what goes on beneath, until she joins the Vigilants on a mission to reveal the secrets of the City Council.

(Yellow Dog-Great Plains, \$14.95 pb, 208 pages, ISBN: 978-1-77337-052-1)



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IMAGE DECAY
MARK LISAC

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D.B. CAREW

Vancouver psychiatric social worker Chris Ryder finds himself at the centre of another high-profile murder case, this time involving a severely disabled young man found at the scene of a slain ice cream vendor.

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GOTH GIRLS OF BANFF
JOHN O'NEILL

A two-sister team of goth tour guides offers themed hikes and an animal pathologist has an unusual encounter while performing a necropsy on a grizzly bear in this surprising and empathetic story collection.

\$19.95 CAD / \$15.95 USD



HORSEPLAY
NORM BOUCHER

In his first true crime memoir undercover RCMP officer Norm Boucher recounts his eight months spent infiltrating Vancouver's heroin scene, illuminating a hidden and dangerous world of paranoia, ripoffs, and violence.

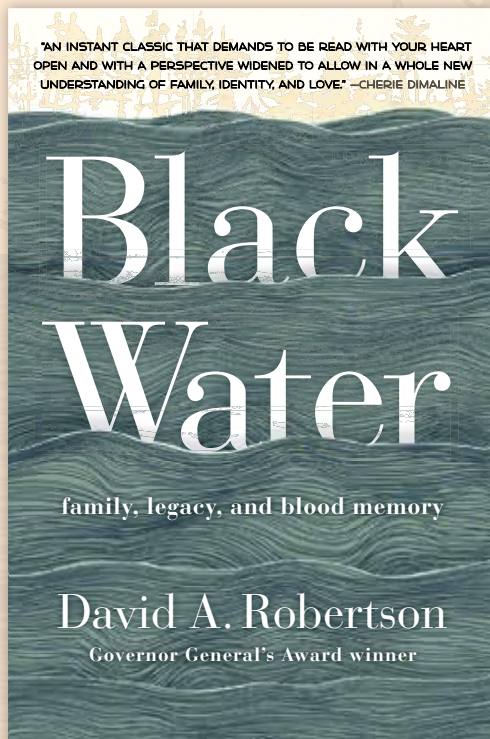
\$21.95 CAD / \$17.95 USD



TAKEN BY THE MUSE
ANNE WHEELER

Laced with humour and revelation, award-winning creator Anne Wheeler tells stories of her serendipitous journey to becoming a filmmaker in the male-dominated art world of the 1970s.

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Dans cette pièce de théâtre, les jeunes peuvent voir leurs propres expériences exprimées en style bilingue

Un artiste francophone queer encourage les histoires des prairies, même si elles sont complexes et imparfaites

par Liz Katynski

INÉDIT

Eric Plamondon

Les Éditions du Blé

15,00 \$ papier, 88 pages

ISBN : 978-2-924915-12-7

Disponible en livre électronique

Le premier livre de Eric Plamondon, *Inédit*, est une pièce qui, à cause de la pandémie de COVID-19, n'a pas encore été présentée. En période de COVID-19, Plamondon et ses lecteurs ont la chance de rêver à comment son histoire au sujet de jeunes francophones au Manitoba pourrait se jouer à Winnipeg, et ailleurs.

« Je me suis beaucoup inspiré par des événements qui j'ai vécus », dit le comédien et artiste visuel Métis et francophone aux racines winnipegaises.

Plamondon a commencé à l'écrire il y a six ans dans un style « bilingue », c'est-à-dire en français avec un peu d'anglais à la façon dont on parle au Manitoba. C'est destiné à un public canadien bilingue.

« Je me demandais, le texte est-il encore pertinent pour les jeunes? » dit Plamondon. Mais lorsque des jeunes comédiens de 22 à 30 ans d'ailleurs firent la lecture initiale de la pièce, chacun d'eux s'y est retrouvé.

