mRb

FALL 2015
Volume 19 No. 1

Montreal Review of Books
is published by the
Association of English-language Publishers
of Quebec (AELAQ).
Circulation: 40,000

Jennifer Varkonyi Publisher
Mélanie Grondin Editor
Sara Spike Associate Editor
David LeBlanc Designer
Michael Wile Advertising Manager, National

For editorial inquiries contact:
AELAQ 1200 Atwater Avenue, Suite #3
Westmount, QC H3Z 1X4
Telephone: 514-932-5633
Email: editor@mtlreviewofbooks.ca

For advertising inquiries contact:
ads@mtlreviewofbooks.ca

ISSN # 1480-2538

Dépôt légal, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
and the National Library of Canada,
fourth quarter, 2015.

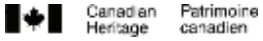
We wish to thank the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and SODEC for their generous support, without which this publication would not exist.

One-year subscriptions available for $12
Please send a cheque payable to the AELAQ.

Visit us online
mtlreviewofbooks.ca
aelaq.org

Cover photo by Terence Byrnes

PRINTED IN CANADA



We wish to thank the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and SODEC for their generous support, without which this publication would not exist.

contents

features

poetry

non-fiction

fiction

graphic

young readers

PHOTO BY TERENCE BYRNES

BY SARAH LOLLEY

LOUISE PENNY
THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

The worst writing advice Louise Penny ever got – to abandon any hope of seeing her work in print – came early in her career, back when she first decided to give creative writing a go. "There are a lot of people who went out of their way to tell me that I wouldn't be published," Penny recalls. It was a difficult time for her; she was being hounded daily by her inner critic, and she still doesn't know what motivated her peers' pessimism. "I don't know if they were aware that they were shooting down something very fragile and vulnerable, and that gave them pleasure, or if they really thought they were doing me a favour."

Either way, Penny ignored them. And a good job she did. Her internationally adored Chief Inspector Armand Gamache series has sold over 2.7 million copies and has been translated into twenty-five languages. In August, the eleventh book in the series – *The Nature of the Beast* – launched to accolades from reviewers and fans alike and debuted at third place on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for hardcover fiction.

The Nature of the Beast sees Chief Inspector Gamache being pulled out of retirement after a murder is committed right in his adopted hometown, the bucolic Eastern Townships village of Three Pines. The victim is nine-year-old Laurent Lepage, an active kid with a hyperactive imagination. When the boy is found in a gully, presumably having been thrown from his bike, his death is reported as an accident. But unfortunately for the killer, Gamache sees something suspicious that others missed. "Ask the coroner to reexamine the medical evidence," Gamache tells his former colleagues in the Sûreté du Québec, kicking into investigation mode. "Ask her if it's possible the injuries were inflicted by something other than an accident."

Penny's starting point for *The Nature of the Beast* was the same as her starting point for every book: "a lump in the throat," she says, borrowing a phrase that Robert Frost used to describe his creative process. "It has to be something I feel strongly about; some emotion or some ethical issue," she says. "It can't be simply a killing or else I would lose interest in about five paragraphs."

Invariably, the source of the emotional conflict that seizes Penny's imagination and drives her to spend an entire book understanding it is a poem. "Poets render emotion down to, sometimes, a line or two," she says, admiringly. "I read poetry out of pleasure but I get so many ideas out of poetry because it's about emotion – strong emotion."

Though they don't always make it into the final draft, every new book has an accompanying couplet that serves as an emotional compass when she is writing. Penny transcribes the couplet on a Post-it note and affixes it to her laptop "for when I get lost in the middle." The inspiration for *The Nature of the Beast* was the last two lines from the poem "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats: "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Although Penny now turns to poetry for creative nourishment, her original source of inspiration was crime fiction. After several years of unsuccessful attempts at historical fiction, everything fell into place on the day that Penny looked at the stack of books on her bedside – which at various times included titles by Agatha Christie, George Simenon, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L. Sayers – and realized the

answer was to embrace the genre she loved.

She resolved to write a book that she would enjoy reading, even if it never made it to print. And then, she says, "I put myself into everything. Every character, every emotion, every bit of jealousy and rage and murderous thought, every bit of bile and every bit of forgiveness."

As she wrote, it became clear that although her main character was a police officer and the plot centred around murder, what her writing would really explore was not police procedure but the duality of life. "My books aren't really about the blood; they're about the marrow," Penny explains. "The gap between what people say and their actions, between what they think and what they feel. And that is informed by my life. My daily life is filled with things that are hilarious and things that reduce me to tears, sometimes within an hour of each other."

Indeed, Penny's books are famous for their sudden flashes of wit, wordplay, and occasional all-out silliness. In *The Nature of the Beast*, a character who traipses through the woods in a ridiculously bright pink woolly sweater is said to look "like an escapee from a Dr. Seuss book. On the lamb from green eggs and ham."

Her genre-bending approach is now beloved, but it proved to be a disadvantage when she was first seeking a publisher. "I sent [the first book, *Still Life*] out to every agent and publisher internationally. No one wanted it. It was turned down by everybody," she recalls. Her luck changed when she placed second in the UK's Debut Dagger competition for the best unpublished crime fiction manuscript, attracting the attention of a literary agent and, ultimately, a publisher. At that point, Penny reports, "what had been its handicap became its strength. Once someone saw what it was, it created in many ways a genre unto itself."

Penny laments that a downside to having a flourishing career as a crime writer is that she can no longer read crime fiction – especially not her contemporaries, whom, she says without irony, she is "dying to read." "I don't want to be influenced," Penny explains. "I'm very impressionable."

On the plus side, Penny has been delighted by the rich connections she has made with readers through her author Facebook page, particularly those who, upon learning that Penny's husband Michael has dementia, have written to offer the wisdom and empathy of their own similar experiences. "I can't tell you how wonderful it is, how much compassion there is out there and how much company," Penny says. "These people are very generous with their own lives, and it's a very powerful thing."

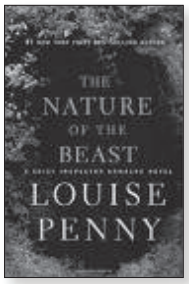
After a whirlwind US book tour for *The Nature of the Beast*, Penny returned home to Knowlton, where she has already begun writing the next Chief Inspector Gamache book. She was tight-lipped about what readers can expect from Gamache and the residents of Three Pines in book twelve, but she did divulge that it has "something to do with maps," a subject that caught her attention and didn't let go.

Ideas for new books "come from all over the place," she says. "Things just kind of appear and I think *that's* interesting. Then I explore it and think 'yes, I could spend a year thinking about this and writing about this.' Because it *is* an entire year of your life. You'd better love it. If it doesn't fascinate you, why would it fascinate anyone else?"

> There is an alchemy between inspiration and discipline that can result in a good book

Penny writes every day, whether she feels inspired or not. "There is an alchemy between inspiration and discipline that can result in a good book," she says. And although she has published a Gamache novel every year since 2005, she feels no slowdown in sight. Even on hard days, she say, "there's nothing I would rather be doing."

Sarah Lolley is a Montreal-based writer of personal essays, crime fiction, and children's literature. Her kids' picture book about yoga is entitled *Emily and the Mighty Om*.



THE NATURE OF THE BEAST
Louise Penny
Minotaur Books
$27.99, cloth, 384pp
9781250022080

poetry

Parallel Worlds

DO NOT ENTER MY SOUL IN YOUR SHOES
Natasha Kanapé Fontaine
Translated by Howard Scott
Mawenzi House
$18.95, paper, 72pp
9781927494516

THIS WORLD WE INVENTED
Carolyn Marie Souaid
Brick Books
$20.00, paper, 77pp
9781771313544

MOCKINGBIRD
Derek Webster
Véhicule Press
$18.00, paper, 80pp
9781550654264

A CLEARING
Louise Carson
Signature Editions
$14.95, paper, 96pp
9781927426630

ASBESTOS HEIGHTS
David McGimpsey
Coach House Books
$17.95, paper, 96pp
9781552453094

The title of Natasha Kanapé Fontaine's *Do Not Enter My Soul in Your Shoes* is a request for listening. There are many rewards to be found in honouring Fontaine's invitation, to being attentive to her imperatives, from the urgency of "stop breaking my erosions with your boats / let me finish!" to the dreaminess of "Come melt the blue of our broken jubilations." This is an English translation from French, by Howard Scott, of the debut 2012 collection by Fontaine, who is an Innu of the Pessamit community along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. Exploring questions of identity, she presents parallel worlds, weaving Innu words and phrases into her work in a way that the rhythms of two languages play off one another beautifully. Fontaine is a slam poet who is equally compelling in book form. Pared down to their most necessary elements, these stanzas weigh every word and its definition(s), making space for wordplay and multiple meanings: "There is summer as there are reservations / between us." This collection is interested in relationships, between family members, lovers, land, homes, and the threads that connect the past to the present.

Fontaine's syntax is consistently surprising, her imagery sensual and immediate. Lines like "Your teeth laced up my vertebrae / your eyes are muddled with cedar / our bed of dead leaves is furrowed our hunts / purged of your cider" demand to be sunk into. She tackles big, expansive emotions but sidesteps cliché, always returning to the precise detail, the "shore / braided with white pearls." A crucial voice.

Carolyn Marie Souaid's seventh collection, *This World We Invented*, also delves into themes of personal and collective identity. Souaid presents origin stories and life cycles, blending notes from history, religion, science, and imagination. The first section, entitled "Sketchbook," uses components of visual art (scale, pattern, perspective, symmetry) to ground reflections on life and death. Souaid's insights are particularized by her light touch and ability to telescope from the micro to the macro. In "Shape," the speaker asks, "Where in the dryer does the missing sock go? / And to be dead, what's it like?" continuing, "Actually. / Now that I'm fifty, things don't fit so well. / My clothes, for instance." By the end of the poem, we have left this domestic scene for "Algae unaware of *love* or *loss*, […] / only the pulsing yes/no of being here for a time, / and then not." These kinds of leaps are a signature mark of all the best poems in this collection.

