Paper Mill Press
A Journal of Creative Arts

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Paper Mill Press
A Journal of Creative Arts
As a writer or artist, there is something special about being published on paper. Paper immortalizes words and images in a way that blogs, online journals and newspapers do not. The Grenfell English Society decided to publish a journal of creative arts celebrating Grenfell’s rich arts community. The call was put out and the submissions flew in. In saying that, I am pleased to present the inaugural issue of *Paper Mill Press: A Journal of Creative Arts*.

Focused on the arts community of Western Newfoundland, *Paper Mill Press* acts as an outlet for creative exposure of students, staff and faculty alike. We sincerely thank Dr. Adam Beardsworth and Dr. Shoshanna Ganz for their leadership and devoted time in this endeavor. We also thank the students who participated in the selection and editing process of the journal. Finally, we thank the contributors; without such a vivid arts community at Grenfell Campus, this journal would not have been possible.
Beautiful Lie, Profound Truth
Megan Musseau
At the Bayward market, behind the vendor’s stands and rubber curtains, crates of mixed vegetables lay awaiting the compost. It was the onions. Not the shrivelled tops or grey skins. It was the smell. The smell of rotting onions always gave her that feeling. She could almost smell those same onions in the bags and boxes by the old door. Their stench mixing with wood stove and wet dog and an open bottle of leberwurst on the kitchen table. It left her gasping, ready to wretch.

She was sure never to take the sidewalk behind the stands to avoid that smell. It led to a place she never wanted to see again. Down through fall those years ago. Down that dirt drive where the apple trees gave birth to countless worm-eaten and tarnished fruit. Not one was round, not one was perfect. That way led her to sore thumbs, cracked and dry from pushing garlic bulbs into cold New Brunswick clay. Just a passing breath of rotting onions and she was in that farmhouse again. With her pants on the wood floor and her eyes closed tight, waiting for the end of it. The smell of him. God damn house. God damn onions.
In memory of a man I did not know.

This is your eternal August: limpid sun and crisp air; but winter comes. For those who last winter comes on much too fast. The leaves brown and wither, yet ne’er is the ground so fair as when adorned by winter’s tell-tale shroud. Watch: Summer’s extinction is beautiful as the night you took your leave – trees bend in the breeze as moon and sun conspire to at once witness your expiry and cradle your mind into oblivion.
Nostalgia
Ashley Sutherland
What clouds the mind so, that one cannot dream?
Beauty from desiring the fear of hate:
the wayward thought perturbed my mind.

Each being in its nightly rest
knows not the force that drives the few
from sleep. The progeny of dream-incest
which at the fringes of reality lay claim
to fearful desire, control beautiful hatred
keep racing my synapses -

The sleep-eluded
dweller rightly has dominion of abandoned streets
but claims but right to wonder at
the emptiness felt just within.
It should have been raining.

It should have been late in the night with heavy storm clouds hovering just out of reach, pressing down on everyone’s hearts, as thunder grumbled a misery to echo mine. I should have been sitting by a window in a hospital, and as a nice couple walked by they could have looked in to see a girl staring out, with mascara lacing the tears that gently trickled down her face. Everyone would pity that poor girl whose love just died, probably in her arms, as they said their last goodbyes. I should have existed in Dawson’s Creek, and if I ever try to write it I’ll put the passion and teen-angst of our favourite show to shame.

Except this isn’t my romanticized version, and that isn’t how you died. It was daytime, drizzly, and grey. Far less dramatic. I don’t wear mascara, so there goes the touching tears, and I don’t gently weep so that people pass me and clutch their chest while aching with my pain. I rock and sob so hard that the only sound I make is this kind of shrill whine and my nose runs and it’s dramatic as all hell, but not in a sexy way. I seem much more like the hysterical mother in movies who’s used for comic relief (and in my hypocritical nature always irritated me) than a strong heroine who will pick herself up and manage to both fall in love again and save the day. All I can think now is that you just died without saying anything emotional or earth-shattering and all I feel is miserable. I thought there would be some relief, but I can see that you’ll haunt me in death just as much as you did in life.

After you ended things between us I pictured you on your deathbed. Maybe you were hit by a car, and called me because you wanted me there so that you could tell me how sorry you were and that you were miserable without me and shouldn’t have left. Or maybe you were so wretched without me that you had to end it all, something slow like pills so that you still had time to call me (although that fantasy was always a stretch. I knew you would have used a gun or something instant like that, in a place where no one – especially your mom – would have to clean it up).

That’s the problem with writers, isn’t it? We’re always re-writing the story, editing it again and again. Adding more effect – less dialogue – more heartbreak – less backstory. I think I’ve rewritten our entire romance – if you can even call it that – over a hundred times. I’m not sure if I even know what was real between us at this point. Sometimes I imagine that you loved me more than you really did, sometimes that you loved me less. Sometimes I’m convinced that you only loved yourself and your misery. I couldn’t understand that concept – loving misery – until months later. I grew to love my misery, lust for more anguish. Maybe that’s why I tried to talk to you and maybe that’s why you didn’t care. Or maybe I’m just rewriting this whole thing all over again. I think I’ll always re-write it...the truth will never be satisfying enough.

“What are you doing in here?” A little voice interrupted my internal soliloquy.

Damnit! Can’t I have even a little bit of damn privacy? I came here because it didn’t look like anyone had found this fort in the woods since I had abandoned it when I was a kid. “Nothing,”
I choked on the word, wanted to vomit as I reached up to my cheeks and tried to rub the tears and snot away. My face felt hotter and stickier than I anticipated.
The little girl cracked the door open further and I saw her eyes widen as more light filtered in. She looked panicked. I don’t blame her – I felt wild, like a caged animal that had been set free only to find her way back into the smallest possible hole. My face flushed with the heat of my blood as I realized how much of your blood was on the floor, spreading between the cracks of wood, soaking into my jeans, coloring my hands and changing your white shirt to crusted red.
Oh. Oh, oh, stop...your blood.
“Clarissa?” I hear an anxious voice yell out, and the little girl spins on her heels, darting away to who I assume is her mom. I picture them embracing, and imagine the little girl having nightmares about the wild beast in a fort for the rest of her life. Her mom will lead her away and keep her safe for as long as she can, until the little girl goes out and finds danger all on her own that she can’t be saved from. I suddenly get a pang of homesickness, even though my home is just over the hill and I was there this morning. I know everything has changed and I can never go back. Nausea overwhelms me and I try to retch up the weight in my stomach that’s preventing me from running away as fast as I can. I realize that I’m rocking and sobbing again. “Oh God. Oh God, God, God”. I’ve never really believed in any religious group, and now just seems like the worst possible time to start. Or the best – I could never understand the concept of an all-knowing, yet all-forgiving being. Maybe now is the time to pray. How did redemption work again? Well, never mind. I never did know how to apologize, and if I were to start now, God would be pretty far down on my list.
I could run away. Maybe I could just keep running and nothing could ever catch me again. I tell my legs to move but they ignore me. Maybe I can repress it. I try to black out and take these feelings out of my mind, but all I can feel is the anger in me. The little girl coming in reminded me of all my anger. I was so mad at how fine you were. I couldn’t believe you weren’t agonizing while I couldn’t get over any of this. It wasn’t fair! None of this was fair! It’s not my fault, none of this was my fault, but now I’ll be blamed. Dead men can’t testify, but judging by the sirens coming my way, a little girl can.

Please let me take it back.
Home is Where You Are
Kristy Lee
The Postle family was the envy of our church. Everyone wanted to be like them or to be friends with them. Mr. Postle had a good job at the mill. He was a supervisor, and he had his own speedboat. He fished all summer and was friends with the pastor. The pastor’s wife, Ellen, was friends with Mrs. Postle. Ellen went to a chiropractor. Until they came to town and took up the ministry, people weren’t sure if chiropractors were of the devil or not. The practice seemed a bit odd, perhaps tied to yoga or other eastern beliefs. But Sister Ellen made it clear she couldn’t live without chiropractors. She swore by them.

Pastor Gillins and his wife had two sons and a miniature collie. It was a sacrifice for Ellen who liked a clean house, but the family had somehow learned to compromise. There were rolls of paper toweling in every room, and when Goldie had come in from outside, it was the job of the closest to grab a paper towel and wipe its ass. Kirk, the eldest, explained to me that even though the furniture and carpet were scotch guarded, little tracks could be left.