« On se voit », dit-il. « Ça m'a donné beaucoup d'encouragement. »

Plamondon, le directeur général de Artspace à Winnipeg, s'est affirmé comme gay à 28 ans. « Je ne

Play written in bilingual style creates space for youth to see their own experiences reflected

Queer francophone artist calls for creation of Prairie stories, even if they're complex, imperfect

by Liz Katynski

INÉDIT

Eric Plamondon

Les Éditions du Blé

\$15.00 pb, 88 pages

ISBN: 978-2-924915-12-7

Available as an ebook

The first book by Eric Plamondon, *Inédit*, is a play that has yet to be staged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, Plamondon and his readers have the chance to imagine how this story about young francophones in Manitoba might be performed in Winnipeg and beyond.

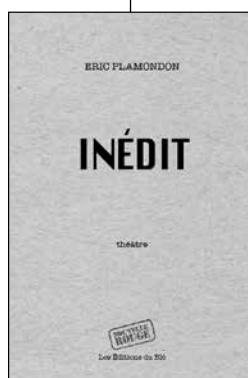
“I was very much inspired by things that I have experienced,” says the Métis and francophone actor and visual artist with Winnipeg roots.

Plamondon started writing the play six years ago in a “bilingual” style, which is what it's called when a text is written in French with a bit of English added in, the way people in Manitoba tend to speak. It was written for a bilingual Canadian audience.

“I asked myself if it is still relevant for today's youth,” says Plamondon. But when young actors aged 22 to 30 from other places did a cold read of it, each of them could identify with it.

“They saw themselves and their experiences,” he says. “It gave me much encouragement.”

Plamondon, the executive director of Artspace in Winnipeg, came out as gay at the age of 28. “I am not the first queer francophone artist from the Prairies but





Eric Plamondon

suis pas le premier artiste francophone queer des prairies, mais il n'y en avait pas des tonnes », dit-il. « Il faut écrire et produire les histoires des prairies, que ça soit imparfait ou non – on doit créer. »

Le titre, *Inédit*, décrit les expériences, la situation, le style « bilingue ». Il rend aussi hommage au mouvement social et littéraire Beat des années 1950.

« Pour la communauté queer », dit Plamondon, « cette période de temps est bien connue, la forme poétique de monologue intérieur de Ginsberg, la musique jazz avec son propre *beat*. »

Plamondon partage les perspectives minoritaire queer qui incluent toute une diversité de gens. Beaucoup de gens ne peuvent pas exprimer leur point de vue, et comme dans la pièce, « Le grand moment passe souvent dans le silence. »

Ses personnages ne sont pas des caricatures. Rien n'est noir ou blanc. « Les gens veulent une certitude, mais ces gens ne sont pas unidimensionnels. C'est un peu plus complexe », dit-il.

Un des hommes de la pièce ne peut admettre qu'il peut aimer la poésie. Plamondon dit, « Dans la vingtaine, c'est un peu plus attendu qu'on traite de différentes expériences. On devrait se permettre de vivre. Nous sommes tous un peu plusieurs choses. »

Inédit n'est pas une pièce éducative, mais ça permet d'entamer un dialogue. « C'est une permission pour avoir la conversation », dit Plamondon. « Lorsqu'on ne s'arrête pas à une fausse conception de qui on est, on embrasse notre humanité. » 🌿

there haven't been many," he says. "We have to write and produce the stories of the Prairies – whether they are perfect or not, we must create them."

The title, *Inédit*, which means new or previously unseen, describes the experiences, the situation, and the "bilingual" style of the play. It also pays tribute to the Beat literary and social movement of the 1950s.

"For the queer community," says Plamondon, "this period is well known, the stream-of-consciousness poetry of Ginsberg, the jazz music with its own beat."

Plamondon presents queer perspectives that include a whole variety of people. Many people can't express their viewpoints, and as in the play, "The big moment often happens in silence."

The play's characters are not caricatures. Nothing is black and white. "People want certainty, but these people are not one-dimensional. This is a bit more complex," he says.

One of the men in the play can't admit he could possibly like poetry. Plamondon says, "In our 20s, it's more accepted that we try new things. We should permit ourselves to live. We are all a little of many things."