The second section, which shares the book's title, documents chaos, decline, and a sense of unease, but also hopefulness in parenthood, recovery, and pressing on. Souaid witnesses the world's messiness without reaching for tidy solutions, recognizing instead that "There's just one crested wave. / And then another, and another." This collection pivots and turns, speaking from diverse vantage points, illustrating a line from "Collage": "What you need to say has many rooms."

Mockingbird is the first collection from founding editor of *Maisonneuve* magazine Derek Webster. Motifs from fables and fairy tales – a small red hood, a woodcutter, a she-wolf – flicker in and out of these poems, in lines that are lilting and dark. The inventory of months in "Calendar" and lines such as "Do you dream of rending wrong from right? / Good luck, my darling, good luck and good night" in "Nursery Rhyme for Big Brother" bring to mind children's verse, with a twist. Dream and waking worlds overlap, often in eerie or frightening ways: "Coal lids closed, it leaps into the air. / Giant shadow rows. Outside the dream / someone knifes the dreamer." Focusing on themes of domestic breakdown, these poems feature characters that emerge as recurring archetypes: angels and monsters in shifting forms, the neglectful mother, a lonely child. The poem's speakers tend towards endings with disillusioned or bitter notes, as in the myth-revisioning "Orpheus": "I must walk the length of my life / yammering about patience, joy and love / until I hated singing / and hated you."

Like the titular mockingbird, Webster echoes the voices of others, referencing Larkin, Hughes, and Dickinson, and nodding to traditional forms. He frequently employs rhyming couplets; these are most satisfying when their rhymes are somewhat unpredictable – "Woodsmoke's listless curlicue— / what's left of what you thought you knew" reads musically over "Rat moving at your feet / A car in the street," for example. Webster's vision is at its starkest and loveliest in the book's penultimate section, where he turns his eye to an idiosyncratic set of birdwatcher's field notes, an eclipse, a pelican's "beauty's folded awkwardness," and "mist like a cat creeping up the lawn" – images that retain their mystery, allowing us to draw our own conclusions.

Louise Carson has many journal, chapbook, and anthology publications, but *A Clearing* is her first full-length collection, released by Signature Editions at the same time as her mystery novel, *Executor*. Carson's poems document the natural world and personal wilderness(es). Her voice is wry and honest; "Yes, it's really like this where I live," she writes in "Muskrat dives," acknowledging the reader's presence as she organizes the seasons, flowers, animals, and musings of her world in rural Quebec.

Despite occasional moments of heavy handedness, many of these poems show a knack for saying just enough. Trained as a musician, Carson experiments with different tempos, and capitalizes on the possibilities of variation and repetition. Her carefully considered rhythms range from breathless lines that spill into one another, to shorter ones that unfold slowly, emphasizing silences and white space on the page. Carson's concise and elegant descriptions are most memorable when they push into a subtle strangeness – the man who steps into the shower, "swimming goggles adjusted"; the woman who "asks everyone she meets: / did you bring me my new face? Did you bring me one with a bright / curved beak?" Carson uses a matter-of-fact tone to avoid oversentimentality, as in "29 words on solitude": "Sometimes chosen, often not. / Society can tell. / I've got emotional leprosy. / Bits of me are dropping off. / Not so bad. When I walk out, / I can hear my bell." These poems meditate on the potential to be found in small moments, in personal "clearings," as Carson articulates in "between times": "in between / is when / I sail the seas."

As the blurb on *Asbestos Heights* explains, David McGimpsey has been "implored by concerned readers to be 'classy' and 'real' for once." So McGimpsey takes on canonical poetic themes, folding these to hilarious effect into his fixations with sports, fast food, and pop culture, familiar from previous collections such as *Li'l Bastard* and *Sitcom*. As a result, lichen creeps over Taco Bells, crocuses are Instagrammable (or not), and a poem titled "Lady's Slipper" ends on a Beyoncé lyric. McGimpsey satirizes the CanLit microcosm, pointing to "towns / where Canadians happily live their lives, / unperturbed by who was excluded / from the *Can Lit? Can Do!* anthology." The jokes are nonstop, delivered with the straight face of formal rhetoric, in seamlessly constructed quatrains.

At the same time, McGimpsey is interested in sincere emotional expression, whether it comes from a poem or a Taylor Swift song. There are many self-deprecating and bittersweet moments here, too, whether in the form of a therapist who couldn't be less interested in her client's poetry, or a quiet memory: "My father, at ninety-nine, could not / recognize his favourite Yankees' faces / but knew their body shapes, averages / and what they did their last time at bat."

The writer's attempts to be "classy" unravel over the course of this set of "canonical notebooks," as signalled by the titles alone – we go from "Nasturtium" to "You may remember me from the small-press Canadian poetry titles *Sugar Shack Parson* and *Midnight Call to Petawawa.*" The effect is dizzying, in a good way. McGimpsey is pure reading pleasure.

Jaime Forsythe is a Halifax-based writer. Her first collection of poetry, *Sympathy Loophole*, was published by Mansfield Press.

non-fiction

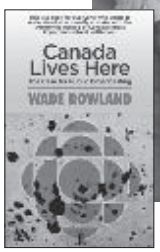
Citizen Can

CANADA LIVES HERE
The Case For Public Broadcasting
Wade Rowland
Linda Leith Publishing
$16.95, paper, 240pp
9781927535820

Twenty-eight. That's the number I can't get out of my head. There are a lot of figures and statistics in Wade Rowland's cri de cœur for the decline to near-terminal status of the once proud and nation-defining CBC, but for this reader the one that jumped off the page and put it all in perspective appears in a breakdown of the comparative per capita subsidy for public broadcasting among countries who have such things. In Norway, for one example, the average taxpayer shells out $180 per year; Germans pay $124, British citizens $97 for their beloved BBC. And here in Canada, where the lurking presence of a culturally rapacious behemoth neighbour makes the nurturing of a strong national voice arguably more urgent than anywhere else? Yes, it's $28, and no, that's not a typo. Less than a dime a day. It's just not enough.

Canadians above a certain age tend to look at the past through very selective glasses, forgetting that plenty of CBC programming has been frankly dire. (Do you remember *This Is the Law*? If not, count yourself lucky.) But it's crucial to bear in mind that even when it was bad, it was *our* bad, and that when it was good – *Kids In the Hall*, *The Beachcombers* (hey, they still love it in Germany!), *Brave New Waves*, name your favourite – it was *very* good, the kind of good that can only come when, as Rowland eloquently puts it, broadcasters "serve their audiences as citizens first and consumers second."

For all the data Rowland has marshalled, he makes *Canada Lives Here* a smooth-flowing read, and as in any good narrative, heroes and villains emerge. There's former CBC radio head Margaret Lyons, the visionary responsible for *As It Happens*, *Quirks and Quarks*, and *This Country In the Morning*. But then there's one-time head of English-language TV programming Richard Stursberg. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry upon reading that our national network was being run, for a time, by someone whose idea of a quality TV show – a foreign benchmark to which we, as Canadians, should be aspiring – was *Desperate Housewives*. It's all you can do not to picture some of these bean counters twirling a moustache and cackling "Mwa-ha-ha!!" as they blithely cut children's programming. Did these people never watch *The Friendly Giant*?



It is, of course, a perfect storm of rottenness that has put the CBC where it is today. The digital revolution, a federal government that at times has appeared actively hostile to the institution's very existence … I could go on, and Rowland does, lamenting how the CBC has engaged in a no-win game of perpetual catch-up when what they should and could be doing, with technology in such flux, is providing "a beacon of reliability and trustworthiness in a chaotic information landscape, sifting information from noise."

Rowland has performed an invaluable service. His breakdown of what has gone wrong is rigorous and sobering; his proposed program for righting the ship – in a nutshell, go back to first principles and, for Pete's sake, jack up the funding – is cogent, clear, sensible, and, yes, affordable. Whether anything like it has a snowball's chance of actually being implemented in the current climate, even assuming an imminent change of government, is a whole different question. I won't be holding my breath. But I will still be setting aside that eight cents per day, and will be prepared to dig deeper still. mRb

Ian McGillis is the *Montreal Gazette*'s weekly books columnist. His book *Higher Ground* will be published by Biblioasis in February 2016.

Working Women

BEYOND BRUTAL PASSIONS
Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal
Mary Anne Poutanen
McGill-Queen's University Press
$34.95, paper, 432pp
9780773545342

The written histories of cities usually tell the big stories, hashing out biographies of visionary men building things and founding things and fighting one another for the spoils. In *Beyond Brutal Passions*, Mary Anne Poutanen delves into the details to create a portrait of Montreal's early nineteenth-century prostitutes, scouring city archives for moments when the lives of these mostly forgotten women intersected with official public record.

Her account relies heavily on police and court documents, but Poutanen isn't only interested in tracking when and how prostitution was policed and punished (although she does that, too). She teases out the roles that brothel owners, streetwalkers, and female vagrants played in their communities as mothers, wives, friends, neighbours, and co-workers. While she's frank about the hardships they faced – violence, larceny, poverty, homelessness, police extortion, Dickensian prison conditions, and the perils of vagrancy during Montreal's bleak winters – Poutanen's subjects weren't just isolated, desperate wretches. They were independent women who relied on themselves and one another to get by.