The Postles had two daughters, Carmine, the eldest, and Caroline. Carmine was slight with wispy hair which she highlighted in summer by dousing her head with lemon juice and sitting on the front lawn, and Caroline was larger boned (a problem for their mother, my mom had told me, as she had to assure one daughter she loved slight girls and the other that she carried an unquestioned strength). Caroline’s hair was brown like the hazelnuts we used to gather in our back yard and curled in three discernible chunks by one of those propane curling irons we all carried to church in our purses. They always had new dresses at Christmas, and Mrs. Postle, Carmine and Caroline could sing like no one else. Mrs. Postle played the piano on Sundays, and on every special occasion, she and her daughters would sing. They knew how to harmonize. Sometimes, they sang in a trio. Sometimes, Carmine and Caroline would sing duets, and, sometimes, Caroline would sing solo, either with her mother accompanying her or with some backup tape. When Amy Grant became big in the eighties, Caroline sang almost every song. Her voice was deep and strong, unlike Carmine’s, which was soft and like a dying bird.

Nothing seemed to go wrong in the Postle family until Caroline became possessed by demons. She was seventeen, and we went to the same high school, though high school and church didn’t mix that much. Even though we were all told to be in the world but not of it, when it came to high school, we didn’t really talk much with each other about church. A lot of us didn’t even hang out together. So I never saw the demons take her there, though I did see what they did to Caroline at church.

The night it happened the first time, I was sitting near the back of the church with Melanie. We were best church friends, and Melanie had brought her boyfriend, Jeff. He was older, wore a black leather jacket and drove a souped-up car with mags. He liked John Cougar. Melanie was the girl next door. They had fallen in love. If Melanie wanted to go around with Jeff, he had to go to church. Melanie’s dad was an elder.
Pastor Gillins had been preaching for about a half hour, and there was noise in the pew behind me. I looked over my shoulder. My brother had just snuck in with Greg. The two of them had shaggy hair and clothes to match. If Greg hadn't had an Eastern Canadian accent, you'd say the two were twins. I was surprised to see them this early. Usually, they skipped the full service, and Shane would meet me outside before we hooked up with Mom to get the highlights. The ushers kept an eye on him and Greg and a couple of others, though. Sometimes, they'd follow them out to see where they were going or to try and stop them, but Shane and Greg would just run away. They wore dark clothes and knew all the trails around the building. They couldn't be caught.

My brother tapped me on my shoulder. When I turned, he grabbed my shoulder tight, then put his hands over his eyes and started laughing, trying to be quiet. ‘What?’ I asked. He was really laughing and trying to cover it. I felt sorry for him. I knew what it was like to get the giggles in the middle of a sermon, and his laughing made me laugh, too. Then I started to panic. The sermon was boring and some people were beginning to fidget. He’d get us both busted. ‘Shut up,’ I snapped, and turned back, watching Melanie draw on Jeff’s hand. ‘M.T. + J. G. True love forever’. Jeff put his hand on Melanie’s inner thigh. Melanie took a manicure file out of her purse and started cleaning his nails. My brother grabbed my shoulder again, this time really hard. ‘Ouch,’ I whined, turning around sharp. ‘You’re hurting me.’

‘Hey,’ Shane pulled himself up against me from behind, ‘Hey.’ He was shaking. He shoved his mouth against my ear. ‘Have you ever done acid?’ he whispered loudly. He wouldn’t let go of me, so I looked over my other shoulder and caught Greg lying down on the pew trying to take off his left boot. He looked scared.

‘Fuck off,’ he hissed. ‘Don’t look at me.’ I took my left hand and ripped my brother’s hand off my shoulder. I turned into his face.

‘Oh my god,’ I breathed.

‘You just took the vord’s name in lain,’ he stuttered. ‘I’m gonna have to pray for you,’ and his forehead hit the back of my pew. Hard. He was laughing uncontrollably.

If it hadn’t been for Caroline’s demons, the ushers would have swooped in on us. But the lord works in mysterious ways, and at that exact moment, a loud moan like Daniel in the lion’s den let loose somewhere near the front of the church. Pastor Gillins was couth, shy it seemed, and he looked up at the congregation, cleared his throat and pronounced a long ‘uhm.’ He seemed like he was going to say something funny to break the tension, perhaps laugh it off as a one-time weirdness. Weird things happened from time to time, and I’m sure everyone thought one of the hippies who had come over from the nearby island for the service was getting ready to accept the Lord. It seemed the Pentecostal church could be a trip on a boring night with nothing else to do, and there were a number of people who would show up once in a while, get saved, give up drinking and smoking pot and howl at the top of their lungs during an altar call. Then, you never saw them again. But the moan came again, this time prolonged and most definitely on the left side, near the front, just behind the musicians who sat with their guitars packed up beside them and bibles on their laps. ‘No. no, no, no, no!’ a definitely female voice started shouting. ‘No, no, no, no, no, no!’

‘Whoa,’ I heard my brother mutter. ‘Whoa, whoa, whoa.’ With all other eyes focused on the front of the church now, I glanced back quickly at Greg. He had both of his socks
wound like large earmuffs held hard against his ears, eyes shut, and two bare feet laid over my brother’s thighs.

Nooo! Nooo! Nooo! I wheeled around. Caroline was standing bold upright, screaming from the third row. No! No! No! No!

I turned to Melanie and Jeff. Melanie held her file like a pitchfork over Jeff’s hand. Jeff looked scared.

Carmine’s boyfriend, Jack, rushed to his feet beside Caroline, wrapped his arms around her arms held stiff at her body’s side and started dragging her out of the aisle. No!, No, No, No! Then a loud moan. Then laughing, but not happy like, more like a clown that ends up in a nightmare. The congregation rippled. I spotted my mother. She was trying to get Mrs. Postle’s eye at the front and right side of the church, but Mrs. Postle had one hand extended to Ellen who was making her way toward her. Then, my mother started craning her neck, quick like, around the church. She was looking for me. I didn’t want to give in, so I fixed my eyes on Jack and Caroline. He was moving her up the aisle, her body in front of him. He maneuvered her by kicking her feet out from under her and pushing her the length of a pew, kicking her feet out again, moving the length of another. It looked like a military exercise. ‘Sorry folks,’ he said defiant and determined. He had been a cool guy at high school, a drinker and a partier until Carmine had led him to Christ. Now, he wanted to go to bible school, like most our church’s grads did when they finished school, and he sounded like a pastor in training. ‘Sorry folks. Just have a little problem here,’ and Jack and Caroline quickly disappeared through the back doors held open by ushers standing sentinel to it all.

The congregation’s attention quickly diverted to the back. I turned to Shane and Greg. Both were sitting bolt upright now, staring straight ahead. Greg had a hymn book in hands, clasped to his chest.

‘Let us pray,’ Pastor Gillins said wisely into the mike. ‘Let us pray. I want us all to stand up and join hands. Take the hand of the person on the left, the person on the right, and step out of your pews to take the hand of your brother or sister in the next aisle.’ I heard movement behind me and looked back to see Shane and Greg moving towards the doors. Shane had one sock stuffed into the pocket of his shirt, another in a back jean pocket, and Greg was trying hard not to trip over the laces of his boots. I was relieved. They made it without a problem past the ushers who even opened the doors quietly for them and seemed to whisper something in passing.

If it had been any other family than the Postles, I’m sure someone would have jumped up and spoken in tongues. Everyone had silently determined, though, that the service should come to a quick end and that no one but the appointed should address anything. The pastor’s prayer was anti climatic. We all felt ripped off in some way. ‘Dear father in heaven, during times in which we are pressed, we ask for your wisdom, your love, and your guidance. Together, we stand firm in our faith and love.’ For the next two minutes, he repeated these lines in different ways, and when Pastor Gillins said ‘amen’ and wished us a safe drive home, we knew not to linger in the back as always but to say goodbye, mind our business and get into our cars. Mrs. Postle and Ellen left through right door at the front of the church, the pastor on the left, and the congregation started moving purposely out the back, most eyes downcast, not many voices bantering like usual.
My mother met me quickly in the auditorium. I was saying goodbye to Melanie and Jeff. Jeff was telling Melanie to hurry and get her stuff. My mother came up behind me. She grabbed my elbow. ‘Get your coat,’ she said. And ‘where’s your brother?’

I followed her instruction immediately. ‘I’ll be back in a second,’ I responded, and moved toward the coatroom in the back far right. She followed me, grabbed my other elbow. ‘Where’s Shane?’

‘He’s waiting for us outside,’ I said, and she seemed okay with that. We got our coats together and moved quickly to the cement steps outside. I could have kissed Mrs. Rocke. She was standing with Jennifer, looking for Keith and Larry, and she signaled my mom to join her. My mom always took conversation over a fight. ‘I’ll find Shane,’ I said. ‘Be back in a second.’ Mom and Mrs. Rocke were already whispering to themselves under their breaths, and Jennifer was digging through Mrs. Rocke’s purse which hung from her arm. She was looking for change to buy penny candy.