Inédit is not an educational piece, but it does open a dialogue. "It provides permission for us to have the conversation," says Plamondon. "When we don't hold onto a false belief of who we are, we embrace our humanity." 🌿

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Un guide jeunesse sur les papillons nous présente les merveilles des chenilles poilues

Le livre de Simone Hébert Allard aide les enfants à apprendre sans qu'ils et elles le sachent

par Lucien Chaput

LES PAPILLONS DES PRAIRIES :

Espèces du Manitoba et de la Saskatchewan

Simone Hébert Allard

Illustrations de Janet La France

Collection Nature jeunesse

VIDACOM

15,95 \$ papier, 64 pages

ISBN : 978-1-989282-79-3

Disponible en livre électronique

Butterfly guide for children introduces them to the wonder of those hairy caterpillars

Simone Hébert Allard's book helps children learn without knowing that they are learning

by Lucien Chaput

LES PAPILLONS DES PRAIRIES :

Espèces du Manitoba et de la Saskatchewan

Simone Hébert Allard

Illustrated by Janet La France

Collection Nature jeunesse

VIDACOM

\$15.95 pb, 64 pages

ISBN: 978-1-989282-79-3

Available as an ebook

Tout a commencé avec des chenilles dans le wagon d'une gamine de sept ans en visite chez une tante religieuse à Dunrea au Manitoba.

« Je me souviens toujours de ce wagon-là », raconte Simone Hébert Allard, l'auteure du guide jeunesse *Les papillons des prairies : Espèces du Manitoba et de la Saskatchewan*. « Je collectionnais des chenilles et tout le monde trouvait ça amusant. Puis je n'avais pas peur des chenilles poilues! »

Adulte, elle décide d'en élever. « Notre cours est devenu comme un conservatoire de papillons avec des papillons monarques partout dans le quartier. Une année, c'était absolument magique. On a eu une centaine de monarques qui sont venus se reposer avant la migration. C'était absolument incroyable! »

De nature curieuse, la chercheuse de profession se décide d'étudier d'autres espèces. « Le monarque, ce n'est pas vraiment notre papillon. Il fait la migration et reste au Mexique pendant l'hiver. On a beaucoup d'autres espèces, comme le morio, un papillon brun foncé avec la couleur crème. Celui-là est ici à l'année longue et survit à l'hiver comme adulte. »

La recherche, ça a commencé sur la table de la salle à manger, avec une liste de plantes hôtes, et une liste de

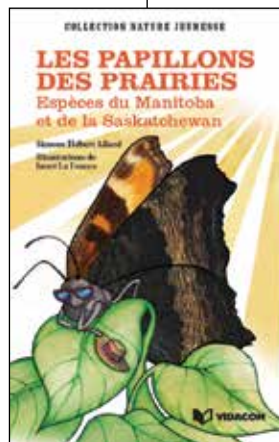
It all started with a wagon of caterpillars pulled by a seven-year-old child while visiting an aunt in a convent in Dunrea, Manitoba.

“I will never forget that wagon,” says Simone Hébert Allard, the author of the children's guide *Les papillons des prairies: Espèces du Manitoba et de la Saskatchewan*. “I was collecting caterpillars and everyone thought this was quite amusing. Especially since I was not scared of the hairy ones!”

As an adult, she decided to raise some. “Our yard became a type of butterfly conservatory with monarch butterflies everywhere in the neighbourhood. One year, it was absolutely magical. Hundreds of monarchs came to rest before their migration. It was absolutely incredible!”

A curious and self-taught researcher, Hébert Allard decided to study other species. “The monarch is not really our butterfly. It migrates and stays in Mexico during the winter. In Manitoba, we have a lot of other species, such as the mourning cloak, a dark brown and cream coloured butterfly. This butterfly is here throughout the year, surviving winter as an adult.”

Hébert Allard began her research on the dining room table, with lists of host plants and lists of butterflies. It



chenilles. C'est devenu le livre *Manitoba Butterflies : A Field Guide*, publié par Turnstone Press en 2013.