For most, selling sex was a temporary gig until a better job or a husband came along, although there were many who saw it as a vocation. Prostitution, the author reminds us, doesn't require any start-up capital, and it's work that can be taken on casually as needed. Sex work offered an autonomous income stream for widows or de facto divorcées, and residential prostitution or brothel ownership afforded mothers both the space and means to provide for their families. By naming individual prostitutes from the period, Poutanen foregrounds the diversity of their experiences.

She also complicates these women's relationships with state institutions. She cites several streetwalkers, for instance, who would contrive to be arrested, often with the complicity of watchmen or constables, in order to use jails for free medical attention while giving birth, for palliative care, or to avoid sleeping rough when winter loomed. Such stories show the agency and resistance women exercised in hijacking resources for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Covering a period from roughly 1800 to 1840, the book is structured in two sections, the first focusing on the women, the second treating police, legal, and carceral systems. Poutanen deftly weaves these together, arguing that changing bourgeois attitudes toward public space, domesticity, and femininity led to more paternalistic and repressive attitudes and laws toward prostitution and vagrancy. The sexual and economic freedom of women who stepped outside of male-run household economies was seen as a threat that might contaminate "unsullied" women of good character. And so police, jurists, and local government disciplined them by criminalizing prostitution and punishing infractions more harshly.

Clearly intended for a scholarly audience, *Beyond Brutal Passions* is academic in tone and structure, addressing a reader already well versed in this period of Montreal's history. Poutanen, who lectures at both Concordia and McGill, really digs into the minutia of her materials to frame her larger argument, and this meticulousness might strike the casual reader as tedious at times. A lengthy introductory exegesis on her research methods, for example, would be something anyone outside of her field could safely skip. That said, her archival research is expansive, offering bait for any local history buff, and the volume marks an important contribution to feminist historical literature, recuperating the lost stories of nineteenth-century Montreal's popular class and especially its disorderly women.

At the heart of this work lies the conviction that prostitutes weren't just prostitutes. They were working women who sold sex to stay alive, to support their families, to survive abusive or absent husbands. Poutanen interrogates the dichotomy struck between the prostitute and the good wife and mother, giving voice to the women who were both. mRb

Emily Raine is a writer, editor, and scholar based in Montreal. She's currently working on a book about philosophy and waiter work.

Unsung Hero

REBEL PRIEST IN THE TIME OF TYRANTS
Mission to Haiti, Ecuador and Chile
Claude Lacaille
Translated by Casey Roberts
Baraka Books
$24.95, paper, 232pp
9781771860390

Few figures are as stirring – and heroic – as a servant, walking a dangerous but noble path, abandoned by the very people who called him to it. We may not be capable of such idealism. But it reminds us of what faithfulness looks like. And the tragedies that usually accompany such missions show us true sacrifice and heroism.

In this case, the master who first called Claude Lacaille was the so-called Good Pope, John XXIII, in the 1960s. The path Lacaille took as this Pope's servant, from 1965 to 1986, was to follow the Second Vatican Council's directive to renew the church by reaching out to the poor and powerless in solidarity with Jesus (who was, as Lacaille reminds us, also murdered by soldiers). As the author recalls with some bitterness, the popes who followed John XXIII quickly tried to reverse his reforms. After the Council, the Church once again "allied itself with imperial power," cozying up to tyrants. Lacaille isn't afraid to name names, which may explain the fact that this book was not published by an official Vatican publisher. But like that of so many other children of Vatican II, Lacaille's faith, having been radicalized, could not be extinguished. A true missionary, he writes, must "live among the impoverished and … support them in their struggles." The book is full of similar pronouncements.

The author's accounts of his ministry contain some humour (soldiers who mistake the Bible for a local revolutionary document), much sadness, and tragedy more real than any Hollywood narrative. The body of Hugo Riveros, a young artist who dared to send sketches of his torture out of the country, is found stabbed sixty times. The pixie-like smile of Maryknoll sister, Ita Ford, did not save the American nun from being kidnapped, raped, and murdered by soldiers in El Salvador. There are too many such examples.

Through it all, including his own brushes with danger, Lacaille tells his story. As a child in Trois-Rivières he wanted to be a missionary. But he chafed at what he describes as the isolating, "infantilized" life of the seminary. His real education came in his

first posting, the slums of Haiti: "this extraordinary people … made me the man I've become." It's telling how the author later enjoyed community life in Chile among young and old, women and men, "simple, full of sharing and brotherhood." Lacaille's true professors were Latin America's revolutionary Christians. Here he found his home. At the end of the book, the author seems a bit lost back in Quebec.

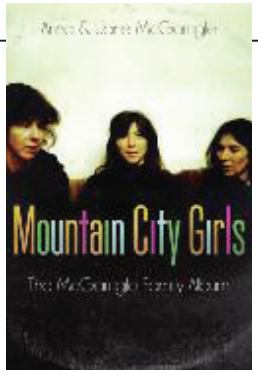
The writing is simple, the translation by Casey Roberts sometimes overly colloquial. Even as a non-Catholic, I was only rarely lost by the vocabulary. The characters are compelling: worker priests, angry old men raising their fists at dictators, silent mothers protesting "the disappeared" while babies nuzzle their breasts, radicalized youth, twitchy *carabineros* (armed police), death squads, martyrs, torturers, and Bishops caught between the poor who occupy their churches and the dictators who sit at the front during official masses. Lacaille's autobiography has all the ingredients of great fiction, which makes it more astonishing as truth.

The naiveté and audacity of statements such as "Our project would be to help our neighbourhood get back on its feet, to defeat terror and to get organized to fight oppression" would be laughable were there not evidence that Lacaille and the other little "red priests" (so named for their emphasis on social justice) in their own small way actually helped do all that. It helps that Lacaille is humble, a humility that clearly goes hand in hand with his love of the people.

A "Good Pope" stands at the beginning of Lacaille's story. One wonders if it would have been told had there not also been a "good pope" – Pope Francis, a friend of liberation theology and advocate of justice – to bless and give hope to the end. mRb

Matthew R. Anderson is a Lutheran pastor, and affiliate assistant professor of Theological Studies at Concordia University, Montreal. His blog can be found at www.somethinggrand.ca

By Julia Kater



MOUNTAIN CITY GIRLS
The McGarrigle Family Album
Anna and Jane McGarrigle
Penguin Random House
$34.00, cloth, 352pp
9780345814029

Anna & Jane McGarrigle

What a Circle Is Worth

All my life I wanted to roam
To go to the ends of the Earth
But the Earth really ends where you started to roam
And you and I know what a circle is worth.
–From "Come a Long Way" by Kate McGarrigle

Sibling relationships are said to be the longest relationships of our lives. They usually outlast our relationships with our parents; they exist long before we choose our partners, and they're a generation ahead of the relationships we form with our children.

One of the best-known and strongest sibling relationships in Canada was that of Kate and Anna McGarrigle, members of the royal family of North American folk music. In addition to appearing on their own award-winning albums, their songs have been recorded by Emmylou Harris, Judy Collins, Billy Bragg, Linda Ronstadt, and Nana Mouskouri, to name just a few of their musical admirers. Before Kate died in 2010 at the age of sixty-three, the McGarrigles toured the world. They played Carnegie Hall seven times. In 1994, they were awarded the Order of Canada, and they won a Governor General's Performing Arts Award in 2004. All of this with the help of their older sister, Jane, who managed their careers for nearly two decades, co-wrote songs, and performed on tours across Canada, Australia, Europe, and the United States.

But *Mountain City Girls*, written by Anna and Jane, is not a retelling of the McGarrigles' career in music. Rather, it is a captivating account of what came before that. The book is a richly worded family history, reaching back three generations, and then focusing mostly on the McGarrigle family unit – Father Frank, Mother Gaby, and sisters Jane, Anna, and Kate. The story ends in the fall of 1976, just as Kate and Anna begin their ascent to international acclaim following the release of their debut album in 1975 with Warner Records. Like so much of the McGarrigle repertoire, this story is told in harmony: sisters Jane and Anna alternate taking the lead.

Having a dear sister myself, I was curious to know what it was like for Anna to have a relationship with Kate as a sister, a friend, a creative partner, and a business partner. She recalled, "From the beginning, Kate and I were very much a party of two. Early on our mother dressed us in matching outfits. I was pink and she was blue – she was the boy after all! […] Because Kate and I were a year apart we grew to depend on each other (like a crutch) and it stayed that way 'til the end. People got so used to seeing the two of us walking around Outremont and Mile-End that after she died I wouldn't go out alone in that part of town. I knew people were feeling sorry for me."

When I asked how writing these memoirs together changed their relationship to each other, both Jane and Anna agreed that the project brought them closer together. Jane replied, "I understand Anna much better than I did before. Because I was working with Kate and Anna (I was their manager) there was already a sort of adversarial aspect […] because you have to remind them to be at the studio on time, or whatever – and also, Kate and Anna lived together, wrote together, and for a lot of years they were sort of a unit. And, growing up, I wouldn't play with them – I was off doing my own stuff – and then I got married young, and was away. And then Anna was living in Alexandria [Ontario] and was in and out of [Montreal], and Kate was in the city, so I saw more of Kate. And I would get news of Anna from Kate."

Anna agreed. "Yes, through the Kate prism."

Jane continued, "It was 'Anna thinks this' or 'Anna feels that.' […] For fifteen years, I was getting to know Anna through Kate. Like 'well, Anna says that but she doesn't really mean it.' So, after Kate died, I was, just … really … not sure about anything."

"Yeah. It was sort of like 'well … here we are now,'" Anna added.

"Yeah," said Jane, turning to Anna. "And here we are."