The ride home was pins and needles. I sat in the front seat, Shane behind. He wasn’t laughing anymore, and there was an unwritten contract I would take care of it.
When You Cry
Cynthia Dunphy
That Floor
Megan Dunphy

Saturday morning,
if I had decided to live,
would have really been lovely.
But the plants needed watering;
the clothes needed washing;
the floors needed everything.
Your feet, your hands,
the crumby remainders of your every meal.
Your skin cells dead or alive.
Sweeping the floor is like sweeping up half your life,
It’s like sweeping away parts of yourself that aren’t important enough to weep for.
The longer you leave it, the more that accumulates.
Your tears, your sweat, your lies, and even love.
Whether it be yours, your others’, the neighbors, the milk men.
Saturday morning came and went because of that floor.
It, like a mother,
reminds you of anything and everything
and keeps you clinging to your sheets.
Fishing Shack
Katharine Broadhurst
Some nights. Most nights,
she won’t allow herself for sleep.

She won’t allow herself to drift into a world of freedom,
But yet, no freedom.

She knows that everybody wants freedom,
And that we are lacking it on every level.

Her bottle of wine is starting to fade..
The sedatives will soon kick in.
She will artificially fall into a deep sleep.
Sleep is not even the word, for she will leave this world
For hours and then some.

She is rarely pleased to wake.

An hour later she finds it hard to stay awake and watch the over stimulated screen.
It’s supposed to be her teacher.
Her role model.

The wind blows outside the shelter of her yellow walls.

She’s thankful she is not out there.
It’s unprotected, it’s unimaginable, it’s unkind.

She wants excitement and a meaning for it all.

She knows there is not meaning,
No explanation.

Her eyes are closing,
She drifts away.
Island Journeys (1): Brač, Croatia
Tony Fabijancic

I spent the summer of 1977 with my family in Yugoslavia near Croatia’s capital, Zagreb. Besides suffering through unbearably long visits to relatives and exploring the hills around the village where my father was born, I also travelled to an island in southern Dalmatia called Brač. Momentously, for me, it was the first island I ever visited, and vivid impressions lingered long afterwards -- the fierce quality of the sun’s light in the hot afternoons, the sea with its million black sea urchins, and the cobbled streets of the old towns where donkeys dozed in the hot shade -- in short a place unlike any I had ever seen.

For the untravelled boy of 1977 the island of Brač was exotic. Maybe my age had something to do with this feeling, my openness to adventure coinciding perfectly with my arrival on an island, as though islands invited new experiences and greater adventures than the mainland. While I always knew that the ferry which took me across would take me back again, with equal certainty I felt as though I had arrived in a new world.

To get to Brač we drove south on the ‘Magistrala’ highway along the Adriatic Sea in a white ’72 Citroen, similar to the white ’69 DS Palas we owned in Edmonton. There was no air conditioning, and the windows were shut because my grandmother, my mother’s mother, was travelling with us and was worried she would catch a cold.

“Guck mal wie ich schwitze,” Oma told us, wiping her forehead and showing us her wet hand. “Look how I’m sweating.” Then she would say, “Es zieht in hier.” “It’s drafty in here. If the windows are open I could get sick.”

“You’re sweating because the windows are closed,” my father answered. “If we opened them it would be cooler.”

“I’m a 74-year-old woman, and I think I know what is best for me,” she said. “I have been around a little longer than you. What would happen if I got sick? Do you want me to catch pneumonia? Maybe you would be happier if I wasn’t around anymore.”

There was only one right response to this comment, and I think it was my mother who made it quickly. So with every window shut except the driver’s one, which my father left open just an inch for a “little fresh air,” we suffered penitently in the stifling heat the rest of the way. Naturally, it took us most of the day to arrive in Split, since were forever slowing to a crawl behind a convoy of trucks and campers and tourist buses on the winding road along precarious cliffs from Istria to Dubrovnik.

I don’t remember much else about our road south except our stop at a Gypsy camp on the side of the highway where a mangy brown bear was on show. In those days this was a common sight in Yugoslavia. The bear was muzzled, had ring in its nose by which it was chained to a stake, and was forced by his master, a wizened old man with a leather face, baggy trousers and a whip in his belt, to get up on its hind legs and dance a few steps. Tourists could pay for a photo of themselves with the bear, but my mother didn’t want to reward the Gypsy’s mistreatment of the animal, and my father didn’t want to give the man his money, so no picture of that day exists.
After the bear, I know we made it to Split, Dalmatia’s largest city, and from there took a car ferry to Brač. On deck, alternately wafted by fresh sea air and cigarette smoke, a combination you can still count on in Dalmatia, we could see the blue-green island in front of us and the massive grey wall of the Velebit mountains on the mainland behind, rearing over Split and the rest of the coast. In half an hour we were on the island. We made the ascent to a plateau spread out under a wide blue sky, dry land covered by pine scrub and outcroppings of white limestone, and soon we descended the southern side of Brač where we saw the Adriatic glitter in late afternoon sunshine, and other nearby islands, Korčula and Hvar, like blue shadowy shoulders of enormous prehistoric beasts rising from the sea.

I never grow tired of such views in Dalmatia. From afar, whenever I arrived by boat, I saw a similar picture: the pale shanks of islands like sun-bleached bones, or islands covered by dark green forests like fur, and the sea in its varying summertime moods with flotillas of clouds on the edge of the picture. The experience was always centred on the eye. Only later when I landed did my other senses begin to work, and the picture, flooded with sounds and smells, came alive.

In my years of travelling to Dalmatia it was always summer; a cold Bura didn’t blow from the mountainous hinterland and the towns weren’t silent and desolate as they tended to be in the winter. The summer mood was commensurate with my age. I was fit enough to enjoy what Dalmatia offered; I walked in the hottest conditions and swam everywhere, in every cove and off every islet, no matter how rough the sea or how hard it was to get to the water. And even though I had set routines of work and habits at home, in Dalmatia I broke free mentally, shrugged off the prim atmosphere of academia, and faced the world with a kind of forthright confidence and absence of doubt. Yes, Dalmatia was a very old place, but to me it was one of youth.

* Our trip to Brač in 1977 wasn’t memorable for the resort in Bol, a rectangular communist structure typical of tourists spots in the former Yugoslavia, or our spartan, white-washed room with its photo of President Tito, but for Bol’s famous beach, Zlatni Rat, a curving peninsula pointing into the green waters of the Adriatic. To my disappointment, the beach wasn’t what it was cut out to be; it was crammed with tourists, and the stones had a grey sooty look, as though dirty from decades of human traffic. I noticed bits of garbage and hundreds of cigarette butts among the pebbles. And the image of elderly women, greased heavily with suntan lotion, their breasts swinging freely for everyone to see, was pretty weird for a sheltered kid from a chilly Canadian suburb of the 70s.

In my memory the beach was more beautiful in photographs, especially ones from the air, than it was in reality. This disappointment is a common one, and is described by Walker Percy as the “loss of the creature.” His main example is the reaction of a tourist visiting the Grand Canyon for the first time after seeing photographs of it. Unlike the first explorers, writes Percy, no one can experience a place in all its visceral reality because someone has always been there before us, has written about it, or photographed it.
In Walker Percy’s example, the pictures precede the reality but it’s equally likely the reverse is possible too. Not knowing anything about Zlatni Rat beforehand, I experienced the loss of the creature *afterwards*, after seeing tourist brochures of Bol and thinking to myself that pictures of the beautiful empty beach taken from up high didn’t really look like the thing itself, that the beach seemed sandy from a distance, for example. Tourists, poor fools, were going to come all this way and be disappointed. Maybe this is less likely for travellers since the arrival of the Internet, which floods us with information about a destination, exhausts its unique properties, and lays bare its secrets.

The upshot for Walker Percy is that there is no longer such a thing as an original experience. I doubt this is true. Even familiar, noisy and well-trodden locations can reveal hidden images of themselves if you know how to look for them. “I have travelled much in Concord,” wrote Thoreau. Perhaps Percy is right only when it comes to famous places. What about the unknown spots in the world about which nothing is written or about which little is written or which are unknown to the traveller? What other associations are floating out there to filter or screen these places? The answer, I suppose, is a complicated one determined by a person’s history and reading and the surrounding cultural prejudices, but for myself, the point of travel writing is to undo this loss of the creature, to peel away the screen of familiarity which hides every place’s ‘real’ identity even if it is no longer thought to exist.