Pour les guides jeunesse, Hébert Allard a utilisé une technique ludique. « J'essaye de rendre ça amusant, pour que les jeunes apprennent sans vraiment le savoir », dit-elle. « Je l'ai fait avec mes propres enfants. Plus tard, ils ont dit, c'était vraiment pas *fair* maman ce que tu nous as fait! Tu nous donnais des jeux puis on apprenait tout le temps! »

Le guide est illustré par Janet La France, une Franco-Manitobaine d'origine métisse chargée « de faire des illustrations douces et joyeuses pour démontrer la personnalité des papillons choisis. »

Elle les a dessinées à la main, sauf pour les ailes. « J'ai ajouté les ailes dans Photoshop à partir de photos », dit La France. « Les ailes sont surimposées dans les dessins, pour mieux représenter le papillon. »

Quand elle était jeune il n'y avait pas beaucoup de livres pour enfants en français, dit Hébert Allard.

« Avec ce guide, je veux vraiment que le jeune apprenne la terminologie, les stades du papillon.

« Ce que j'essaye de faire aussi, c'est de toujours fournir de petits clins d'œil culturels : comment le papillon est perçu dans différentes cultures. Par exemple, d'après le folklore, le papillon serait l'âme d'une personne décédée. Je trouve ce genre de renseignement vraiment fascinant. »

became the book *Manitoba Butterflies: A Field Guide*, published in 2013 by Turnstone Press.

For the children's guides, Hébert Allard used a playful approach. "I try to make it fun so that the children are learning without really knowing that they are learning," she says. "I had done this with my own children. Later they told me: 'It really wasn't fair, Mom! You gave us games and all that time we were learning!'"

The guide has illustrations by Janet La France, a Franco-Manitoban Métis illustrator tasked with preparing "soft and happy illustrations which showed the personality of each butterfly."

All of the illustrations, including the cover illustration, are hand-drawn and hand-coloured, except for the butterfly wings. "I added the wings from photographs in Photoshop," says La France. "The wings are superimposed on the drawings to better represent the butterfly."

When she was young, there were not many books for children in French, says Hébert Allard.

"With this guide, I really want the child to learn the vocabulary, the various stages of the life cycle of the butterfly.

"I also tried to always include a cultural 'hey there': how butterflies are perceived by different cultures. For example, according to some folklore, the butterfly is the soul of a deceased person. I find this type of information fascinating."



Simone Hébert Allard

VIENNENT DE PARAÎTRE EN FRANÇAIS

GANIISHOMONG OU L'EXTASE DU TEMPS

J. R. Léveillé

L'été à *Ganiishomong* : les souvenirs d'enfance se prélassant sur une plage d'une communauté métisse près de Saint-Laurent, dans le Far-West canadien deviennent autant de réflexions sur l'art comme pensée poétique, la poésie comme pensée philosophique et le roman comme poésie. *Summer at Ganiishomong*: childhood memories of basking on the beaches of a Métis community not far from St. Laurent in the Canadian West become reflections on art as poetic thought, poetry as philosophical thought, and the novel as poetry.

(Éditions du Blé, roman, 19,95 \$ papier, 156 pages, ISBN : 978-2-924915-21-9)

L'HOMME À LA BARBE HIRSUTE

Elizabeth Withey, illustrations de Lynn Scurfield, traduit de Rachel Martinez

Dans ce récit simple, la curiosité et la perspicacité de l'enfant servent de catalyseurs pour comprendre la peur, la souffrance et la résilience tout en explorant les thèmes de l'itinérance, de l'appartenance et de la compassion. In this simple narrative, a child's curiosity and perceptiveness act as catalysts for understanding fear, suffering, and resilience while exploring themes of homelessness, belonging, and compassion. (Orca Book Publishers, album jeunesse, 19,95 \$ relié, 32 pages, ISBN : 978-1-4598-2478-2, disponible en livre électronique)

L'UNIVERSITÉ DE SAINT-BONIFACE : 200 ANS D'ÉVOLUTION DU PREMIER ÉTABLISSEMENT D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DE L'OUEST CANADIEN

Michel Verrette, avec la collaboration de Carole Pelchat et de Rokhaya N. Gueye
L'historien Michel Verrette nous brosse une fresque particulièrement vivante de l'histoire de l'Université de Saint-Boniface, dont les racines remontent à il y a plus de deux siècles, afin de nous rappeler la fabuleuse épopée de ce vénérable établissement et de nous donner un aperçu saisissant de son avenir. The historian Michel Verrette paints a particularly vivid fresco of the history of the Université de Saint-Boniface, a Manitoba French-language post-secondary education institution founded over two centuries ago, and gives us a glimpse of its future. (Éditions des Plaines, essai historique, 29,95 \$ papier, 364 pages, ISBN: 978-2-89611-820-5)