Born into a family of mixed Irish and Québécois background, the girls spent their first few years on the island of Montreal, in Lachine, until their parents relocated the family to a small house their father was slowly building in the town of Saint-Sauveur, in the Laurentian Mountains about sixty kilometres north of Montreal. That home is a strong focal point of the book, and continues to be a place where the extended clan converges today. About it, Jane writes, "Almost seventy years later, the question could be asked, 'Why are we still here?' For we are still very much in the old family homestead, with its ghosts and memories that have infected our children and their children. We're clearly here because we need to be."

Mountain City Girls reads like a long visit to the McGarrigle family living room, where laughter is plentiful, wit is sharp, and stories are always on offer. Some of these stories are achingly funny, like that of enterprising grandpa Latrémouille's (failed) business venture making wine that turned out to have laxative properties. Some are heart-wrenching, like father Frank's sudden death. And some are wistfully tender, like a rare moment when mother Gaby is caught playing the piano – an indulgence she reserved for solitude. All of them are poignant and insightful.

Like that living room, the book is full of song, too. There are snippets of lyrics interspersed throughout the recollections, and especially in the retelling of Kate and Anna's rise to popularity in the burgeoning Montreal folk scene of the 1960s as members of The Mountain City Four. Later in the book, we are treated to the backstories of several of Kate's early songs, allowing us a glimpse into her creative process. Of course no cozy living room is complete without a few photos, and *Mountain City Girls* offers up a great collection of snapshots from family albums.

Of the book's inception, Anna writes: "I told Louise [Dennys, who suggested the project, that] I would want to do it with my sister Jane, whose turn of phrase I've always admired. In a way, I was carrying on what Kate had done when she'd asked me to join her in a musical career. She'd said to me, 'Anna, I don't want to do this alone.'"

Together, Anna and Jane have produced a stirring portrait of the McGarrigle sisters and the cast of characters who have shaped their stories. It is a necessary addition to the book collections of all folk music lovers.

Julia Kater's talents lie in music, graphic design, and papermaking. She is currently teaching herself to play the fiddle, and will forever be trying to write a good song.

By Frederik Byrn Køhlert

Meags Fitzgerald

"We Knew We Weren't Made of Porcelain"

After making a splash in the alternative comics world last year with *Photobooth*, a delightfully idiosyncratic history of the titular machines and the author's own obsession with them, Montreal-based artist and illustrator Meags Fitzgerald returns this fall with *Long Red Hair*, a new memoir about childhood, female friendship, and coming of age queer. Fitzgerald's books are beautifully drawn in a realistic style that accentuates the surfaces of everyday objects and environments. Always attuned to the larger cultural perspectives suggested by their personal narratives, both *Photobooth* and *Long Red Hair* are examples of how graphic memoirs can transcend stories of the self in order to bring vibrant visual life to the marginal and the unexpected. Busy between her book launch and a trip to the Small Press Expo in Bethesda, Maryland, Fitzgerald found time to discuss her new book with me over email.

Frederik Byrn Køhlert: I'm wondering if you can say something about how you got started drawing comics? What is it about the form that drew you to it?

Meags Fitzgerald: As a child I struggled with reading and writing, I loved stories but even little chapter books were daunting and felt inaccessible. From a young age, I was a strong drawer and so my interest in comics felt very natural. I've been writing and drawing my own stories since I was about six years old. Now, as an adult who reads a lot of books, my favourites all happen to be graphic novels. I think that's because my mind operates in a very visual way, I just connect with the material on another level.

FBK: In comparison with the episodic nature of your new memoir *Long Red Hair*, your previous book, *Photobooth*, is both more traditionally literary and linear, and is closer to being an illustrated personal essay than it is to being a comic in the ordinary sense. Did that shift occur organically as part of your developing practice, or was it more a question of what felt right for each narrative?

MF: It's true, I use very different narrative devices in each book. The shift was to serve the stories that are told in *Long Red Hair*. I wanted the narrator to have less of a presence and for the story to unfold more organically in conversation. For example, there's only about a dozen speech bubbles in all of *Photobooth* (a 280-page book) but it's the primary textual tool used in *Long Red Hair*.

FBK: I sense the influence of such authors as Alison Bechdel and Ariel Schrag on *Long Red Hair*, and in addition to writing graphic memoirs, both of those artists are of course thematically preoccupied with queer identities and coming-out narratives. In fact, there

continued on page 16

LONG RED HAIR
Meags Fitzgerald
Conundrum Press
$17.00, paper, 88pp
9781894994958

By Ami Sands Brodoff

H. Nigel Thomas

Can You Go Home Again?

"Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced," wrote James Baldwin, an apt epigraph for *No Safeguards*, the new novel by H. Nigel Thomas. Cultural memory often involves a good deal of willed forgetting, an overlooking of painful parts of experience in favour of a dominant narrative. In *No Safeguards*, Thomas grapples with the complex bonds and migrations of a Vincentian family, among those people often left out of conventional Canadian histories.

No Safeguards centres on two brothers, Jay and Paul, as they come of age in St. Vincent, and later, in Montreal. Their lives are complicated by the fact that both are gay and their parents subscribe to intolerant fundamentalist Christian beliefs, complete with hellfire and damnation. Fortunately, they have an enlightened grandmother with a comfortable home on the Caribbean island, which provides a refuge. When their mother flees her abusive husband, the brothers join her in Canada, which the family sees as the promised land.

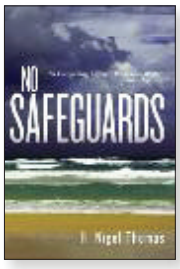
As fall draws in, I invite Thomas to my home to talk about his life and work over coffee and scones. One of my first questions is how closely the novel hews to his own history. "It's not autobiographical in any factual way," Thomas tells me, though he acknowledges parallels in the violence of the father and in the inspiration of a grandparent. Thomas grew up with his maternal grandparents in a village called Dickson, actually named for his great-great-grandfather who was a land surveyor in Great Britain and was given the property on St. Vincent that became Dickson's village. When Thomas was three years old, he chose to live with his grandparents because of his father's violence. "My grandparents gave me something I didn't find at home," he says. "They were affectionate." Like Grama Kirton in *No Safeguards*, Thomas's grandfather kept a journal and was an avid reader and storyteller. "He taught me to read before I went to school. Growing up, I didn't see myself as a writer. I loved literature and wanted to be the best English teacher ever."

Thomas achieved that goal in Canada. He arrived in Montreal in 1968 at the age of twenty-one, "eager to experience life on a continental scale." After teaching English and French for a dozen years, he went on to earn his PhD and was appointed assistant professor of US Literature at Université Laval. Since 2006, he has devoted himself to writing full time.

So how did the writing start? "With poetry," he tells me. "In my late twenties, I realized the thoughts and images in my head were poems. Then the characters came and told me their stories – *very* late at night," he adds laughing. "I realized if I wanted to get any sleep, I'd better write them down."

In *No Safeguards*, Thomas deftly delineates the contrasting natures and physicalities of the two brothers and their divergent paths. While Jay, the elder by six years, is tall, lean, and regal with close-cropped hair, Paul is short and portly, sporting dreadlocks. Jay is cautious, contained, and formal, while Paul is impulsive, outspoken, and wild.

continued on page 16



NO SAFEGUARDS
H. Nigel Thomas
Guernica Editions
$25.00, paper, 294pp
9781550719840

fiction

Ghosts of Eldorado

ARVIDA
Samuel Archibald
Translated by Donald Winkler
Biblioasis
$19.95, paper, 300pp
9781771960427

Named for its author's hometown, Samuel Archibald's debut short-story collection *Arvida* is a grab bag of family lore, tall tales, idle boasts, and dark secrets – the kind of stories usually told around a kitchen table or campfire before vanishing into the night air like smoke.

The town of Arvida was built in 135 days in 1927, as a model resource community for the modern world. Three generations later we find an Alcan Eldorado in bad decline. In fourteen wide-ranging stories, Archibald paints an affectionate but unsparing portrait of a mythical milieu where nothing is straightforward: hapless criminals are endearing; what average guys do is chilling to the bone.

The opener riffs on Proust's madeleine to tease out the meaning of family stories, memory, and desire, themes echoed in the closing reminiscence of learning to write stories on the family Underwood typewriter. "People who know stories can't write them, and people who can write them don't have enough," the narrator tells his father. "It's telling them that's the problem." These meditative pieces bookend the collection, resonating against the others to sketch an approach to the story that elegantly resolves this problem of telling.

A third story in the family vein, "The Centre of Leisure and Forgetfulness (Arvida II)," is a hilarious blow-by-blow account of a 1978 hockey game. The retired Habs who drive to town "in big Buicks, Molsons tucked between their legs" are in for a surprise when the team of local also-rans don't roll over easily. Also on the lighter side are two accounts of spectacular criminal ineptitude. The much darker "Blood Sisters" cycle, told from a female perspective, delves deep into the lasting repercussions of abuse.

Archibald excels at long, fast-paced stories, page-turners with a whiff of genre fiction (one of his academic specializations at UQAM, where he's a professor). "The Animal (Blood Sisters II)" is a drawn-out, harrowing tour de force. The collection's longest and strongest stories are Chekhovian in their structural integrity and moral ambivalence.

"House Bound" is a taut, mean yarn spun by a characteristic Archibald narrator. Fiercely intelligent but emotionally stunted, he lovingly describes every plank and panel of his house but can't find one nice thing to say about his ex. Throughout *Arvida*, Archibald gives eloquent voice to men most articulate with chainsaws and hunting rifles, men for whom clouds are "swollen with water, like the plastic sheets you hang up over drying wood."