About Brač, for example, there is this story -- the myth that the White House in Washington is made of Brač’s white limestone or, to put it in the terms of local jingoism, that a relatively unknown island like Brač is important to a great country like America. Even though some well known structures around the world like Diocletian’s Palace in Split and Canada’s Vimy Ridge Memorial in Flanders are constructed from Brač’s limestone, the White House is not. It is built out of Virginia sandstone, which makes sense if you think about it. So, for me, the real story about Brač, about any destination I want to write about, is always about the “thing itself and not the myth” (as Adrienne Rich once put it in a different context).

* Oma sat in the shade of pines along Zlatni Rat, while we roasted on the packed beach with thousands of loud, flaccid, partly nude Germans who had driven south in campers and were settled in equally congested RV parks. The water was beautifully turquoise at the edges where it met the land, but the beach was hot and painful for my winter-soft feet, and I concluded that overall Pigeon Lake was just as nice a place. Had I gone, as I did years later, a few hundred metres further along the coast, I would have thought differently. There, in rocky inlets the acetylene-pure water taps out a gentle rhythm against the white pebbled shore, and from the pine trees a vigorous clatter of cicadas, like the whirring of summer popsicle sticks on the spokes of a thousand bicycles, rises from the forest and floats out to sea.

A body experiences a different degree of pleasure lying on one of these small beaches than it does by a Prairie lake, probably one more akin to the experience in the tropics. The water is pleasant, almost too warm to be refreshing, but with the sun’s heat against your skin, and the aromas of the pine forest and the sea around you, and the beat of the cicadas, your body is almost perfectly in concert with the Dalmatian world.
But there’s much more to Braĉ, and indeed all of Dalmatia, than hedonism on a beach. Old stone towns like Supetar are strewn throughout Croatia’s Adriatic coast and on its many islands. They are Venetian in origin, with their limestone walls, flagstoned streets, and narrow alleys leading into quiet dusty culs-de-sac. Every town in Dalmatia seems a variant of one model: each has a harbour crammed with skiffs, tour boats and expensive yachts; a promenade rings the harbour and heads out of town, leading you to more pebbled beaches in secluded coves; figs and mandarines fall off their branches and roll into the sun, grow rotten and attract yellowjackets which dance around the fruit, gorging themselves; inevitably you will come across some concrete monstrosity beside a thousand-year-old chapel, obscuring a view of the sea or spoiling the ambience for no other reason than an owner’s personal greed.

In Dalmatia you will still see fishermen in shorts and white undershirts doing some repairs on a net which billows around them like a bridal train; old ladies in black kerchiefs and dresses sitting on stools outside their doors tossing out bits of conversation at people going by; brown, barefoot kids playing in the squares, and tall, handsome young men on a casual stroll to a café.

Then there is the land itself. Once you get outside the towns, the tough arid country makes an impression, especially if you walk any distance across it. On a summer afternoon the sun beats every living thing into submission, goats huddle under olive trees and beside stone walls to eke out some shade, the wooden doors and windows are shut tight, and no one risks a walk outside. But more than once I have wandered out in mid-day, sometimes under the pressures of my writing, at other times for no other reason than the craziness of youth. Each of these walks inland was different, yet the same, coalescing in my imagination into one ‘meta-walk.’ The sun’s white-hot light, an oven blast on my body. A country road alongside a vineyard or a garden or a meadow of lavender. Swallows skimming over the ground, tilting at speed, carving the warm blue air. Always a wind, a breeze at least, stirring wild wheat. Olive trees, stooped and gnarled, cantankerous, their dusty leaves quivering, silver underneath. Corridors of black pines along a sea walk, carpeted by brown needles, the lean of the trees telling you the direction of the prevailing wind. White clouds scoon on the horizon heading out to sea. And the Adriatic in its usual daytime summer mood, green near shore and deeper blue further out, perhaps torn with patches of white if the wind was up, but always pleasantly cooling on the body, on my sun-blasted head.
Untitled
Renee Baldwin
It is cool and dark in the tiny room, but through her sleep blurred eyes she can see a bright blue sky through the slit in the dark blue curtains. It’s a nice day. Today she can go wading in the water to catch pin fish in her new plastic beach bucket.

Across the room her father is snoring lightly, her mother curled gently into his back, sleeping away the beer and wine of last night’s card game. Her baby brother, cheeks flushed pink, is sleeping soundly in his playpen nestled between the two beds. His arms are thrown above his head, his straw blonde hair sticking straight up at the crown of his head. His stuffed giraffe at the crook of his neck and his blue satin bound blanket kicked around his tiny pyjamaed feet.

She can hear them awake in the kitchen. A tinny old metal radio plays a commercial for the Valley mall, the CFCB call sign, then the voice of a morning dj sends out a song request and a caterwauling Newfoundland country song plays. She can hear a kettle whistle for a moment before the metallic clunk of it being set on a different burner. The acrid smell of coffee and burnt toast. She hears him curse under his breath, then the familiar sound of him scraping toast over the garbage can. She can hear their voices idly chatting to each other. The tinkling sound of a spoon in a china mug.

She blinks her sleep clouded eyes and sits up, throwing back the covers on her cot. She kicks her feet out from under the floral sheets and multi-coloured plaid sleeping bags that cradled her during the night. She stands on the mattress, bouncing on the bed for a moment, looking for her doll, notices him pinned between the bed and the wood paneled wall, and bounces down to pull him out. Her mother rolls over in her sleep, disturbed by the noise she is making. She is careful to be quieter as she slides off the mattress, her toes touching the cold linoleum floor, Albert, the doll, tucked tightly under her arm. She sucks in her little pot-belly as she slides between the worn and heavy wooden dresser and her brother’s play pen. Pauses for a moment to stand on tiptoe and peer in at him, kiss the tip of her finger and poke it into the warm pink flesh of his cheek. He doesn’t even stir, just heaves a sleep filled sigh. She reaches up to turn the glass doorknob and as she opens the door she squints into the sunshine filled living room.

“You’re up already my little dolly!” Poppy says as he chews his jam covered toast.

“Youp. I wants breakfast. Can I have tea too?” She asks, pulling out the scuffed painted chair between the two of them.

“Yis, you can have a cup of tea my love.” Nanny says as she pulls a mug out of the cupboard with a Carebear face on the side. She throws a square teabag into the bottom of it and half fills it with water from the kettle, and then cold water from a jug. She stirs it and puts the cup in front of the little girl who stands on the chair, leaning over the table to reach the sugar dish and the can of Carnation milk. Albert the doll sits propped on the edge of the table, hunched and grinning as always, at his feet.
She digs her spoon into the dish and granules of sugar spill on the green checked table cloth, she does this again, and is going for a third when Nanny says “Getouttadat! Getouttadat! Das enough now, my goodness! You’ll lose all your teeth you keeps puttin’ dat much sugar in your tea!” The little one screws up her face, but goes about pouring milk from the punctured holes in the top of the milk can. It slops over the side of the mug to pool in a ring around the cup that is so full that instead of picking it up, she lowers her head to slurp the tea from the top.

“What are you going to have for breakfast dolly?” Nanny asks. “Do you want toast like Pop, or cereal, like Nan?”

“I wants Special K, and I wants strawberries too!” She says exuberantly, hopping on the seat of the chair.

“Alright” Nan says. “But there’s no strawberries in the fridge so we’ve got to go out to the garden to get them. Don’t go jumpin’ now.” She picks the little one up underneath the arms and sets her on the floor.

The little girl skips around the table and across the living room, running her hand along the scratchy knit blankets covering the worn couches. Nan opens the screen door opening out onto the front patio deck. The morning is already warm. Sun glistens off the lake where Poppy’s little green fibreglass boat is tied to the sun-bleached wharf, bobbing on the gentle waves. Everything is so bright that it appears to be radiating its own light. The brown planks of the deck are warm, almost hot, under her bare feet. She climbs up onto the wooden bench surrounding the patio deck, her thin cotton night dress covered in dancing teddy bears catching and pulling on a knot in the wood. Flakes of old paint rub off and stick to her knees as she kneels on the bench, elbows resting on the railing and chin in her hands, watching as Nan roams about the strawberry patch keeping a keen eye out for early berries. She bends to a plant, pulls a weed alongside it and turns a few berries in her hand. Some of them are bright red on one side, but still green on the other. She pulls one and puts it in the empty yellow Eversweet margarine container she brought with her, moving about to different parts of the patch, placing her feet carefully amongst the plants so as not to step on any of them.

“Oh, I got a big one here! Bet it’ll be some good!”

“Yay!” The little one says, clapping her hands together. A robin lets out a long whistle blast call from the nearby trees and another one answers almost immediately. Her eye is caught by the rainbow coloured, flower shaped pin-wheels in the nearby flower patch, catching the light breeze and spinning amongst the lupins and tiger lillies.