CREDITS

MANAGING EDITOR Anastasia Chipelski

EDITOR Marjorie Poor

AMBP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Michelle Peters

COPY EDITING Heidi Harms, Lucien Chaput, and Liz Katynski

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Prairie books NOW
100 Arthur Street, Suite 404,
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 1H3
tel (204) 947-3335
prairiebooksnow@gmail.com
prairiebooksnow.ca



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ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

MELANIE BRANNAGAN FREDRIKSEN is a writer and critic living in Winnipeg. Her poems have appeared in *The Waggle*, *Prairie Fire*, *GUSH: Menstrual Manifestos for our Times*, and *CV2*. Her book reviews are published regularly in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. She can be found on Instagram @shereadswinnipeg.

DR. MICHAEL C. BUMSTED is a bookseller at Whodunit? Bookshop in Winnipeg, where he has worked in various capacities since 2007.

SHIRLEY BYERS has been happily writing for *Prairie books NOW* since 2000. She is a freelance writer and editor from Saskatchewan.

A former journalist for the Franco-Manitoban weekly *La Liberté*, **LUCIEN CHAPUT** is a freelance writer and editor based in Bélair, Manitoba. Ancien journaliste à l'hebdomadaire franco-manitobain *La Liberté*, **LUCIEN CHAPUT** est un pigiste en rédaction et en édition établi à Bélair (Manitoba).

MARGARET ANNE FEHR is a freelance writer and editor who moved from Winnipeg to Milton, Ontario, where she operates her writing practice, Effective Eloquence. Besides contributing to *Prairie books NOW*, Margaret Anne has written for Yellow Pages, NextHome publications, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and others.

DAVID JÓN FULLER is a Winnipeg writer and editor.

Now retired from the Quebec Library Association, **MARGARET GOLDIK** still works occasionally as an editor but finally has time to finish working on some ghost stories.

ARIEL GORDON is a Winnipeg writer.

BEV SANDELL GREENBERG is a Winnipeg writer and editor.

LIZ KATYNSKI is a Winnipeg writer. **LIZ KATYNSKI** est une écrivaine de Winnipeg.

PAULA E. KIRMAN is a writer, editor, photographer, and filmmaker. She lives in Edmonton where she edits two community newspapers (and one newsletter), and is a community organizer and a performing singer/songwriter. Her website is wordpicturesmusic.com.

LAURA KUPCIS is a Toronto-based freelance writer and editor.

STEVE LOCKE is a writer and poet from Treaty 1 Territory/Winnipeg. His work has appeared in lit mags and on community and festival stages across Turtle Island/Canada.

LAURA MCKAY is a speculative fiction writer whose work leaves you wondering and your mind wandering. Her current work-in-progress brings fast-paced, thought-provoking mystery and magic to the streets of Winnipeg. Laura is also managing editor at Portage & Main Press, and she freelances on writing and editing projects.

KYLA NEUFELD is a poet and editor living in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 Territory.

LUIS REIS is 30-year veteran with Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre. His directing credits include *An Enemy of the People* (Arthur Miller), *And Then There Were None* (Agatha Christie), and *Tempest-Tost* (Robertson Davies).

AMANDA SANDERS lives in Leduc, Alberta, where she is a stay-at-home mom to her three-year-old son and her five-year-old German shepherd.

BOOKENDS

Prairie books NOW values your feedback. Please send your comments to prairiebooksnow@gmail.com. In order to reach *Prairie books NOW* via phone, please call the Association of Manitoba Book Publishers at (204) 947-3335.

On the Cover: Cover art from *Les papillons des prairies* by Janet La France.