In its original French, *Arvida* made waves in Quebec, won awards, and sold briskly. (Archibald has since published a novella; a children's book is forthcoming.) No small part of the appeal lies in Archibald's masterful ear and wholehearted embrace of Québécois vernacular, not excluding borrowings from English. In a province where even bathroom stall graffiti is routinely corrected, this is still a big deal. It's also slippery to translate. Perhaps inevitably, certain narrators and characters have lost some of their salt. But translation is an art of mitigating loss. Donald Winkler has given us a tight-knit, readable collection whose best stories spirit us along to the bittersweet end. *Arvida* is an important contribution to Canada's increasingly ebullient translation scene.

PHOTO: FREDERICK DUCHESNE

A spot on the Giller Prize shortlist suggests a book ready to cross over to English readers. And why not? The larger-than-life Saguenay it depicts – a place where men once logged and mined and their grandkids move away to get educated, or stay behind doing drugs and odd jobs, hemmed in by inscrutable bush and deadly wildlife – kind of sounds like large swathes of Canada. What's outlandish in Montreal may be familiar in Sudbury or Kitimat. The fate of Arvida the town is uncertain: yesterday's Eldorados are today's ghost towns. *Arvida* the book, like the kind of storytelling it embraces, is made of more enduring stuff.

Pablo Strauss's translation of Maxime Raymond Bock's *Atavisms* was published in 2015. He lives in Quebec City.

Montreal Legends and Late Nights

MOUTHQUAKE
Daniel Allen Cox
Arsenal Pulp Press
$15.95, paper, 208pp
9781551526041

Employing a variety of experimental techniques in style and structure, Daniel Allen Cox's fourth novel, *Mouthquake*, details the queer coming-of-age of a stuttering young man in Montreal. *Mouthquake* is divided into two sections, each focusing on a significant relationship in the unnamed narrator's life: a friendship with a Montreal legend and a later romance with a sensitive young man. Woven through the novel is a third relationship, between the narrator and his hometown of Montreal. The city is central to the protagonist's development and connects the book's two very different narratives.

The story opens in the late 1970s. It is winter and the city is "a nonstop blizzard," heavy snowfall wreaking havoc. A fan of *The Littlest Hobo*, the child protagonist leaves home in the snow, hoping to find the show's star. Instead, while wandering the city streets, he stumbles into an unlikely friendship with a five-hundred-pound strongman and self-proclaimed *Champion du monde*. The narrator refers to Grand Antonio as his "imaginary friend," but Montrealers will recognize that this larger-than-life figure is based on the real Antonio Barichievich, a fixture of the city in the late twentieth century, famous for once pulling four busses full of passengers down Sainte-Catherine Street. Although he is eccentric and down on his luck, Antonio is depicted by Cox as a good-natured outsider, a symbol of a time when the city was more open to strange characters.

Cox's writing about the city is replete with references that will intrigue newcomers and make long-time Montrealers smile. He presents the city during the late 1970s as a nearly mythical place, still basking in the afterglow of the 1976 Olympics. One scene takes place during an Expos game at the Stade Olympique. Another chapter revisits the rock band Queen's legendary two-night stand at the Forum in a fictional open letter to the city from singer Freddie Mercury. The novel effortlessly captures the relaxed rhythms of Montreal.

By 1994, when the second section of the novel picks up, the city has lost some of its glamour. Now in his early twenties, the narrator is living a Bohemian lifestyle on the Plateau. By night he indulges in a decadent world of sex and drugs, and in the daytime he volunteers at McGill's community radio station CKUT. In the intervening years he has become a rabid music fan, obsessing over bands. (Cox's eloquent apotheosis of New Order's hit single "Regret" is a treat.) When he finds love with a young man named Eric, who is deaf, the narrator is forced to reflect on his devotion to sound, even as Eric tells him that he can hear music, too, "just differently." The novel charts their romance through the various stations of young love, from exploratory sex to arguments over grocery shopping.

Cox's depiction of Montreal in the 1990s is surreal and dreamlike. If the first section of the book was tinted with the sepia tone of nostalgia, in the second part, the city appears as if seen under the influence of psychedelic drugs and young love – both of which can powerfully alter perception, and have volatile emotions as side effects. Cox's bricolage style and short scenes reflect the disjointed experiences of late adolescence. Eschewing the conventions of realism, Cox uses a range of experimental techniques to explore his narrator's inner world, including daydream cameos from dead celebrities, stand-alone meditations on religious and sexual proclivities, lists of favourite bands, and BDSM-fueled reveries. Some of these are more successful than others at giving us real insight into the protagonist's character. Nevertheless, *Mouthquake* is a compelling portrait of a queer young man and a city changing together.

Jeff Miller is the author of the short story collection *Ghost Pine: All Stories True*. His writing also appears in several periodicals and anthologies, and weekly at *Said the Gramophone*.

Losing Control

CAPTIVE
Claudine Dumont
Translated by David Scott Hamilton
House of Anansi Press
$22.95, paper, 200pp
9781487000516

Claudine Dumont's *Captive* is animated by the idea of power, and how quickly it can be gained or lost. When Emma, the novel's first-person narrator, is abducted from her bedroom by a group of masked assailants and awakens in a locked room, she is quickly reduced to a state of helplessness and terror. Her disempowerment is heightened by the enigmas surrounding her captivity: there is no apparent motive for her kidnapping, and she has no interaction with her captors. As readers are presented with sparse, carefully curated details about Emma's life prior to her abduction, it becomes unclear to what extent her isolation, and the numbing routine she develops to cope with it, truly represent a departure from her previous life. It seems that she was primarily a passive observer in life as well, with minimal social interactions and a reliance on alcohol to distract her from the bleak monotony of her days.

The sudden appearance of a fellow prisoner, Julian, who, like Emma, has no understanding of why he is being kept captive, abruptly disrupts the carefully calibrated dynamic Emma has achieved with her captors. He exudes "Impatience. Irritation. Anger. He walks as if each of his steps were crushing one of *them*." Moreover, Julian demands to know why Emma has so quickly conceded to playing by rules established without her consent, prompting her to wonder why she has experienced so little rage. As Emma awakens to a new sense of rebellion and anger at her circumstances, Julian pushes her to explore the deeper recesses of her emotional numbness. Within the starkest of settings, a bare concrete cell, Dumont is able to vividly evoke the crackle of sexual tension between the two captives.

The plot twists that follow in the remaining pages of this slim text continuously renegotiate the balance of power between individuals and their seemingly overwhelming circumstances. The jarring final revelation, in particular, undermines everything that has gone before it. The novel's form, as well as its content, forces readers to confront their own impotence within a narrative that rarely offers the relief of a logical explanation. Dumont's writing, well served by Hamilton's elegant translation, mirrors the surgical precision of Emma and Julian's abductors. Sentences are sharp and pointed. Generally minimalist in her style, Dumont strategically deploys a powerful ability to evoke visceral physical realities, such as a lengthy and stomach-churningly detailed description of Emma administering a blood transfusion to Julian.

Lacking the reassuring orientation of chapter divisions, the novel consists instead of sections of varying length demarcated by blank space before the next section begins on a new page. The disorienting use of white space throughout the novel becomes a stark visual reminder of the incoherent experience of time and space for Emma, who is unable to calculate the duration of her imprisonment and loses all visual markers whenever her captors choose to extinguish the lights in her cell.

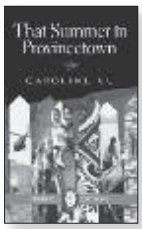
As a study in suspense, *Captive* is a page-turner, and its diminutive length makes it all the more likely to be devoured in a single sitting. What causes the novel to linger in a reader's memory, however, is less the details of the two characters' experiences than the vivid evocation of being simultaneously a privileged voyeur and forced to share in Emma's vulnerability because of a lack of signposts about the narrative's ultimate aim. The limited amount of narrative resolution on offer at the novel's end may well provoke frustration. On the whole, however, *Captive* does a masterful job of suggesting that extreme confrontation with a loss of agency can generate provocative questions about the extent to which anyone is ever in control.

Danielle Barkley holds a PhD from the Department of English at McGill University and teaches topics including writing, rhetoric, and critical analysis.

Arbitrary Luck

THAT SUMMER IN PROVINCETOWN
Caroline Vu
Guernica Editions
$20.00, paper, 134pp
9781771830355

The title suggests tangled nights on the beach, afternoon cocktails, at least a bit of coming-of-age necking. But *That Summer in Provincetown* is only glancingly about any such summer. The titular season, on the still-carefree eve of the AIDS epidemic, is covered in a six-page erotic body count, serving only to precipitate the premature, hollow-bodied, disgraced death of Daniel, cousin to the narrator, Mai. From the dying man's bedside, the novel skips back across his extended family, tracing their relocation within their native Vietnam, their immigration to North America, and particularly their trysts and transgressions.



Structure dominates storytelling in this novel: each chapter opens on Daniel's death, and goes on to revisit family history through the frame of one character – Horny Uncle Hai, Daniel's Parisian mother, Mai's own mother and her assorted paramours. The world of *That Summer in Provincetown* is utterly matriarchal – the grandmother looms everywhere, and the mother, fallen and redeemed, is the most vivid figure in the novel. The men, meanwhile, are uni-adjectival – handsome, charming, careless – with the exception of brother Tim, who is portrayed in a plausible, intimate light. Every writer has favourites among their characters, but unjustified transparent allegiances can skew the reading. Mai, the narrator, is not deliberately unreliable, yet the resulting attention is scattered, diffuse. We don't know where to look, and we never quite trust the author to tell us.

War, youth, family, sin: *That Summer in Provincetown* ends up being about a lot of things, but merely brushes up against each topic in scattershot clichés: Encountering small-town racism, "we knew we had to leave fast." Teenaged sisters "drove young men to desperation." When Daniel's diagnosis comes to light, his grandmother "hid from prying neighbours wishing to expose her dirty laundry." Even the frequent sex manages to be leaden, described at most as "casual encounters of the flesh" or "an exchange of bodily fluids." Strangely, following Vu's more evocative *Palawan Story*, *That Summer in Provincetown* stumbles along, awkward and expository.