“Look how many we got. We’ll be able to pick some for jam next week.” Nan says as she stands in front of her down in the garden. She holds out the butter container, half full, picks up a berry and pulls the leafy top from it and passes it to the little girl who takes it and pops it in her mouth.

The taste is sun warmed and sweet, full of sugars and juices from the early summer rains. “Let’s go cut them up and put them in your cereal now.”
Grandmother
David Sturge
Taleofvision,
Brittney Hollett

She fell asleep to her television and dreamt the answer. There was a way to start over. It wasn’t artificial or forced. People thought they knew her, but she didn’t even know herself—until now.

Her body snapped awake, shot up straight. She needed a notebook, a pencil. No. Any scrap of paper, any pen would work. She needed to write immediately. Thoughts attacked the page, spitting ink from the leaky pen. Flashes of her dream scrawled along the imaginary lines.

She had seen it plainly, how to turn everything around. The way she walked, hunched and quiet, it had to stop. She had to be confident. What she ate, that 2 AM Kraft Dinner, still stuck to the pot. She wrote about consciousness. “Wake up.”

“What I do every day matters more than what I do once in a while.” She remembered her Mom, always mentioning not having a childhood. “I’m only seventeen once.”

Roman numerals, one, and then another, the list grew. No more depriving her thoughts of rest, “Give into sleep,” she spoke under her breath, to be sure. The sun slinked between cracks in the window blinds and ate away the night. Arms outstretched held the answer high above her head. She read it, over and over.

The dream dissolved. Only the list remained. Slipped beneath her pillow, she slept on it. By night the list was living, as revelations swirled through her sleepy brain. A dream-like smile grew upon her face, tucked above the blankets. Her mom would be proud. Sun crept light across the bed, over the box. White noise fizzled from the TV.
The Potato Diggers
Virginia Mitford
What does it mean
to eat clean
and train dirty?

Given stamina
quicker than camera
flashes
of speed
running down a highway
training for dooms day
marathon on the news page

Rage

Faster than the boss
quicker than the clock
stronger than the mighty bod
of Hercules, impossible to freeze—
raw and bloody knees…

Hit the hurdles twice? Nice.

Check Achilles, and his theories:

Take the energy
bend the busted knees
slay the enemy
bring them into battle
like a Chicory of irony
distraction with your flower

power
for the people
who think they can’t do it

—Now, is the only moment.
Channel Ghandi, practice Tai Chi, create energy
to fight free
and stay thirsty
The Print Shop
Virginia Mitford
“For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite....Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy....So out he goes and watches the river of life flow past him in all its splendour and majesty.”

- Charles Baudelaire (Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne, 1863)

She always seemed to be there, the old lady on the bench. I’d catch glimpses of her out the south-facing window of our second-story apartment. She sat there day in and day out, always in grey—even her umbrella when it rained or her thick coat for the fall. She was part of the landscape, a stone statue poised along the park’s walkway.

Sure, I’d noticed her before, but I hadn’t noticed her. Not until today. I gaze out in my boredom, my thoughts circling around the old woman’s wispy hair—no wind required. She doesn’t appear to be doing much. Body stiff and face sour, her roaming eyes drift from one passerby to the next.

The irony of people watching a people-watcher hits me. Greg would call me a stalker. Kathy would give him a playful slap and tell him to stop teasing. But she’s currently occupying him down the hall, so I’m not too bothered. I find my thoughts drifting into the dangerous territory of the difficulties of roommates, but I remind myself about the benefits of shared living expenses before refocusing on my exterior distraction.

The elderly woman’s expression never changes. The frown mortared to her face accentuates her vast collection of wrinkles. Even from my vantage point, I can see the mountains and valleys time has eroded into her features. Dull irises dart to a young couple jogging along the path. Wires hang from their ears to the pockets of their brand-name running suits, complete with those mutant sneakers that are supposed to tone as you walk. The grey-clad lady turns her head slightly to follow the pair until they round the next bend. I entertain the thought that her gaze lingers on the young man momentarily, but Freud knows it’s a vicarious notion.

A mother is dragging her son from the parking lot to the playground. The boy digs in his heels the whole way, face red and arms flailing, like some unidentified cousin of the giant squid. I can’t hear through the closed window, but when the old lady’s expression does the seemingly impossible and darkens further, I chance to speculate.

The mother was probably just trying to give her child the recommended thirty minutes of daily activity, which has obviously not worked out to her favour—don’t worry, I’d
tell her, *he actually needs twice that a day, but the medical community wouldn’t make that the official recommendations because they didn’t want to discourage you. So, don’t feel too bad if he doesn’t get his activity, it wasn’t enough for him anyway.* The boy will demand compensation, I decide. He’ll want one of those violent video games to make up for the time he wasted outdoors. Mom will give in—there’s an obvious correlation between the decrease of willpower and the increase of stress lines. If the studies are right, he’s another gunman in the making.

But I’m really not all that bothered with them. The old lady’s my real interest. In the continually changing world, she is the constant. She’s seen a lot, I bet. How else could someone wear a mask of such bitterness?

*Your history is my past!* I can hear her scratchy voice filled with indignation as I look to my cold coffee and open twentieth century history textbook. *I remember when nuclear war was seconds away! I remember when the radio was entertainment! I remember when my father and brother were drafted into a bloody war! I remember when you made a living from hard labour!*

Yes, I would respond with a pleasant smile. *That’s all fine and dandy, but what does that mean to me? My past will be home computers and global community and global warming and animal rights activists and instant communication and making money is as easy as getting a reality TV show.*

Then she would mumble something about “the good old days” and I would wonder why on earth she wanted to go back, since the past was so rotten. Who would have thought advancement could be so painful?

I am pleased with the hypothetical conversation. Maybe I’ll walk through the park to buy some hot, freshly brewed coffee—the stuff in my cup is likely poisonous by now. I could causally stop to tie my shoe or check my purse, just a few steps from my fellow people-watcher, test out my hypothesis. Of course, she would have to talk for that, and be even slightly approachable and friendly. None of these anomalies have yet to occur, so I put the thought aside to await further research.

The old woman twitches oddly. I worry that I’ll have to call 9-1-1 and give a statement to the police. A hand strains to root around her large coat pocket. Movies—the pinnacle of truth—have taught me to expect a bag of breadcrumbs to emerge to feed the pigeons (why bother with those dirty creatures, anyway?) Perhaps I have discovered her weakness. She has an affinity to pesky little animals that serve no real purpose to society. That might just explain everything (after some psychoanalytical considerations, of course)!

The old woman pulls out a palm-sized device. Flipping it open, her eyes scan the tiny screen. Features softening, her lips turn into a playful smile as she begins to type her text message reply.
on the payphone with my sister in Ottawa
she’s better now, home
tired after the surgery
too weak to pick up her little girl
knew something wasn’t right
by the pain in her abdomen

can barely hear her
this fucking automatic door behind me
these clang bang carts
listen, try to listen

last weekend at my parent’s house
the photo albums, resemblances
reminds me of the story about Nan
when she lost the baby
came home from the hospital
sat down on the back step
held her little girl
cried and cried and cried

get the groceries
walk home
past children, parents
laughter in the dark school playground

the Big Dipper catches me crying
and I wonder if this is a poem

how the yellows blazed today
juniper, bogs, birch and sun
while now they dance on the black water
reflected from lights across Humber Arm
Lilies
Beverly Young
In the forest lived a man, his wife and their son. They had a pleasant house, with fields and trees and a little brook nearby. Behind their home, at the bottom of an old well, was the soul of the family. Every summer the man scraped out the soul to keep it healthy. He then dried the scrapings, put them into sacks and travelled over the mountains in the fall to trade for flour. This year was special as the boy would be going with his father for the first time.

On the appointed day, they awoke in the dark and ate hot bowls of porridge and blueberries. They followed this with large mugs of scalding tea. Afterwards, the boy’s mother kissed them both goodbye and handed her husband a large picnic bag. Outside, the horse whinnied. He had the red sacks of scrapings lashed down on his back and was anxious to go. In the yard, the boy looked back and waved at the silhouette of his mother in the warm doorway. Then they were in the trees and she was gone.

For hours they walked, down to the big bridge and across the river. They passed woodcutters in the cold morning with tall saws and shiny axes. The broad, bearded men smoked sweet-smelling tobacco in glowing pipes. Back in the trees, the trail climbed for miles over hard-packed earth. At a clearing they stopped and looked back. The boy could hardly believe that the tiny speck at the bottom of the valley was their house.

“Why do we trade our scrapings?” he asked his father as the man prepared a small fire for tea.

“Because we need flour.”

“And what do the other people do with the scrapings?”

The man thought for a second. “I really don’t know. Something.”