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Dispatches

Insights from an Independent Bookseller

by Dr. Michael C. Bumsted

Once upon a time, way back in the mid-1990s, specialty fiction bookshops, particularly mystery ones, were all the rage across the globe. After its founding in Winnipeg in 1994, Whodunit? regularly shipped internationally to customers found through magazine ads and conventions. Often, these orders did not even come by phone, but were sent as lists on the backs of postcards.

The first decade of the new millennium was hard for genre stores. The twin scourge of the big-box store – with space to house coffee shops, giftware, and blankets – and the rise of the Internet, both for commerce and as a publishing vehicle, meant that only a few stores like Whodunit? survived – mostly through a combination of luck, local support, and stubbornness.

Throughout the continent, and across the Prairies especially, the independent bookstore disappeared.

Gradually, however, independents came back. By the end of 2019, more bookshops were opening than closing, small towns that had been without started to see alternatives to shopping with enormous corporations, and . . .

. . . and then, pande-mania.

The impact of COVID-19, both locally and in the rest of Canada and the world, has obviously affected the book industry. Events cancelled, books delayed, shipments stopped, suppliers shuttered – all these factors hit bookshops equally, even before the additional and varied impact of the virus itself.

However, unremarkable to readers of *Prairie books NOW*, but notable nonetheless, people kept buying books. And since books are all we

sell, that continued to work for us. COVID-19 has led to an array of customers returning to Whodunit?, or finding us for the first time, all of whom need, or needed, things to read while there was little else to do.

It meant a lot of spring evenings in the car delivering books, and a change in how people could visit us, both in person and online, but the sudden increase in demand for books also included ones that would have certainly fallen outside of our traditional genre purview.

Cherie Dimaline, Joan Thomas, Jesse Thistle, and Michelle Good have joined Agatha Christie, Louise Penny, C. C. Benison, and Iona Whishaw as authors who are in high demand. Children's books increased in popularity, and books on Indigenous issues, racial and gender inequality, and anti-racism have found a place in our store next to Scandinavian noir, Victorian sleuths, and cat cozies.



Michael C. Bumsted

Even more surprising has been the rediscovery of some Prairie writers in our stacks, some used, and some that have been waiting decades to be purchased for the first time. The surge of local support for independent

retail has brought with it a renewed interest in regional authors such as Susan Bowden, Alison Gordon, Anthony Bidulka, and Michael Van Rooy.

Bookselling in pande-mania in many ways reflects bookselling before Internet vending changed all forms of commerce. We hope that

this support for local independent business continues past our current crisis and brings back to the Prairies the brick-and-mortar bookstore. We still won't be selling coffee, though. ☘

Michael Bumsted is a bookseller at Whodunit? Bookshop in Winnipeg, where he has worked in various capacities since 2007.

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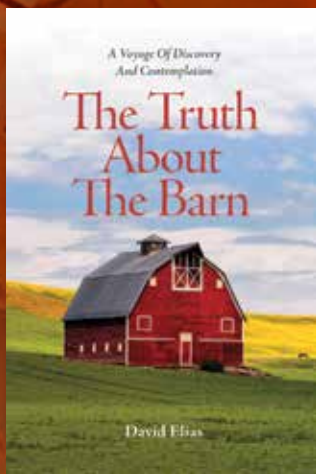
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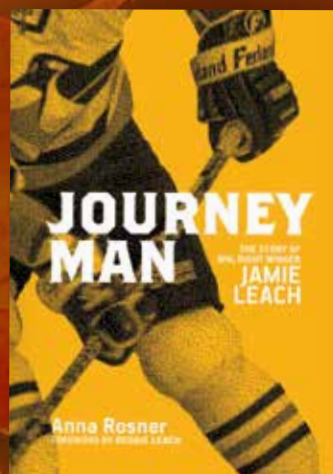
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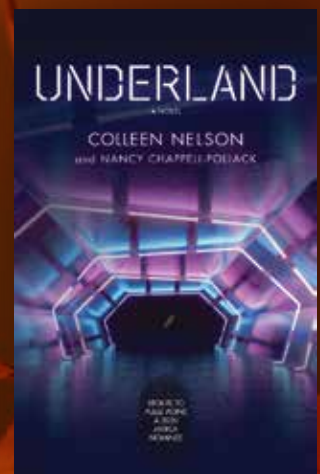


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