The novel is saved by occasional flashes of expressive flair: Tim, the baby, is described as "a pebble that you kick out of your way. The only time you notice its shape is when it leaves a dirt mark on your new shoes." Elsewhere, we read: "With its ebb and flow, the war occasionally lulled to sleep." The author is notably perspicacious when it comes to death: "When fathers of classmates died," Mai confesses, "I didn't feel bad. I felt jealous instead." Many of the choices we make – notably migration – are impelled by mere survival, and their outcomes decided by fickle luck. Yet at the heart of *That Summer in Provincetown* is a stirring insolence against death – bring it on, they seem to say. Whether through a fling, a spur-of-the-moment adoption, or a summer of ill-fated love, Vu's characters share a reckless appetite: life wins.

Vu's structure is interesting, and subtly introduced. By the time we notice that Daniel's death is the chorus, we are so deep in the exuberantly flawed escapades of his living kin that mortality is a slow, cold shiver. But *That Summer in Provincetown* feels rushed, in need of a more convincing edit. Some family members come out of left field, and might have stayed there without adverse effect; likewise, some anecdotes (such as a memorable, lengthy aside on irritable bowel syndrome) might have been omitted. The book's uneven registers, grammatical mishaps, and most of all its exposition hobble the instincts that earned Vu a Quebec Writers' Federation First Book Prize nomination for her first novel. Her second, which should have shown off an emerging author honing her storytelling chops, is instead a cobbled-together recounting.

Katia Grubisic is a writer, editor, and translator.

Beneath the Surface

THE LAKE
Perrine Leblanc
Translated by Lazer Lederhendler
House of Anansi Press
$22.95, paper, 208pp
9781487000202

In the village of Malabourg, girlhood is a difficult, even dangerous time. This fictional town on the baie des Chaleurs, setting of Perrine Leblanc's second novel, is a place out of time, inhabited by generations of lantern-jawed fishermen and run by local gossips. *The Lake*, translated into English by Lazer Lederhendler, seems at first glance to promise a kind of thriller, but its village setting is the stuff of *contes* or legends.

The girls of Malabourg become women under the eyes of the village patriarchs, who are apparently, to a man, intoxicated by their developing forms. "The men of the village, with their fishermen's faces and ageless palms, are driven to distraction by the girls of the new generation." Here, a body is something thrust upon a girl; her "precocious fertility [drops] like a guillotine blade on her little girl's neck." And the men are not to be held responsible for their desires: "in Malabourg, it's always the girls' fault." But when a young woman goes missing and turns up dead, discovered at the bottom of the lake that the children of the village will later dub "the Tomb," only to be followed by two more girls, the village is shaken. These events would seem to set us off on the trail of a mystery, but this is a crime all too quickly solved, the answers brutally ordinary. It will later be referred to in the village histories as a "calamity," a "small hurricane," something wrought upon the passive community rather than deliberate violence enacted by one man.

The novel turns to its two young protagonists as the community reels from these events – Mina and Alexis each have an intimate connection to this tragedy, and both struggle to move beyond it. Mina keeps to herself and pays no attention to what others think of her. She is mistrusted, we are told, entirely on the basis of her appearance: "her raven-black hair is enough to make her suspect." The slurs thrown her way label her "gothic, a savage, a *kawish*." Alexis is a young florist and amateur perfumer with a cloying habit of matching girls with flowers ("Geneviève, his favourite, was the damask rose").

The novel is at its best in the sections set in Malabourg, where the narrative meanders through a cast of small-town characters: Madame Ka, an "amiable old whore"; Barry O'Reilly, a Frenglish-speaking, easy-going drunk; and Cécile, Mina's Mi'kmaq grandmother, who concocts herbal teas and remedies. Later sections of the novel, in which Mina and Alexis meet again in Montreal in the midst of the 2012 *printemps érable*, are an abrupt, even jarring return to reality. There still seems to be so much more to say back in the village. As a contrast, I was reminded of Elisabeth de Mariaffi's excellent and sensitive exploration in *The Devil You Know* of the way one continues to live in the aftermath of this kind of violence, even after the crime has been "solved." Mina and Alexis have good reason to move on, but by now the village itself is perhaps the character with which we are most engaged. What does a changed Malabourg look like? When will its women stop looking over their shoulders?

Leblanc's sensual language is beautifully rendered in Lederhendler's translation, though I did wonder at the choice to "translate" the title – the original title, *Malabourg*, could work in English too, and is far more evocative of the world of Leblanc's story than the starker *The Lake*. As Cécile tells her granddaughter, urging her to leave, "the malady is in the name of the place."

Aimee Wall is a writer and translator living in Montreal. Her translation of Vickie Gendreau's *Testament* is forthcoming from BookThug.

A Peculiar Fratricide

EX-YU
Josip Novakovich
Véhicule Press
$19.95, paper, 240pp
9781550654226

The word *Balkan* may bring to mind a number of associations. Complex borders, fraternity, religion, betrayal, atrocity. It gets complicated very quickly.

Josip Novakovich's most recent collection of short stories, *Ex-Yu*, explores each of these topics in turn and in conjunction. Novakovich, the Croatian-born Montrealer and Concordia creative writing professor, who was a 2013 finalist for the Man Booker International Prize, uses the short form to focus on these elemental themes and to examine how humans react to them in the crucible of brutality. And yet, the stories also gleam throughout with moments of hope and brightness.

The story "Honey in the Carcase" perfectly exemplifies the twinned themes of hope and dread that run throughout the collection. In it, Novakovich describes an older couple who refuse to flee their town, even as a battle front threatens to engulf it. She braves the shelling to visit the bakery. He drives to his apiary in the fields outside town, bribing his way through the checkpoints with honey. They are preserved – for a time – by the simple solidity of the brick house he built with his own hands and the life they built together.

A good example of how Novakovich develops his ideas is his three-part exploration of the honey metaphor in "Honey in the Carcase." This pattern of imagery also gives a great taste of his writing. First, he cites a Montenegrin poet who says, "A glass of honey asks for a glass of spleen, together they are easiest to drink." Then, as the hostilities mount, Ivan the beekeeper examines the biblical verse "There was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion." Finally, when old Ivan fashions a willow flute to call the bees from the hives, and we are given hope that social cohesion and its fruits may triumph over predatoriness, Novakovich brings it all together: the bees "came out and criss-crossed the sky into a mighty net. When they came back, they tossed out their drones and kept tossing them for days. A peculiar fratricide – that aspect of bees theologically troubled Ivan. Some kind of wrath of God built in the natural order of things? In front of the beehives, fat drones with stunted wings curled atop each other and shrank; the ditch filled up with drones. On a sunny day, so many crows flew over Ivan's head to feast on the drones that it grew dark."

The collection's range of topics and settings is broad: from cousins who cross Balkan battle lines to share the proceeds of an inheritance in "Heritage of Smoke" to the diamond-like self-interest of murder-cannibalism in a Pacific lifeboat in "In the Same Boat." Novakovich sketches his fictional characters sparsely but humanely. However, he spends less time sketching the historical figures, relying instead on their pre-existing persona. As a result, the stories featuring historical figures Nikola Tesla and Slobodan Milosevic came off flat for this reader.

The short form is perhaps the best medium for exploring these particular conflict zones. It allows each of the specific complications to express themselves in turn and keeps the focus on Novakovich's characters, who are generous, flawed, violent, and rooted in an understanding of the earth in which they grow plums and bury their families.

Rob Sherren feels blessed to be living in a land where relative peace prevails.

Thomas (from page 12)

The tension between them and the different roads they must take to discover their identities form the core of the story. "I realize since I wrote the novel that Paul may be a side of me I wasn't ready to acknowledge," Thomas admits.

The family dynamics are well drawn and heart breaking. Father Caleb, otherwise known as Pastor Hallelujah, must split rocks for stonemasons in order to feed his family because he does not qualify for the stipend doled out by white missionaries. In his frustration, he beats his wife and his son Jay "with compound interest," becoming a dissolute alcoholic when they flee to Canada.

Thomas's strengths are voice and dialogue and he has a lively sense of humour. Paul's speech, rap music, and poetry are seasoned with wit, poignancy, and power, as he incessantly needles and confronts his older brother. There is a priceless scene in a Montreal gay club when Paul says, "Tonight you'll give it up, Bro. Besides, let's face it: brothers who sin together bond better."

Thomas also evokes landscape with a painterly brush. In St. Vincent, the fishing canoes look like "whales with their humps above the water. The waves, like long rolls of white lace unwinding and rewinding … the sea a lolite plain, out of which leaping flying fish created momentary silver flashes."

No Safeguards is a dense, meditative book about the wounds of history filtered through memory. Voices and stories are embedded within other voices and stories like the layers of an onion. For example, Jay narrates, but his voice disappears into the words of Grama's diary, and then into his mother's retelling of her own life story, and later into the poetry, rap songs, and letters of globe-wandering Paul. Though these are meaningful ways in which family histories are passed down, they do not always work optimally in narrative form. These filters dilute material that would have been more immediate if dramatized in scenes. Too much of this story is told, rather than lived. For example, the great ice storm occurs during the brothers' first winter in Montreal. What a powerful scene we might have witnessed through their eyes, boys used to the sultry heat of the Caribbean. Instead we are told only that "the traumatic experience of the ice storm … left us in awe of winter's destructive power."