In the late afternoon they reached the top of the pass and headed down. The trees on the other side were greener with larger leaves than in their home valley. They continued downwards until dusk and crossed another river with white rapids above the bridge. Soon they came to a road and across a ridge they could see firelight.

“That is our destination, my son,” the man said.

In the clearing there blazed a dozen campfires. People were gathered in groups in front of tents with strange designs. The boy had never seen so many people. Horses, cattle, fowl and other strange animals were in the clearing. The man led the horse towards the fire on the left.

“Stay close,” he said to his son.

Soon his father found the man who he had traded with for many years.

“Greetings.”

“I see you have brought your son with you this year,” the trader said. He wore a bright blue sash over his colourful robes. He looked closely at the boy and grinned. The boy decided that the man was kind.
“Yes,” his father said.
“And it looks like you have ample this year,” the trader said, looking at the sacks on the horse.
“We have done well.”
“Good. I know you are a man who likes to conduct his business and be on his way home as soon as possible,” the trader said.
“This is true,” the man said. An assistant helped the trader weigh up the scrapings. In turn, a similar weight of flour in blue sacks were brought out from the trader’s tent and tied down on the horse.
“Very well,” the trader said and the two men shook hands. The boy followed his father across the field. He kept looking at the sacks on the horse. Shadows from the firelight crept amongst their dark blue folds. He smiled at the stars.
Near their fire, the trader spoke to his assistant in the low, bubbling tones of their country. “Come here and help me my friend,” the trader said. “Let’s get the door opened.” Together they carried the red sacks into the dry interior of the tent. “Perhaps we’ll leave in the morning as well,” he said. “We need to get home and bring them this flour.”
Car Crashes
Amber-Lynn Thorne
she points to her chest
and tells me about the day
her heart exploded into
psychedelic paint smears that
covered every inch of her life
and she tells me that
it's never worth the trouble.

she tells me that every morning
she feels like an ugly fleeting
image that nobody bothers to
notice and she feels like the
birdsongs that nobody is awake to
hear and she feels like a nobody.

she rests her hand upon her
head and tells me about the
ghosts that haunt her brain and
the time that monsters used their
hands to cover her eyes and
the time her voice left her.

i started to cry.

she put her hand to my face
and her touch felt like
overflowing starshine.
she tells me that she will be okay.
i tell me that i will be okay.
Language
Amber-Lynn Thorne

with his sad eyes
he whispers gently

how many times
can we die
before our soul
leaves our bodies

and with her warm heart
she lets him know that
she will be there forever
Outside the Café
Emma
There is a space outside, grey concrete that blends to everyone’s emotions like wet sugar leaves a bit of remorse on my tongue.
I have to say, I couldn’t know what you were doing to yourself and your hastiness for perfection that appeared before us as your shadow grew slimmer in the amber twilight, and I cringe at your desperation in order to be, ever so different, from the rest who are lingering to see your face flush with the ruddiness of health and how is it the dusk grew so sombre for you?

Who shrieked blasphemy into the raspberry moon and determined that we-are-all desperate beings clinging onto each other’s forearms in hopes of love? Does it mean something for you to smile at yourself and understand that I am near with an umbrella the colour of the autumn leaves, isolation building a frail pottery wall between everyone existing in the space outside the café?

Sandy Shores
Jessica Gagne
Temporary walls constructed by untrained finger tips. A moat never finished; the youngest set to work as a social hierarchy unfolds. Intruders are kept at bay by brittle barbed seaweed and broken shells. Along the perimeter cigarette butts and beer caps separate the castle grounds from its slums. Sparkling mud spires loom over the kingdom, threatening to collapse upon its people. Fragile stacks are packed together, transforming the sandy structure into a fortress. Towers overlooking miles of flat land speckled with puddles and shallow streams. In the distance the tide grows stronger, waiting. One boy, sweating from the afternoon heat, barks orders at his workers:

"Dig deeper!"
"Add support to the north wall!"
"Gather more supplies!"

Discarded trash and sea life remnants become triumphant flags and impenetrable doors. Invisible soldiers march into their fort across a drawbridge of driftwood into mica encrusted corridors, taking to their appointed stations to fend off the inevitable attack. Time is moving quickly, and the shallow foam creeps closer with each swipe of the shore. By now the troupes are armed with determination and prepared to defend a morning’s hard work. But the halls are sagging into themselves and the spires, once so magnificent, are beginning to crack and crumble. Children hold their breath as one break comes too close, playfully licking the edges of the barricade. At once, the ocean's wrath is made clear. In one grand gesture the freezing,
salty mixture storms the fortress, breaching the gates and pooling in the moat. Before the soldiers can react the water flows in through the hallways and chambers, leaving dilapidated walls and useless piles of sand in its wake. The men are swept out from under their own feet as the undertow returns home, and they're carried out to sea. Until the land is as flat as its surroundings, and even after the soldiers have given up hope and accepted their fate, after the kids have packed up their pride and trudged home, the tides still stroke the shore.

Ripples in a thought process:

Cool water washes over my face under the river's surface, pinching my creases with fingers of ice
Crinkle my nose as they invade my eyes and ears, the river's flow tugging gently on strands of hair

The freezing body envelops my skull in numbness as I dive deeper into its currents searching for answers amongst decaying driftwood and rotten leaves
A forgotten sun throws pictures upon the distant surface above me not so far from reach

Bubbles escape from between the eyes and return home
I briefly try to capture them in my hands to no avail and eventually allow them to travel on their predetermined path

Resurface for a moment's breath to warm your lungs from the inside out, taking care to rub regrets from your eyes and wring out old cries
On the river's edge I wait, patiently, gazing up to return the morning's smile

Shallow Bay Sand Dunes 2
Neil Porter
Homesick
Jessica Gagne

Lean back on the beach
Toes crinkle in the sand
Push them deep. Deeper
Maybe If you push hard enough they'll disappear.

Cool water comes and goes
Gently stroking your feet
Surrounds your ankles
To caress your calves

You remove you dirty hands from their underground fortress
To sift through the murky water
Swirling in circles around your fingertips
Bringing the tips to your lips
Salt stinging your tender skin
It feels refreshing, almost. Moist.

Forget the ocean, sand, wind; everything.
Just fall back and feel the warmth upon you cheeks
Rest your eyes until all you see is a faded glow under lashes

Until all you hear is the rhythmic tides
Feel each grain of sand across your body
Taste your cracked lips tainted by the sea
Absorb the atmosphere and all its scents

And soak up every aspect of this moment in time.

Island Journeys (1): Brač, Croatia
Tony Fabijancic

Tulip in my hair (For my Monkey friend)
Marta Croll-Baehre

Days have gone by since I brushed
russet afro. Abstracting soggy strands
from behind the streaked shower curtain
to draw my feet along cavity corridors
and mutely lisp supremacy’s prayers
I clutch my throat for its illness is overwhelming
to me; I seek a bare room lurking wildly
with hearts of small children.

At this time of the morning
6:00AM - and - I - am - back - again
licking daybreak’s chest with a crumbling tongue
I daydream about a tulip in my hair
written out in convoluted composition.
I know my spinster days are numbered
butchered by supremacy’s deceit
for my closest friend awoke one morning
with Jehovah’s Witnesses at her feet.

Montreal Mosaic and Her Mantra
Marta Croll-Baehre

Leave-taking! My baggage in Montreal
I near a tollbooth with spectral halos of light
cuffing shadow onto enamelled wall
Blistering the cobalt undercoat,
I eternalize zero hour onto a secreted boulevard
veneered from its snowfall
The ceramic station reeks of cumin and diesel oil
gritty with subzero sensuality
Near a gateway of suggestion, with immoral contagions
On the Metro with a goddess

her secular mantra upon us
Beautiful Lie, Profound Truth 2
Megan Musseau
Peregrination
Joey Lawrence
Peering into an alternate dimension…
If I were not taunted by outside forces, I would enjoy this life.
Paradise is not a true destination,
But rather a state of being once one has endured harsh wilderness.
We believe in spirits and marvel at their tangible presences
The anomalies of the universe are said to be obstacles on our quest for enlightenment
The latest trickery of the gods is to convince us we are fools
Destitute in our barren existence, desires and expenditures bloom
You get inebriated, even where there is nothing to be celebrated
I swallowed all your remedies, they never did a thing for me.
Life shrouded; sensation and delusion
Mirrors
Blending colours
A cacophony, splash painting, palette of minds drawn closer to conclusion
You are the breathing element
The catalyst of all earthly fulfilment
I told my body not to be this way
Stewing at night, drying at day
Living in one moment, dying in another
Aching for perfection
Taking in the rejection
The web to weave
The alpha and omega cleave
Dreaming to mingle in high society
Watching slaves dance in impropriety
The worst are spared and the best are slaughtered
All in the name of testing the water
If you feel something new in the air,
Why don’t you share?
The emblems, the rituals
The symbols
The sights and sounds
You bake in that atmosphere
Where stardom exists only in the imagination
Beyond our experience lies strata of fossilized wisdom
Forged indelibly by scholars before us
Waiting for its discovery
Sculpted from the plain and worthless
Sculpture is not based on addition,
But rather subtraction
Subtracting what does not belong,
That which is inimical to our potential glory
We are the archaeologists of our own souls
Digging and dusting for something of value
That which is minimal in reaping
Is also minimal in sowing
The ocean can only provide the background
You must swim and supply the foreground
The setting is set.
You must plot the plot.
Waterfall
Renee Baldwin
Creation
Brandon Pauls

I live in a world where I can look up and see shrouds of cotton seperating the blue global canvas.
A world where a green marvel stretches for miles to be met by rays of nourishment.
A world where as the morn fades to dusk, it reaches a texture of light lavender along the horizon, as the world clocks into it's time of daybreak.
A world that presents a deep impact of black as we slumber, along with glimmers of hope scattered through the shade to prove the light of purity is always shining through us.
God through Nature.
Nature through God.
I live in a world of creation.

Elation
Brandon Pauls

Eyes drop upon the open lake,
a waving blue breaks the fall.
Small lands of rock make up the isle,
our souls of silence name call.
The shore drops into the nodding of beach,
secret paradise past each turn.
Clouds of gulls soaring to teach,
heards of wood drifting to learn.
Patches of wild shade the sand
but one goal is in the sun.
To prrove color in life
when the shade is over run.
Piss Stain
Kyle Curlew

I woke up covered in dry piss, in the indoor parking lot of the Valley Mall. I inhaled the putrid smell before I even opened my eyes and I immediately jumped up. In frustration, I smashed my left fist into the concrete floor. Smeared blood across the concrete contrasted with the dark stain on the ground in the dim morning light that shimmered in from the entrance. Some of the blood looked as if it were old and coagulated. But really, who even knows what coagulated blood looks like? The sun was rising over the mountains to the east. The streets were empty of cars and the sidewalks were empty of people. If it weren’t for the orchestra of birds tweeting, it would have been perfectly silent.

The stench followed me as I rolled out of the dry piss. A couple of quarters fell out of my torn jean pockets, jingling as they rolled in separate directions across the cold concrete. My head was throbbing. A possible hangover? I couldn’t remember for the shit of me. Laying on my side, I let out an irritated sigh and I began to rummage through my memories, piecing them back together like a spoiled film roll.

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I was drinking in the grove with my buddy Nathan earlier that afternoon. Nathan was a crazy bastard, with his long wavy black hair and his dark native complexion. A wild whirl of green swirled in his stoned eyes. He would go to mass every Sunday if holy water was whiskey. His worry free attitude was a perfect explanation for why we were drinking on a large branch that hung over the Bowater River. We drank and we laughed and we shot the shit.

Down the shute. I said, and I took a swig from our bottle of Screech. After a heavy
swallow and a slightly exaggerated grimace I passed the bottle on down the branch. I was met with a stoic look from Nathan, he took the bottle and set it down next to him in a nook between two small branches. I will not lie when I say that I felt slightly frightened by Nathan’s suddenly serious attitude.

“What are you doing, b’y?” Nathan asked.
“Nothing. What the hell do you mean by that?” I was a little taken aback.
“Buddy!” He cried out, “you live on the streets, and of all places, in Corner Brook. There’s no homeless shelters in this shit hole. You might actually be the only homeless person in the city.”
“I happen to like this shit hole.”
He laughed. “What are you doing with your life?”
“G’wan b’y!” I shouted, “Let’s get sloshed.” I pointed accusingly at the bottle of Screech sitting in it’s lonely nook.
“We are sloshed.”
“Don’t you go worrying about me, I will find myself a nice rich lass.”
Nothing mattered in that shit hole. We inhaled the simplicity and we laughed out loud. I felt free - tremendously free. And then at the height of my laughter, I heard a splash. Nathan had fallen off of the branch. His wild eyes and hair fluttering in shock. The flask flew through the air and landed in the river below. It floated away, downstream with the rest of the booze. Nathan sputtered and splashed to the shore, cursing and swearing that he lost his smokes.
***

Three hours after picking up my scattered quarters and leaving the indoor parking lot, I was sitting in the blueberry fields amongst twigs, ferns, and slugs. I smoked a joint and picked up my white bucket and wandered, with no specific pattern, through the berry fields. I would pick a couple of berries and toss them into the bucket and listen to them tumble to the bottom. Then pick a few more and toss them into my mouth. It was a beautiful breakfast, a hell of a lot better then my usual pack of twenty-five cent dry noodles and powdered beef flavour.

Where ever I wandered, the stench of piss followed me. It was unimaginably terrible. A constant reminder of my life as a bottom feeder. I was usually a clean street kid. I would sneak showers at a friend’s house while their parents were out to work. Some of my friends would even donate socks to me when the stench became unbearable. It was the least they could do to help a troubled friend.

Berry picking was a lengthy job - especially nearing the end of the season when most of the berries had already been picked or eaten by wild life. Usually I was never alone, on any other day there might be several families with whining, lazy kids and old bag ladies rummaging about the field. This morning I was able to enjoy a comfortable solitude. I think it was a Sunday, everyone would’ve been at their chapels praying. I couldn’t be sure.

Two hours had passed and I finally had my white bucket filled. I was sweaty, tired, burnt out and sober. I tried to smoke the roach from my last joint, but it was too small and I burnt my lips. I cursed and spat and decided to call it a day. I admired my handy work, a full gallon of berries, and walked back to town to find a buyer.
***
Nathan lived in a shack of a house up near Murphy Square. It was a small wooden shack with peeling sky blue paint and spiders spinning webs all over the windows. The garden was overrun with hordes of weeds and wild flowers and shrews. Inside the house was damp and earwig infested. The lighting was terrible and shrouded all the rooms in a depressing sort of shadow. The smell reminded me of old people rotting away in their Sunday clothes.

I had to wait outdoors, as Nathan’s mother hated me. This did not disappoint me. I sat on the concrete porch and smoked a cigarette while Nathan jetted inside to change into some dry clothing and score some money for another bottle of rum. I told him to be quick, I felt really anxious that I would run into his family.

Nathan, of course, took forever in the shadowy depths of his home and I had to sit on the porch puffing away at my cigarette and staring into the sky. I would exhale the smoke and watch it dilute into the infinite expanses of the sky. Eventually I began to reflect on how I came to be a vagabond street kid in Newfoundland. A year ago I was forced to move to Ontario by my parents who couldn’t find work. We moved to the city of Toronto and I was swept away with a torrential wave of rules slapped on me because my parents had a terrible problem of worrying. I felt trapped. Almost claustrophobic. I remember how I read The Catcher in the Rye and I became obsessed with leaving and experiencing my own complete freedom. I remember the homesickness I felt. The culture shock. The big cities of Ontario were strange and cold places. After I turned sixteen, I had saved up enough money from my job operating deep fryers and flipping burgers, to buy plane tickets.

I told my father I was going to visit my grandparents for the summer and I would buy return tickets when I wanted to come back. My father thought it was a good idea, my grandfather was sick and I could help him around the house. He even offered to buy the return tickets for me. I left a note on my bed the day I left explaining that I wasn’t coming back and I would call him from a payphone one day. I simply made myself disappear.

I remember all I had with me when I left was a green military duffle bag stuffed with clothing and a sleeping bag. I also brought my messenger bag with my journal and an mp3 player. My wallet had fifty dollars to help me with food when I arrived. I felt so light when I left everything behind. I felt so happy. I was really excited. My first night back home I went on a raging drunk and spent my fifty bucks and lost my sleeping bag. I missed my sleeping bag, Newfoundland nights are not warm.

***

I walked back to town with a bucket of blueberries tumbling about my white bucket. It was making a soothing sort of music. My headache was beginning to disappear and I was so used to the smell of piss that I stopped smelling it. I was walking toward The Bean, the multicoloured slums of Corner Brook that resembled a pile of discarded jelly beans. The buildings were all painted in a variety of queer colors - blue, green, purple and yellow. The Bean was the laughing stock of the city and it was considered an embarrassment to live there. The tougher kids that lived in the queer coloured buildings would beat the snot out of you if made any comment about their home. These kids were known as ‘Beaners’.