Another narrative challenge is that Jay is a self-sacrificing caretaker, and thus, his own needs and desires are repeatedly subsumed by those of his family. As a result, he becomes a kind of invisible man. Fortunately, Jay comes into his own in the final part of the novel.

Jay does well in Montreal, completing university and working toward a PhD in history, but his dream is to travel to Africa and then to resettle in the Caribbean. But due to anti-homosexuality laws, gay people are tortured, imprisoned, and murdered in parts of Africa and the West Indies. To be gay in those countries, as Jay puts it, "is to be subhuman." If he goes home again, he fears the need to conceal his authentic nature, or he must remain in exile.

Jay's concerns are rooted in Thomas's own experience. He sees the themes of his novel as "the accommodations we must make to live in society, as well as the high cost of repression." In 1994, despite rampant homophobia in St. Vincent, Thomas came out publicly there. "This was the first time my family knew I was gay, the first time friends knew." He was forty-seven years old. These days, he often goes back to his home island to see his siblings.

Thomas is prolific, the author of three previous novels, three collections of stories, and a volume of poetry. He shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, *No Safeguards* is the first volume in a tetralogy. It will be interesting to see what awaits Jay and Paul in the future. As for Thomas, he simply plans to follow his muse.

Fitzgerald (from page 11)

seems to be an entire sub-genre of coming-out narratives that has appeared in comics over the last few years, and I'm wondering if you think there is something about comics that lends itself to these types of stories?

MF: I believe that things that live in the fringes of society and popular culture have a way of finding each other. For that reason I don't think it's a coincidence that queer narratives lend themselves to the comics medium. From the beginning, alternative, underground comics have tackled sexuality in an honest and raw way. There seems to be a new wave of creators using the medium this way, likely in part because of the influence of Bechdel's *Fun Home*. Admittedly, it was a huge inspiration to me.

FBK: More broadly, I'm interested in your thoughts about the relationship between comics and autobiography. And from your own perspective, why memoirs?

MF: I work in several disciplines, so aside from making comics and illustrations, I also perform at live storytelling events where I tell autobiographical stories. My relationship to the audience at these events feels very different from my relationship to readers (when I do get the opportunity to meet them in person at comic conventions). The difference hinges on a public vs. private dynamic. The connection you can form with someone after they spend 10+ hours reading about your life is deep. I've had some incredibly powerful meetings with readers and received emails that were so thoughtful that I was brought to tears. I haven't experienced a bond like that yet from my work on stage. A book is an intimate object and I believe that enhances the truthfulness of the narrative.

FBK: At one point in *Long Red Hair*, you mention that when playing dress-up with your friends as an adolescent, "we were one way at school, and another version of ourselves entirely after sunset." This is followed by a sequence where you and your friends play with Ouija Boards, read each other's palms, and watch movies such as *The Addams Family*, *The Craft*, and *Practical Magic* on VHS. Could you elaborate a little on what you mean by this – what exactly is this "other version" of yourself, and how does it relate to the book's overall preoccupation with femininity and what it means to be a girl and young woman in the culture?

MF: As a young girl, you first learn to understand your body through the perspective of older, white men. The media plays such a dominant role in the lives of our culture's youth. I think that as a child, my friends and I were drawn to entertainment related to the occult because witch characters were singular and strong. A lot of other films made in the late 1980s to mid-1990s had very few or no female characters. Think of the first *Toy Story* film: all of the toys except the porcelain figurine, Bo Peep, are male. That sends a message to girls. I believe we were drawn to the supernatural and macabre because it felt a little forbidden and a little defiant. It's empowering to break the rules (even if it's only a perception). At a sleepover, where there are no rule-makers, we were free from the expectations of how little girls ought to behave. We knew we weren't made of porcelain.

FBK: Finally – and just because I'm curious: In *Photobooth*, you mention several times that the paper stock used for colour photos is no longer being made, and that at the time of the book's writing it was projected to be used up by summer 2015. Do you know if this has happened? Have we reached a point where the last colour photobooth picture has been taken?

MF: It hasn't happened yet but it's in the works. This summer, the last remaining chemical photobooths were removed from many Canadian cities. In Montreal, we're lucky, because the company that operates all the booths in Canada is based here, so they're leaving them for a bit longer. In the last few weeks I noticed that some have disappeared from metro stations but the most popular ones will probably last until the winter holidays. I knew it was

graphic

Folly, But the Good Kind

STEP ASIDE, POPS
A Hark! A Vagrant Collection
Kate Beaton
Drawn & Quarterly
$24.95, cloth, 160pp
9781770462083

Fans of Kate Beaton don't need a review to tell them what to expect from Step Aside, Pops, the second collection from the author of the web-comic Hark! A Vagrant. Beaton's followers have no doubt been eagerly anticipating another feast of lumpy presidents, sassy dames, and unaccountably bitter superheroes since Beaton's first collection (also called Hark! A Vagrant) came out in 2011. Step Aside, Pops won't disappoint, and those who have yet to discover her work have a hearty spread awaiting them.

Beaton, who is originally from Cape Breton, began publishing her comics online in 2007. She quickly found an audience, proving that jokes about *Wuthering Heights* and Napoleon aren't just for lit nerds and history buffs – or proving that lit nerds and history buffs dominate the Internet. Since then she's built a consistently delightful body of work from a sandbox filled with obscure historical figures, unpopular wars, nineteenth-century literature, weird children's books, pop-culture tropes, and charming, doomed peasants.

Beaton's singular style is on full display in *Step Aside, Pops*. Her comic timing is dead-on and she never seems to hit a sour note. And there's something quintessentially good-hearted about her work, even when it's critiquing the narrowness of women's roles in Hollywood, or the erasure of women and people of colour in history books, or just subtle everyday prejudice. She can be wickedly funny without ever seeming mean, and she always chooses the surprising joke over the obvious one. This is maybe why she's so widely beloved; the factory setting for modern humour often tends to be some combination of humiliate/offend/gouge/shame. Not that there's no place for harsh, nasty humour in the world; it can be necessary, and even when it's not, sometimes it's still funny. But there's something appealingly optimistic about Beaton's work. Her way of pointing out unfairness, greed, cruelty, and plain old garden-variety human misery makes you feel tickled and possibly enlightened, rather than hopeless.

Beaton's work has always dealt with sexism, but her feminism is especially overt in this publication. The cover, with its bike-straddling, bloomers-wearing, no-nonsense lady, is like an old-timey (but modern) iteration of the *We Can Do It!* poster – a future classic we'll likely be seeing in Gender Studies lounges and on the jackets of girl gangs. Inside, Beaton takes on tropes like Strong Female Characters, Straw Feminists in the Closet, and the cleavage-enhanced and chronically bad-choice-making Femme Fatale. She introduces women we rarely encounter in history class, like Ida B. Wells, Dr. Sara Josephine Baker, and Katherine Sui Fung Cheung. And she appears to take a lot of joy simply in drawing women and telling their stories, from pregnant peasants to The Lady of Shalott.

For my money, the best parts of this book are the strips where Beaton riffs on found images, from Edward Gorey book covers to quaint broadside illustrations, using the found image as the first panel and following it with her own storyline. These strips reveal Beaton's sense of humour at its purest, unencumbered by narrative or fact. They're exquisite, self-contained comedic gems. To use one of Beaton's own phrases, it's folly, but the good kind.

My one complaint about *Step Aside, Pops* is that Fat Pony is nowhere to be found. There's something about just looking at him that makes me feel good; he's like a glassy-eyed creature from the depths of the id, or just a really funny-looking pony. My fellow Fat Pony fans and I will have to suck it up and get a copy of her children's book *The Princess and the Pony*, released earlier this year. It could be worse.

Anna Leventhal's first book of short stories, *Sweet Affliction*, was published in 2014. She lives in Montreal.

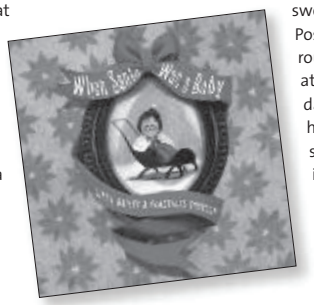
young readers

If you've had a kid in the last five years, chances are you're already a fan of Mélanie Watt. This multiple award-winning author and illustrator is the creative genius behind Scaredy Squirrel, as seen on YTV in Canada and on the Cartoon Network in the United States. The Scaredy Squirrel books and her series featuring Chester the megalomaniacal cat are best-sellers because Watt consistently creates wonderful picture books for kids that entertain adults at the same time.

Watt is the kind of writer and illustrator who deftly crafts stories that simultaneously unfold on multiple levels. *Bug in a Vacuum* follows the trials and tribulations of a housefly, who, while reposing on the top of a globe, is unceremoniously sucked up into a vacuum cleaner. Watt plants information throughout the book, clues that establish the second narrative playing out. Careful readers will notice that on the page just before the housefly's fateful encounter with the vacuum cleaner, the family dog is watching the machine swallow a beloved stuffed toy. *Bug in a Vacuum* intertwines the struggles of a trapped fly confronting his mortality from inside the bowels of a vacuum cleaner with the journey of mourning associated with the loss of a life companion.

The setting of *Bug in a Vacuum* is suburban North American retro, from the shag toilet seat covers to the hula dancer table lamps and the Formica kitchen table. In the first pages of the book, while the fly is buzzing contentedly throughout the house, Watt puts household products centre stage, complete with 1950s-style packaging: a spray can of dandelion repellent, a box of laundry detergent, a frozen dinner, a children's book, and a box of tissues. Those kitschy throwbacks are rebranded and given new meaning after the fly and doggie toy are hoovered.