Some of the older ’Beaners’ would buy my berries for their baking. The old retired ones with pictures of Jesus covering their walls. They all seemed to own a painting of The Last Supper and have it positioned cleverly over the dinner table. Other folks would boot me off
their door steps, some of them would even threaten my life. I desperately needed the money, so I would have to take my chances.

I knocked on the first door. No answer. Behind the second door was an angry old man with a baseball bat and a white, beer stained wife beater. I could tell that he was drunk from the putrid smell of booze and piss and his blood shot eyes. He chased me down the street, yelling pure gibberish. The third door revealed an old lady with so many cataracts it was a miracle that she found her way around the house to the front door.

She smiled and asked me what I would like. I told her that I had a gallon of blueberries for sale for ten bucks. She tasted one and with a smiled and reached into her dusty purse and gave me a wrinkled ten dollar bill. The old lady said God bless and I handed her the bucket. As I turned to leave, she added, “you should clean yourself young man, you smell like a litter box.” I ignored her.

***

Nathan had scored a twenty from his father, by spinning him some story about going to see a flick at the Majestic Theatre. He came outdoors grinning and laughing. As we walked I spent some time complaining that he took so long. He told me that he had pre-rolled a couple of joints for the day. Nathan was always prepared. I cooled off after hearing his excuse and we sparked one of the joints up. You might be wondering how two poor assholes like ourselves came across so much grass, I mean, we sure as hell didn’t buy it. It was through cruel luck that we acquired it in the first place.

Two nights ago, I earned ten dollars, compliments of a successful blueberry excursion. Me and Nathan went on the prowl to find some grass and chill out for the rest of the night. The city turned out to be dry and we were reluctantly forced to give up our search. As we wandered the streets, our spirits cold and feeble, we ran into Pigsy, our last resort dealer. Pigsy was a chubby little thirteen year old kid that had been corrupted by his older brother Brad. He must have been the youngest dealer on the rock. However he had what we were looking for. It was terrible stuff, but bog weed is better then no weed.

“You holding anything?”

“Yes buddy, I got some good shit,” Pigsy squealed, “ten bucks.”

We made the exchange. I held up a small piece of tin foil wrapped around the merchandise. It felt heavy enough so I shoved it in my torn pockets. We thanked him and made our way on down West Street to see if we could scope out a party. While we walked I pulled out the tinfoil and opened it. Inside was little more then a five piece and the rest was a balled up piece of paper that read, Sucker. The little fat fuck jipped us. I turned around to see Pigsy running his ass down the street laughing. We chased after him.

It didn’t take long for me and Nathan to catch up to Pigsy and tackle him to the ground. Pigsy collapsed in a heap of sweat, wheezing and coughing. Nathan punched him in the face. “fucking queer,” he snarled and punched again. While Nathan held him to the ground by the throat, I patted him down and searched his pockets. I found a zip lock bag with a heaping amount of bud and thirty dollars. I also took his lighter and a pack of cigarettes.

Nathan shoved him into the ground, tears, snot and blood. “You got blood on your nose,” he laughed. Pigsy could only cry, tears dripping down his face. I kicked him in the side and we left, making ourselves scarce before Brad caught wind of what we did to his brother and
came after us. Brad was a very beefy dude - we couldn’t hope to face him.

***

I returned to the Valley Mall to search for someone who might be holding. The mall scene had changed from what it was in the morning. The parking lot was teeming with activity. Cars were gliding in and out of the parking lot gracefully. Horns were honking. Old ladies were walking with their carts of fresh produce. Kids were smoking and swearing. Couples were holding hands. Birds were screaming.

As I walked into the lobby of the mall, I held the door open for one of the old ladies wheeling a cart of fresh produce. She walked through and scrunched up her nose in disgust. She didn’t say thanks. Whatever I thought, and I ran over to the payphones.

First I slipped in a few of my quarters and dialled my father’s number. I was feeling a bit nostalgic, I haven’t talked to him for a month or two. A few of my friends gave me messages from my parents every so often. They were mostly full of worry and begging me to call them. Ring. Ring. Ring. “Hello,” I heard a gruff voice grunt, and I hung up. I picked up the phone again and dialled my dealer’s number.

He picked up. “Hey Rob, what are you at?” I said.

“For a moment the line was silent. “Are you stupid?” Rob finally said.

“What?”

“You mugged Pigsy the other night.”

“So what,” I protested, “the ass tried to jip me.”

“You’re gone some crooked, buddy.”

“So you got nothing for me I guess?” I asked. Hope was falling apart around me.

“His brother is looking for you,” He said, “I’m not getting involved.” There was a click and silence. The bugger hung up. Hope had left me. I threw the phone at the wall and stormed into the mall. A few people stared at me for a moment and then went back to whatever it was that they were doing. The kids smoking were laughing at me and taunting me from behind the glass doors. Everyone went on with their afternoon.

***

We got our rum easily with no hassle from the grey old man behind the counter. He didn’t ask for ID, just muttered that the bottle was twenty bucks and then put his face behind a book and went back to his reading. Some old war book. It didn’t look that interesting. We pretty well skipped out the door and down the street laughing and cheering. The sun was going down and we were ready to get smashed. The night was young and we had hopes of finding a party or running into some of the guys drinking in the bush.

We strolled down the street sipping our screech and merry making. But as the night went on and we were getting more and more drunk, we found nothing. No parties of any kind. Instead we found ourselves discussing melancholy life issues. We questioned our motives for life. We blamed the authority figures and our structured religious society. We talked about our hatred for happy people. People who never seemed to get themselves down or people that seemed to be blind of how terrible life really is. We were jealous of their happiness. Jealous of their wealthy families. Jealous of their pretty girl friends and their illusions of true love. I truly hated myself and my meaningless existence. If I disappeared just then - no one would notice. If they did, they would forget about my existence a few months down the road.
After a while the cold was beginning to get to us and our legs were tired as hell and we decided to make our way to the indoor parking lot at the Valley Mall. There was a camera in there, hooked into the ceiling and protected by a shaded plastic globe. No one really believed it worked, and the younger kids had painted it with a variety of colourful penis’ and titties and jeering smiley faces. We sat in the shadows, huddling in our sweaters for warmth - and we continued to talk and listen to our echoes. It was like drinking in a cave. We heard something else though, it was a heavy echoing of foot falls. We thought it was mall security at first and we quickly jumped up and looked toward the entrance. It wasn’t mall security. It was Brad. Our situation was looking grim. We were cornered by a giant silhouette. All two hundred and fifty pounds of him blocking the only exit.

***

I sat in the Tim Horton’s in the mall, alone and with a cigarette that I bummed off another customer. I was alone amongst the old bag ladies and truckers and young assholes with nothing better to do. People kept their distance from me. The tables around me were empty. I assumed I smelled like an outhouse. My memory was beginning to come back to me. I remembered Brad taking the Screech from my hand and taking a long swig. I remember him throwing the bottle and smashing it on the concrete floor. I didn’t try to run and I didn’t cry. I accepted what I had coming. There was no way out anyway. Finally I remember him punching me in the face. I saw Nathan run. And then another sharp blow to the face and I collapsed to the ground and blacked out. That was the end of my night. I probably pissed myself around then.

I scratched my nose, to find dried blood flaking onto my table. I must of looked priceless. Covered in blood and piss. But that didn’t matter to me. I had realised something and it struck me hard. I watched the ash on the tip of the cigarette become long and bend under its own weight. I felt fresh despite the putrid smell of my own piss. None of this was worth it. Disappearing and freedom - it was all over rated. It was all unhappy and terrible and lonely. I was so tired and so hungry and so depressed. But that was all falling away now. I butted the cigarette in the ashtray and I ran back to the payphones and used my last quarters to dial my fathers number.

After Anacreon (On Getting Old)
Bernard Newman Wills

Life blazes
in the young

you won’t
hear me deny it
no sir,

but tell me

where’s the fire
in our gray
graceless forms?

There’s nothing for us now
but nightmare terrors
and the empty pit…

our fears surround us
like a tattered shawl…

that place
we’re going

is deep down,
dreadful dark
with no
road rising east.

So
trim girls,
lovely boys

you wonder
why us old men
burn with grief?
After Sappho
Bernard Newman Wills

Some say the fairest sight
On this black earth
Is wheeling horsemen with
Infantry massed in ranks.

Some say fairer than this
A fleet of ships, their
Sharp keels cutting sea,
But they’re mistaken.

I say fairer than these
The one you love,
And I can prove it true,
No work at all,

For who has ravished
Helen from her halls,
From children and from
Doting lord, if not our queen?

And as for me for what
Sight do I tremble more
Than bright Anactoria
Whom I love?
More beautiful
The lightness of her step
Than Lydian horses
Preened for war.