Dandelion repellent becomes a spray can of denial that promises to wipe out the ugly truth. The laundry soap is a box of bargaining powder that will wash away your troubles. The TV dinner is a quick and messy serving of anger, the tome of classic children's stories is an unfair tale of despair, and the tissues are transformed into a box full of acceptance made of 100% real feelings. I'm pretty sure no other picture book author has attempted to bring Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief to the under ten crowd, but Watt pulls it off with ease. And if you're wondering how your child will deal with such a tragic tale of loss, Watt manages to write an ending that celebrates resilience and the power of faith.



Marianne Dubuc is another one of Quebec's young and exceptionally talented author-illustrators. Unlike many of her contemporaries, however, Dubuc is decidedly old school when it comes to illustrations, using pen, ink, and pencil to get the results she wants.

In *Mr. Postmouse's Rounds*, Dubuc has created a tiny, perfect, mouse-sized universe. Children will love discovering the hidden treasures on every page: the seven story bunk beds in the rabbit family's warren, the snake reposing over three pages under his personal heat lamps, the magpie admiring himself in all his stolen finery, the carrier pigeon consulting his maps, the very pink mobile home on the turtle's back, and the penguins' ice-cube filled claw-foot tub. These are only of few of the delightful surprises on the indefatigable Postmouse's rounds. There are endless opportunities to introduce the young reader to animal species, numbers, and colours. The story is simple and sweet – the Postmouse's rounds end at the birthday party of his own son – but it's the pen and ink drawings that transport us into the fantastical animal worlds of Dubuc's creation.

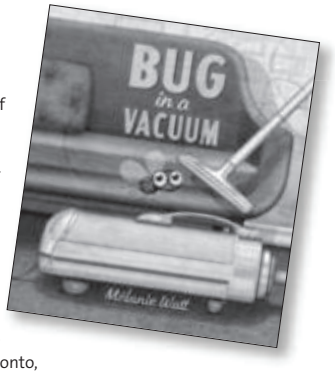
There's something about a prequel to a fictional character's life that has universal appeal. When that fictional character is Santa Claus, and the title of the book is *When Santa Was a Baby*, the temptation to get the backstory of such a beloved holiday hero is pretty much impossible to resist. Writer Linda Bailey has published more than two dozen books for children and her skill is obvious in the well-crafted narrative. There is nothing extraneous here.

Bailey reveals the genus of each of Santa's peculiarities, from his booming "Ho! Ho! Ho!" to his penchant for cookies and the colour red and his affinity for reindeer. While tracing the roots of Santa's Santa-ness, Bailey also tells the story of a boy who doesn't fit in with his peers in many ways. Santa is a young man who does things his own way and who is able to realize his dreams. He is resilient and resourceful and, with the love and support of his often-bemused parents, he is ultimately able to find his life's work.

Illustrator Geneviève Godbout's drawings are soft and warm. The earthy tones make Santa's bright clothes and perpetually red cheeks and nose even more jolly than usual. Santa fans of all ages will enjoy this book and with the very convincing evidence Bailey provides regarding St. Nick's early years, you might just find yourself wondering if Santa really does exist after all.

Toronto-based children's author Kyo Maclear knows a good illustrator when she finds one. Beginning with her multiple prize-winning book *Spork*, she has often found them in Quebec.

Specific Ocean is illustrated by Montrealer Katty Maurey. The large pages are filled with vast marine landscapes painted in muted browns, blues, and greens. Human figures are small in comparison to the enormous ocean. It's easy to sympathize with the little girl protagonist who wishes that her parents hadn't dragged her out of her familiar inner-city home and into this strange and intimidating territory. Maclear says *Specific Ocean* was written for readers who love nature and for those who prefer to spend their time indoors. She was inspired to write the book by her own memories of being a city kid – she spent her childhood in Toronto, London, and Tokyo – and her first experience in the great outdoors.



Marion Arbona, also from Montreal, is the illustrator for Maclear's second release of this year, *The Good Little Book*. Arbona's whimsical aesthetic elevates *The Good Little Book* from a simple story about how a humble book can change the lives of countless children to an example of the book as objet d'art. From the first look at the lush crimson patina and embossed lettering on the cover we are intrigued. The red floral mid-century end pages remind us of old books we loved as children. The black ink drawings of rocket ships and dinosaurs scrawled over the end pages, and crossed out names under "This Book Belongs To" entice us to explore further. When we do, we are rewarded with glossy psychedelic images of flora and fauna exploding from the mind of a little boy when he discovers all the amazing things a book can do. The message of the story is that books are meant to be enjoyed over and over again and Arbona's drawings are sure to keep you coming back for more. mRb

B. A. Markus is a writer and teacher who is repeatedly amazed at the number of talented children's illustrators and authors who call Quebec home.

BUG IN A VACUUM
Mélanie Watt
Tundra Books
$24.99, cloth, 96pp
9781770496453

MR. POSTMOUSE'S ROUNDS
Marianne Dubuc
Translated by Yvette Ghione
Kids Can Press
$18.95, cloth, 24pp
9781771385725

WHEN SANTA WAS A BABY
Linda Bailey
Illustrated by
Geneviève Godbout
Tundra Books
$19.99, cloth, 32pp
9781770495562

THE SPECIFIC OCEAN
Kyo Maclear
Illustrated by Katty Maurey
Kids Can Press
$18.95, cloth, 32pp
9781894786355

THE GOOD LITTLE BOOK
Kyo Maclear
Illustrated by Marion Arbona
Tundra Books
$18.99, cloth, 40pp
9781770494510

By Patricia Boushel

Naming the Possible

IN DEFIANCE
Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois
Translated by Lazer Lederhendler
Between the Lines
$21.95, paper, 190pp
9781771131827

GENERATION RISING
The Time of the Québec Student Spring
Shawn Katz
Fernwood Publishing
$22.95, paper, 232pp
9781552667255

The 2012 student uprising lingers uneasily for many Quebecers. The streets were a vibrant main stage upon which all citizens were invited to play themselves, pots and pans in hand. The actions depicted in the media, however, were performed by a cast of formidable characters: scorned politicians, their armed senseless sentries, and fresh-faced student leaders. Add a panda, some rabbits, a banana, inviting weather, the thud of helicopters, and the sting of teargas, and you've got the more memorable elements of a generation's mobilizing event.

Many took to the streets for the first time, some created critically engaged art, and others, like myself, wrote or translated the news in an attempt to balance the anti-student bias in mainstream media. We felt that the historical context would yield a transformative rupture. Yet three years have passed and Quebec is still in the throes of neoliberalism. The collective ideals of society are being actively dismantled by a market-pandering state, for which profit always wins over the hearts and health of humans.

Two new books – *In Defiance* and *Generation Rising* – are useful in situating the 2012 strike within an ongoing struggle against society's marketization at the expense of its citizens, and set against the backdrop of Quebec's unique sociopolitical history.

In Defiance is the cogent English translation by Lazer Lederhendler of Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois's Governor General's Literary Award-winning *Tenir tête*. The book reminds readers what the student strike was actually about: defiance of the Liberal Party's explicit plan to "re-engineer the state," including a proposed tuition hike, which lead to the emergence of "one of the largest sites of civic education ever created in Quebec."

The author, who was one of the main student leaders of the movement, delivers an eloquent memoir of the challenges he faced from both supporters and antagonists without relying upon hyperbolic or proclamatory nostalgia, reserving his passion instead for social and environmental ideals. Nadeau-Dubois does a good job of separating his role of spokesperson and the events of the strike from his own beliefs without ever speaking for the whole of the movement, pointing out that "no one holds a monopoly on the truth of that moment." The English text preserves the trademark potency of Nadeau-Dubois's writing, which was one of the notable galvanizing elements of the movement.

In *Generation Rising*, Shawn Katz integrates Nadeau-Dubois's account into a panoramic history of student politics in Quebec since the Quiet Revolution. The book's astonishing level of detail reflects the author's thorough research and makes up for a dearth of writing in English about the topic. Like Nadeau-Dubois, Katz supplies a rich index, copious notes, and a solid list of references, including Badiou, Hessel, and Massumi. The historical account of student associations is frankly fascinating when set alongside the major changes in Quebec society over the past fifty years. Katz at times relays the action on the streets and in the corridors of power with histrionic zeal – but the extent of mainstream media's compliance with the government's agenda, and the latter's conflation of governance with profit mongering, should rightfully arouse indignity! The author gets carried away and carries us with him.

Taking to the streets is an act of bridging untold solitudes. Not just the two our Francophone and Anglophone elders bound us to, but also the manifold pasts and presents of this place. Yet, in 2012 and still now, the streets and other public places we share are made dangerous not by their potential as political commons, but by the forces that seek to keep that potential at bay. Policing has increased alongside the mercenary abstraction of capitalism and its adjoining political structures.

In the face of these disempowering forces, which reveal the tenuous, even deceptive nature of our democracy, it is only natural that we might ask if there is not a better way to organize ourselves. Repeated efforts to defeat neoliberalism through voting reveal the limitations of this important democratic privilege, and we see thoughts turning towards supporting a collective goal rather than party lines. The spirit of 2012 was one of politicization, inviting us to distinguish between formal politics and the wider political sphere. For once, we all came out and acted politically – and it wasn't only to cast a ballot.

Throughout their works, both Katz and Nadeau-Dubois call upon readers to locate instances of democratic and political possibility and engagement. The former student organizer appeals to us to be "constantly fostering debate on our campuses, in our workplaces, and in our neighbourhoods."

If there's anything that we've learned through the aftermath of 2012, it is that there's still work to be done to make room for youth's productive clamour, to name the possible within (or without) the existing political apparatus.

Patricia Boushel is a cultural producer and independent translator from Montreal. One of the main contributors to Translating the Printemps Érable, she is currently questioning the role of translation in the anti-austerity movement through the Language and Dissent project.